

**From the Inside Out**  
**(Re)presenting Whiteness:**  
**Conceptual Considerations for**  
**South African Geographers**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to map and represent whiteness for the purposes of proposing how whiteness might be included in a critical geographical agenda. An extensive literature review is represented alongside a limited amount of personal reflection and examples from public discourse. This research tells the story of the diverse ways in which the set of social ordering processes here called whiteness, works within systems of social relations and spatial configurations to shape our experiences of and practices in space and place. These are important considerations if whiteness is to be effectively challenged in both geography as a discipline and in social and spatial relations in post-apartheid South Africa.

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## **Preface**

This research was carried out in the discipline of Geography in the School of Applied Environmental Sciences, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, under the supervision of Dr Trevor Hill and Mr Kevin Burton.

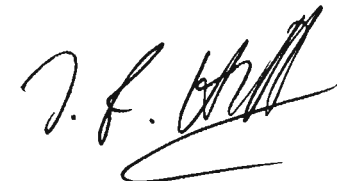
This research represents original work by the author and has not otherwise been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma at any university. Where the work of others has been used it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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## Chapter One: An introduction to considering a geographical agenda for (re)presenting whiteness

### 1.1 The Crisis of the Academy and the Crisis of the Contemporary

*"The fighting going on throughout the country was raging tight outside my windows throughout the city. Now and then a horrid THUMP and CRUMP shook the house and chipped down the plaster. I heard screams too, not of pain but apparently of an inside hilarity. Sometimes they (I mean 'they'), sang garbled versions of incredible national anthems and punctuated them with cowboy and Indian games of BANG-BANG YOU'RE DEAD NO I'M NOT. But most of the time they credibly recollected themselves and got down to the grisly business of pummeling each other with napalm, rockets, machine guns, booby traps, landmines, and trusty shaving razor. They also had fighter planes on each side that occasionally strafed my roof because some fucking joker had painted a bull's eye on it. However, the TV was still working and I could turn it up really loud if things got out of hand like they do sometimes when everyone knew it was almost time.*

*The fighting had been going on for a long time. In fact no one could remember when the thing had begun, why it had ever begun at all, and finally who was supposed to be on whose side. All I know is that at one stage it was us blacks against the whites. But somehow or other things had suddenly become complicated and it was no longer a black against white chess game. It was more like a kaleidoscope in which every chink of color in the shaken picture was fighting ever other little chink. News agencies could not keep track of the alliances and counter-alliances, the neutrals and the non-aligned the ferocious and the hyperferal" (Marechera, 1990:23-24).*

Dambudzo Marechera's writing is obsessed with war and terror. For him war is no longer a mere fact of life but has become life itself. We are constantly living under its shadow of horror both metaphorically and in reality- Vietnam, Dresden, Hiroshima, Southern Africa (at present we need only think of Palestine, Somalia, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chechnya, Afghanistan or Zimbabwe). In our streets, in our cities, in our homes, living is said to have been reduced to mere existence. But for Marechera (1990), it is not only the state of our collective existence that is in chaos, his metaphor of a house besieged is said to be reflective of the state of academia as well. He sees the academy as both spiritually and intellectually inept, inadequate to deal with the extent of 'the war fighting outside'. Any attempt to find coherence in the chaos, fragmentation and separation from meaning that characterizes both our epoch and episteme is for radical commentators no more than an exercise in 'self destruction'. There is not space in our academies for those with ideas contrary to 'the game', of seeing any trajectory other than those which seem reasonable in the context of current knowledge. Logical and 'common-sense' writing and thinking are deemed oppressive and constrained by their position within the very system(s) they seek to interpret. Can we as intellectuals find the means to reconstitute our understandings? "We are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world- mad, even from an ideal standpoint we can glimpse

but not adapt. We are born into a world where alienation awaits us. We are potentially men, but we are in an alienated state, and this state is not simply a natural system. Alienation as our present destiny is achieved only by outrageous violence perpetrated by human beings on human beings" (Laing, 1967 in Veit-Wild, 1990:19).

In (re)presenting the 'reality' of our infinitely heterogeneous and open-ended world our current modes of writing seem inadequate. The depths of individual suffering of mothers losing children to HIV/AIDS, violence, or murder; girlfriends, brothers, fathers, sisters - real people facing real corporeality, suffering, heartache and sadness. Somehow it seems impossible to (re)present the trauma in even one city or family- the infinite number of trajectories culminating in the moment we try to capture, there is not space in our current writing for these infinite oppressions or injustices and there seems little hope of fully understanding them.

The world today is one of oppression, war and terror. South African society is one in which women (from only a few months old to 113 yrs old), face the constant fear of rape. Highjackings, mugging, assault, theft, and violence are commonplace. They (predominantly the media), tell us that our police, government and law enforcement agencies are themselves 'corrupt'. We are afraid to park on the road, consider our route in traversing the spaces of our city (most especially when on foot) and always ensure female acquaintances travelling alone give us a call when they reach their destination.

For Marechera (1990) and others, it is not just our existence that is besieged but our framework for interpreting that existence. The space in which we are trapped seems to offer no apparent room for escape. In a world of falsity and misrepresentation how does the intellectual seek 'truth' or interpret 'reality'? How do we match our descriptions to the depth of the oppression we fail to comprehend, how do we interrogate the complacency of our 'common sense' images and attitudes? How do we enter into this frame, the hidden atrocities committed in the name of modernity, civilization and development? How do we begin such a task when reason, rationality, time, space, historicity and language have themselves been torn apart? Twenty postmodern years have placed the intellectual in an incomprehensible crisis or is it a crisis of incomprehension? We find ourselves in an increasingly desperate world with our academy discredited.

The object of this research is more than to simply (re)present whiteness or its link to the brutal history of racism, it is also to investigate the implications of the conceptual means and taken-for-granted assumptions through which such a (re)presentation is constructed. This is not only for the purposes of academic rigour but has been conducted in the full awareness that we should, "in our late modern time, acknowledge that the principles upon which our complex social and political systems operate allow for unprecedented opportunity for people to do the wrong thing. They multiply the possibilities in which evil can be done and is done more easily by people who are not in themselves evil, brutal, or blindly animated by hatred" (Gilroy, 2000:72). To what extent are we, as academics, implicated in racialized brutality past or present? How is it that 'race' was constructed and

continues to be maintained by people and processes which on first appearances seem in no way racially structured? How do we, with this knowledge in hand, map an alternative trajectory and inform a collective understanding that could ultimately transcend raciological thinking? Primo Levi (1988) suggests that it is only in drawing on the histories or memories of suffering that we can adopt a properly ethical attitude amid these chronically corrupting circumstances, "the fever of our western civilization that 'descends into hell with trumpets and drums', and its miserable adornments are the distorting image of our symbols of social prestige ... we ... are so dazzled by power and prestige as to forget our essential fragility: willing or not we come to terms with power, forgetting that we are all in the ghetto, that ghetto is walled in, that outside the ghetto reign the lords of death and that close by the train is waiting" (Levi, 1988:51 in Gilroy, 2000:86).

For Gilroy (2000:87), this argument is not a licence to indulge in paranoia, his point is more subtle, "If we wish to live a good life and enjoy just relations with our fellows, our conduct must be closely guided not just by this terrible history but by the knowledge that these awful possibilities are always much closer than we like to imagine. To prevent their reappearance, we must dwell on them and with them, for they have become an essential moral resource: a compass". Thus, in order to ultimately transcend racialized thinking, the way in which it structures our everyday lives and modes of interpretation, needs to become visible, moreover we need to be consistently aware of the enduring power and effects of racialized expressions.

## **1.2 An Introduction to Geography, 'Race' and Whiteness**

Global society is deeply racialized. International opinion over the fate of Palestine, the treatment of Afghanistan by America, or commentary over Zimbabwe for example over the past 18 months could all attest to this. Oppositions of North-South, civilized-terrorist, developed-developing have been played out not only in America's refusal to discuss repatriation for slavery, or the refusal of 'white' South Africans to sign an acknowledgment of apartheid, but in a number of subtler processes of racialization (predominantly social, economic or political), in the ordering of modern society. The problem for geographers wishing to investigate the effects of current and previous 'racial' formations is that geography, not only as an expression of life but also as a discipline, is extremely racialized. In addition, processes of racialization are not necessarily immediately apparent as such, and may often be diffused or cloaked in a number of subtler processes often under the guise of 'commonsense' or 'normal' decisions and occurrences, outside the realm of overtly racialized thinking.

For geographers it is exposing both the material and ideological processes and their effects or consequences (ie: the social construction), of 'race' that is of interest. Specifically, how the social construction of 'race' influences social landscapes and how these spaces influence processes of racialization. That is, how racialization *takes place*. Racialization meaning an active process diffused through a range of social actions, "by which racialized groups are identified, given stereotypic characteristics, and coerced into specific living conditions, often involving social/spatial segregation and always constituting racialized places. It is one of the

most fundamental means of organizing society" (Koyabashi and Peake, 2000:393). It is important to be constantly aware that racialization not only implies overt racial discrimination, hateful deeds or thoughts, indeed for Goldberg (1997:20-21), "expressions of hate encourage their dismissal as abnormal, not the sort of undertaking ordinary people usually engage in, the irrational product of warped minds. This reduces all racist expression to a single form: what is not reducible to hate is not criminalizable; perhaps not even racist (or sexist), for it fails to fall under the reductive categorization of racism (or sexism) as hate" instead he proposes that racist expressions are, "various - in kind, in disposition, in emotive effect, in intention, and in outcome. Moreover, racism's are not unusual or abnormal. To the contrary, racist expressions are normal to our culture, manifest not only in extreme epithets but in institutions and suggestions, in reasoning and representations, in short, in the micro expressions of daily life. Racism is not- or more exactly, is not simply or only- about hate"(Goldberg, 1997:20-21)

If racial thinking is understood as a set of active processes diffused through a wide range of social actions, then whiteness may accordingly be described not only as a position of racial privilege in an hierarchical ordering of society but as, "the normative ordinary power, to enjoy social privilege by controlling dominant values and institutions and, in particular, by occupying *space* within a segregated social landscape" (Koyabashi and Peake, 2000:393). For cultural geographers, "a dominant group will seek to establish its own experience of the world, its own taken-for-granted assumptions, as the objective valid culture of all people. Power is thus expressed and sustained in the reproduction of culture. This is most successful when least apparent, when the cultural assumptions of the dominant group appear simply as common-sense" (Cosgrove, 1989:124). In terms of the spaces of our geographies, whiteness similarly inscribes itself through acting as a non-located and disembodied position of knowledge. Whiteness is a taken-for-granted, invisible (unnamed) positioning resulting in, and from, a range of unearned privileges, advantages, and moments of dominance. These are reproduced and maintained through the practices of a range of 'social actors' carrying out normal responses and commonsense decisions in their everyday lives. As such critical 'race' theory has begun considering how everyday practices and discourses (as opposed to overt 'racisms') enact, (re)produce and express whiteness.

The most common attribute of whiteness named during such consideration is the so called *invisibility* of whiteness(for example see Dyer,1997). Invisibility referring to the way in which whiteness seems to refer to nothing in particular or that 'white' culture and identity are perceived and (re)presented as having no content ('white' persons are said to be made confident, comfortable and oblivious to the dominance conferred upon them). This self-conception is said to be of strategic importance in that "having no content, we can't see that we have anything that accounts for our position of privilege and power. This is itself crucial to the security with which we occupy that position" (Dyer, 1997:9)(see also Kincheloe, 1999). For many theorists this is, in essence, the importance of coming to understand whiteness. As long as whiteness is seen or felt to be *the human condition* then, "it both defines normality and fully inhabits it" (Dyer, 1997:9). The equation of being 'white' with being (hu)man is said to secure the ultimate position of power, "white people have the



power to believe that they think, feel and act like and for all people; white people, unable to see their particularity, cannot take account of other peoples; white people create the dominant images of the world and don't quite see that they construct the world in their own image; white people set standards of humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others bound to fail. Most of this is not done deliberately or maliciously; there are enormous variations of power amongst white people, to do with class, gender and other factors; goodwill is not unheard of in white people's engagement with others. White power none the less reproduces itself regardless of intention, power differences or goodwill, and overwhelmingly because it is not seen as whiteness but as normal. White people need to learn to see themselves as white, to see their particularity. In other words, whiteness needs to be made strange" (Dyer, 1997:9-10).

But, the particularities or process(s) of whiteness cannot simply be listed, there is no range to denote the cultural parameters of whiteness because, "the privilege and power of being white in white culture is not to be subjected to stereotyping in relation to one's whiteness. White people are stereotyped in terms of gender, nation, class, sexuality, ability and so on, but the point of such typification is gender, nation etc. Whiteness generally colonizes the stereotypical definition of all social categories other than that of 'race'. To be normal, even to be normally deviant (queer, crippled), is to be white. White people in their whiteness, however, are imagined as individual and/or endlessly diverse, complex and changing"(Dyer, 1997:11-12).

This reiterates that, whiteness although predicated on racial difference, and although implicated in processes of racialization, remains hidden. Ruth Frankenburg (1993), structures this point as follows; whiteness as it has developed over the past 200 years has come to be a taken-for-granted experience structured upon a varying set of supremacist assumptions (biological/moral/cultural etc)(see also Goldberg, 1992), which have come to be seen as normative. In order to locate this normative space it needs to be acknowledged that whiteness is a material and discursive moment, the result of specific social processes which can be made opaque or brought into focus. In short, "whiteness is indicated less by its explicit racism than by the fact that it ignores, or even denies, racist indications. It occupies central ground by deracializing and normalizing common events and beliefs, giving them legitimacy as part of a moral system depicted as natural and universal. In such a system, whiteness is embodied and becomes desire in the shape of the normative human body, for which 'race' provides an unspecified template. Geographically, human beings reciprocally shape, and are shaped, by their surrounding environments to produce landscapes that conform similarly to ideals of beauty, utility or harmony, values not immediately associated with 'race' but predicated upon whitened cultural practices" (Koyabashi and Peake, 2000:394).

The task for critical theorists is thus to make whiteness visible through interpreting how the everyday practices of 'white' people are racially influenced. If we are to delineate whiteness for academic purposes, Frankenburg (1993:1) suggests that it be conceived of as being composed of three interrelated dimensions, "first it is a position of structural advantage, associated with 'privileges' of the most basic kind,





including for example higher wages, reduced chances of being impoverished, longer life, better access to health care, better treatment by the legal system, and so on... second whiteness is a 'standpoint' or place from which to look at oneself, others and society. Thirdly, it carries with it a set of ways of being in the world, a set of cultural practices often not named 'white' by white folks, but looked at instead as 'American' or 'normal'".

To name and locate whiteness is an intricate and complex task, for instance, "the recursivity between the whiteness of the social world, as our object of study, and the whiteness of the discipline, as our medium of study, operates to make opaque the whitening process." (Koyabashi and Peake, 2000:394) Moreover, with knowledge and the academy exposed in recent years as partial, constructed, situated and strategic it is not only geographers who find themselves deeply implicated in raciology. Drawing on a range of lessons from other fields of critical cultural enquiry, proponents of 'the new cultural geography' remind us that when we write our geographies we are not reflecting but actively creating meaning, "we write to make sense of the world, but in so doing authorize that sense at the moment of conveying its importance to our reader" (Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993:37). Thus, once geographers accept that the construction and representation of all 'knowledge' is ideologically informed, then we "must somehow let our readers know that what we are creating are themselves cultural, gendered and political products, that our writing is as much about ourselves and our conditions as it is about some purported geographic reality, and that our methodologies and techniques are not ways of establishing ground truth but are rather conventions devised to make meanings intelligible"(Cosgrove and Domosh,1993:36).

But questions of representation are dependent upon prior questions of ontology (what constitutes reality), and epistemology (how we come to know that reality). What has become apparent is that not only is science (the formal construction of knowledge), but also ontology and epistemology implicated in the same pervasive mindset. We(read- white western, English speaking, rational geographers), accord primacy to intellectual discourse, reason, linear history, abstract space, the Cartesian subject and other signifiers of the modern mindset. These having been exposed as 'whitened' means that both our 'ways of seeing' and 'ways of representing' the world are exposed as intricately bound up in 'whiteness'. We look at and interrogate from within the very set of processes we wish to question (and in terms of this research seek accolade within the very systems I question). This is a recurrent theme throughout this research and poses a number of conceptual and methodological problems for geographers requiring careful consideration.

### **1.3 Considering Whiteness**

In 1977 the apartheid state classified me as 'white' under the Population Registration Act of 1950. A signifier, a mark, a privilege, an identity, a social and material reality. It seems an impossible task to try and specify the ramifications of this 'reality'. Peggy McIntosh (1988) is well known in cultural studies for her consideration of the everyday implications of what it means to be 'white'. She

structures her thoughts as a series of 46 questions that have become well-known in the field of whiteness studies.

"I can turn on the television or open the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented

If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege

Whether I use cheques, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability

I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to bad morals, the poverty or illiteracy of my race

I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group" (Dyer 1997:8)

The above is Dyer's (1997:8) choice from McIntosh's (1988:5-9) list which she names "special circumstances and conditions [she] experiences which [she] did not earn but which [she] has been made to feel are [hers] by birth, by citizenship, and by virtue of being a conscientious law-abiding 'normal' person of goodwill". These occur because of the way 'white' people are systematically privileged in Western society. We are conferred with dominance and unearned advantage but are unable to see 'white' privilege which nevertheless acts as, "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and blank cheques" (McIntosh 1988:1-2 in Dyer 1997:9).

Given the pervasiveness and invisibility of whiteness and the difficulty in (re)presenting whiteness, how should geographers incorporate whiteness into their critical agendas? How do we begin to map the profound influence of whiteness, its relationship to modernity and in the instance of this research- the whiteness of post-apartheid social and spatial formations and practices? How do we map something that is invisible, hidden and normal? How do we actually undertake this task given how implicated geographical ideology and methodology are said to be in whiteness?

The first consideration is methodological. We need to consider not only alternative geographies but also alternative means for constructing and (re)presenting those geographies. For Cosgrove and Domosh (1993:37-38), "The problems of writing in a post-Kuhnian world are that it leaves us without any 'objective' reality from which to base our work, but that it forces us to explicitly recognize our personal and cultural agendas, and the power that words give those agendas. We must recognize our commitments as authors and treat them seriously. The postmodern world leaves us nothing behind which we can hide. When we write our geographies, we are creating artefacts that impose meaning on the world. The moral claims implicit in our descriptions and explanations of landscapes and places are what have determined their choice as subject matter, controlled the mode of study, produced the story we tell and structured the mode of its telling. Our stories add to the growing list of other stories, not listed in a logic of linearity to fit into a coherent body of knowledge, but as a series of cultural constructions, each representing a particular view of the world, to be consulted together to help us make sense of ourselves and our relation to the landscapes and places we inhabit and think about. These stories are to be read, not as approximations to a reality, but as

tales of how we have understood the world; to be judged not according to a theory of correspondence, but in terms of their internal consistency and their value as moral and political discourse”.

The task at hand is thus for me to *tell the story* of how I have understood whiteness and to acknowledge that this can never be anything more than my (re)presentation of whiteness framed through the particularity of the processes constituting my own whiteness. It is thus the whiteness of 23 years of participant observation in a highly racialized society. It is whiteness understood through engaging with an Euro-American, written interrogation of ‘race’ and whiteness (not only within the field of geography but through reading and interpreting a wide range of texts of ‘cultural’ engagement and criticism by post-structural, feminist, critical cultural and post-colonial theorists amongst others). Apart from this textual assimilation it is a whiteness framed through spending 18 months interrogating myself, friends and acquaintances as to our experiences of whiteness in different contexts and instances. This correspondence was supplemented by discussion with a number of undergraduate university students (including a range of responses to an essay question entitled ‘how and why life on campus is ‘racially’ segregated’). These narratives both textual and experiential informed my reading of whiteness. In order to structure the insights gained through personal communication, I archived 24 months of newspaper clippings from *The Natal Witness* ([www.witness.co.za](http://www.witness.co.za)), mainly composed of letters to the editor that I supplemented with relevant editorials and press releases. What made *The Natal Witness* an interesting source for interpretation is that it is a daily paper circulated primarily in and around Pietermaritzburg? Contentious issues are always widely debated in the editorial section and the letters to the editor often result in a few days of lively exchange by various ‘camps’. Thus, following these discussions (the nature of discussion as well as that deemed worthy of discussion given what else was currently in the news), allowed for some dominant discourses and narratives of ‘white’ people to become apparent, allowing insight into the set of social ordering processes here termed whiteness.

The aim of this data collection was not to construct an ensemble of the current rhetoric of ‘white’ people or their dominant discursive strategies or to research attitudes. Neither is it an attempt to place and define the specificity of a ‘white’ ‘subject position’. Of interest rather was to begin to consider the way (or processes through which) racialized identities and social processes inform our everyday practices and social-spatialization (so often taken-for-granted or normalized in our societies). The data collected was thus a) a means to compare local and global experiences of whiteness and to act as a benchmark against which to gauge foreign academic writing (given the lack of consideration around South African whiteness) as well as to document the peculiar texture of South African whiteness and, b) an attempt to gauge to what extent whiteness influences the spatial imagination(s), interaction(s) and experience(s) in and of space in South African urban spaces.

If this research may be read as no more than my (re)presentation of whiteness then I feel it important to share my first real realization of my own whiteness. African House music and Kwaito have in recent years become increasingly popular. The

first nightclubs catering to this taste in music appeared in central Pietermaritzburg approximately 3 years ago. These nightclubs/dance clubs catered for a predominantly (in excess of 95%) 'black' youth crowd. Being only one of a few 'white' women amongst a few hundred 'black' people made me realize for the first time just how invisible my 'race' (and my gender in many ways) had been to me, and just how effective my enculturation had been despite (or as a consequence of) my liberal upbringing. Standing out as 'other' is not something 'white' South Africans are necessarily used to. The effect of the space of the nightclub was for me heterotopic, my own racial socialization only became apparent not in the actual space of the nightclub but in relation to that space. Within the nightclub 'race' for me seemed transcended (especially at 2am with everyone on the dancefloor), but going down the road to draw money a 'reflex' action spurned a bout of self-reflection. When walking on my own and seeing 3 'black' men walking down the road toward me I crossed to the other side, full knowing that had it been three 'white' men I would have continued unperturbed. Moreover, I knew full well that should these same 3 men have been in the nightclub 10 minutes earlier there would have been 30cm and not a road between us. The full magnitude of the multitude of ways in which whiteness constructs our identities, experiences, our 'common sense' and 'normal' responses is only, after 2 years of committed engagement, becoming apparent to me.

For Steyn (1999:267), acknowledging our whiteness in South Africa is important because only if, "whites' honestly 'fess up' in the interest of ending the cycles of denial and projection that kept the old system in place, can we get to better understand the inner workings of our racialization, and contribute to dismantling power. By becoming conscious of the narratives that inform our identities, we empower ourselves not to continue acting them out". But as noted earlier this is not just about overcoming racialized thinking, Frankenburg (1993), reminds us that the uncomfortable truth is that whiteness resides in the social forces and categories informing and moulding the very nature of our existence, such as 'modernization', development, and 'civilization', with which we are all engaged in some way. We cannot escape whiteness either in our personal or disciplinary endeavours. If we cannot escape whiteness then it is time we located it and mapped its effects.

#### **1.4 Aims, Objectives and Outline**

The aim of this research is to construct an ensemble of conceptual considerations relevant for a project of geographically (re)presenting and placing South African whiteness. This is not to be achieved through mapping the specific spatial behaviours of any group of 'white' subjects nor is it to make an inventory of their specific 'racial' attitudes, discursive repertoires or their spatial implications. Nor is it an attempt to present ethnography of 'white South Africans'. Rather, this is an attempt (enacted within the belief that such consideration is lacking) to 'tell the story' of the diverse ways in which the set of processes, here termed whiteness, work within systems of social relations and spatial configurations, as a hegemonic apparatus which (through influencing everyday practices and experiences as well as our modes of intellectual inquiry) acts not as a directly imposed regime of conformity but as a system of pressures and constraints (enacted through bodies and informed

by discursive practices in space) which have enabled and sustained 'white' dominance and social landscapes (even through the actions and activities of those either oblivious to its power or those unwilling or unable to challenge its manifestations in their own lives).

If we recognize that whiteness can be located through the interlocking axes of power, spatial location and history and, if we take it that it is through controlling the dominant cultural apparatuses, values, languages and ideologies that the power of whiteness is reproduced, then we can begin to name the social ordering processes here called whiteness. Moreover, if we look to the nature of our global socio-political economy, neo-colonial/neo-liberal economic regimes, western travel, diaspora, music, television, academic texts, information, technology, and cultural normativity then it becomes evident that the power of whiteness is becoming increasingly pervasive and is unparalleled by alternatives (Shome, 1999). Exposing this universal all-encompassing whiteness (which is both non-located and disembodied), alongside an emerging post-apartheid whiteness is important given that our (South African Whiteness) cannot be separated from global processes of whiteness, an important yet seemingly impossible task, whose parameters I begin to explore in chapter 5.

The way in which I approached this task was to first (after a preliminary reading of a range of texts), to set out a framework of considerations to guide my collation, interpretation and assimilation of relevant literature. (A 'skeleton' on which to 'hang' my ideas). These read roughly as follows;

- Racialized processes and racially marked bodies influence our everyday interactions, choices and the outcomes of our practices in a number of intersecting ways. These may often be 'hidden' or not immediately apparent as such.
- Whiteness is part of the normal and normalized landscape, it is invisible yet has numerous influences and effects in the ordering of social and physical space " 'race'... is what it is and does what it does precisely because of how it is given spatial expression" (Delaney 1998:18 in Kobayashi and Peake 2000:395). The relationship between 'race' and space is reciprocal and complex.
- The effects of whiteness are both ideological and material, (and reside in our identities, sense of self) thus geography, as both discipline and practice, needs to be alert to processes of whiteness.
- Questions of 'race' are tied to questions of place and boundary both central problematics in geography, so despite a moral obligation there is also a political necessity for geographers to consider whiteness.
- The history of 'race' and whiteness are said to be implicated in the formation and dominant processes of modernity, as such raciology needs urgent consideration beyond merely conceiving of it as an identity or 'subject position', but also as a social ordering process (with material and ideological concepts) given the diffused and pervasive effects of whiteness.
- For South African geographers the task is amplified. 'Racisms' have been, for at least 400 years, normalized in our society and for the last 100 years, have been the essential organizing force in our society. To undo the explicit

effects of apartheid and to challenge its continuing power in normalized thinking and 'reasonable' action will require an investigation of the way in which spatial racialization involves not only the placement of 'the other', but all people in racialized spaces.

This broad initial understanding was after further reading and investigation structured into a series of questions through which this research has been framed. These read as follows;

- To what degree is there an overarching/homogenous global meta-whiteness whose parameters and effects can be enunciated and with which we are all implicated to some degree?
- What is the relationship between geography and whiteness?
- How should geographers understand and incorporate whiteness into their critical agendas?
- Why should geographers incorporate whiteness into their critical agendas?
- How should a geographical (re)presentation of whiteness be approached and structured?
- Given that our ultimate aim should be to transcend thinking through 'race', how is whiteness to be studied without essentializing it?
- What are the global implications and local manifestations of whiteness?
- What particularities/textures can we assign to South African whiteness?
- How do we interrogate and map the ways in which whiteness shapes our inner psychological geographies and our social-spatial imaginations and experiences?

As noted whiteness is complex, diffused and normalized. (Re)presenting whiteness is a difficult task and it is a relatively new field of enquiry. This research cannot hope to comprehensively answer these questions. Rather my aim is to begin to consider how a geographical approach to whiteness might look and to map the parameters of whiteness we should consider when developing a field of whiteness in geography.

Within this broad problematic, I have structured this research in the following manner;

✓ Chapter two represents my interpretation of current debate (re)considering space and subjectivity. If our modes of enquiry are implicated in whiteness then any conceptual tools widely employed in discussing whiteness need (re)consideration. Space and subjectivity are, in my understanding, the two main axes of 'cultural geography' at present, and as such, frame any reading of a geographical approach to whiteness. In short, the findings of this chapter have it that both the space(s) *in* our interpretations and the space(s) *of* that interpretation are implicated in the very hegemonic systems we seek to interpret. I conclude that just as modernity has fragmented 'real' spaces into homogenous separate and disparate activity spaces, so too have our identities been fragmented into a number of discrete static 'subject positions'. Both these axes thus require (re)conceptualization. I adopt Foucault's heterotopia (after Hetherington, 1997) and Gilroy's (2000), diaspora as examples of potential ways forward from these static, homogenous spaces currently used to

name and interpret the city and the subject. Lefebvre's conceptual triad provides an example of a means to interrogate space beyond a static, neutral understanding.

Chapter three and four deal with 'race' and 'whiteness' respectively. To say that both are socially constructed requires, in my opinion, an investigation into the nature of that construction. In so doing the ways in which the processes of whiteness and raciology function become more easily apparent. I have also included in both these chapters a discussion of geography and 'race' and geography and whiteness (given that the nature of this research is not to map contemporary whiteness in South Africa but to plot how a specifically geographical interpretation might look and to note the dominant conceptual considerations such a map might consider).

Chapter five aims to situate the interpretations (re)presented in chapters two, three and four through the discursive medium of urban whiteness in Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu- Natal). Given my earlier contention that our (re)presentations are no more than personal stories, I wish to reiterate that this then is a very specific representation of whiteness. It is the whiteness of a 23-year-old student in a confused academy (as noted at the beginning of this chapter). It is the whiteness of a woman in a patriarchal society. It is whiteness as gauged some 8 years after the end of apartheid. It is an urban whiteness specific to an English speaking community. It is a whiteness emanating from 'the last colonial outpost' of the British Empire. It is whiteness as interpreted through the tools of an Anglo-centric Euro-American academy. It is whiteness resulting from enculturation and socialization in a 'good', middle income, liberal home in a 'white' suburban area. Moreover, it is also a whiteness forged in an African country, a whiteness recovering from apartheid, a whiteness forged in contradistinction to a feared 'other'. It is whiteness attempting to question modernity and overt racisms but which finds it implicated in both. But more than anything it is a whiteness which is denied, hidden but which is insidious in all our social processes and spatial forms. It is thus a whiteness that needs to be both materially and ideologically exposed not only in its local manifestations but also in its wider implications and in its relationship to modernity. It is a whiteness that needs to be urgently addressed if we are to seriously consider systemic change. The aim of this chapter is to 'read' the ways in which whiteness takes place and continues to maintain itself through the social spatializations, spatial imaginings and interactions of 'white' people in Pietermaritzburg and specifically to note the texture of the 'white' collective imagination in the city.

Before concluding there is an important methodological consideration I wish to address. The goal of this thesis is to make geographers more aware of the hegemonic nature of 'whiteness' in geography both as an expression of life and as a discipline. Fundamentally I aim to provoke self-reflection in both the way we (as geographers) experience and (re)present post-Apartheid spaces in South African cities. I feel that I have achieved this goal in terms of providing a comprehensive review of relevant literature, in a manner that advances geographical debate through highlighting the theoretical complexity of the notion of whiteness (both in Geography and across a range of other disciplines). Moreover, in this thesis I pose a number of questions which although to a large extent remain unanswered widen the scope of current debate. Conversely, the empirical application of the framework



for interpretation suggested in this thesis is minimal. The primary data presented in chapter Five is largely under interrogated. In retrospect a more thorough consideration of this material could have beneficially strengthened my overall discussion of whiteness. But as indicated in the subtitle of this thesis - "Conceptual Considerations for South African Geographers"- this thesis is primarily aimed at interpreting and collating secondary sources in the hopes of proving a comprehensive framework for whiteness studies in post-Apartheid South Africa. It is my belief that a comparative overview of whiteness and the ways in which it shapes social relations in space, everyday practices and experiences is important before considering any specific examples of its influence. Although I feel that this has been achieved to a large extent, in retrospect the scope of this thesis may have been too broad to provide any specific insights. In addition had the scope been narrower, more attention could have been paid to the application of the ideas in the thesis to South Africa's changing social and spatial landscape(s). Important questions remain unanswered, for example;

- How do whiteness and spatialization interact in post-apartheid urban spaces?
- To what extent are Apartheid's city spaces being reproduced or re-invented by today's social imaginings?
- How could the understanding of whiteness here developed help geographers to consider new relationships with and within space?
- How can an awareness of whiteness contribute to a new and just social and spatial order in South Africa?

Nevertheless, through highlighting how both our "ways of seeing" and "ways of representing" the world are intricately bound by whiteness and through exposing that we cannot escape whiteness in either our personal or disciplinary endeavours this thesis hopes to make a valuable contribution to geographical commentary. Interrogating 'the world' from within the very processes we seek to question dictates the need for careful conceptual and methodological orientation. Whiteness remains an under discussed and relatively novel field of enquiry (although it is rapidly gaining popularity and publication), and studies of whiteness seldom venture outside their relationship to traditionally defined racism(s). Geographers, in particular, have displayed limited interaction with whiteness despite including 'race' in their critical agendas for some time. Seeking, collating and assimilating relevant literature and conceptual approaches and comparing a range of intellectual positions, has allowed me to (re)present a conception of whiteness and the disciplinary considerations I consider appropriate for a geography of whiteness. As is made evident in the chapters which follow the discipline of geography is highly implicated in whiteness and as such this research has an important sub-theme for all geographers, which are best typified though considering; whose value systems, whose knowledge, whose realities, whose spaces and subjectivities- are being imposed *on* whom, *by* whom and, with what consequences? For geographers most importantly we need to carefully and consistently consider and locate the spaces *from* which we speak, *to* which we speak and *of* which we speak.



Lastly, I wish to briefly disclose my position with regards to the Euro-American texts drawn on throughout this research. Nearly all of the theory and contemplation considered in this research comes from America or Britain (the English speaking academy). Experiences of racialization in 'the west' do differ substantially from those of South Africa but; (a) there has been little 'race' or whiteness theory coming out of South Africa on which to base a research such as this, and, (b) our academy as a whole in South Africa is extremely Euro-American or Anglo-centric. At present our ways of knowing, thinking and valuing come from 'the west', Europe and America for example through the academic texts, fashions, music, entertainment, media or, communications hegemony they produce continually colonized us materially and idealistically (Bonnett, 2000), and have entrenched their value systems and 'ways of knowing' in the 'white' South African psyche. We have always imagined ourselves to be (and go so far as to call ourselves), Europeans. I thus feel that these texts are necessary and relevant but do impose a bias. Locally specific geographies are lacking and in part this research contributes to redressing this imbalance and attempts to contribute to such geography. In addition, although I have engaged with a range of feminist, post-colonial and work by radical 'black' authors these oppositional discourses may only be evident in my world-view not so much as in this textual re-presentation. Nevertheless, they have helped to provide an important 'other' perspective to raciology and whiteness, and in retrospect they deserved more attention.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

This research aims to review, comprehend, assimilate and (re)present an extensive range of relevant intellectual positions and ideas about 'race' and specifically whiteness, in order to negotiate an appropriate space and subjectivity for locating a geographical interpretation of whiteness. But, all theory needs to be grounded if it is to be made practically applicable. I have thus chosen to use the understanding gained through these processes to see if it allows me to make visible the whiteness in which I am implicated, the whiteness of my peers, elders, colleagues and those strangers with whom my activity space intersects. That is to (re)present the whiteness of the urban 'white' English speaking citizens of Pietermaritzburg. Again, I reiterate that the stories we tell are only ever partial representations of the 'realities' we perceive. Thus, what follows is a situated and partial account of 'my whiteness' and the whiteness of the academy as I perceive it (given a wide range of reading, discussion and experience).

Chapters two, three and four are my (re)presentation of the 'texts' I engaged, in order to try and gain insight into and broaden my understanding of whiteness. Chapters five and six in contrast aim to see how the resultant arsenal of tools could be used to make visible the social ordering processes in this research named whiteness, specifically the whiteness which I have come to know.

## Chapter Two: Considering Space, Society and Subjectivity.

### 2.1 Introduction

Geography at its most basic is about spaces and the relationship(s) between different people (or 'subjects'), constituting and constituted through those spaces. The aim of this chapter is to consider how geographers (re)considering whiteness could reflexively approach these two axes of geographical cultural interpretation. Before continuing, I wish to once more re-assert two important issues. Firstly, I wish to re-assert that this research is not aimed as an assault on 'white', male, bourgeois, Judeo-Christian, Euro-American culture or its mode of thinking. Rather, this is an attempt to promote new (self)understandings for geographers through making the set of social ordering processes, here named whiteness, visible, especially to those positioned as such (in effect 'white' geographers in a 'white' academy). In so doing, this research attempts to explicitly move beyond uncritical assumptions of space and subjectivity in which the possibility exists for whiteness to endlessly re-invent it. This is thus, an attempt to nominate and locate ('make visible'), the process(es) through which we attach ('white') meaning, experience ('white') power and, place our ('white') selves and imaginations. This research is no more than a momentary and specific expression of my understanding of whiteness framed through the particularity of my ('white') experience(s) and my ('white') situation(s). Secondly, throughout this thesis I have chosen to directly cite authors as far as possible, and to represent their arguments in their own terms. Although this makes the thesis somewhat long and tedious reading I have chosen to adopt this methodology in order to minimise mis-representation. This is not an attempt to avoid the responsibility of subjective interpretation, rather, because the subject matter engaged in this research is relatively novel and as I struggled to find clarity or a uniform/obvious approach to specifically how geographers should approach whiteness, constructing the conceptual arsenal for such a project ultimately turned out to be one of my most important aims. I found this a difficult and confusing task and ultimately I drew on a range authors and I feel that maintaining the integrity of their particular insights remains important.

Space, identity and subjectivity are contentious constructions and this chapter aims to make visible my approach to placing 'ourselves'. If identity is a process, what can we say about the identifications of 'white' South Africans? Tied together through our past of multiple European diasporas, connected across nationality, class, gender and social position by being visibly marked as a 'racial' identity. How can our self-deceptive fragmented whiteness be made visible (both as an identity and as a process) within a conflation of facts, ideology, imagination and, everyday experiences? What tools will this require geographers to have at their disposal? How can whiteness be located/articulated in both physical and metaphorical space? How do we begin to (re)present these tangled experiences, the power they inscribe, the multiple structures, possibilities and material realities and spaces they imply?

(Re)presenting ourselves, or our collectivity is no easy task. For instance, "how is it possible to make sense of ourselves when the boundaries which seemingly tell us who 'we' really are appear incoherent, or fragmented, or fuzzy or somehow unreal,

or fluid or on the move" (Pile and Thrift, 1995: preface). Geographical discourse has until recently rarely engaged with the dynamic ways in which people gain a sense of who they are and how space helps to tell them their place in the world (Pile, 1996). Increasingly though, geographers have begun to seek an "appreciation of the intricate ways in which narratives of space and self intertwine. These stories are about the ways in which people gain a sense of who they are, the ways in which space helps tell people their place in the world, and the different places that people are meant to be in the world" (Pile, 1996:6).

The relationship between the social, 'the subject' and space is increasingly becoming a central theme for geographers. However, there are a number of conceptual difficulties in investigating this type of relationship, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:15) describe how, "being an 'intellectual' is a difficult and fraught task nowadays. It is rather like a game of playing snakes and ladders. Having climbed to the top of one ladder, a snake beckons and produces a precipitate fall. Thus, the intellectual climbs the ladder of taking 'the people's' side. But there's the snake. Writing about people too often involves the heroic assumption of getting closer to the people when the intellectual may just be slipping further away as a result of an intellectual bias which construes the world as a set of significations to be interpreted rather than as a concrete set of problems that people have to solve practically". The task for the intellectual is to be critical without becoming a voyeur, to balance reflexivity in interrogating a self/other relationship without falling prey to narcissism or solipsism, and avoiding the subject of inquiry becoming an object. The list of snakes and ladders can be infinitely extended, "the point being that these are all perils of a world where *positioning* has become a crucial element of everyday intellectual practice" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:16).

No longer is critical cultural theory simply (re)considering the place of the subject in enquiry but also the place from which such a 'subject' is observed, described and represented. Who is 'the subject', how do they come to be placed as such? Who is looking at whom, from where and why? What are the implications of this introspection for geographers? What are the consequences for our geographies? "Every idea becomes a major moment in the journey to my inside, like a stethoscope to my heart I've interrogated my 'self', my mind, my desires, my hopes and my dreams- that which I take to be normal and commonsense. In so doing I've re-constituted my 'self', and come to discover my own whiteness, not only through increasing my discursive repertoire and thus the scope of the self-interrogation I am able to thus implement but, through enacting and re-forming that whiteness in my own lived experiences. Through this process, I've never known myself more 'white' or felt myself more uncomfortable with being positioned as such " (December 2000, my personal journal).

What can we say about the politics of investigating subjectivity, how do we (dis)place our own experiences in relation to wider theoretical and political debates? How do we (re)present without (re)constructing a subject custom-made for the purposes of our own intellectual inquiries? How to proceed beyond this game of snakes and ladders which seems to be largely (but not only), a crisis of the 'white', western, heterosexual, male self? (Pile and Thrift, 1995). How do we (re)construct a

position from which to write without replacing one dominator world view with another essentialised static position from which to interrogate or, in the words of de Certeau "look down like a god"? Pile and Thrift (1995), suggest that what we need is a geography that injects an equivocal and personal moment into our work through enunciating a politics of location, "this is a politics that makes no claims to second guessing other's experience but still allows people to speak for themselves" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:17).

How could geographers practically enact such a re-orientation? For Probyn (1993:31 after Pile and Thrift, 1995:17), "the critic's experience may be turned into an articulated position which allows him or her to speak as an embodied individual within the process of cultural interpretation. This does not mean that critical activity becomes focussed on a reflexive account of one's experiences of oneself: this is not a proposal for an endless deconstruction of the subject/text relation. As an enunciative position within cultural theory, the self can be used to produce a radical re-articulation of the relationship between critic, experience, text and the conjunctural moments that we construct as we speak of that within which we live".

For Pile and Thrift (1995:17), such a statement is problematic in that it "requires the construction of a discursive image of self which is not located in the traditional discourses of individualism; is located in an historical analysis of what self and experience can consist of at particular conjunctures; is relational; is embodied; insists on difference as a qualitative multiplicity; and can provide new, empowered speaking positions". What is thus required is the construction of a "multiple, shifting and often self-contradicting identity as a subject that is not divided in, but rather at odds with, language; an identity made up of heterogenous and heteronomous representations of gender, race and class and often indeed across languages and cultures; an identity, that one decides to reclaim from a history of multiple assimilations and that one insists upon as strategy" (de Laurentis, 1986a:9 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:17).

Moreover, questions of practically locating this subjectivity remain unanswered. In what space does this new intellectual inquiry operate and where do we situate ourselves as authors? Where and how does it position the subject(s) of our inquiries? How do we construct, utilize and understand the geography of those subject(s)? What does this mean for geographers interrogating the relationship between space, subjectivity and society? More specifically, how should we incorporate these abstract ideas into a geography intent on (re)presenting whiteness?

For instance, returning to the questions of placing 'white' South Africans can we in practice locate the 'double-agent'? The subaltern who is 'white', who is of, but not always in, the west? What of the former colonizer who is located in the space of the previously colonized? What of the uncertain, confused, bifurcated, unsettled psyche of the 'white' (dis)placed in the colonized world, but equally not from the overdeveloped world? How do we understand 'the subject' neither dispossessed by nor, of the west? Not released from Europe, yet firmly located in its languages,

cultural practices, power structures, worldview and way of being? Where does that subject locate themselves and how do we map that space?

Who is 'the white subject', how can 'they' be collectively (re)presented? Where could such a (re)presentation position/locate 'the white subject'? How can we conceive of the inner spaces of this subject with due political sensitivity but with a desperately needed critical interrogation? How can this subject be placed in metaphorical, physical and social space (in Lefebvrian terms, lived, conceived and perceived space)? Moreover what is the relationship between whiteness as an identity and whiteness as a set of social ordering processes? These and numerous other considerations come to the fore when trying to name and locate whiteness.

In short, considerations of subjectivity and space have recently been exposed as situated, strategic and politically dangerous (see Pile and Thrift, 1991). Yet they still provide the best point of entry for interpreting our collective existence or the contemporary and so require careful consideration. What follows is my interpretation of the parameters of the current body of theory pertaining to conceptualizing subjectivity, identity and space. Overall I feel that theorists as a whole seem confused and disorientated. By the end of the 1990's the postmodern inertia seemed to be fading, and calls for deconstruction have increasingly been replaced by an urgent need for informed 'ways forward'. But analytical confusion still reigns and authors tend to find difficulty in differentiating real, metaphorical, metaphysical and multiple identifications and spaces as simultaneously present. Both our interpretive devices and 'realities' have become 'fuzzy'. Absolute conceptions of both identity and space have been discredited, and there is little consensus as to alternative interpretive devices. After extensively engaging in an array of literature (and in the spirit of 'forging forward'), I have chosen to use Hetherington's (1997) interpretation of Foucault's (1980) heterotopia - a potential 'space' through which to locate an interpretation of 'white' subjects, Lefebvre's (1991) conceptual triad as a lens with which to illuminate that space and, Gilroy's (1991) diaspora as a space in which to interpret the identifications of those subjects. Although these concepts have received criticism for not transcending all of the problems associated with traditional approaches, they made the most sense to me after interpreting a range of relevant texts, appropriate for constructing geography of whiteness, and the following chapter develops these ideas.

Just as absolute conceptions of abstract space fragment space into a number of separate homogenous shards, absolute conceptions of identity are said to fragment subjects into a number of homogenous and seemingly autonomous static 'subject positions'. Acknowledging this is not the same as conceptually transcending such abstractions or forging alternative analytical approaches in either case. What follows is a brief synopsis and (re)presentation of relevant current thinking around identity and space, in order to highlight difficulties and present possible ways forward, for thinking about whiteness.

## **2.2 Considering 'The Subject' and Identity**

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The term identity has recently acquired great resonance, both inside and outside academia. Identity refers to more than, "a commonsense way of talking about individuality, community and solidarity and has provided a means to understand the interplay between subjective experiences of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which those fragile meaningful subjectivities are formed" (Gilroy, 2000:98). As an interpretive device, identity can harness a plurality of meanings, "we are constantly informed that we share an identity at the most fundamental levels: national, 'racial', ethnic, regional, and local. Identity is always bounded and partial. It marks out the divisions and subsets in our social lives and helps to define the boundaries between our unseen, local attempts to make sense of the world. Nobody ever speaks of human identity" (Gilroy, 2000:98). Identity is seen to imply specificity (usually 'cultural'), and helps form ideas of 'we' and resultant patterns of inclusion and exclusion. With this in mind we need to remember thus that, "calculating the relationship between identity and difference, sameness and otherness is an intrinsically political operation" (Gilroy, 2000:99). ✓

Identity proves a useful concept in considering raciology because of "the dizzying variety of ideas condensed into the concept of identity, and the wide range of issues to which it can be made to refer, foster analytical connections between themes and perspectives that are not conventionally associated. Links can be established between political, cultural, psychological and psychoanalytic concerns. We need to consider, for example, how the emotional and affective bonds that form the specific basis of raciological and ethnic sameness are composed, and how they become patterned social activities and elaborate cultural features. How are they able to induce conspicuous acts of altruism, violence and courage? How do they motivate people toward social interconnection in which individuality is renounced and dissolved into the larger whole represented by the nation, a people, a 'race' or an ethnic group?" (Gilroy, 2000:101). Constantly returning to these questions in both our everyday practices and geographies is important given the moral, political and ethical consequences that emerge once the concept of identity has been tactically engaged.

In its extreme form, identity refers to immutable difference, and signifies otherness through signs that act as emblems written into/onto the bodies of its carriers (a latent destiny). Identity constantly sets one group apart from others who lack the particular, chosen traits that act as the basis of topology and comparative evaluation, "no longer the site for the affirmation of subjectivity and autonomy, identity mutates. Its motion reveals a deep desire for mechanical solidarity, seriality, and hyper-similarity. The scope for individual agency dwindles then disappears. People become bearers of the differences that the rhetoric of absolute identity invents and then invites them to celebrate. Rather than communicating and making choices individuals are seen as obedient, silent passengers moving across a flattened moral landscape toward the fixed destinies to which their essential identities, their genes, and the closed cultures they create, have consigned them once and for all" (Gilroy, 2000:104).

This raises questions surrounding issues of exclusion and conflict. What counts as the 'same' or as 'different', as 'self' or 'other' in what circumstances? What is the

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role of recognition (or its refusal), in constituting identity (or soliciting identification)? (Gilroy, 2000). 'The Other' (against whose resistance the integrity of an identity is established), for some is recognized as that part of the self that is no longer plausibly understood as a unitary entity but appears instead as a dialogic moment in what is referred to by Gilroy (after Batlaglia, 1995) as a 'representational economy'. That is, "there is no selfhood apart from the collaborative practices of its figuration. The 'self' is a representational economy: a reification continually defeated by mutable engagements with other subjects' histories, experiences, self-representations, with their texts, conduct, gestures, objectifications" (Batlaglia, 1995:2 in Gilroy, 2000:110).


Coming to understand and (re)present 'the self', in the context mapped above is "a determinedly partial activity charged with subversion and resistance as well as meaning authority. Mapping the subject is a triangulation of power. Mapping the subject is an ethics of wanting to know, not knowing and not wanting to know. Mapping the subject is a contested ground, fixed through position, movement, practice, encounter, visibility. And mapping the subject is a masque. Mapping the subject is a necessary, passionate fiction" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:50). For Pile and Thrift (1995:1), mapping the subject is difficult for a number of reasons amongst them being that;

- the subject has no precise boundaries
- the subject cannot be counted as a singular, only as a mass of different and sometimes conflicting subject positions
- the subject is always on the move culturally and in fact
- the subject is only partially locatable in time-space
- there is difficulty in deploying the representational metaphor of mapping with its history of subordination to enlightenment logic in which everything can be surveyed and pinned down.

It was during the mid 1980's that the problem of subject formation and the position of the person in the social world first became a central concern for 'cultural geography'. A research agenda emerged in which the possibility of simultaneously recognizing both the way in which individuals are determined by social structures and, the way in which individual(s) will do things sometimes differently (agency). Before this time, theorists tried to resolve the issue on either side of the structure/agency debate (Pile and Thrift, 1995).

Where circumstances (or social structure), is seen to centrally determine what people choose to do, the triangulation points of the subject (eg: the body, self, person, identity), have no meaning outside of their relationship to the social structure or system of social relations, "whatever the theory of the dominant system of meaning and power, it is this that fills the empty containers of body, self, person, identity. Outside the dominant system- whether it be capitalism, patriarchy or something else- these components are assumed to be nothing. The challenge then, is to change the system" (Pile and Thrift, 1993:5).

Conversely, proponents of agency argue that people 'make history'. People are here conceived to be free to choose what to do without constraint. The co-ordinates



of subjectivity are seen to have their own internal meaning (although such meaning may be disguised by a number of received ideas), and, "the individual's experiences of the body, self, person, identity and subjectivity are seen as central to understanding their (true) meaning" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:3). Thus, for example, the body can mean whatever the individual takes it to mean eg: white, male, old - depending on the way the body is decoded in a social setting and the way that setting is decoded and recorded and, "because the subject's body, self, person, identity and subjectivity are assumed to derive their deep or true meaning either from their own inherent qualities or from their inter-subjective experiences of the individual, they are open to contest through changing their meaning" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:3).

Increasingly geographers have come to the recognition that 'the subject' can not be conceptualized adequately through either structure or agency, "social structures could not exist without human subjectivity; on the other hand, social structures at least set the parameters within which humans behave and at most set the rules for 'allowed', 'prohibited' and 'enabled' thoughts and actions" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:3). Human agency has thus become reconceptualized as; "a continuous flow of conduct through time and space constantly interpellating social structure" and that "through the processes of socialization, the extant physical environment, and so on, individuals draw upon social structure through the production or the reproduction of the conditions of production and reproduction. They therefore have the possibility, as, in some sense, capable and knowing agents, of reconstituting or even transforming that structure" (Thrift, 1983a:29 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:3)

But even if structure and agency are taken as a dualism, it is still not possible to interrogate 'everyday life' as simultaneously real, imaginary and symbolic (a task that current theorists note as particularly urgent) (see Pile, 1996). This challenge comes from post-structuralists who recast the debate, by entering 'discourse' into the equation. If discourse is concentrated on as simultaneously an identifiable practice or institution and, as the inter-animations between different discursive practices then, we can argue that the co-ordinates of subjectivity can be constituted by the practices that they seemingly describe. That is, words such as 'self' or 'body' may describe things but simultaneously disguise their constitution "institutional practices such as the madhouse, prisons, schools and universities, rather than containing particular subjects, actually and actively create them" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:4). Discourse in this formulation is neither structure nor agency but is both structure and agency, "the body, the self, becomes a location within various power riddled discursive positions, but where the body or the self is not a passive medium on which cultural meanings are merely inscribed; they are neither a thing nor a set of free floating attributes" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:4).

In short, "about the exactitudes of the subject there is remarkably little agreement, except that the subject is a primary element of being and that the Cartesian notion of the subject as a unitary being made up of disparate parts, mind and body, which is universal, neutral and gender-free is an error. Nowadays the subject and subjectivity are more likely to be conceived of as rooted in the spatial home of the body, which is universal, and therefore situated, as composed of and by a



'federation' of different discourses/persona, united and orchestrated to a greater or lesser extent by narrative, and as registered through a whole series of senses, not just what Descartes conceived of as the 'noblesse of sense', sight, with its implicit Cartesian perspectivism (which in turn, produced an orientation 'to be spectator rather than actor')" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:11).

Where does this leave appropriate conceptions of self and identity for geographers seeking tools to (re)present whiteness? Hall (1996:3/4) suggests that, identity does not signal a stable core of 'self', unfolding in a linear chronology without change, 'the same', identical to itself across time. Nor- can we sum this essentializing conception to the stage of cultural identity - is it a "collective or true self hiding inside many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common and which can stabilize, fix or guarantee an unchanging 'oneness' or cultural belongingness underlying all the other superficial differences" (Hall, 1996:4). Rather, such an interpretation accepts that "identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions" (Hall, 1996:4), and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. Identities are here seen to be constituted within, not outside representation. "They arise from the narratives of the self, but the necessary fictional nature of this process in no way undermines its discursive, material or political effectivity, even if the belongingness, the 'suturing into the story' through which identities arise is, partly, in the imaginary (as well as the symbolic) and therefore, always, partly constructed in fantasy, or at least within a fantasmatic field" (Hall 1996:4). It is precisely because identities are constructed within (not outside) discourse that they need to be situated within the specific, historical and institutional sites, discursive formations and practices, and specific enunciative strategies that produced them. In addition if identities emerge within specific modalities of power then they "are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity- an 'identity' in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation)" (Hall, 1996:4). Identities understood as constructed through difference, exist only in relation to another (that which it is not/lacks) a so-called, 'constitutive outside'. "Identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, leave out, to render 'outside', objected. Every identity has at its 'margin', excess, something more. The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure, every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it 'lacks'" (Hall, 1996:5).

What then given the nature of this research would constitute a good 'working' definition of identity? Hall (1996:5-6), suggests that we think of identity as "the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to interpellate, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions that

discursive practices construct for us. They are the result of a successful articulation or 'chaining' of the subject into the flow of discourse". Identity is thus located at the intersection between rudimentary levels of individual psychic identity and, at the level of discursive formations and practices that constitute the social field (see Pile, 1996 for an investigation of the juxtaposition of a psychoanalytic and geographical imagination).

Before continuing though I wish to digress briefly. In addressing issues of identity, Hall (1996), suggests that *identification* is a preferable term to *identity* for the purposes of critical enquiry. Although it is beset by the same conceptual difficulties outlined above as a *process* it seems an easier concept to direct a consideration of whiteness. Identification is described by Hall (1996) as the "recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the 'naturalism' of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed- always 'in process'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost', sustained or abandoned. Though not without its deterministic conditions of existence, including the material and symbolic resources required to sustain it, identification is in the end conditional, lodged in contingency. Once secured it does not obliterate difference. The total merging it suggests is in fact a fantasy of incorporation. Identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an overdetermination not a submission. There is always 'too much' or 'too little' - an overdetermination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play', of difference. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since, as a process, it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the building and marking of symbolic boundaries - the production of 'frontier effects'. It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside to consolidate the process" (Hall, 1996:2/3).

### **2.2.1 The Subject in Practice (understanding the subject in the social world)**

If current considerations of subjectivity need to be urgently refreshed and, if process(s) of identification are yet to be unravelled, then how should critical theorists proceed? At present critical cultural theory is said to have yielded a number of "limited, contingent, but still potent forms of subjectivity which are clearly difficult to grasp and theorize, but the task is not impossible" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:23). The most common of these approaches, as just discussed is, to conceive of the subject as a federation of discourses (united by narrative and rooted in the spatial home of the body), and, articulated in the space of intersection between the level of individual (psychic reality), and the social field (represented by a multitude of discursive formations and socio-spatial practices).

Within such an approach lived *experience* has become the primary means for considering the subject with due sensitivity to the relative positionings of both author and the subject under enquiry. The lexicon of experience provides a means to reflexively engage 'the subject' as both a material (in terms of 'what people do') and a social/ discursive ('what people say') moment (Pile and Thrift, 1995). When

experience is perceived as a specific enunciative *practice* then it enables a mode of signification, which as an active articulation of both ontological and epistemological levels allow, "an enunciative position which puts forward a level of being as the conditions of that being are being problematised. In this model, the self is put forward not to guarantee a true referent but to create a *mis-en-abyme* effect in discourse. In distinguishing these two levels at which the experiential may be made to work, I want to enable the use of the self which neither guarantees itself as an authentic ground nor necessarily rejects the possibility of a ground" (Probyn, 1993 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:29-30). In other words "we imagine ourselves to be whole, to be complete, to have full identity and certainly not to be open or fragmented; we imagine ourselves to be the author, rather than the object, of the narratives that constitute our lives. It is this imaginary closure that permits us to act. Still, I would suggest, we are now beginning to learn to act in the subjective mode, as if we had full identity, while recognizing that such fullness is a fiction, an inevitable failure. It is this recognition that permits us to acknowledge the limits of ourselves and with it the possibility of dialoguing across subsequent differences- the boundary, or horizon, from which, as Heidegger points out, things unfold, both towards and away from us" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:25-26). The task for critical theorists is thus not to try and give meaning to human action as was the case in past traditions but rather to decipher *intelligibility*. Overcoming a Cartesian intellectualism means rejecting the understanding of being as a belief system implicit in the minds of individual subjects and rather understanding being as, "the social with which we are in contact by the mere fact of existing and which we carry with us inseparable before any objectifications" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962a:362 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:27), (Kincheloe, 1999).

If the emphasis of current critical theory is on the experiences of the subject as derived and read in *practice*, then the problematic for geographers is not only to understand how the subject comes to act but how to *locate* and (re)present their experience(s). According to Pile and Thrift (1995:26-30), theoretical investigations of 'the subject's' experience in the social world is presently underscored by four premises. The subject in practice is seen as (1) being engaged in a flow of practice (2) this is an embodied subject (3) operating in joint action and (4) who is situated. Understanding 'the subject' in these terms enables an epistemological stance (in a range of disciplines), which opens the possibility for theorists to engage experience as a number of temporary constructs which by illuminating different images of the world, give intelligibility to human action. I outline each of these four points below;

(1) When practice is understood in terms of a **future orientated flow of conduct**, then individual subjects are considered to move intentionally through time and space. They are credited with an open mode of awareness transcending traditional conceptions of a mental, first-person, private, inner subjective experience separate from and directed outward to other subjects and objects. This is thus an adaptable approach that manifests flexible dispositions shaped by a vast array of previous dealings, in which conduct is deliberate and when disrupted produces a startled response because future orientated activity is displaced.

(2) The subject can also be understood of as embodied or as positing **an intrinsic corporeality**. Here the modern socialized body is no longer considered an object but rather as a repository of a generative capacity to understand, "adapting a phrase of Proust's, one might say that arms and legs are full of dumb imperatives. One could endlessly enumerate the values given the body, made body, by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy which can instill a whole cosmology through injunctions as insignificant as, 'sit up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand', and inscribe the most fundamental principles of arbitrary content of a culture in seemingly innocuous details of bearing and physical manner so putting them beyond the reach of conspicuous and explicit statement" (Bourdieu, 1990b:63 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:28). In addition embodiment produces temporality and spatiality, "In focussing movement, my body invites the present, past and future...my body takes possession of time; it brings into existence a past and a future for a present, it is not a thing but creates time instead of submitting to it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962a:239-240 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:28).

(3) Thirdly it is suggested that the subject not be considered a self-standing entity but rather in terms of, joint **action**. "Many actions require co-operation to complete. Many actions assume the presence of others. All actions are bound together by mutual dispositions and shared understandings that they both take from and contribute to. In other words, dialogical action is a fundamental determinant of the intelligibility of social life; understanding comes from 'we', not 'I'" (Taylor, 1993:53 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:25). Discourse enters the frame here in that "often language's function is simply to set up the intersubjective spaces for these common actions, rather than to represent them" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:28-29).

(4) Lastly, understanding the subject *in practice* requires a **sense of situatedness**. "The subject can only 'know from'. Therefore abstracting subjectivity from time and space becomes impossibility because practices are always open and uncertain, dependent to some degree upon immediate resources available at the moment they show up in time and space. Thus, each action is lived in time and space, and part of what each action is a judgement on its appropriateness in time and space" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:29). In addition, following any kind of social 'rule' in practice always involves some measure of openness and certainty to be associated with each movement, "a rule does not apply itself; it has to be applied; and this may involve difficult, finely tuned judgements ... However, situations arise in infinite varieties. Determining what a norm actually amounts to in any situation can take a high degree of insightful understanding. Just being able to formulate rules will not be enough. The person of real practical wisdom is marked out less by the ability to formulate rules than by knowing how to act in each particular situation ... In its operation, the rule exists in the practice and it 'guides'. But we have seen that practice not only fulfills the rule, but it also gives it concrete shape in particular situations" (Taylor, 1993:57 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:29). Importantly for geographers, "It follows that there is major emphasis in theories of practice on the specificities of place. Particular contexts are crucial elements of the practical sense because dispositions have to be constantly tuned to the indeterminacy of each context, often in creative ways, so the 'rule' never stays quite the same. In other

words place is constitutive of the subject's understanding of the world" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:30).

Once we have considered how to conceive of the subject's experiences with, and practices in, the social world, then we need to consider how to reflexively engage *experience* and *practice* within the geographical mind. As noted in contemporary critical social theory, the lexicon of practice acts as a means to move away from the intellectual bias most often named the 'objectifying gaze' (seeing the world as a set of significations to be interpreted), towards a position which focuses rather on experience, that is, focuses on the intersection of the 'personal', 'social' and, 'lived' worlds. The understanding of practice engaged in geography has its roots in a range of intellectual traditions. I wish to briefly digress in order to map these traditions given that their tenets have fundamentally shaped geographies present understanding, yet the routes of this understanding are seldom noted and not all geographers are familiar with their work. These can be categorised as follows;

- Work in the tradition of Bourdieu
- Work in the tradition of de Certeau
- Social Constructionist Traditions
- The influence of Actor-Network Theory
- Work in the tradition of Deleuze

The primary influence in any reading informing the *practices* of the subject is **the work of Bourdieu**. Bourdieu is often cited in the tradition of Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty (Pile and Thrift, 1995:31). In this interpretation everyday coping for individuals is seen to come through socialization into the public norm which "forms the clearing that governs people by determining what possibilities show up as making sense" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993:37 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:31). This 'clearing' or understanding of being is instituted, or passed along between individuals. An emphasis on the 'lived body' extends this ontology to the domain of social and historical analysis, 'being in the world'. Social practices as embodied skills that have a common style and are transported to various domains enables an account of how durable and transposable bodily dispositions are appropriated and 'projected' back into the situation without appeal to conscious and unconscious representations (Pile and Thrift, 1995:31).

"The life of the unconscious-cognitive life, the life of desire or perceptual life-is subtended by an intellectual one which projects round about us our past, or future, or human setting, or physical, ideological or moral situation, or rather which results in our being situated in these respects"(Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993 after Pile and Thrift, 1995:31). The social field is thus seen to be located in the domain of a set of objective relational configurations between social positions and based on certain forms of power, "each field prescribes its own particular values and possesses its own regulative principles which agents struggle to change or preserve" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:31). These values anchor the social field (or habitus), and enable agents to cope with unforeseen and changing situations in a "system of lasting transposable dispositions which integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perception, appreciations and actions and makes possible

the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (Bourdieu, 1977:95, in Pile and Thrift, 1995:31). Through providing a kind of embodied unconscious the "habitus reacts to the solicitations of the field in a highly coherent and systematic manner ... this description is a historically constituted, institutionally grounded, and thus socially variable generative matrix. It is an operator of rationality, but of a practical rationality inherent in a historical system of social relations and therefore transcends the individual. The strategies it 'manages' are systematic, yet *ad hoc* because they are 'triggered' by the encounter with a particular field. Habitus is creative, inventive, but within the limits of its structures, which are embodied sedimentation of the social structures which produced it" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992 after Pile and Thrift, 1995:32).

In short for the followers of Bourdieu, "our socially inculcated dispositions to act make the world solicit action, and our actions are a response to that solicitation" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993:38 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:32).

For de Certeau, Bourdieu omits tactics, "as if to put out their fire by certifying their amenability to socio-economic rationality or as if to mourn their death by declaring them unconscious" (de Certeau, 1984:59 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:32). de Certeau tries to surmount this by emphasising that space intervenes both in constituting tactics and in forming the 'other' (Pile and Thrift, 1995:32). For de Certeau, practices are always, spatial-symbolic and as such can be discerned via spatial-symbolic metaphors for example 'walking'. The movements of the body and the powers of speech jointly provide the possibility of converting one spatial signifier into another "the subject (walker) is able to call up transformative tactical resources. New places and meanings, 'acts and footsteps', 'meanings and directions' are produced and they produce, liberated spaces that can be occupied. A rich indetermination gives them ... the function of articulating a second poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. They insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement" (de Certeau, 1984:105 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:33).

For de Certeau (1984:115-116 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:33), space additionally intervenes in the production of narratives, "narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes. By means of a whole panoply of codes, ordered ways of proceeding and constraints, they regulate changes in space (or moves from one place to another), made by the stories in the form of places put in linear or interrelated series...more than that, when they are represented in descriptions or acted out by actors (a foreigner, a city dweller, a ghost), these places are linked together more or less tightly or easily by 'modalities' that specify the kind of passage leading from one to the other" For de Certeau thus, "every story is a travel story- as spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them, from the alphabet of spatial indication ('it's to the right', 'take a left'), the beginning of a story the rest of which is written in footsteps, to the daily 'news' ('guess who I met at the bakery'), television news reports ('Teheran: Khomeini is becoming increasingly isolated...'), legends (Cinderellas living in hovels), and stories that are told (memories and fiction of foreign lands or more or less distant times in the past). These narrated adventures simultaneously



producing geographies of actions and drifting into the common places of an order, do not merely constitute a 'supplement' to pedestrian enunciations and rhetoric. They are not satisfied with displacing the latter and transposing them into the field of language. In reality, they organize walks. They make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it"

**Social Constructionist Traditions** also provide a major influence on geographical interpretations of subjectivity though providing a situated view of human life as a 'third entity', existing between *us* and the *others around us*. Within this tradition, "contrast is drawn between cognitivist approaches to language, where texts, sentences and descriptions are taken as depictions of an externally given world, or as realizations of underlying cognitive descriptions of that world; and the discursive approach where versions of events, things, people and so on are studied and theorised primarily in terms of how these versions are constructed in an occasioned manner to accomplish social actions" (Edwards and Potter, 1992:8 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:34).

The 'third space' 'between' the individual psyche and the abstract system of principles which supposedly characterize the external world is the space of everyday social life, "a flow of responsive and relational activities that are joint, practical—moral and situated in character. This is the space of 'joint action' in which all other socially significant dimensions of interpersonal interaction with their associated modes of subjective or objective being, originate and are formed" (Shotter, 1993:7 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:34). Language is assigned a central role not as a communicative device for transmitting messages from the psyche or social structures, but as a rhetorical-responsive means of moving people or changing their perceptions. Language is formulated as a 'sensuous', communicational, conversational, dialogical means of responding to others, "all of what we might call the person-world, referential-representational, dimensions of interaction at the moment available to us as individuals- all the familiar ways we have of talking about ourselves about our world(s), and about their possible relationships which in the past we have taken as in some way primary- we can now claim must be seen as secondary and derived, as emerging out of the everyday, conversational background to our lives" (Shotter, 1993b:8 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:34)

4) Similar ideas about language as practice and practice as language are employed by sociologists in regards to **Actor-Network Theory**. The metaphor of a network is here used to consider the constitution of social agency, through employing a relational understanding between agents and the social world which is fragmented and is itself a set of more or less related pieces which are the result of endless attempts at ordering some (some relatively successful and others redundant).

The social is here an outcome of a, "recursive but incomplete performance of an unknowable number of intertwined orderings" (Law, 1994:101 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:35). Actor-network theory also includes things other than human agents like tools and texts with two results, "First, and as a matter of principle, actor-network theory recognises networks as collectivities of all manner of 'actors' which all contribute in their way to achievement (and attribution), of agency. In other words,

actor-network theorists argue for 'symmetrical anthropology' which is more likely to recognise (and value) the contribution of the non-human by it shifting our cultural classification of entities" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:36). In the tradition of Latour (1993 after Pile and Thrift, 1995) the human is refined as a 'mediator' or 'weaver', "all collectivities are different from one another in the way they divide up beings, in the properties they attribute to them, in the mobilization they consider acceptable. These differences constitute countless small divides; there is one now capable of recognising as such, one that has distinguished the official version of certain segments of certain collectivities for three centuries. This is our constitution which attributes the role of non-human to one set of entities, the role of citizens to another, the function of an arbitrary and powerless god to a third, and cuts off the work of meditation from that of purification" (Latour, 1993:107 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:36). Such an approach inevitably leaves 'the human' in a highly decentred position. Favoured dualities like nature-culture or, nature-society are replaced by new hybrid representations and new ethical considerations; "the human is in delegation itself, in the pass, in the sending, in the continuous exchange of forms. Of course, it is not a thing, but things are not things either. Of course it is not a machine, but anyone who has seen machines knows they are scarcely mechanical. Of course it is not a god, but what relation is there between the god above and the god below ... human nature is the set of its delegates and its representatives, its figures and its messages" (Latour, 1993:138 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:36).

For **Deleuze**, it is better to understand the subject in practice through proposing a theory of the self in which, the body becomes a "complex interplay of highly constituted social and symbolic forces. The body is not an essence, let alone a biological substance. It is a play of forces, a surface of intensities; pure simulacra without originals" (Braidotti, 1994:163 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:37). In so doing Deleuze brings to the fore, "the effective foundations of the thinking process. It is as if beyond/behind the propositional content of an idea there lay another category - the effective tone, level of intensity, desire or affirmation that conveys the idea and ultimately gives it its values, thinking, in other words, is to a very large extent unconscious, in that it expresses the desire to know, and this desire is that which cannot be adequately expressed in language, simply because it is that which sustains language" (Braidotti, 1994:165 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:37). The self thus becomes both disjunctive and nomadic, a highly variable speaking stance attuned to encounter. ✓

This approach provides an account of subjectivity, "which privileges intensity, multiplicity, productivity and discontinuity, one which is pitted against Lacan's vision of desire as lack, and one which hunts down all notions of inferiority, in search of an inside that lies deeper than any internal world" (Deleuze, 1993b:125 in Pile and Thrift, 1995:38). So, it is often argued that what is left is simply the classical post-structuralist subject without much subject, whilst others note that he is attempting to redefine 'human' around a new ethical constitution in which the subject becomes a sense of practice, "where the situated subject acts, and is acted upon, by numerous lines of force; where the self is a 'slow' inside space that is multiple, productive and



continuous; where encounters are both exterior and interior" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:38).

## **2.2.2 Placing the Subject and the Re-assertion of Space in Critical Cultural Theory**

### **2.2.2 (a) A space for locating the 'other'**

As was noted in section 2.2.1, experience and practice have become primary means through which to consider subjectivity. Having briefly considered the subject in practice, the question becomes how and where to place our reading of subjectivity (as constituted in practice) for the purposes of academic (re)presentation. The first consideration is political in accepting that we actively construct as opposed to reflecting the world through our intellectual practices, geographers need to become accountable to the authority or positioning of authorship (see Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993). Post-colonial, post-structural, feminist and critical cultural theorists amongst others have, over the past 10-15 years, increasingly exposed how our academic endeavours are themselves cultural, gendered, moral and political products reinforcing the contingency of authorship. We thus need to make visible the place(s) from which we (re)present subjectivity, alongside the spaces in which we locate those subjects.

Much of the initial impulse for this type of consideration is attributed to feminist theorists, who contributed to a revised politics of identity in two senses; firstly, by highlighting a concern for women and all 'others' as subject(ed) to Anglo-centric and patriarchal definitions of 'self' and secondly, through their attempts to search for forms of resistance to these processes (Rose, 1995). The importance of their work with regards to this research is the space it opens for the subaltern, women or 'other' to 'speak' or 'write' back from their own location and on their own terms. For feminist scholars interrogating relations of power that constitute identity reveals, for instance, that the qualities of rationality, consciousness and agency attributed to 'the subject' in western humanist traditions are actually the qualities attributed by those same traditions to masculinity. When 'the subject' becomes exposed as the (hu)man subject (Rose, 1995) then the difference between women (or the feminine), as it is imagined in phallogocentric discourse and women as subjects only partly and problematically positioned through the interpellations of women becomes problematic. Subjectivity becomes positioned as a political project in which, 'the subject' is located as multiply structured through a diverse range of shifting, mutually mediating and conflicting discursive interpellations of gender, class, 'race', sexuality and able bodiedness for instance. When these are exposed as problematic so to be the knowledges in which they are embedded and through which they are constituted. The production of knowledge (including knowledge about the subject), needs thus to be located within the relations of power knowledge from which they emanate.

Realizing the contingency of truth in this regard opens the production of knowledge to a wide range of critical interrogations. Exposing the need for alternative

approaches for interrogating the ideological representation of gender (or race), opens a space for considering what, for example, traditional male centred or 'white', discourse leaves out/makes unrepresentable. Rose (1995), describes this process as realizing an 'off-space' for hegemonic discourses (and institutions). A space 'elsewhere' in which alternative interpretations of discursive and social spaces can take place? In so doing an enunciative position is enabled which reconsiders subjectivities outside of the space(s) for opposition made allowable by 'oppressor system(s)', and sets up the need for more complex spatialities. ✓

"The connection between subjectivity and...spatiality is elaborated most fully by feminists is probably the mutually constitutive link between 'the master subject'- that is, white, heterosexual, middle-class masculinity- and the view from elsewhere from nowhere which hopes to construct a transparent space in which the whole world is visible and knowable" (Haraway, 1991 after Rose, 1995:335). The point being that women (even in opposition), often understand themselves in terms of the very system(s) and spaces they are seeking to interrogate. Trihn-Minh-ha (1990) explains the dominator position in terms of 'territorialized knowledge' which, "secures for the speaker a position of mastery: I am in the midst of a knowing, acquiring, deploying world- I appropriate, own and demarcate my sovereign territory as I advance- while the 'other' remains in the sphere of acquisition. Truth is the instrument of a mastery which I exert over areas of the unknown as I gather them within the fold of the known" (Trihn-Minh-ha, 1990:327 in Rose, 1995:335). This space depends on and reproduces a subject position that, "captures it's others as passive figures in the landscape and while constantly gazing at their otherness never specifies itself. In this scopic regime, subject positions and speculating positions merge through a specific spatiality: a space which is produced by, and reproduces the fantasy of the (potentially) all-seeing, all knowing humanist subject" (Rose, 1995:333). For the purposes of considering whiteness it is this space and these notions of subjectivity from which we need to move away. ✓

If particular imagined spatialities are said to be constitutive of specific subjectivities and, if identities are constituted in part by the kind of space through which they imagine themselves then, in terms of the above, spaces of resistance need to be urgently (re)considered. Resistance to identities shaped by oppressor systems implies that the off-space can not de-stabilize the master subject if it is utilizing a similar conception of spatiality but should rather utilize an enunciative strategy which portrays the existence of several spatialities, entangled, contradictory, shifting, when mapping the female subject of feminism. (Rose, 1995:336) (as will be discussed in section 2.3).

If the project for feminists is to de-stabilize phallogentric (or in this case racialized) systems of meaning, their everyday spaces and their subjectivities by implying 'a space' and 'a subject' beyond them, then theorists need to present some possible alternatives. Specifically, we need to consider the space in which it might be possible to map alternative subjectivities outside hegemonic conceptions of the (hu)man. Similarly, post-colonial theorists, consistently call for an alternate space from which the oppressed can 'speak back'. Articulations of post-colonial subjectivities have become attempts to, "produce new figurations, positive identities ✓

✓  
from which to speak which are neither faintly pencilled nor permanently etched in stone" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:18).

Post-colonial subjectivities recognize that subjects can be found 'in-between' domains of difference (for instance class, race or gender), or in their intersection. Additionally, attempts to find a 'third space' for the exchange of values, meanings and memories which are not necessarily collaborative or dialogical may be seen as a political ambition, resulting in often antagonistic or incommensurable spaces and subjectivities (Pile and Thrift, 1995). This is a way of representing difference not just as a set of pre-given and calcified ethnic or cultural traits but as a process of negotiation, in which self and experience are never totalised and always ongoing. Such an 'interstitial perspective', opens new notions of solidarity and community in which subjectivities may be proposed. Moreover, the liminal spaces of this 'interstitial subject' are not just literary allegories (or only metaphorical spaces), for locating and understanding subjectivities, but are "quite clearly related to borders and frontiers, to migrations and diasporas, to the colonised, to political refugees and to consequent refiguring of notions of 'home' and 'nation'. In other words, as the 'unhomely' becomes the norm, replacing the sovereignty of national cultures, or even the universalism of a human culture, so new subjectivities are needed" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:18). ✓

#### ✓ 2.2.2 (b) Spatial enquiry as a lens for illuminating the contemporary

It is not only in attempts to articulate subjectivities that space, as simultaneously metaphor and locale, is being employed as a means to locate alternative understandings. Social inquiry is widely embracing spatial as opposed to temporal lexicons in order to interrogate the complexity of the dominant organizing principles of social and cultural life. Geographers have received widespread criticism for their lack of engagement with this newly emerging spatial consciousness and its role in unravelling the complexities of the contemporary. Primarily criticism has been levelled on two grounds;

- with regards to the unproblematic use of spatial metaphors in locating identity (as introduced above and as will be discussed in section 2.3)
- with regards to poor theorization of the concept of space itself by critical thinkers ie geographers are accused of still relying on a unitary notion of abstract/real space

Using 'space' as a means to both interpret our sensibilities and as a means to interpret our collective abstract and material interactions has resulted in a number of new understandings of space. For Jameson (1991), the schizophrenia that marks our age, signals an epoch in which "old loyalties of class or gender or race interrupt, disrupt, recombine, fuse. No one is quite sure of the ground on which they stand, which direction they are facing, or where they are going" (Jameson, 1991 after Keith and Pile, 1993:3). Increasingly there is thus a need to find the means to theorize power not through single dimensions of oppression (race, gender, class), but rather in terms of the relations between them. The recognition of the need for more complex understandings beyond 'postmodern paralysis' calls for "a new kind

of spatial imagination capable of confronting the past in a new way and reading its less tangible secrets off the template of its spatial structures-body, cosmos, city, as all those marked the more intangible organization of cultural and libidinal economies and linguistic forms" (Jameson, 1991:364-365 in Keith and Pile, 1993:4). Soja (1989 after Keith and Pile, 1993) similarly notes that space may be a template from which the secrets of reality can be read, but sees space as less passive and undialectical and thus locates his argument on a different terrain. For Jameson (1991) space is a process of distance (allowing the individual to, be mapped in terms of the spatial specificity of their 'subject position' and in so doing uncover the hidden human geography of power), whereas Soja (1989) treats distance "as a dialectic between separation and a desire to be close. This leaves the question of the individuals occupation of subject positions in a very different conceptual place" (Keith and Pile, 1993:4). Space is thus seen as much more dynamic and is moreover seen in itself to be filled with politics and ideology (and no longer an innocent backdrop to social activity), "we must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology" (Soja, 1989:6 in Keith and Pile, 1993:4).

For Soja, (1989:124 in Keith and Pile, 1993:4), social theory is presently suffering from a dual illusion in its misrecognition of space;

- **The illusion of opaqueness;** in this illusion space is seen as fixed, dead and undialectical. The deeper social origins of spatiality and, its production and reproduction in/through power relations and ideology, are neglected and left unacknowledged.
- **The illusion of transparency;** the illusion referred to here dematerializes space. Space becomes an abstraction and a supposedly 'real' representation of concrete forms. Spatiality is reduced to a mental construct and social space folds into mental space and away from material social realities.

However, for hooks (1991), positions both similar to Jameson's (1991) and Soja's (1989) hold inherent political dangers, "for those who have no place that can safely be called home there must be a struggle for a place to be. Her evocation of margins is simultaneously real and metaphorical- it defines an alternative spatiality: radical openness. A different sense of place is being theorized, no longer passive, no longer fixed, no longer undialectical because disruptive features interrupt any tendency to see once more open space as the passive receptacle for any social process that cares to fill it - but still, in a very real sense is about location and locatedness" (hooks, 1991 after Keith and Pile, 1993:5).

This argument highlights a need for theorists to consider new spaces in which identity politics can challenge dominant discourses of power (and identification). Such a (re)interpretation of spatiality requires that critical geographers become aware of two myths in their thinking (Keith and Pile, 1993);

(1) The myth of spatial immanence; that is that there is a singular true reading of any specific landscape involved in the mediation of identity.

(2) The fallacy of spatial relativism; here it is argued that it is individualistic to suggest that every specific reading of a landscape is either of equal value or equal validity.

What we need is thus a position which acknowledges that, "simultaneously present in any landscape are multiple enunciations of distinct forms of space- and that these may be reconnected to the process of re-visioning and re-memembering the spatialities of counter hegemonic spatial practice" (Keith and Pile, 1993:6). We need an approach which notes that the social and the spatial are inextricably linked and that, "society and space are simultaneously realized by thinking, feeling, doing individuals and also to conjure up the many different conditions in which such realizations are experienced by thinking, feeling, doing subjects" (Keith and Pile, 1993:6).

The myth of spatial immanence is usually associated with economic based cultural superstructure analysis (for example some post-structuralist work), in which one form of spatiality is seen to multiply, structure landscapes and reflect the multifaceted images of capital. In such investigations, space is given a singular imminent meaning as opposed to acknowledging the multitude of sources of spatiality. The fallacy of spatial relativism is usually associated with a search for order through unravelling the cultural facade as outlined above and is, "explicitly or implicitly, prompted by a fear that if every individual reading of landscape form is equally true, then geographical analysis falls prey to cultural relativism- in other words that *anything goes*" (Keith and Pile, 1993:8). In adopting critical geographies sensitive to the complexity of spatiality it is this fallacy that often inhibits investigation.

The writing of Walter Benjamin provides an example of potential for overcoming this fear. Through disparate fragments of prose and in aestheticizing the spaces of the city Benjamin creates not just a location or grid reference but, "a way of life, a metaphoric allusion to a form of sensibility, a Proustian metonym, an invocation of a way of seeing, a nodal point in a field of vision that condenses sets of contradictory meanings. It is all these things and more. And none of them is identical. Each is closely related to most of the others but each evokes a slightly different form of spatiality" (Keith and Pile, 1993:8). In so doing successfully intertwining experience, knowledge and spatiality. In celebrating the conflation of the sites of the urban and the sight of the city, "places are known through this sensibility, but places also in turn constitute the sentient individual" (Keith and Pile, 1993:9). Through allowing space to be simultaneously ambiguous, ambivalent and multifaceted and identity as both produced and expressed in relation those spaces, "the spaces of Benjamin's Paris and Berlin are both real and metaphorical simultaneously. They are not just a personal view but then they are not the true representation of the city or society either. Too often used as a residual descriptive container that defines the empirical, these spatialities are instead to be understood as a constitutive element of the social. Neither are these spaces ethically rudderless" (Keith and Pile, 1993:9).

If geographers are to successfully interrogate subjectivity and/or the contemporary through the lexicon of space whilst avoiding spatial relativism, we need, "a more complex relationship between the so-called real and so-called metaphorical : one does not merely cover the other; one is not more real than the other... spatialities draw on a relationship between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic that is not beyond truth and falsity, but is different from it" (Keith and Pile, 1993:9). The dependency of truth claims, such as notions of true-false, real-metaphorical, authentic-inauthentic, need thus to be constantly interrogated. Whatever the particularities of our particular invocation of spatiality, a spatialized language is still being deployed. Practically, people mobilize around and their practices and experiences are moulded by different imagined geographies. We need an approach and (re)presentation that accommodates the multi-layered and multi-faceted nature of each of the space(s) of different social 'actors'. If we are to negotiate a reflexive geography of whiteness, how should we conceive of the space of that whiteness and that whiteness in space?


### **2.2.2 (c) An alternative spatiality**

According to Keith and Pile (1993), everyday discourse is routinely spatiality marked, but this is often hidden because, "discourses ostensibly marked with their spatiality are conventionally assumed to be narrow-minded, bounded- coming complete with a self-confessed specificity that, it is frequently assumed, restricts their relevance working within common sense understandings of knowledge, the markings of spatiality can become a stigma of parochialism" (Keith and Pile, 1993:6). This rhetorical route is said to have created narratives of identity formation which have, "frequently spoken to an interplay of commonality and difference that erases spatiality through a homogenization of the specific-not a process of *misrepresentation* through over-generalization but instead a naturalization of particular experiences within a frequently implicit spatial frame of reference. Typically, this frame of reference operates at a higher level of generalization, such as the silent evocation of (national) societies or the reified subject positions of either post-colonial subjection or Eurocentric domination" (Keith and Pile, 1993:16).

This is said to be part of de Certeau's point when he argues that "normative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes" or that "every story is a travel story- a social practice" (de Certeau, 1984:115 in Keith and Pile, 1993:16). "This 'spatialized syntax' is not always obvious, even if it is invariably present (if only as an absence)", "Just as all knowledge on close inspection is both empowered and restrained by its situated operation, all narratives can be unpacked to reveal the frequently implicit spatialities that they evoke, varying from the mundane to the contradictory" (Keith and Pile, 1993:16). For example, "particular realizations of colonial ideology may have been inscribed in locally specific ideologies of empire; these underscored the definitions of 'self' and 'other' that lay at the heart of spatially diverse and contradictory understandings of nation, whiteness, power, subjection, common wealth; and which were installed at the heart of the imperial metropolis" (Hall, 1992 after Keith and Pile, 1993:17).




What I am suggesting is that a geography sensitive to the politics of (re)presenting whiteness needs a methodology which makes specific and problematises the spaces inherent to a politics of identity. In imagining how such an approach might look Gilroy's (1991), imagined geographies of the 'black' diaspora invoke a useful conception of space suggested by their ability to enact a strategic double-take on the recurrent tensions of a politics of identity (Gilroy, 1991 after Keith and Pile, 1993). Gilroy's (1991) project appears to work on both "narrative and conceptual levels, with the notion of an imagined spatiality of diasporic politics serving to mediate these tensions. At the level of a historical narrative, the project stresses the international links between 'black' intellectuals throughout the last 100 years and more; 'black' diasporic intellectual forms intermingled both within a diasporic international context and with western thought. Black nationalism is tied to Hegelian thought, just as Pan-Africanism resonates in parallel struggles across and beyond the diaspora" (Gilroy, 1991 after Keith and Pile, 1993:17).



"The diaspora invokes an imagined geography, a spatiality that draws on connections across oceans and continents and yet unifies Black experience inside a shared territory. This experience is a source of difference and yet does not legitimate the elevation of 'the black experience' to an incommunicable cultural essence" (Keith and Pile, 1993:18). This is not the spatialization of black consciousness that is not controlled by those that would police black cultural expression in the name of their own particular history or priorities. Neither is the space of the diaspora the party ground for the celebration of "the saturnalia which attends the dissolution of the essential black subject" (Gilroy, 1991 after Keith and Pile, 1993:18). It might be that Gilroy is looking for a middle ground between these two extremes. In this way diaspora is invoked as a communal space simultaneously inside and outside the West. The outcome of such positioning allows a kind of cultural fusion; "a black sensibility which for Gilroy has the power to conflate ethics, aesthetics culture and politics by the creation of subversive new public spaces in seemingly the least propitious of circumstances. It is in such spaces that even in Victorian England touring black musicians can subvert imperial ideologies and speak to the experiences of the white working class in the 19th century as much as their heirs provide the diasporic syncretisms of music forms that inform the cultures of late 20th century cosmopolitanism. In short, the spatiality of the diaspora is the ground on which momentary and ever shifting lines are drawn between inside and outside, oppressor and oppressed, the same and other" (Gilroy, 1987 after Keith and Pile, 1993:18).

Here interconnection as much as distinction is stressed producing a space in which identities are momentarily authenticated, in a moment called *arbitrary closure*, "Rejecting both Essentialised and depthless representations of black identity Gilroy's diaspora is the spatiality which contingently mediates Black authority, in the explicit knowledge that an imagined space of diasporic identity is located within global systems that not only make such claims counter specific, but also make communication through their myriad forms of cultural syncretisms inevitable" (Keith and Pile, 1993:18)





What is particularly relevant is that, "such formulations rely on a cultural hybridity through which political codes of difference are crossed and transgressed through the processes of syncretism rooted in simultaneously imaginary and real spatialities" (Keith and Pile, 1993:19). The politics of diaspora thus conceived, finds an epistemological equivalent for Pile and Thrift (1995) in the way social science has legitimated or discredited 'ethnically' specific perspectives in the productions of knowledge about race relations. These perspectives (often described as 'local knowledges') have at times drawn respectability in postmodern critique of the possibilities of meta-narrative certainty. Yet possible slippage into ethnic essentialism and cultural relativism inherent within such critique outlines tensions which diaspora sidesteps. Keith and Pile (1993), feel that Gilroy's diaspora could be constructively supplemented by turning to the space(s) of Bhaba's (1992) post-colonial subjects and discourse.

For Bhaba (1992) post-colonial discourse is marked by the incommensurability of different articulations of identity. Bhaba celebrates the, "conflictual articulation of meaning and place, the partial- the double identifications of race, gender, class, generation at their point of unfamiliarity, even incommensurability" (Bhaba, 1992:60 in Keith and Pile 1993:19). Through focussing on a moment of culture caught in a contingency in *between* a plurality of practices which, although different occupy the same space of adjudication and articulation, Bhaba (1992) is able to investigate a liminal form of cultural identification in which different spatialities are simultaneously realized. Post-colonial realities in this way produce a type of co-presence articulating a paradox akin to Fanon's ('Black' man's souls being a 'white' man's artefact). This is not to say that post-colonial identities are necessarily controlled by colonial legacy but that "discourses of racialization invoke different, frequently irrevocable identities" (Keith and Pile, 1993:19) The simultaneous presence of multiple spatialities provide a medium through which such contradictions are subsumed or naturalized suggesting that, "epistemological problems associated with situated knowledges may in part be resolved by unpacking the spatialities that they so unproblematically evoke ... just as Gilroy's identity formation is tied to the imagined geography of diaspora, the epistemological incommensurability with which Bhaba is concerned is linked to the liminal spaces on which his analysis rests. Politically, there is a reactionary vocabulary of both the identity politics of place and a spatialized politics of identity grounded in particular notions of space. It is the rhetoric of origins, of exclusion, of boundary making, of invasion and succession, of purity and contamination; the glossary of ethnic cleansing. But there are also more progressive formulations that become meaningless deprived of the metaphors of spatiality. Debates around territorialized and diasporic politics and political authority are just two instances where opposing the reactionary and prompting the progressive is possible only if the spatializations on which they rest are unpacked and made explicit. Such spatialities are necessarily always the source of both ethical optimism and political caution" (Keith and Pile, 1993:19-20) (see section 2.3).

If critical geographers are to evoke the spatial as simultaneously real and imaginary and wish to highlight the multiplicity of spatialities inherent in different subject positions, then, the metaphorical and real cannot belong to separate worlds. The

symbolic and literal need to become understood as constitutive of one another. Meaning is considered, "not just *marked* but also in part constituted by the spaces of representation in which it is articulated. These spaces of representation subvert the representation of spaces so that the ground we stand on becomes a mongrel hybrid of spatialities; at once a metaphor and a speaking position, a place of certainty and a burden of humanity, sometimes all of them incommensurably" (Keith and Pile, 1993:23).

If the metaphorical and real may no longer be separated then 'space' becomes highly problematic for critical geographers incorporating spatiality into their agendas. The second part of this chapter thus focuses on re-considering 'space'. Before turning to space *per se*, I wish to take a closer look at how our relationship(s) to place inform our identities before highlighting some problems associated with the unproblematic employment of spatial metaphors in locating identities and mapping cultural analysis.

### **2.2.3 Place and Identity**

Typically 'place' for geographers is 'space' which has been 'claimed' (by emotion, feeling or memory for example), and is seen as central to creating and sustaining a sense of self. When place is (re)considered as a dynamic arena (as opposed to a fixed, empty, undialectical background or container for action), both constituting and constitutive of the social, then understanding the locatedness of the subject becomes a difficult task (as highlighted above). In what way then can we consider the relationship between subjectivity and spatiality (a relationship which has often been neglected by critical social theorists)? One means in which we can consider this relationship is through the concept of 'place-identity' (as it is named by social psychologists). For Dixon and Durrheim (2000), processes of creating, sustaining and (re)presenting a coherent sense of 'self' are based on a sense of belonging or attachment to place, and that it is through these attachments in turn that social, cultural and biological definitions and cognitions of place are built (a process akin to Soja's (1989) socio-spatial dialectic). "In this conception, human actors are cast as imaginative users of their environments, agents who are able to appropriate physical contexts in order to create, here, a space of detachment and rootedness, a space of being" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:29).

It is not the individualistic dimensions of place identity in the process of self-definition that is here important but rather, the nature of collectively determined dimensions of attachments to place or relations between persons, identities and material settings. These can be made visible by looking at the collectively determined dimensions of attachment to place through focussing on the discursive strategies, rhetoric and, ideology, of place-identity. Such an approach sees place-identity not as a predominantly cognitive structure (and a highly contextualized form of individual identification forged through individual engagements with material contexts) located in the minds of individuals, but it is rather "something that people create together through talk: a social construction that allows them to make sense of their connectivity to place and guide their actions and projects accordingly. One advantage of this approach is that it recovers the irreducibly social origins of place

identification. Not only does it acknowledge the relevance of places to their collective senses of self, but it also highlights, the collective practices through which specific place identities are formed, reproduced and modified" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:32).

In this formulation, language becomes the binding force between people and place, "it is through language that everyday experiences of self-in-place form and mutate; moreover, it is through language that places themselves are imaginatively constituted in ways that carry implications for 'who we are' (or who we claim to be)" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:32). As such that 'the language of place' is more than a medium for representing material/external environments or revealing subjective sense(s) of belonging (see 2.4) instead "as a symbolic resource, constructions of place act as symbolic resources orientated to the performance of a range of social actions such as blaming, justifying, derogating, excusing, excluding and all of the other things people do with words" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:33). In this sense, constructions of place-identity speak of the *grounds of identity* in a double sense. (1) They imply a sense of belonging to places and (2) they act as "a rhetorical warrant through which particular social practices and relations are legitimated" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:33). Such an approach enables us to map the variety of ways in which discursively locating the self may fulfil a variety of social and rhetorical functions.

When we displace place(s), as innocent, depoliticized arenas in which people live and act then "politically there is a reactionary vocabulary of both identity politics of place and the spatialized politics of identity grounded in particular notions space" (Keith and Pile in Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:33). The apparent 'transparency' of notions of place and the self evident identities appear to uphold become precisely why a critical perspective to place should be adopted, "one might say that the rhetorical traditions through people locate their selves and others are also *ideological* traditions that sustain relations of domination" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000 after Billig, 1995:87-91).

For instance, the rhetorical traditions of locating self through the space of 'the nation' provides an example of how a concept such as nationalism, "cannot be understood only through its passionate expressions: its quieter moments must be considered too. As a 'banal' construction, it relies upon seemingly trivial gestures, including deictic references to the national homeland (eg, 'this country'). In terms of this spatial rhetoric replayed daily in the mass media, we are positioned within a particular type of geopolitical system, its dangerous pattern appearing harmlessly homely" (Billig, 1995:127 in Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:33). Nationalism here provides an example of how rhetorical traditions of locating self and other are also ideological traditions of domination.


Similarly, Rose (1996 after Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:34), contends that, "nationality is often represented so as to disconnect certain groups from the national character, a process facilitated by the images of place. The historical association between white Englishness and the rural landscapes of the shires is a case in point. Not only has this association concealed how much settings have

thrived upon the labour of the very people they exclude, it has also perpetuated the idea that black citizens of England belong to urban areas, notably in 'degraded' areas of the inner city". For Dixon and Durrheim (after Rose, 1996 and Shields, 1991), the politics of place and identity can be extended if we consider how "collective identities are typically fashioned through symbolic contrasts between 'our space' and 'their space' expressed in terms of 'paradigmatic oppositions' such as marginal/central, primitive/civilised or first/third world" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:34). A discursive approach to place identity engage(s) public dialogue in order to 'read' how discourses of place and identity are (re)produced, rendering insight into how discourses of place identity shape the lived experiences of and practices in space.

How is place-identity used to speak about social or political solidarity? How is 'identity' invoked in binding individual agents into groups that become social actors attached to place? How do specific ideas of located ethnic, racialized, national or civic identities come into play? How does a sense of belonging and identity interact and with what consequences? Gilroy (2000) uses the rhetoric of attachment to place as a means to consider the relationship between identity, social/political solidarity and belonging. Specifically Gilroy (2000) considers how ideas of ethnic, racialized, national or civic identities are invoked. For example contemporary discourse around national identity illustrates the malleability of identity forged on nationalist sentiment. Specifically, I have chosen to (re)present Gilroy's (2000) consideration of president Nelson Mandela's inauguration speech to illustrate the above.


*"Each one of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous Jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld... Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal...the spiritual and physical oneness we all share with this common homeland explains the depth of pain we all carried in our hearts as we saw our country tear itself apart in a terrible conflict"* (Nelson Mandela: May 1995 in Gilroy,2000:111).

"Working to produce an alternative content for the new nonracial, postracial or perhaps antiracial political identity that might draw together the citizenry of the reborn country on a new basis beyond the grasp of racializing codes and fantasies of favoured life as a people chosen by God, President Mandela turned to the land-common ground- beneath the feet of his diverse, unified, and mutually suspicious audience. Significantly, he spoke not only of the soil but of the beauty of the country and offered the idea of a common relationship to both the cultivated and natural beauty of the land as elements of a new beginning" (Gilroy, 2000:111). For Mandela, a truly democratic consciousness lay in transforming the relationship between the body and the environment. It was in this new relationship that he believed the irrelevancies of apartheid's redundant social hierarchies would be transcended (Gilroy, 2000). For Gilroy (2000), what is significant is that, "territory and indeed nature itself are being engaged as a means to define citizenship and the forms of rootedness that compose national solidarity and cohesion. President Mandela's words were powerful because they work with the organicity that nature has bequeathed to modern ideas of culture. In that blur, Mandela constructed an



ecological account of the relationship between shared humanity, common citizenship, place and identity. The speech subverted traditional assumptions with its implication that apartheid was a brutal violation of nature that could be repaired only if people were prepared to pay heed to the oneness established by their connection to the beautiful environment they share and hold in common "stewardship" (Gilroy, 2000:111).

This is a dangerous position given the arguments that have thus far been presented in this research. What alternatives are there to this type of rooted or grounded sense of belongingness or identification? What might such an approach look like? What might be gained if the relationship between identity and claims to soil, roots and territory was suspended? Gilroy (2000:111) notes that, "the idea of movement can provide an alternative to the sedentary poetics of either soil or blood. Both communicative technology and older patterns of itinerancy ignored by the human sciences can be used to articulate placeless imaginings of identity as well as new bases for solidarity and synchronized action"



As noted earlier, Gilroy (2000) considers the workings of this 'new solidarity' through the space of the deterritorialized history of the modern African diaspora in the western hemisphere. Diaspora provides insight into the workings of identity and identification through considering the effects of disjunction, relocation, displacement and forced transition between cultural codes, habitats, language and religion, "transcultural mixture alerts us not only to the syncretic complexities of language, culture and everyday modern life in the torrid areas where racial slavery was practised, but also to the purity defying metamorphoses of individual identity in the 'contact-zones' of an imperial metropolis. Even under those conditions, identity was the compound result of many accreditations. Its protean constitution did not defer to the scripts of ethnic, national, racial, or cultural absolutism" (Gilroy, 2000:117).

For Gilroy (2000) our complex heterocultural life has long been represented as monochromatic. Differences of gender, social status, 'race' and caste have all become body-coded homogenized orderings of identification. These ideas of essential and absolute identity are thought to be grounded in the power of roots and rootedness and are forged in the connection between the domains of nature and culture in part naturalized through place and resulting in forms of belongingness which appear natural rather than social phenomena. "Diaspora provides a means to re-assess essential or absolute identity in this example precisely because it is incompatible with that type of nationalist and raciological thinking" (Gilroy, 2000:125). Diaspora thus provides a means to elaborate on a form of identification that takes theory beyond the dualism of genealogy and geography. Through challenging the dominant narratives of nationality by valorizing sub and supranational kinship and allowing for a more ambivalent relationship toward national encampments. "By embracing diaspora, theories of identity turn instead toward contingency, indeterminacy, and conflict. With the idea of valuing diaspora more highly than coercive unanimity of the nation, the concept becomes explicitly antinational... diaspora can be used to instantiate a 'chaotic' model in which shifting 'strange actors' are the only visible point of fragile stability amid social and cultural turbulence" (Gilroy, 2000:128). Diaspora is thus, "an outer-national term which

contributes to the analysis of intercultural and transcultural processes and forms" (Gilroy, 2000:123). In so doing the concept of space is itself transformed when seen for instance in terms of the "ex-centric communicative circuitry that has enabled dispersed populations to converse, interact, and more recently even to synchronize significant elements of their social and cultural lives" (Gilroy, 2000:129). Gilroy (2000) proceeds to reiterate that, "neither the mechanistic essentialism that is too squeamish to acknowledge the possibility of difference with sameness nor the lazy alternative that animates the supposedly strategic variety of essentialism can supply keys to the untidy workings of diaspora identities" (Gilroy, 2000:129). They remain chronically impure forms.

In short, "the idea of diaspora offers a ready alternative to the stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging. It rejects the popular image of natural nations spontaneously endowed with self-consciousness, tidily composed of uniform families: those interchangeable collections of ordered bodies that express and reproduce absolutely distinctive cultures as well as perfectly formed heterosexual pairings. As an alternative to the metaphysics of 'race', nation and bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that problematises the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location, and consciousness. It destroys the naive invocation of common memory as the basis of particularity in a similar fashion by drawing attention to the contingent political dynamics of commemoration" (Gilroy, 2000:123). More generally, diaspora indicates a shift in focus of enquiry away from notions of fixed identity and places emphasis rather on processes of identification. This is a useful concept given the range of identification both in Africa and 'the west' through which 'white' South Africans come to frame themselves. Before concluding the first part of this chapter, I wish to briefly (re)consider the role of spatial metaphor in locating an understanding of the self and identity.

### **2.3 (Dis)placing Spatial Metaphor**

"In social theory and literary criticism, spatial metaphors have become a predominant means by which social theory is understood. Theoretical spaces have been 'explored', 'mapped', 'chartered', 'contested', 'colonized', 'decolonized', and every one seems to be 'travelling'. But, perhaps surprisingly, there has been little, if any, attempt to examine the different implications of material and metaphorical space. Metaphorical concepts and uses of 'space' have evolved quite independently from materialist treatments of space, and many of the latter are cast in ways that suggest equal ignorance of the productive entailments of spatial metaphors" (Smith and Katz, 1993:68).

It is Smith and Katz's (1993), contention that popular spatial metaphors such as 'positionality', 'locality', 'grounding', 'displacement', 'territory', 'nomadism' and so forth require critical scrutiny, "the appeal of these spatial metaphors lies precisely in the new meanings they impart, but it is increasingly evident that these metaphors depend overwhelmingly on a very specific and contested conception of space and that they embody often unintended political consequences" (Smith and



Katz,1993:68). At the very least what is needed is a critical awareness of the translations connecting material and metaphorical space. Their position does not represent an argument against metaphor (for metaphor is inseparable from the generation of meaning, from language and thought), rather it is a call to critically scrutinize the spatial metaphors we employ and the way(s) in which we employ them. Geographers often appropriate the language of space and social metaphor from other social disciplines without considering the implications of this discourse, in terms of their own critical considerations. Metaphors have in recent times become particularly popular with cultural geographies because they (1) provide a location from which to speak and (2) recognize the relativity of location in geographic and social terms. For Smith and Katz (1993), the spatial metaphors commonly used in considering the politics of identity can be divided into three broad groups. (Although these are not directly relevant to this research, they are integral to a reflexive understanding of space and subjectivity)

#### **(a) Metaphors of Location, Positionality and Locality**

Notions of subject position, social location and locality borrow from the concreteness of spatial definition to impose some order on the chaotic melange of social difference and social relations.

- Social Location- gives differentiated social subjects a place to stand, rendering them at least visible in their differences
- Subject Position- takes up the question standpoint and the relativity of social location as a place of seeing and acting. Different social actors (by virtue of their distinctive identities) are particularly located *vis-a-vis* other actors, and therefore enjoy a distinctive perspective from which they construct different social meanings
- Locality- suggests social location is multi-dimensional and less an individual experience as a collective engagement of mutually implicated identities. (Smith and Katz, 1993)



### **(b) Metaphors of Mapping**

The mapping metaphor functions to produce a scaled representation of a pre-given space. Presently theories, projects, concepts and differences are all being 'mapped'. In as far as mapping involves exploration, selection, definition, generalization and translation of data, it assumes a range of social cum representational powers. Although geographers acknowledge maps are strategic social constructions class, race, gender are all metaphorically mapped in contemporary geographical discourse. (Smith and Katz, 1993).

### **(c) Metaphors of Colonization and Decolonization**

Metaphors of colonization and decolonization are deployed to convey the dynamics of social domination in the everyday lives, thoughts and practices of social groups and historical subjects. Colonization is predicated on the deliberate, physical, cultural and symbolic appropriation of space, and implies re-scripting territorial incursion as; an invasion and insidious habitation of the social and physical space of 'the oppressed' by 'oppressors'. Decolonization becomes a metaphor for the process(s) of recognizing and dislodging dominant ideas, assumptions and ideologies as externally imposed. (Smith and Katz, 1993).

These three groups of spatial metaphors are widely employed in contemporary social, political and especially cultural and literary discourse. Their character may be traced according to Smith and Katz (1993) to two sets of influences. The first being the French structuralist and Post-structuralist schools exemplified by the work of Althusser and Foucault and the second being the lack of real recent engagement with spatial discourse especially in the English speaking world.

"History for Althusser, was a 'process without a subject' and, into the vacuum of a missing subject he inserted an array of performing spatial metaphors" (Smith and Katz 1993:71). His structuralist epistemology was equally spatial and metaphorical. Knowledge was rendered diagrammatically as a structure of connected 'levels' and spatial metaphors were specifically used to convey the social structure of capitalism. Following on from this tradition, Foucault used spatial metaphors to express; "the relations that are possible between power and knowledge. Once knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the pressures by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power" (Foucault, 1980:69 in Smith and Katz, 1993:72). For Smith and Katz (1993), "Foucault persistently explored the connections between knowledge, power and spatiality, and maintained that the transition from temporal to spatial metaphors enabled a discursive shift from the realm of individual consciousness to wider 'relations of power' as constitutive of social meaning. For Foucault, the exercise of social power through the state, the other social institutions and the exercise of power inherent in social oppression- this web of social power is modelled as a spatial field described by spatial strategies and geo-strategic interests" (Smith and Katz, 1993:73). This is not to say that he was not aware of the "devaluation of space in intellectual discourse, the supposed deadness, fixity and immobility of space" (Smith and Katz, 1993:73), which can result from an over-reliance on spatial metaphor (despite the fecundity of spatial metaphor for expressing relations of power). But, the pervasive substitution of

spatial metaphor for social structure, institution and situation in this tradition continues to elide the agency through which social space and social relations are produced. (Instead placing these as the outcome of some juridical- political forces) (Smith and Katz, 1993). Thus, "far from enlivening a spatial discourse, Foucault invariably occludes the actual spatial source of such metaphors as domain, field, region, even territory or imperialism, thereby exercising the possibility of examining the mutual translations between geographical and metaphorical space. In Foucauldian terms, the 'space' between material and metaphorical space is radically denied, and the collapse of this distinction is marked by a deeply ambivalent dismissal cum retention of geographical space" (Smith and Katz, 1993:73). Moreover, this type of approach "fails to recognize how social agents produce space and socio-spatial relations within and against the economic, political and juridical imposition of produced space and spaces" (Smith and Katz, 1993:74). Additionally, Foucault's concern for the politics of the oppressed disguises a privileging of the intellectual (indeed western intellectual), "Foucault is a brilliant thinker of power-in-spacing, but the awareness of the topographical re-inscription of imperialism does not inform his presuppositions ... the clinic, the asylum, the prison, the university [for Foucault] all seem to be screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism" (Spivak, 1988:292 in Smith and Katz, 1993:74).

In short, most approaches to space in critical social theory (influenced by the above traditions) are unable to effectively examine mutual translations of geographical and metaphorical space. Moreover, despite advances in conceptualizing space in other disciplines (most notably art and physics), geography has failed to develop adequate socio-spatial concepts, "If the discipline of geography has been at the forefront of the recent reassertion of space, it was also a central contributor to the death of space" (Smith and Katz, 1993:74). Until recently, "rather than contribute to these scientific and cultural developments, geographers clung to a traditional (Newtonian) conception of absolute space - space as a field or container, describable by two-or-three dimensional metric co-ordinates" (Smith and Katz, 1993:74). Their research emphasized descriptive studies of social and natural forms located in absolute space and social processes were rarely considered in any serious way. When they did enter discussion, "social processes were conceived as connecting pre-existing spaces or as happening 'in' or 'across' an equally given spatial field. Geographers recoiled from engaging emerging social theory ... and by the middle of the century they had become increasingly isolated from other social sciences" (Smith and Katz, 1993:74-75).

Spatial metaphors are thus problematic (in both political and philosophical terms), mostly in their presumption that space is not. The problem lies not with spatial metaphors *per se*, but with metaphors that depend on a specific representation of space, abstract space (space as field or container, a co-ordinate system of discrete mutually exclusive locations). Abstract space has been hegemonic spatial understanding since the 17<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century (depending on theoretical orientation), when it was established by philosophies and scientists at the time (such as Newton, Descartes and Kant), and became increasingly dominant with, "the emergence of capitalist social relations in Europe [which] brought a very specific set of social and

political shifts that established absolute space as the premise of hegemonic social practices. The inauguration of private property as the general basis of the social economy, and the division of land into privately held and precisely demarcated plots; the juridical assumption of the individual body as the basic social unit; the progressive outward expansion of European hegemony through the conquest, colonization and defence of new territories; the division of global space into mutually exclusive nation-states on the basis of some presumed internal homogeneity of culture (albeit a division brought with economic motivation and through military force): these and other shifts marked the emerging space economy of capitalism from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards and represented a powerful enactment of absolute space as the geographical basis for social intercourse" (Smith and Katz, 1993:75).

The space of our common sense today is directly related to this abstract space. Thus, despite, "its apparently abstract neutrality, absolute space is politically charged in its contemporary implications as much as in its historical origins" (Smith and Katz, 1993:76) and it is a conception of space appropriate for social domination. It is not space *per se* that expresses power but the naturalized absolute conception of space. Nevertheless spatial metaphors ground our understandings of the subject and identity and can be powerful tools.

For Rich, how 'we' can see the world politically from 'our' multiple social perspectives provides a good example of an appropriate use of spatial metaphor. In looking at gendered social relations she suggests a need for a spatially scaled sense of social identity that begins to consider the political geography of woman's bodies, as a location from which to speak with authority as woman. The metaphor of location is here said to accomplish two interrelated political shifts. It quite literally renders Rich visible, giving her a specific place to stand (as an inclusionary rather than exclusionary metaphor opening a space for all women to become visible as differently constituted social actors young, old, lesbian etc). Secondly, by returning to the scale of her self, Rich "challenges the presumed homogeneity of identities: 'the meaning of my whiteness' she says, is a point of location for which I need to take responsibility? (Rich, undated after Smith and Katz, 1993:77). In so doing there is the recognition of the relativity of location in geographical come social terms (Smith and Katz, 1993:77). This success in disrupting the imposed social mapping of identities is dependent not simply on claiming a location for women, but "on questioning the very processes through which the base map of different locations is drawn and through recognizing that the relationality of social action is inextricably imbricated with the relationality of geographical location. Further, the relationality of location applies not just to us versus them, one group *vis-avis* another, but inevitably implies a redefinition of ourselves, of the group" (Rich, undated after Smith and Katz, 1993:77).

This provides an example of maintaining the relationality of social identity without slipping into formless relativism, whilst simultaneously disarranging the received fixity of social and geographic location. Often critical theorists draw only upon the first part of this shift and seldom question the absoluteness of geographical space, "the political ramifications filter back to infect the map of the social: social location,

inherently fluid is inadvertently mapped as absolute. Society is implicitly rendered as a *mappa mundi*, a blank space on which social relations are projected- a new world of sorts, ready for colonization; identities are located, positioned, elbowed into an already existing social mosaic. Identity politics too often becomes mosaic politics; at it's worst it quickly develops towards an unseemly nationalism of competing isms- a geopolitics of identity which is still being fought out" (Smith and Katz, 1993:77).

The most common recent response to the undue fixity of traditional metaphors of social identity is to turn to metaphors of travel and displacement to represent social identity, "'travelling' provides a means for conceptualizing the interplay among people that are no longer so separate or inaccessible one to the other. Travel erodes the brittleness and rigidity of spatial boundaries and suggests social, political and cultural identity as an amalgam, the intricacy of which defies the comparative simplicity of 'identity'. The flow of travel not the putative fixity of space donates identity" (Smith and Katz, 1993:78).

James Clifford, is considered the progenitor of travelling metaphors. Travel for Clifford moves beyond the fixity of singular locations, and allows for a dynamic (rather than static), conception of location, advancing theorists beyond the practice of 'localizing' cultures in 'the field' or 'the village' to a point where "identities are established in the course of travel as much as spatial and cultural rootedness" (Clifford after Smith and Katz, 1993:78). But for Smith and Katz, Clifford is guilty of accomplishing only the first shift of Rich's 'politics of location', remaining effectively blind to the second, there is no evidence of the combined rupture of received social/geographical space. Clifford's 'series of locations' and 'diverse, but limited spaces' suggest a multiplication of absolute space rather than a radical rethinking of spatial concepts. 'Taking place' over a pre-given space (or series of spaces), means that Clifford provides a more replete map of social location than most but nonetheless presumes pre-given space.

"It is tempting to think of Clifford's travellers as the frequent fliers of theory and knowledge, accumulating culture along with mileage while gazing down on the patterned land below. Diverse as space and spaces are, 'space' itself is rendered unproblematic, in startling contrast to the 'everything' flows of the social. The hard if largely hidden reassertion of an absolutist spatial ontology performs as virtual image for the social flux; spatial language comes to ground social meaning. It provides the missing foundation for everything else in flux. Without the pre-given structure of diverse if limited spatial locations, to which and from which our travellers travel, there is nothing to stop the flux of 'travel' from deteriorating into complete relativism ... to escape the potential essentialism of overtly fixed social identities, he imports a spatial essentialism connected with the most modernist of spatial concepts. The unexamined silences of spatial metaphors, then, may covertly constrain the formation of the very political alliances and possibilities they seem to invoke" (Clifford after Smith and Katz, 1993:79). The spaces of travel metaphors thus need careful consideration.

In short, "Newton, Descartes and Kant were the philosophical progenitors of spatial modernism, as much as Columbus, Napoleon and the Duchess of Sutherland were its practitioners. The depth of their collective influence, the taken-for-grantedness of the absolute space they established, is only beginning to be challenged." (Smith and Katz, 1993:8). This space is quite literally the space of capitalist patriarchy and racist imperialism and thus requires critique and reconstruction. But "the uncritical appropriation of absolute space as a source domain for metaphors forecloses recognition of the multiple qualities, types, properties and attributes of social space, its constructed absolutism and its relationality. This is not to say, therefore, that absolute space has no real referent; in modern representations of the body, private property, the state and colonization, absolute space is very real if socially constructed. The problem lies rather in the naturalization of absolute space which leads, in turn, to a tendency for such metaphors to become virtually free floating abstractions, the source of their grounding unacknowledged." (Smith and Katz, 1993:8)

Spatial metaphors are appealing in the context of the radical questioning, decentring and destabilisation of previously fixed realities and assumptions. "Space seems to provide a constant to ground ideas or bring order to a floating world or ideas but in the process, absolute space has become unhinged from the actual spatial experiences that rendered it an appropriate social conception in the first place" (Smith and Katz, 1993:80). Nearly all critical cultural theory uses spatial metaphor and it is as important for geographers to remain consistently aware of the implications that different spatial metaphors evoke, and the hegemony we may unwittingly inscribe by critically adopting social theory based on a spatial metaphor of other disciplines and our own. This is particularly pertinent given that this is research on whiteness in which the nature of the Anglo-centric academy and its means of interpretation and (re)presentation is continually being questioned. I now turn to a body of theory more practically applicable to this research, how to conceive of the space(s) in which the subjects of our enquiry interact. (For further clarification on the relationship between metaphor and materiality see Aiken *et.al.*, 1998).

## **2.4 Considering Space**

As a consequence of the reassertion of space in intellectual inquiry, space has over the last 10 to 15 years become a central theme for social theorists especially critical human geographers and cultural studies analysts. Much of this work has drawn from French social theory especially work classified post-structuralist. Both Foucault (1977), and Lefebvre (1991), have provided much of the key theoretical impetus to this movement. The 'new cultural geography' as influenced by this body of work makes three key theoretical claims about space (Hetherington, 1997:20);

- Space and place are not sets of relations outside of society but are implicated in the production of social relations and are themselves socially produced.

- Space and place are situated within relations of power and in some cases within relations of power-knowledge. Power is performed through spatial relations and encoded in the representation of space or as place myths.
- Spatial relations and places associated with those spatial relations are seen to be multiple and contested. A place does not mean the same thing for one group of agents as it means for another. In some cases something like a dominant ideology or hegemonic discourse of place is perceived with the possibility for resistance left open within interstitial or marginal spaces and the opportunities they can leave open for counter-hegemonic representations of space.

Shields (1991), was one of the first geographers to adopt a social constructionist view of space. Social divisions and cultural classifications are for Shields (1991) often spatialized. These in turn are often "expressed using spatial metaphors or descriptive spatial divisions" (Shields, 1991:29), which become incorporated into imaginary geographies, and in so doing, geographical space/sites become associated with particular events, values and feelings, which may be used interchangeably as imaginary geographies become used as metaphors for more abstract distinctions. "Sites become symbols (of good, evil or nationalistic events), and in tandem with other sites can be taken as metaphors to express (gendered) states of mind, of affairs and different value positions" (Shields, 1991:29). Shields (1991) see these types of affective tie with the environment by humans which couple sentiment to place as similar to Tuan's notion of topophilia. For Shields (1991:30), "the empirical datum of geographical space is mediated by an edifice of social constructions which become guides for action and constraints upon action, not just idiosyncratic or pathological fantasies"

For Shields (1991:31), place myths are the central outcome of social spatialization's. Social spatializations being - the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the collective social imaginary (that imaginary being collective mythologies or presuppositions and landscape interventions such as the built environment). These act as a means for framing social performances, interactions and presuppositions about appropriate activities in particular places, allowing us to name an object of study which encompasses both the cultural logic of the spatial and its expression and elaboration in language, concrete actions and institutional arrangements. As imagined cultural formations place myths are not defined only by their own symbolic criterion but in relation to other places. *"real spaces are hypostatized into the symbolic realm of imaginary space relations"*. The world is cognitively territorialized so that on the datum of physical geographic knowledge, the world is recorded as a set of spaces and places which are infinitely shared with connotative characteristics and emotive associations" (Shields, 1991:264 in Hetherington, 1997:25). The nation, body, street or city can all thus be seen as place myths.

Place myths can be seen as 'real' and may influence perceptions of place in popular representations and imaginings. As such place myths are the product of social



practices out of which discourses of place and space are formed, "the resulting formation - half typology, half metaphor - is inscribed as an emotive ordering or coded geography" (Shields, 1991:256 in Hetherington, 1997:26). For Shields (1991), what is of interest is that spaces exist as much in our imagination as in physical reality, and that such a realization should inform an alternative geography of space as well as an alternative geography of modernity which is able to, "challenge the self-definition of the 'centres', deconstructing cultural sovereignty and re-mapping the universalized and homogenous spatialization of Western Modernity to reveal heterogeneous places, a cartography of fractures which emphasizes the relations between differently valorized sites and spaces sutured together under masks of unity such as the nation state" (Shields, 1991:278).

What is left undeveloped in Shields's account is the active and subjective engagement by agents in the production of place myths (akin to Dixon and Durrheim, 2000 place identity) and their objectification in discourses or symbolic cultural systems of placing, "there is a tendency to conflate the social construction of space with social production, a tendency that sometimes confuses cultural representation with social action" (Hetherington, 1997:25).

#### **2.4.1 The Social Construction of the Spatial**

Social spatialization for Shields (1991:46), includes; "the fundamental coordination of perceptions and understandings which allows for the sociality of everyday interaction and the creation of durable social forms and institutions. The coordinating role of social spatialization's represents an overlooked part of hegemonic systems of thought and supposition because socialization sets in place more than an imaginary geography. As a fundamental system of spatial divisions (eg. subject-object, inclusion-exclusion) spatialization provides part of the necessary social coordination of perceptions to ground hegemonic systems of ideology and practice".

Spatial suppositions are thus conceived in this perspective as grounding "a cultural edifice of perceptions and prejudices, images of places and regions, and to establish performative codes which relate practices and modes of social interaction to appropriate settings" (Shields, 1991:46). Place myths once absorbed into discourses on space become directive; images, metaphors and other spatial conceptual forms become normative and play a significant role in the rationale by which daily decisions, policies and actions are rationalized and legitimized- how our daily lives are lived.

We organize our lives around spatial routines and around spatial and territorial decisions; these surfaces are "the carriers of central social myths which underwrite ideological divisions between classes, groups and regions. Spaces, fields of homogeneity, are conventionally subdivided into significant nodes and points: places" (Shields, 1991:47). But, the reductionist view of space at the heart of Anglo-centric social science allows, "a divorce takes place between representations, at the level of the imaginary or mythical, and practices in the interest of founding a socio-technology of control in the services of power" (Shields, 1991:50), thus ignoring the complexity of 'space' in our daily lives. In order to adopt



a framework of interpretation that allows for the dialectics of space to be more thoroughly conceptualized many contemporary theorists are turning to the work of Lefebvre (1991). What Lefebvre (1991) proposes in order to overcome reductionist views of spatialization is threefold dialectic of space (although Lefebvre (1991) remains unclear as to the precise interaction of the three, his theory does provide a sound approach to the different aspects of spatialization);

- (1) Spatial practices
- (2) Discursive representations of space
- (3) Spaces of representation- the abstract space of the social imaginary

If as indicated social theories both inform and are informed by the material circumstances of everyday life. Then geographers need to understand people's relationship to space through the central role of imagination and representation in producing the space's that inform our subjectivities and collective behaviour. Lefebvre's (1991) work is particularly applicable to discussions of urban public spaces (the spaces of cities- streets, parking lots, shopping malls and parks), because of his attention to the everyday practices of life or the performances of our daily activities. For critical geographers this allows a simultaneous interrogation of the politics 'in' and 'of' public space. It also allows us to examine how the boundaries of what is material and, what is metaphorical, what is public and what is private are, constructed, contested and continually recreated (McCann,1999). "It is Lefebvre's ability to link representation and imagination with the physical spaces of cities and to emphasize the dialectical relationship between identity and urban space that makes his work so attractive to many contemporary urban researchers" (McCann, 1999:168). His work provides a conceptual framework through which the spatial practices of everyday life can be understood as central to the maintenance of physical spaces and place myths.

Part of Lefebvre's (1991) project was to write a history of space by relating representations of space to certain modes of production through time "this history culminates in what he characterizes as the always incomplete imposition of modern, abstract space (commodified and bureaucratized space) over concrete space (the space of everyday life and experience)" (McCann, 1999:169). In order for such abstract space to become / remain dominant two major processes must occur;

1) There must be a concerted effort to define and appropriate the meaning of, and suitable activities that can take place within abstract space. Abstract space being for Lefebvre (1979)- "a space of quantification and growing homogeneity, a merchandised space where all elements are exchangeable and thus interchangeable; a police space in which the state tolerates no resistance and no obstacles. Economic space and political space thus converge towards an elimination of all differences" (Lefebvre, 1979:293 in McCann, 1999:169).

2) The second element in the production of abstract space is to render it ahistorical, devoid of any implications of the social struggles around its production (in much the same way as 'race' as we shall see in chapter 3), or traces of the concrete space it replaces. Abstract space must be a space from which previous histories have been

erased. Central to this erasure is the power of the state and capital to re-shape the physical spaces of the city.

For Lefebvre (1972), abstract space is produced in capitalism's image to facilitate the continuation of this mode of production, but not all public spaces are dominated by this representation of space. Indeed, "abstract space is fundamentally contradictory because while it is a space that emphasizes homogeneity it can only exist by accentuating difference. The image of homogeneity and unity that is the central feature of abstract space can, according to Lefebvre (1972), only be achieved and maintained through a continued state-sponsored process of fragmentation and marginalization that elides difference and thus attempts to prevent conflict" (McCann, 1999:171). In extreme cases, "cities are transformed into a collection of ghettos where individuals are at once 'socialized', integrated, submitted to artificial pressures and constraints [...] and separated, isolated, disintegrated. A contradiction that is translated into anguish, frustration, and revolt" (Lefebvre, 1972:168 in McCann, 1999:171).

For Robinson (1999:163), "South African cities are born, perhaps as no other urban spaces are, of the kinds of spatialities Lefebvre (1991) refers to as 'abstract space', or 'representations of space'. This signifies a geometric and homogenous space of separation and power, built upon the dominance of the visual, of formal relations amongst objects organized on the basis of technical knowledge. Abstract space has come to dominate the form of the modern city. It is exemplified by the homogenization and division involved in the capitalist commodification of land and the construction of alienating environments in which the possibilities of alternative spatialities are repressed." Lefebvre's (1991) conceptual triad, if contextualized in racialized cities, allows us to think about how these processes might occur, according to McCann (1999), and is thus, I feel, an excellent conceptual tool for the purposes of (re)presenting whiteness in this research.

For cultural geographers it is the set of processes producing cultural conceptions and practices in space (in effect through the process of social spatialization or the construction of place myths), not space itself that is of interest. The relationship between social practices and social spaces(s) for Lefebvre (1991) can be understood as a threefold dialectic between representation of space, representational space and spatial practices.

#### **(a) Representations of Space**

McCann (1999) notes that representations of space are constructed through discourse. For Shields (1991), this discourse posits forms of knowledge and hidden ideological content of codes, theories, and conceptual depictions of space linked with production relations. Such representations of space are always abstract since they are conceived rather than directly lived. This form of space is dominant in our modern urban areas and is central to the production of abstract space (McCann, 1999). As a 'representation' this space is encountered through understandings and abstractions (for example plans or designs or other forms of knowledge and claims to truth grounded in the rational legitimacy of the dominant power structure- in

Lefebvre's case, the capitalist state), that shape how we experience and comprehend ordered space(s) (Sheilds, 1991).

### **(b) Representational Space**

This space is also referred to as 'spaces of representation', this is the space of the imagination through which life is directly lived, "it is space experienced through the complex symbols and images of its 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (Lefebvre, 1991:33 in McCann, 1999:172). This space often draws on physical objects found in space in order to symbolize lived experience and produce meaning. It is thus a discursive sphere which offers "complex re-coded and even de-coded versions of lived spatializations, veiled criticism of dominant social orders and of categories of social thought often expressed in aesthetic terms as symbolic resistance." (Shields, 1991:54). The work of photographers, artists, poets, filmmakers may be representational spaces that through their use of symbolism construct counter-discourses and thus open the possibility to think differently about space (McCann, 1999).

### **(c) Spatial Practices**

Everyday routines and experiences (spatial practice), are said to also 'secrete' their own social spaces (McCann, 1999). "Through lived practice, 'space' is (re)produced as 'human' space. This practice involves a continual appropriation and re-affirmation of the world as structures according to existing socio-spatial arrangements" (Shields, 1991:52). These 'social spaces' help to assure, "the society's continuity in a relatively cohesive fashion and the reproduction of the social relations of production. Such cohesion through space implies, in connection with social practices and the relating of individuals to that space, a certain level of spatial 'competence' and a distinct type of 'spatial performance' by individuals. This, then, consists of the individualized performance or enactment of spatialization by individuals in their daily habits and minute gestures and mannerisms" (Shields, 1991:52-53). Over time, spatial practices are concretized or sedimented into the landscape, these actions become part of the constitution of the qualitative reality of sites as places where certain events and actions are known and expected to take place.

The practices and everyday activities of life continually mediate between the two forms of social space, working within the bounds of the conceived abstract spaces (of the likes of planners and those in power), whilst simultaneously, being shaped and shaping individual's perceptions and uses of space. For example, "while planners may designate the downtown streets to be public, individuals perceptions may induce them to use the streets in different ways, feeling out of place in some parts of downtown or unsafe in others. The continual interplay of the two types of social space exists in a mutually constitutive relationship with the spatial practices of the 'uses' of space" (McCann, 1999:173).

In sum, conceiving of space in terms of the above three dimensions allows theorists to discard the dualistic socio-spatial dialectic which tends to give primacy to either ideological dimensions or those expressed in practice. "Lefebvre's real object of study is the process of the production of cultural notions and practices of space (in

effect the process of social spatialization), not space itself" (Shields, 1991:56). And what makes spatialization interesting is that, "in spite of the commonsensical veneer of empirical rationality (space is a void), people treat the spatial as charged with emotional content, mythical meanings, community symbolism, and historical significance. It is the latter repressed emotions, not the former rationalism, that one finds built into the framework of institutions, perception and biases which characterize the everyday life of otherwise rational institutions" (Shields, 1991:57).

Lefebvre's three moments capture bodily practices in space and their relationship to lived experiences of space. The nature of public space(s) and individual subjects experience(s) of them for Lefebvre can ultimately be traced to a formative power residing within capitalist modes of production, which for him act as the locus of power organizing the social. But the new cultural geography is increasingly moving away from reducing the complex processes of the contemporary to either simple economic or political expressions of power, as I have asserted throughout this research. Rather social processes are now understood as part of a more pervasive, hidden and normative set of social structuring processes in this research called modernity. Hetherington (1997) argues that looking at social space provides a distinct and important perspective on key aspects of modernity. Hetherington's (1997) reading of Foucault's heterotopia, in addition, provides an example of the type of contradictory space in our hegemonic spatial conceptions to which Shield's (1991) suggests we include in our geographies.

#### **2.4.2 Modernity and Space**

There is, as noted throughout this research, an ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of our collective social imaginary. Our interpretation(s) of such collective understandings become a means for framing experiences, social performances, interactions and presuppositions about appropriate activities in particular places. We can gain insight into social ordering processes by interrogating some of the spaces/spatializing processes that are/have been significant in informing our collective practices. Hetherington (1997) seeks to interpret modernity (modernity referring to the dominant set of social ordering process of our time), through looking at its most important social spaces. He turns to Foucault's notion of heterotopia (spaces of alternative ordering), to argue that the socio-spatial ordering of modernity originates through interplay between ideals of utopia and heterotopic spatial practice. Heterotopia is seen as spaces that organize the social world differently to the spaces around them. These can be textual as much as geographic sites and are said to be constituted in relation to other sites by their difference. In adopting the concept of heterotopia, Hetherington (1997) reminds us that we should remain critical of static views of social order which do not take account of a range of processes, and their ambiguities and differences which are involved in social ordering processes of modernity.

"Heterotopia are not quite spaces of transition- the chasm they represent can never be closed up- but they are spaces of deferral, spaces where ideas and practices that represent the good life can come into being, from nowhere, even if they never

actually achieve what they set out to achieve- social order, or control and freedom" (Hetherington, 1997). It is important to remember that modernity does not refer to a social order but to a set of social and spatial ordering processes. This is important as it allows a conception of the contemporary that is open to uncertainty, heterogeneity and contradiction, whereas to 'fix' modernity as an order tends to polarize issues of marginality, difference and otherness into a number of binary positions. "Just as the process of social ordering creates positions of uncertainty, so those positions of uncertainty are implicated in the processes of ordering and re-ordering. Ordering and disordering go together, as do centres and margins, in that they are tangled, uncertain and topologically complex" (Hetherington, 1997:7).

Modernity for Hetherington (1997) has therefore been about "trying to create a society that is ordered and stable and governed properly as well as one in which the principle of freedom is upheld" (Hetherington, 1997:viii preface). Moreover, modernity is a process that is never able to achieve its utopic outcome and so it is the spaces that open up between the 'reality' of spatial processes and utopic intention that become interesting sites in which we may gain insight into the spatial ordering processes of modernity.

According to Bauman (1991 after Hetherington, 1997), one of the defining characteristics of modernity is its war on ambivalence. Bauman (1991) notes that since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the state began to see its role as legislator for a changing and increasingly uncertain society. The state sought in the spirit of the Enlightenment to incorporate supposedly neutral, scientific, rational discourses into legislative projects aiming to order society. The social context of intellectuals at the time was significant. They were placed as independent thinkers who, free from church or courtly influence, could guide the state in its transition from a 'game keeping role' (in which society was tended but given no basic overall shape) to a 'gardening role' (in which the state orders and regulates society, controlling and policing sources of ambivalence). At the time there was much social ambivalence and anxiety arising from old patterns of rights, duties and established hierarchies being disrupted by the transition brought about by population increases, agricultural revolution and urban land-based capital markets. Enlightenment thinkers concerned with social ambivalence were called on to use their knowledge of reason (see Kinchel, 1999) and in order to distinguish superstition, prejudice and opinion from 'truth'. The resultant rationales were applied to the ordering of space.

The crusade of modern states against ambivalence expressed itself in intellectuals of the time attempting to order and classifying social processes and spaces. In so doing they, "not only defined the marginal and deviant, but by associating all that was left outside these spaces as ordinary, normal and healthy" (Hetherington, 1997:60), they came to pass judgement on all social order. Hetherington (1997) goes on to note that the "ordering of society and its relationship to the development of modern society is not one where a preconceived order is established but one where modes of ordering take place in spaces of uncertainty that act as obligatory points of passage for ideas about freedom and control to be performed" (Hetherington, 1997:64). The issue of social ordering as an uncertain process needs to be at the heart of our thinking about the character of modernity and its

social spaces. Heterotopia for Hetherington (1997) do not quite represent spaces of transition as the contradictions they posit may never be resolved, they are rather, "spaces of deferral, spaces where ideas about the good life can come into being, from nowhere, even if they never actually achieve what they set out to achieve- social order, or control or freedom" (Hetherington, 1997:xi). What is therefore needed is an approach that can make cognisance of modernity (and its spaces) as neither neither neither regimented nor totally ordered but instead as a process continually in a state of dynamic change or flux. I briefly map modernity as order and uncertainty below before considering heterotopia;

#### **(a) Modernity as order**

This approach is usually identified with the postmodern position. These theorists see modernity as an overwhelming desire to order around some grand design that began with the Enlightenment. In this sense the order of modernity is seen as being driven by the grand narratives of freedom, progress, utopia and emancipation. Moreover their effects are seen rather to end in overall social control and the marginalization of those who do not fit into its grand designs (there is seen to be a desire to eradicate all forms of social resistance).

#### **(b) Modernity as uncertainty**

This is a parallel tradition that sees modernity not as monolithic but, full of uncertainty and ambiguity. Modernity becomes the embodiment of flux, change and ephemerality. Most work in this tradition takes the uniqueness and distinctiveness of modernity to be central along with issues of complexity and change. For Hetherington (1997) by looking at modernity through some of the spatializing processes that emerged within it and their relationship to modes of social ordering we can see uncertainty and ambiguity as central to the utopian vision of modernity as opposed to things that always had to be subject to planned eradication. Order is seen as something that does not always exist in a pristine state, fully formed. Nor is it something always intentionally created, it is instead a contingency effect that arises from ongoing social and technical processes.

For Hetherington (1997), modernity as order and modernity as ambiguity come together in heterotopic spaces. Heterotopia are spaces of heterogeneity and ambiguity, yet represent an alternate ordering (one which interweaves ideas of freedom and control). Freedom (like control), is said to be more than an abstract idea, and is instead, a situated social performance and expression of agency. For Hetherington (1997) the social ordering that is the basis for modernity was forged in heterotopic spaces that aligned the idea of personal freedom with conditions of social control. Of interest, in terms of the understanding developed in this research, is how freedom and control are related and woven into spaces of ordering that is the relationship between utopia and heterotopia. If freedom is implicated in social control just as social control is implicated in freedom then who we are as free subjects comes into being through the effects of power. For Hetherington (1997) the paradox of freedom and control is the paradox of the utopianism of modernity that defines the heterotopic condition. Equally, in devising conditions of social order we will always create positions of 'freedom' from which to resist that order if not freedom from order. Heterotopia are thus always based on some ideal of social

improvement. Such utopian thinking is not just about the good society and the freedom it offers the individual but is implicated in thinking about social control. Placing ideas about freedom and control alongside modernity (as a utopian project) allows for heterotopia to become apparent not just as sites of resistance/transgression but also as sites of alternative modes of social ordering. Modern forms of social ordering result from a heterotopic uncertainty in which order and disorder are set in a practice of deferral set up between ideas of freedom and control. Heterotopia is sites of deferral, sites of alternate modes of social ordering through which physical interaction and social discourse produce a new sociality.

Hetherington (1997:51) draws five main conclusions about heterotopia;

- No space can be described as fixed as a heterotopia
- Heterotopia always have multiple and shifting meanings for agents depending on where they are located within power effects
- Heterotopia are always defined relationally to other sites within a spatialization process and never exist in and of themselves
- Heterotopia, if they are taken as relational, must have something distinct about them, something that makes them obligatory points of passage (otherwise any site could be described as in some way 'other' to another site)
- Heterotopia are not about resistance or order but can be about both because both involve the establishment of alternative modes of ordering

Utopics (a spatial play on the theme of utopia), refers to taking ideas about the ideal society (based on order and certainty and founded on principles such as 'virtue' 'discipline' and 'reason') and turning them into spatial practices, aimed at producing ordered social spaces (Martin,1984 after Hetherington,1997). Spaces representing the spatialization of utopian ideals have been around from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and include- the scientific laboratory, town planning, places of leisure, botanical gardens and places of education. The ideas of the good place are transformed not into a perfect society but into spaces for the perfection of society and the individual within it. Attempts to achieve social order are the effect of modernity's epistemological dreaming of a clearly defined ontology of order, which while never achieved are endlessly deferred to new modes of ordering that are utopic in intention and something else in practice. Heterotopia is spaces where difference is encountered in a space of alternate ordering. Modernity in its diverse forms can be expressed through a multitude of a space of alternate ordering that produce new modes of ordering and discourses to make sense of that order. "The spaces that facilitated the opportunity for new modes of social ordering were those that were most ambivalent and uncertain, and hence open to new actors able to express their utopia through the practices that made up the ordering found in those spaces" (Hetherington, 1997:68).



What is important to recall is that heterotopia is, "established by their difference in a relationship between sites rather than their 'Otherness' deriving from the site itself. It is not a relationship within a space that is the source of this heterotopic relationship; for such an arrangement to be seen from within that space may make perfect sense. It is how such a relationship is seen from the outside, from the standpoint of another perspective that allows space to be seen as heterotopic" (Hetherington, 1997:43). Heterotopia thus either provides an unsettling of spatial relations through their presence or provide alternative representations of spatial relations. The concept of heterotopia is thus a conceptual tool to utilize when (re)presenting whiteness, especially given the idea that racialized space(s) are not necessarily always apparent by who we find in them but who is absent, as shall be discussed in chapter four. Racialized processes may only become apparent when seen in terms of spaces of contradiction to the hegemonic spatial representations.

This chapter has been about making visible the tools and axes through which a (re)presentation of whiteness may be constructed. Before concluding, I wish to indicate the way in which I have understood the process of (re)presentation itself. Thus, it is to a discussion of the so-called 'new cultural geography' that I now turn.

## **2.5 The New Cultural Geography**

The aim of this research is to begin to map the conceptual considerations appropriate for a geographical (re)presentation of the discursive space(s) and material manifestations of whiteness. In so doing, a number of theoretical and methodological assumptions are made. One of the major themes throughout this research is to make visible the position from which we speak as authors. What follows is thus a brief overview of the geographic tradition to which I align myself most closely, an understanding loosely called 'the new cultural geography'. This movement emerged during the 1990's and had its roots in a set of debates responding to challenges made by the postmodern theorists of the 1980's. For geographers this period was marked by increased transdisciplinary engagement with other social sciences. It was, in part, a reaction to the hegemony of forms of Marxism embraced by geographers during the 1970's and 1980's increasingly being named reductionist, patriarchal and ethnocentric.

The 'new cultural geography' proposes (re)considering the relationship between society and space through emphasizing on the contingency of knowledge claims and the close relationship between language and power, "both epistemologically and in the construction of new empirical research objects, the cultural turn is probably best characterized by a heightened reflexivity toward the role of language, meaning and representations in the constitution of 'reality' and knowledge of reality" (Barnett, 1998:380).

Moreover, geographer's assumptions about how they should set about explaining human occupancy and activity have, as a whole, changed little since the 1960's. These assumptions Cosgrove (1989), notes are in no way dishonourable but do result in excluding from our geographic agenda much of what human geography could interpret in terms of human spatial activity, "further, they produce a deep

contradiction within the subject. If our intentions are morally founded and the outcome of our work supposedly of value to humankind, while our material remains exclusively empirical and our interpretations of human motivation absolutely utilitarian, we deny ourselves a language for framing the very goal we seek; the making of a better human world" (Cosgrove, 1989:120). These assumptions read as follows (Cosgrove, 1989:119-120);

1) The physical world, or 'natural' environment is the domain of scientific physical geography. It may set the bounds to human conduct, but such bounds are so broad as to render dangerous any appeal to them in human geographical explanation. Although, both space and population serve as legitimate starting points for explanation in human geography.

2) The second assumption is that "humans behave in a rational, fairly predictable manner, when viewed in aggregate, to achieve personal and social goals that are overwhelmingly practical. Rationality is tacitly agreed to mean economic maximization or satisfaction. Other motivations are treated as 'irrational' and geographically interesting only as deviations from the model form" (p 119).

3) The third assumption is that geographers should seek practical or utilitarian outcome from their studies. Human geography should be 'relevant', its results applied to some 'real world situation'. Human geographers display a strong moral commitment to bettering their world; this relevance must apparently be immediate and direct.

4) Lastly, human geography should "avoid overt and contentious political, ideological and even philosophical questions. It should strive for objectivity by analysing facts and ensuring that its statements are anchored securely to empirical warranty" (p120).

Given the above, how then should geographers go about (re)presenting the place of culture both to the nature of their enquiry and modes of representation? Science (as a discourse of technical, objective, rational, Enlightenment knowledge) is often claimed to be universal in its scope and free from political or cultural interests. But science is also a practice and, as such, may be taken as knowledge in the service of power that cannot be disassociated from the cultural, social and political webs of society (Duncan and Ley, 1993). In accordance with the scientific domain to which geographers have traditionally aligned themselves, the primary mode of representation has largely been mimetic. The traditional mode for cultural geography has thus been descriptive field work (based upon trained observation later transcribed to produce an 'accurate' understanding of the world). Thus the approach influenced by positivist science aims to reduce the complexities of the world to a set of abstract descriptions. This stems from an Enlightenment belief that language and imagery can be a transparent media for representing and understanding 'the world', and assuming that there is a univocal and visible 'world' which can be represented and that we have the capability for such representation (Duncan and Ley, 1993).

The first sustained criticism of this traditional mode of representation came from feminist and post-colonial theorists who argued that such epistemologies were profoundly gendered, patriarchal and, ethnocentric respectively. The quest for abstraction and detached objectivity that disavow distraction by values were said to be characteristic of the western male. By looking closely at how gender, imperial power, nation and 'race' are constructed through discourses of exclusion and through looking at how the social construction of values and valuing are integral to 'knowing', it was concluded that any claim to objectivity is untenable. In a similar vein to these assaults by feminists, postmodern theorists took task with the idea of objectivism and the search for the 'truth' and with mimetic representation. Through an anti-foundational and radically relativist approach the totalising ambitions of modern social science were explicitly rejected. The idea of a progressive historiography of scientific knowledge was discredited alongside totalising discourses and belief in a meta-language of communication and the belief that words reflect (as opposed to construct) the world. A radical standpoint emerged in which it became obvious that, "if the world has no inherent logic or order then no criteria for truth exist. We are obliged to accept the magical/mystical interpretation of the world as equally valid or invalid as the scientific, for each is a construction of meaning" (Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993:28).

A less radical break from traditional objectivism is offered by hermeneutics. Through acknowledging the role of the interpreter mimesis in a strict sense of the term is ruled out. "Rather than setting up a model of a universal, value free researcher whose task is to proceed in such a manner that s/he is converted into a cipher, this approach recognizes that interpretation is a dialogue between one's data- other places and other people- and the researcher who is embedded within a particular intellectual and institutional context" (Duncan and Ley, 1993:3). This understanding allows a number of theoretical positions in geography to be accommodated, including post-structural approaches and the 'new cultural geography'.

"Rather than attempting to banish the historically situated observer, hermeneutics acknowledges the collision between data and interpreter" (Duncan and Ley, 1993:8). One consequence is the recognition that one cannot completely escape from ethnocentrism, for by definition "all representations are inextricably intertwined with the theory laden categories of research" (Duncan and Ley, 1993:8), thus although hermeneutics acknowledges its 'position' ontologically and epistemologically, the researcher is still taken to hold power over objects of study (and importantly in terms of whiteness this position is still an intellectual elite in the West). Any meaning cannot be (dis)placed from that interpretive frame.

If the world can no longer be seen to exist independently of its observer and if scholars may no longer seek to discern a pre-given internal order or pattern then the contribution of scientists may no longer be seen as located in a progressive continuum from ignorance to enlightenment, nor can the production and communication of knowledge be separated (Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993). 'Truth' at one time could be 'established' (in methodologically sound ways) and communicated (in the most precise objective language possible). The process of scholarly writing itself was undertaken as an 'accurate' representation reproducing

specific scientific ontologies and epistemologies, but, the primacy accorded to intellectual discourse, reason, the cumulative progression of knowledge, linear history, science and the like has been unsettled.

For human geographers "we trace out the production and communication of cultural meanings in spatial organization, conduct and landscape. But cultural studies of landscape are no longer regarded as part of a 'coherent body of knowledge'; slowly assembling, growing and developing like an architectural structure. Rather they seem disassociated fragments, shards reflecting glass that at once illuminate, reflect and distort- in sum, re-present- the world of the individual and intersubjective experience. It may be that those shards imply a potential single sheet of transparent glass through which a single reality might be visible, but the task of reassembling them is fruitless if we are obliged to deceive as we perceive ... we seem obliged to abandon all rules constraining and delimiting the field of scholarly geographical endeavour" (Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993:29).

Given that culture, social formation and discourses of meaning are now implicated in struggles for power the judgements that we make can no longer be based on 'empirical truth' but are themselves implicated in the struggle for meaning and dominance between humans. Hegemonic power theories suggest that this occurs through naturalizing specific discourses, suppressing others and legitimizing particular power distributions.

In response to this crisis of geographical representation described above we need to constantly be reminded that when we write our geographies we actively create meaning (our modes and methods of analysis both being morally implicated) and as such are not just representing 'a reality', "we must somehow let our readers know that what we are creating are themselves cultural, gendered and political products, that our writing is as much about ourselves and our conditions as it is about some purported geographic reality, and that our techniques and methodologies are not ways of establishing ground truth but are conventions devised to make meanings intelligible. We are obliged to share authority with both subject and reader, but equally cannot evade the authority of authorship." (Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993:36).

We write to make sense of the world but authorize that sense at the moment of conveying its importance to the reader, "by acknowledging that our story is related to and constitutive of our social experience, by admitting that our story is part of moral and political discourse, we become more fully rational. We make sense out of the world in the only 'rational' way: from our own experiences. Such an admission makes evident the power of our words, opens the creativity of meaning and honestly faces the assumption of authority" (Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993:37). Hence as stated in chapter 1, this research is for me no more than my own experience of whiteness framed for the reader by my own (re)presentation of current theoretical considerations. Given just how subjective such a (re)presentation can be, I have chosen to cite the authors from which I have gained my understanding directly, in order to minimize misrepresentation.

In short, "the problems of writing in a post-Kuhnian world are not that it leaves us without any 'objective' reality from which to base our work, but that it forces to explicitly recognize our personal and cultural agendas, and the power that words give to those agendas. We must recognize our commitments as authors and treat them seriously. The postmodern world leaves us nothing behind which we can hide. When we write our geographies we are creating artefacts that impose meaning on the world. The moral claims implicit in our descriptions and explanations of landscapes and places are what has determined their choice as subject matter, controlled the mode of study, produced the story we tell and structured the mode of story telling. Our stories add to a growing list of other stories, not listed in a logic of linearity to fit into a coherent body of knowledge but as a series of cultural constructions, each representing a particular view of the world, to be consulted together to help us make sense of ourselves and our relation to the landscapes and places we inhabit and think about. These stories are not to be read as approximations of reality, but as tales of how we have understood the world; to be judged not according to some theory of correspondence, but in terms of their internal consistency and their value as moral and political discourse" (Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993:37-38).

## 2.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to (re)present the two concepts I have identified as main axes for considering a critical cultural geography sensitive to the social ordering processes of whiteness namely; 'space' and subjectivity. Traditional conceptions of both space and subjectivity have recently been exposed as problematic and are themselves implicated in whiteness and as such require careful scrutiny. The conclusion drawn from my consideration of relevant literature is that 'the self' is a set of identifications (points of momentary articulation) forged at the intersection of our own individual psychic identity and at the level of 'the social' (that is at the level of discursive formations and practices which constitute the social field). It is locating and articulating these spaces of intersection that is of interest to cultural geographers. The primary means of understanding and the construction of these spaces is through addressing the lived experiences and practices of our subjects in order to locate and (re)present these subjects, their experience is usually understood at the intersection of their discursive repertoires and everyday practices by cultural geographers.

Space is also presented as a dynamic arena, as opposed to the traditional dualistic, socio-spatial dialectic that privileges either ideology or practice. Space is here identified as being constituted by the social. Yet it is also noted that processes of creating, sustaining and (re)presenting a coherent sense of 'self' are simultaneously based on a sense of belonging and attachment to place. Places are seen to be built around their own social, cultural and biological definitions and cognitions.

A critical cultural geography thus needs to focus on the collective relations between persons, identities and material settings. That is, we should look to the collectively determined dimensions of space and place. The social construction of the spatial is determined by the dominant discursive repertoires that help people make sense of their everyday spaces and influence their actions and attachment to place. Reading public discourse around particular places or spaces allows insight into how the social imaginations might shape the lived experiences of, and practices in, space. The datum of geographical space is in this formulation mediated by an edifice of social constructions that become guides for, and constraint upon action. The spatial is continually (re)constructed at the level of the collective social imaginary and this imaginary acts as a means for framing social performances, interactions and presuppositions about appropriate activities in particular places. In so doing we name an object of study which encompasses both the cultural logic of the spatial and its elaboration in language, concrete actions and institutional arguments. Moreover, it is argued that these socio-spatial understandings represent an overlooked part of hegemonic systems of thought and supposition which provide part of the necessary social co-ordination of perceptions needed to ground hegemonic systems of ideology and practice.

The reductionist views of space traditionally embraced in social science are argued to divorce imaginary representations and practices. Lefebvre (1991) suggests that spatial practices, discursive representation of space and spaces of representation cannot be separated if we are to understand the relationship between people and

space. In linking representation and imagination with the physical spaces of the city, the relationship between identity and urban space becomes clearer and for cultural geographers it allows insight into the construction of the spaces of everyday life. Here it is practices in space, not space in itself that is of interest. In terms of this research, the focus should thus be on the relationship between social practices and social spaces.



## Chapter Three: Race and Raciology

### 3.1 An Introduction to 'Race'

'Race' is a social construct that has, over the past 400 years, developed into a complex means for differentiating life opportunities for a variety of socially signified hierarchically ranked subject positions. For Goldberg (1992:558), the power of racist expression has consisted of "its productive capacity to define population groups, and by extension social agents, as self and other at various historical moments. It has thus facilitated the fixing of characteristics of inclusion and exclusion, giving an apparent specificity otherwise lacking in social relations". In so doing, "race has become a touchstone. Sewn over the centuries into the seams of the social fabric, the idea of race (or really the ideas, for they are multiple) furnishes the terms around which a complex of social hopes, fears, anxieties, resentments, aspirations, self-elevations, and identities gets articulated" (Goldberg, 1997:8).

Goldberg (1997), provides an example of how when in May 1996, a day after the South African parliament voted to adopt a new constitution (amongst the most progressive in the world thus formally ending apartheid), F.W. de Klerk (then deputy president in the government of national unity), announced that he and the National Party would be withdrawing from government in order to form an opposition party, the South African stock market lost 1.5% of its value within a day. This experience for Goldberg (1997), reveals the subversive global frame in which racism operates today. Why should the peaceful resignation of the former head of South African political life to form a democratic opposition in a transformed society cause such consternation in its capital markets? (Goldberg, 1997:2).

The answer is said to lie in 'race' for Goldberg (1992, 1997). 'White' people (regardless of past behavior), are seen as the guarantors of stability and political rationality, of peacefulness and law and order, 'black' people represent just the opposite. 'White' people removing themselves from direct power signals to rational, self-interested investors that there will be a slide into contentiousness and chaos, instability and insecurity. A new kind of racism is here evident in which questionable presumptions about 'white' rationality and 'black' irrationality combine to produce real socio-economic and personal consequences. 'White' greed and fear dominated by racist stereotypes are for Goldberg (1997), hardly rational motives. An unmitigated drive to profit mixed with paranoia frames; stock markets, cultural and political practices. The radicalized results, though hidden under economics, read as 'business as usual' (Goldberg, 1997:3). This is Goldberg's (1997) example but more recent and equally racialized instances could be the treatment of many colonized nations (including South Africa), by the stockmarkets and investors of the overdeveloped world following the Argentinian economic crisis of 2001/2002, or America's war on 'terror' and subsequent re-colonization of the Islamic world following 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 (by re-colonization I am referring in this instance to the numerous proposals for economic, political, military and social reform being offered by the United States in order to combat 'terror' and ensure 'stability').

Despite formal racisms and apartheid systems worldwide having come to an end, 'race' as a means of differentiation and motivation for action is becoming more subversive and entrenched. As noted in chapter two, our conceptual apparatuses for interrogating the complexities of a concept such as 'race' seem inadequate, and past theoretical traditions and conceptual models including the last 15 - 25 years of post-modern re-orientation, are being urgently reconsidered (in some instances to the point of prescribing wholesale annihilation of past procedures). 'Race' may now be recognized as socially and not biologically determined, opening it to deconstruction, but Golding (1997, Preface), asks that we take task with traditional approaches to interrogating identity politics and subjectivity more generally; "what if we were to stop sterilizing old wounds?"

"What if it were to be admitted that the usual, empty phrases- like the so-called 'deep and violent cut' of meaning, truth, death, indeed identity itself: the 'who are we' and 'what are we to become' of science and of life- have collapsed under their own bloodless, sexless weight of self-reflexive reason? For though the very cunning of dialectic logic (historical, metaphysical, or otherwise), has already produced many interesting political dalliances with empowerment, necessity and change, it has, more often than not, simply recast, or (worse) simply reproduced, the very practices it is seeking to overcome - the usual either/or 'Deep cut' posturings nonchalantly taking as given a binaric divide: male as an entity distinctly 'opposite' to female; or black as opposed to white, Jew to Muslim, gay to straight, and so on down the proverbial line. Usually in the name of marginality, excess and diversity, but now, more frequently in the name of otherness itself, we sadly, annoyingly, are often left with a kind of 'shopping list' of so-called other subjective 'other' identities-be it woman, Jew, immigrant, person of color, s/m dyke, white etc-gathered together in opposition to the so-called objective 'dominant power' forms of identities, often named male, white, heterosexual, middle or ruling class" (Golding, 1997:Preface).

For Golding (1997), although it may be acknowledged that racism, sexism, classism, homophobia or war exists; identity politics seems to be out of its depth. Whatever it is, that, constitutes 'identity', seems to be a very different notion of otherness than 'that' and its 'not'. "At its most basic understanding otherness is simply and only a cosmetic wound; a very thin, virtual, and in this sense impossible limit ... only and always a superficial dimension: a surface. But it is a 'surface'... not in the sense of being the 'last layer' or 'top' of say, a table or body. On closer inspection, it is the 'is'- the 'I'- between the either and its or. And yet this planed notion of surface is rather vampiric, for it requires a certain kind of blood for food, a certain kind of something, necessary for it to 'make sense' and, in turn, give meaning 'back'. That certain 'something' or 'somethings' are [the], technologies which are themselves nothing more or less than relations, techniques, or techne (in a Foucaudian sense): the everyday strategies we use, wittingly or not, to make all the we-selves into me-selves" (Golding, 1997:Preface). One such technology is that of 'race'.

Therefore we need to begin to address some of the substantive problems lodged in the way people conceptualize and act upon racial differences. That is to consider how 'race' comes to inform our everyday actions and common sense. This task is

deemed difficult for two principal reasons, firstly, "if the brutal simplicity of racial typology remains alive even in the most deliberate and assertive of anti-racist gestures, then perhaps critical, avowedly 'anti-essentialist' intellectuals are asking too much when we inquire about the renunciation of 'race', or when we aspire to polychromatic and multi-ethnic utopias in which the color of skin makes no more difference than the color of eyes or hair" (Gilroy, 1997:192), if even the most dedicated anti-racist mythology remains wedded to the basic mythology of racial difference then what chance does the public have of escaping its allure? Secondly, there exists a complex relationship between 'race' and modernity to the extent that, the "order of active differentiation that gets called 'race' may be modernity's most pernicious signature. It articulates reason and unreason. It knits together science and superstition. Its specious ontologies are anything but spontaneous and natural. They should be awarded no immunity from prosecution amidst the reveries of reflexivity and the comfortable forms of inertia induced by capitulation to the lazy essentialisms which postmodern sages inform us we cannot escape" (Gilroy, 1997:193).

Although critical theorists do see a space for challenging and moving beyond 'race' this is not perceived to be the natural outcome of societies current trajectory. If we accept that 'race' has become integral to the formation and maintenance of modernity then without interrogating the concept as part of a wholesale re-evaluation of all 'technologies of Otherness' (in Golding's (1997) terms) or the intersecting oppressions of modernity (in Gilroy's (1997) terms), racism's in our society will merely adapt, re-orientate and become more subversive.

The biggest challenge commonly perceived for overcoming raciology is that 'race' has become normative to the self-conception of both oppressors and oppressed, both live racially structured lives, within the racialized operations of modernity (Frankenburg, 1993). Undoing 'race' then requires challenging both racial identities and the racialized material and ideological constitution of the contemporary, for all persons.

In everyday discourse, the word 'race' is used to describe an individual or group who is seen to possess shared traits on the basis of a notion of origin or descent. This collective heredity may be based on either biological/physical or cultural affiliations. Within the tradition of biological determinism, biological differences differentiate groups or individuals whose physical appearance (e.g. skin color, hair type, body build etc), are identified by another individual or group as signifying some psychological or social difference between that group and itself, thus constructing 'racial' variation from physical variation. Differentiation on the basis of ethnic/cultural differences is also and is increasingly becoming the dominant categorization for human populations. Here a fixed cultural, as opposed to biological essence, is assumed. In both orientations racism is seen as a set of discursive practices imbuing negative meanings or ascriptions which ultimately serve to deny some individual or group full participation in economic, social, political and cultural life (Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Gilroy, 1997).

'Race' has thus become an important force of inclusion and exclusion providing a number of rationalizations for inequality. This is not to say that processes of racial categorization are an end in themselves but rather that they attribute social significance through a set of social ordering processes. The concept of race generates patterns of behavior that may not necessarily be formally racialized but when interrogated some reference will be made to the existence of different 'races' (Miles, 1982:10).

### **3.1.1 'Race' as a Material and Discursive moment**

As noted, the highly flexible social construction of racialized ideology reflects more than personal belief systems pre-disposed to bigotry, and is embedded in wider systems of power relations. Examining such power relations yields insight into how these are structured and operates to legitimate 'real' positions of social domination and subordination. It was Robert Miles (1982), who was one of the first to examine the varied connections between forms of meaning (in this case racist significations), and forms of power (the links between ideas about power and the power of ideas). Miles (1982), prescribes a focus on, " the ways in which racist ideology distorts social reality, reflects economic and political structures, and also acts as a condition of existence shaping those structures" (Wetherell and Potter, 1992:13). This approach highlights the importance of juxtaposing and comparing individual actions and actual patterns of behavior with, collective understandings (discursive repertoires or 'ideology'). In Frankenburg's (1993), terms; it provides a means to compare individual experiences. Experience being the intersection between discursive repertoires (manifestations of meaning), and material realities (manifestations of power).

In the social constructionist tradition, any focus on institutional practices, discriminatory actions, social structures and social divisions is inevitably intertwined with discourse. Discourse represents the way in which society gives voice to racism and acts to institute, solidify, change, create and reproduce social formations, essential to collectively (re)producing racially structured thinking (in Gilroy's (1997) understanding how signs and symbols of racial differentiation become 'apparent').

For Miles (1982), "if a discursive statement mistakes surface appearances for real relations, and is on weak ground scientifically, then the way is open to conclude that this discourse is ideological" (Wetherell and Potter, 1992:16). Popular and everyday notions of 'race', which give meaning and significance to certain superficial characteristics, such as skin color or physiogamy are believed to be erroneous in two senses. Firstly, racial descriptions are contradicted by developments in modern biology and genetics; and secondly, they perpetuate a conceptual terminology that is not adequate to describing the real nature of group relations.

For Miles (1982) (along with other Marxist accounts of ideology), ideology works by assuming the social as natural. Racial descriptions act as smokescreens distracting attention away from actual social divisions, through falsely extrapolating social theory from physical signs of difference. This point is well articulated by Jackson

(1987), who notes that if we are to advance our geographies beyond the categories of 'common sense' understanding we must recognize that 'race' has no explanatory value and serves little if any analytical purpose. We should instead focus on its ideological effects in various domains (scientific, political, commonsense etc), thus explicitly recognizing 'race' as a social construction, with no objective 'reality' independent of its social definition.

Through such an interpretation the possibility of an epistemological break between 'reality' and 'appearance', 'truth' and 'falsity' or 'essential' and 'phenomenal' forms is raised, " ideological discourse becomes discourse which obscures and mystifies, conceals and covers over real states of affairs, and which can be appropriately described as forms of false or deluded consciousness. This judgement is reached through the comparison of the racial account with the forms of the 'real' described in certain categories of scientific research. One class of discovery (the scientific) is thus privileged and its neutrality assumed in order to reveal the non-neutral and interested nature of other forms of discourse" (Whetherell and Potter,1992:18). Hence, despite reducing all that is 'real' to science and all that is not science to ideology (this simple binary has seen much criticism amid increased self-reflection by the academy), and despite still basing his understanding of 'race' as a relatively static 'noun', Miles's (1982) work is important for interpreting racially informed discourse. His interest being not the falsity of the history of the racial account, but the history of 'our collective delusion'. This proves useful at a time when our geographies urgently require substantial reappraisal of both the way people conceptualize 'race' and the way we act upon it, "the aim is to note how concepts in both scientific and public discourse are contested; how 'race' becomes a site of dispute and conflict. Some meanings and representations persist as effective systems of social justification, in flagrant contestation with newer alternative conceptions, long after discursive movement is possible... Discourses become ideological in this view not simply because they have a history, or because they are incorrect... ideology is distinguished by its social functions and effectivity, even if that effectivity is sometimes difficult to theorize" (Whetherell and Potter, 1992:21/22).

The task becomes one of coming to terms with the fluid, constructed and contested nature of the concept of 'race' and the evolution of racial discourse (alongside an interrogation of its material manifestation). If there exists no scientific validity in categorizing humanity into different races on the basis of physical variation and, if there exists no validity in the conception of the existence of some deterministic relationship between physical variation and psychological and/or social characteristics, then the question becomes just how the popular (mis)conception of race perpetuates (or in the above terms how 'racial' ideology comes to function?).

### **3.2 The Construction of 'Race'**

Any critical consideration of how 'race' is beheld needs to start by rejecting any integrity to claims of avowedly natural perceptual schemes. Although we can see individual variation, what should remain persistently clear is that "the human sensorium has had to be educated to the appreciation of racial differences. When it

comes to the visualization of discrete racial groups, a great deal of fine-tuning has been required" (Gilroy, 2000:42).

How did racialized discourse emerge? More specifically, how did the concept of 'race' set the conditions for racist expression and how do manifestations of racialized ideology *take place*? How were 'races' historically invented and socially imagined? If we are to answer these questions Goldberg (1992:544), reminds us that there is no single transhistorical phenomenon of racism that we can identify *per se*, rather "the emergence of racialized discourse (and hence as a matter of necessity the concept of race), sets the social conditions for racist expression (in some or other manifestation), to take place. Racisms (which I prefer to call racists expressions), began to emerge with the appearance of the concept of race, that is, with the set of interests that the concept expressed at the time of its emergence". Although it is possible to think of the set of social conditions we call racism as historically presupposing the concept of 'race', this may be conceptually but not empirically sound. Moreover, it makes little sense to question whether the concept or the disposition came first considering that transformations of racism's are closely entwined (as cause, as effect, or only as effect) (Goldberg, 1992:544), with the sets of interests 'race' expressed from the 16<sup>th</sup> century amidst changing social conditions. If we are to try and define 'race', we need in each instance to contextualize it historically. Goldberg (1992:544), suggests that in each instance we consider the following;

- how has the term 'race' been used in different times ?
- what has it signified in different times ?
- how has it served to articulate conceptions of self and other for its users?

Such an approach allows critical theorists to identity those features in our social formulations that have expressed racist formulations thus possibly enabling an identification of any transhistorical features that may indicate further use of the concept or provide an opportunity to limit its transformative capacity and adaptability.

Can we identify any history internal to racial thinking given that, "the prevailing meaning of race at any given historical conjuncture is embedded in and influenced by the prevailing conditions within the social mileau at the time" (Goldberg, 1992:559)? For Banton (1988 after Goldberg, 1992), what alters historically is not the conception of 'race' as such, but the way in which 'race' is explained (theories of and about) 'race'. If we see 'race' as, "a fluid, fragile and more or less vacuous concept capable of alternative senses" (Goldberg, 1992:559), then we need not to look so much at theories about 'race' but to "historically transforming conceptions of race, subjective identity and social signification" (Goldberg, 1992:559). It is to these transforming conceptions of 'race' and their changing significance that I now turn remembering that 'race' assumes specific meanings relative to prevailing historical conditions and discourses in given societies.

Before examining the history of the social construction of 'race' though, it is wise to take heed of Jackson's (1987:8) advice that; "the racism of previous generations may now appear self-evident. But one should beware of complacency in assuming

that our own ideas are so much more enlightened" especially given Gilroy's (2000) warning, that the basic mythology of racial difference remains at the heart of modern thinking.

### **3.2.1 The Scientific Construction of 'Race'**

The concept of 'race' emerged in European languages in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The word 'race', is thought to have originated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (approximately 1508), where for the most part it was used to refer to a class or category of persons or things (there was no implication that these classes or categories were considered biologically distinct) (Whetherell and Potter, 1992) (Remember here that historical shifts in how 'race' was theorized, or thought about are thought to have resulted in shifts in the very meaning of the concept) (Goldberg, 1992). Only during the 17<sup>th</sup> century when a number of Englishmen became interested in their historical origins, and concluded that they were the *decendents* of a German 'race' who were conquered by Norman invaders during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, did the concept of 'race' as lineage come about (Miles, 1982). 'Race' as lineage became the dominant philosophical conception from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was used extensively to make sense of national history. This concept rested on the idea of ancestry and the tracing of common origins back through related individuals and family lines ('race' was here theorized in terms of origin, breed or stock).

It was not assumed that all members of the same lineage would have the same fixed biological characteristics, indeed the concept of lineage is said to have a theological rather than a biological reference point (Whetherell and Potter, 1992). That is, 'races' were seen as distinct because they had a separate history (and there was little interest as to what else may be different between such races). Such thinking was founded on an idea of monogenesis based on a biblical claim that all humans were decedent from common stock (of godly origins decedent from Adam and Eve). But with increasing global expansion and interaction this theory soon became criticized for its weakness in explaining common phenotypical differences amongst certain groups. It was concluded that although all humans were decendents from the same parents, environmental factors (for example the heat of the sun), must be responsible for phenotypical differences (for example the fact that some decedents were darker skinned than others). This type of explanation soon floundered in the face of experience (for example when it was noticed that Africans transposed to Europe did not lighten and Europeans transposed to Africa did not darken) (Miles, 1982 after Whetherell and Potter, 1992).

It was during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century that science (specifically natural history and anthropological science), provided an alternative explanation to theological accounts of human difference. Separate human types or different 'races' were conceptualized and nominated according to inbuilt and distinguishable biological characteristics, and, then these were hierarchically arranged (Whetherell and Potter, 1992) (Goldberg, 1992). Nineteenth century 'race' science in general and evolutionary anthropology in particular, maintained that discrete 'races' existed and could be differentially ranked on the basis of hereditary, physical characteristics



and intelligence. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century 'race' typologies provided a solid foundation for explaining behavioral variation and justifying social inequality (Wander *et al.*, 1999). This shift from thinking of people predominantly in terms of pedigree to conceiving of them foremostly in terms of group identity was reflected in growing emphasis on the concept of population (identification on the basis of invariant heritable characteristics) (Goldberg, 1992). This is important given that, "Knowledge production, and this is especially true of social knowledge, does not take place independent of social circumstance. The production of knowledge is sustained and delimited by political economy and by culture - by its own and by that of society more generally. Productive practices act upon the epistemological categories invoked, informing the knowledge produced, imparting assumptions, values, and goals. These categories that frame knowing, in turn, order their users' terms of articulation, fashioning content of the known and constraining what and how members of the social order at hand think and what they think about. The grounds of knowledge, accordingly, offer 'foundations' for the constitution of social power" (Goldberg, 1997:28 after Habermas, 1988). Thus, although heavily implicated (see 4.2.2) science cannot alone be held accountable for naturalizing raciology or developing racial knowledge. Racial knowledge did though assume as its own, the modes and premises of established scientific fields, especially anthropology, natural history, and biology, but also of sociology, politics and economics and so was as much reflective as implicated in dominant thinking at the time (see Goldberg, 1992). The scientific cloak imparted to racial knowledge, a seemingly formal character of universality, authority and legitimation, "racial knowledge acquires its apparent authority by parasitically mapping its modes of expression according to the formal authority of the scientific discipline it mirrors" (Goldberg, 1997:28). Racial knowledge is able to do this because it has been integral to the emergence of these authoritative scientific fields historically. 'Race' has been a basic categorical object, and in some cases a founding focus of scientific analysis.

Epistemologically, power is exercised in naming and evaluating. In naming or refusing to name, existence is recognized or refused, meaning and values are assigned or ignored and people and things are elevated or rendered invisible. Once defined, symbolic order has to be maintained, serviced, extended and, operationalized. In this sense the racial other becomes nominated into existence. The "Other" becomes constituted through the invention of projected knowledge. The practices of naming and knowledge construction tend to deny any meaningful autonomy to those so named and imagined, extending over them power, control, authority, and domination (Goldberg, 1997).

### **3.2.1.1 The Emergence of Biological Racism**

I now turn to mapping just how 'racial' power came to be epistemologically correct. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, intense categorization and classification were the focus of natural and social sciences throughout Western Europe. Scientists from a range of disciplines were informing not only intense debate around the advantages and disadvantages of the different European 'races' (particularly with respect to informing north American immigration and settlement policies at the time) but, the

word was also being transported beyond the boundaries of Europe to the populations of the then ever expanding world. Racialization involved a set of social processes whereby a mode of categorization was developed, applied tentatively in European historical writing, and then more confidently, to the populations of the world (Banton, 1977a: 25 in Miles, 1982). It was the application of the term to the growing knowledge about populations outside Europe that came to refer to distinct biological types whose (supposed) differences were defined as permanent. It was no longer history but physical appearance, which was to divide humankind.

An important characteristic of the intellectual context of this time was the centrality of religious belief. The bible was a key text against which to measure the validity of all other ideas. The origin of 'race' and the racialization of the world developed in the context of a more specific debate around the origin of *Homo sapiens* more generally (which was by implication a debate about the validity of the historical record of human creation provided in the bible) (Miles, 1982). Herein lay a problem, either polygenists of the time made their theories biblically compatible or, they would need to embrace completely secular explanations for the origin of *Homo sapiens*. Given the predominance of religious thought, the latter was not feasible but given certain interpretations of the Old Testament already available, the former was possible (Miles, 1982).

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century 'race' had become a dominant scientific concept (as well as a highly political one). Although scientists of the time disagreed about much, debates however, took place against the background of an acceptance of a number of basic propositions

- The physical appearance and behavior of individuals was an expression of a discrete biological type which was permanent
- Cultural variation was determined by differences in biological type
- Biological variation was the origin of conflict between both individuals and nations
- Races were differentially endowed such that some were inherently superior to others.

(Banton, 1977a:47 in Miles,1982) .

Charles Darwin's "On the Origins of Species by the means of Natural Selection" (November, 1859), provided the first real challenge to typological classification. Darwin was less concerned with the static nature of formal classification ('races' for polygenists were tantamount to species, fixed more or less since a separate inception and incapable of breeding) and more concerned with the dynamic process of biological change (for Darwin, species were breeding populations and races subspecies). This laid the foundation for the complete rejection of polygenist arguments, through imparting a fluidity to taxonomic categories that was missing altogether from polygeneism. Darwin named a process of natural selection whereby those members of a given population, which are best adapted to their environment, contribute more to subsequent generations than those less well endowed. His emphasis upon selection, process and change, as well as his concern with environmental influences, contained an implicit challenge to the then hegemonic

ideas of static and permanent biological types. 'Races' became populations that diverge from each other in their relative gene frequencies or the degree of possessing certain inherited characteristics that even in one population tend not to converge. Darwin's theory provided a possible foundation to provide a monogenic explanation for the very obvious range of physical variation of *Homo sapiens*. Moreover, the assumptions of the exponents of theories of racial typology were deeply rooted, and given the prevailing economic and political circumstances in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was little room for a sudden and wide-ranging change in intellectual direction. The idea of natural selection thus became wedded to the existing ideas of racial typology (a moment later to be classified as social Darwinism) (Miles, 1982; Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Goldberg, 1992).

Before continuing, it is important to note that, "the theory of evolution serves as a warning, though often ignored, to those who would proceed in rigidly classifying the human species into 'races' on genetic grounds, and perhaps those who would proceed with such classifications at all. Darwin issued the challenge to any theory investigating explanatory power in the conception of 'race', and he did this at the very moment that race had assumed discursive hegemony in colonizing social space. 'Race' had set the parameters to what could be rational and reasonable, credible and utterable. It had drawn bounds around common sense" (Hall, 1988:44 in Goldberg, 1992:546). Nevertheless, "prompted by Darwin's influence (and at least tentatively), 'race' began to occupy the position not of explanans but of explanandum, of the social object requiring rather than furnishing scientific explanation" (Goldberg, 1992:546).

The next major moment in the development of scientific racism came with developments in genetics (in particular the work of Mendel). With an increased understanding of our genotypical and phenotypical bases (a fundamental change in the conceptual scale of the human body came about - see section 3.4) it became evident that much work on racial typology (then influenced by social Darwinism), which was classifying the world's races on phenotypical features, needed to be reconsidered. It was already clear that the various phenotypical features did not co-vary with each other in a consistent way, and it became clear that, the proposed classification of the world's population into discrete 'races' using phenotypical variation was erroneous. Various claims about hierarchy and superiority were dependent upon the validity of an initial proposition about the permanence of phenotypical type, and this was exposed as false by the development of genetics. Yet, despite the weight of scientific evidence, similar sorts of classifications continue (Miles, 1982:15).

In terms of a typology of 'races' based on genotypical variation, there are grounds for identifying systematic genetic variation that could be termed 'races' (if 'races' are seen as populations which differ in the frequency or prevalence of different genes). But, the extent of genetic variation within any population is usually greater than the average difference between populations, and although the frequency of occurrence of different alleles does vary from one race to another, any particular genetic combination can nevertheless be found in almost any 'race'. In addition due to inter-breeding and large-scale migrations, the distinctions between 'races' identified

in terms of polymorphic frequencies are often blurred. Thus, despite the existence of measurable genetic variation between groups, it is not possible to generate from it a discrete classification of races; "Races, are not, and never were, groups clearly defined biologically. The gene flow between human populations makes race boundaries always more or less blurred" (Dobzhansky in Miles, 1982:16 after Osborne, 1971:16).

It is not being denied that there are identifiable, measurable group differences in the overall pattern of gene frequencies. It is accepted that there exist what may be termed gene pools maintained through, "the random interchange of within (interbreeding) groups and other genetic processes, a certain commonality of traits is often established and maintained within such populations" (Montagu, 1972 in Miles, 1982:68). However, the formation and maintenance of the intra-breeding populations are not due to genetic or any other biological factors. The determining factors are rather geographical and socio-economic. Both factors tend to obstruct spatial movement of populations while socio-economic factors discourage or prevent sexual relations between groups that are defined and or define themselves as somehow distinct from others. However, as has already been emphasized, the different genetic profiles or genes that result from these processes do not exhibit absolute difference only, continuous variation.

There is no simple or direct relationship between genetic variation and visible physical variation (such as skin color, height, etc): many genotypical differences are not evident phenotypically while different geographical populations, which share certain phenotypical features, do not necessarily share the same genotype, and populations which look alike may not necessarily share the same genetic profile. "It is clear from all this evidence that the interpretation of genetic variation cannot be overlaid with the notions advanced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century theorists of racial typology. The nature and pattern of genetic variation does not allow one to divide the world's population into a number of permanent and discrete 'races' that can be hierarchically ordered. Neither is there any suggestion by most geneticists that genetic variation is related to some sort of capacity for 'civilization' as did those in the 19<sup>th</sup> century who were obsessed with the measurement of cranial capacity" (Miles, 1982:18). In other words, when geneticists and biologists use the word 'race' to refer to a genetic variation as described above, its referent is quite different from that of the nineteenth century and herein lies a fundamental conceptual problem. Is there any reason for scientifically redefining 'race' to mean something which approaches the opposite of its meaning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

Miles (1982) believes that there is no valid reason for doing so. Any attempt to redefine a concept will almost certainly involve a transfer effect with the result that the new meaning is 'infected' with aspects of the previous interpretation. The drawing of scientific boundaries around populations in order to separately identify them, as 'races' is simultaneously arbitrary, a matter of taste and a matter of politics (see Goldberg, 1992; Kincheloe, 1999). Miles (1982), warns us that since the terminologies of 'race' and 'racial' are based on misapprehensions (and since the outcomes have the implicit effect of maintaining exclusionary power relations), these concepts should be given no explanatory or descriptive utility within social

science, "their illusionary status should be further signified by quotation marks whenever the terms are used" (Wetherell and Potter, 1992:18).

The nature of those power relations become apparent if we consider Wander *et al*'s (1999), reminder that the scholarship of 'race' occurred during the period of colonial expansion at which time the subjugation of 'native' peoples was a strategic priority. Anthropologists and Egyptologists found evidence of cultural, social, technological and spiritual inferiority of non-white races throughout human history, these 'facts' confirmed colonial propaganda at home and abroad. The natural world was seen to have an intrinsic hierarchal order in which 'white' people became the last and most *developed* link in the great chain of being. As will be discussed shortly in section 4.2.2, the science fiction of 'race' is intimately related to colonization and modernity.

### **3.2.2 Thinking through 'Race'**

As introduced at the beginning of this chapter, it is not only the changing social manifestations of 'race' to which I should focus my study in terms of contemporary critical enquiry but also to historical transformations of our *conceptions* of 'race' as well. For Goldberg (1992), 19<sup>th</sup> century positivism has had the influence of ensuring a reductionistic mindset within our academy for explanations of social groupings and divisions within the body politic. The influence of the 'reasonable mind' (see Kincheloe, 1999), has been to ensure that the epistemologies of racial interrogation have, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century concerned, themselves with ways to explain the complexity of group structure and relations, in terms of simpler more 'fundamental' levels taken to lie at their foundation (Goldberg, 1992). In terms of explanations of racialized phenomena, this mindset has commonly been reflected in two forms of interpretation. In one sense 'race', is seen as a '*natural kind*' and underlying social (in terms of class or cultural explanations) relations, or biological (in terms of reference to 'the gene-pool') relations who are both deemed primary or more basically motivating than social structure. The other paradigm is an explanatory paradigm that gives no independent content to 'race'. If the first paradigm reifies 'race' as an unquestioned '*given*', the second conceives of racial relations as '*ghost-like*' (lacking any determining motivational force of its own), and thus any appeal to 'race' is perceived to be misleading, representing 'false-consciousness' or as is more commonly referred to as 'ideology'. It is this second mindset to which many contemporary social commentators are said to have fallen prey (Goldberg, 1992).

For Wetherell and Potter (1992), the social function of ideology can most easily be examined if, "ideology is thought to work by imposing, usually liberal, metaphysical abstractions which conceal and obscure the real exploitative basis of social relations. Abstractions give the impression that society is rationally, reasonably and harmoniously ordered. Ideology is the means by which the ruling class consolidates and reproduces its advantage through preserving its partial and sectoral interests as the universal interests of the entire community" (Billig after Wetherell and Potter, 1992:24). According to Miles (after Wetherell and Potter, 1992), this misrepresentation is necessary to preserve the colonial and capitalist status quo, through concealing actual interests and reproducing particular relations of social/economic production thus securing a position of dominance for its

initiators. What is not necessarily made clear though is just how ideology might go about influencing the political or economic conditions, nor how effective ideology might be in accomplishing this task. Moreover, there seems to be little direction given as to how we should expose or move away from racial ideologies.

'False' ideas are said to be able to exist through offering sufficiently 'sensible' explanations for social experience that is ideology functions as 'common sense'. One reason why racist ideologies are said to be so enduring and powerful, is because they can offer "practical adequacy in the face of the knowing subject" (Sayer, 1979:8 in Wetherell and Potter, 1992:31). Racisms or racialized expressions are a false explanations and representations of social processes, yet have sufficient appearance of explanatory validity to enter 'common sense' and become acceptable. Our, "ideas may be reflections of the distortions within their social situation but people are the active participants here. They produce the knowledge, they think their thoughts, and they reach conclusions. They are in an important sense the source of knowledge and create it through their ruminations on their, albeit partial and restructured, experience" (Wetherell and Potter, 1992:31).

Such an interpretation is problematic though in its formulation of "discourse as both reflective, a medium which simply expresses, and thus stands to one side of 'the already there', and ideology as in some way constitutive of social conditions" (Wetherell and Potter, 1992:32). But, at least the mutual constitution of knowledge, discourse and social and material processes are acknowledged. This is deemed important because it allows theorists to move beyond a conception of racism as wilful bigotry or deliberate prejudice (see Goldberg, 1997), to acknowledging the range of subtle processes through which the power relations of 'racism' are (re)produced. In so doing, the ways in which the racially dominant can unwittingly perpetuate racism's, through operating 'normally' within our modes of production, socio-political and spatial organization, becomes increasingly evident. If ideology governs peoples activities and can specifically be read through their social, political or cultural practices, then a social revolution unaccompanied by an ideological revolution will imply a return to the structures overthrown because of our habitual and unconscious actions and relations. Given Goldberg's (1992,1997), analysis of the relationship between discourses of 'race' and real historical relations, as academics, we need to consistently be aware of the enduring effects of raciological ideology. If we take ideology to be a material as opposed to ineffable force in this context then we may conclude that;

- Ideology is forceful and effective and has visible results particularly for the objects of racist ideologies
  - Ideology is found within institutions. It has a concrete life embodied in 'ideological state apparatuses' such as schools, churches, mass media, trade unions and in all the places people are taught to recognize themselves in particular ways
  - Ideology is material in that it constitutes particular individuals and fixes them into positions within hierarchies. People are produced as particular kinds of beings predisposed to certain kinds of activities
- (Wetherell and Potter, 1992:28).

Thus, even if the biological sciences played an important role in the construction of 'race', it does not follow that the continued use of the term is nothing more than the result of cultural reproduction. Ideas are not formulated and reproduced of their own accord. We should therefore ask why the idea of 'race' was given such great significance during the 19th century, by whom, and whether this construction of 'race' can be related to preceding ideological and material processes. Wetherell and Potter (1992), suggest that since 'common knowledge' has not taken up more recent scientific conceptions of 'race', we need to search for reasons for continuing racial ideologies. Moreover, Goldberg (1992) notes that, if racialized discourse and expressions are taken as ideological and thus 'politically charged' it does not necessarily mean that exposing 'race' as a morally irrelevant category will do anything to end its endurance. To take note, "that race is a morally irrelevant category fails to get at what is centrally abhorrent about racist lynching or expressions, discriminatory labour practices, segregated housing or voter misapportionment. To deem these sorts of practices to be wrong merely because 'race' is appealed to as a mode of picking out their objects is to discourage further concern about what is really important. The implication is either that there is nothing more at issue than the arbitrariness of the category applied or worse, that amongst the wrongs they are not nearly the most evil" (Goldberg, 1992:562).

What is the next step for critical theorists once they've realized and come to terms with the fact that racisms have no factual basis yet racialized ideologies perpetuate? Goldberg (1992), suggests that we consider what difference it would make to our considerations if 'races' turned out to be real, that is, what if there were relatively homogenous population groups in terms of some given physical or cultural characteristic?

Well, "we would be able to draw from this bald admission nothing about the relative values of the 'races' in question, for to claim otherwise would violate the constraint of the naturalistic fallacy that from purely empirical presuppositions we can infer no normative conclusions" (Goldberg, 1992:562). Additionally Goldberg (1992), notes that should there once have been a basis for considering homogenous population groups, the shrinking of obvious cultural and physical differences under late capitalism "should serve as an adequate warning of the inevitable design in trying to sustain the thrust of racial homogeneity, whether biologically or culturally conceived" (Goldberg, 1992:563). This is to insist conceptually on a point already historically elaborated, "classification, valuation, and ordering are processes central to racial creation and construction. The ordering at stake need not be hierarchical, but it must at least identify difference; and the valuation need not claim superiority, since all that it must minimally sustain is a criterion of inclusion and exclusion. It follows that race is irreducibly a *political* category". That is, "no matter how races form and whatever the meanings- and I have insisted that both the processes and the connotations are various and historically specific- racial creation and management acquire import in framing and giving specificity to the body politic. In this sense, race basically serves- sometimes explicitly and assertively, other times silently and subtly- to define self-ownership and self-direction. It has established who can be imported and who can be exported; who are immigrants and who are indigenous; who are property and who are citizens; and amongst the latter who can



vote and who cannot, who are protected by the law and who is its object, who are employable and who are not, who have access and privilege and who are marginalized" (Goldberg, 1992:563).

To conclude, "that racialized objects are manufactured in the simulacrum of reference suggests that the issue is not the fact but the terms of asserted reference, its mode, styles, affects and effects. The fabrication and manipulation of racial construction acquire significance purely instrumentally" (Goldberg, 1992:564). So where does this leave us? The task is no longer simply to discredit the myriad of ways and diverse processes through which racially structured ideologies falsely divide and order our societies. Instead we need to be able to interrogate the range of racist expressions and their influence, determinations, nature and consequences, to the point that we at least have a better idea of the 'racisms' of which we speak, in short we need at least to know what we're talking about. This research then aims to set the parameters of what is meant by whiteness and its influence on the contemporary (as well as our influence as academics in extending and reifying the concept through investing in the assumptions of the 'construct'). Before turning to consider in what ways raciology is undergoing crisis during the contemporary I wish to briefly consider cultural, ethnic and national features of racialized rationalization on which more recent racialized ideologies are based.

### **3.2.3 Social Conceptions of 'Race'**

#### **(a) 'Race' as class:**

In contemporary discourse 'race' is usually used or assumes significance in terms of class or culture. When 'race' is understood to mean either socio-economic status or some relation to the dominant mode of production. As status 'race' functions as an index of social standing or ranking in the social system relative to the position of others. 'Race' is, in this paradigm, seen to be reflected in criteria like wealth, education, style of life, linguistic capacity, residential location, consumptive capacity, having or lacking respect, for example which contribute to a critical complex of self-conception and valuations by others (Goldberg, 1992:547).

Within such a conceptualization it becomes apparent why 'race' is so often equated with class. If class is taken to be a position that defines social distinction and involves classification into groups occupying distinct social positions then it does precisely what 'race' does in the formulation used in this research. For those rejecting the biological connotation, 'races' are identified with socially formed and materially determined class positions (or fundamental economic or structural relationships in terms of relations to the mode of production and corresponding interests), in which 'race' is often conceived as masking these relationships and interests. But class analysis, whether in terms of status or modal relation, still assumes 'race' to be empty in itself and assumes the sense of the conception of class which it is taken to determine. This is not to say that 'race' as class has not made us more fully aware of the constructed nature of social position (imposed as opposed to inherited and natural perceptual schemes), but there remain infinite limitations to any identification of 'race' with class, "conceiving race in terms of class

is tendentious, for we are encouraged to identify race misleadingly as class, as class under another name. This either leaves unexplained those cultural relations that race is so often taken to express or it wrongly reduces them to more or less veiled instantiations of class formation" (Goldberg, 1992:548)

**(b) 'Race' as culture:**

As the biological set of conceptions has increasingly been discredited, it is the cultural set of senses that has come to enjoy popular and academic discursive commitment. Generally, the cultural conception includes identifying 'race' with language group and religion. Group habits, mores or customs, dominant style of behavior, dress, cuisine, music, literature and art. Primarily at issue with such cultural differentiations are group-circumscribed values (Goldberg, 1992:549).

Since World War Two and especially in the last decade or so, the cultural conception has eclipsed all others. In the cultural conception many insist that racial differentiation inevitably appeals if only implicitly to underlying biological claims. Even where the surface expression is cultural commitment to racial groupings it is thought necessarily to be a commitment to biological distinction. The only difference between 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century forms of racial differentiation in this understanding seems to be at the level of surface expression (Goldberg, 1992:549). Appealing to differentiating races in terms of historical criteria presupposes a belief in biologically distinct races as the only way of identifying the subject who's these distinct histories are taken to be. If common racial membership entails shared heritable, moral and intellectual characteristics not shared with members of other 'races' which has entailed the widespread claim as a matter of 'historical fact' that some races are superior to others there needs to be some independent way of picking out group members who can then be said to share their history, and this is claimed to be the false belief in biological heritability. For Goldberg (1992) this claim that ascriptions of race are inevitably reducible to a single essential claim about biological heritability is both conceptually and empirically false and wrongly turns on a singular, unchanged and transhistorical reading of the significance of race, "even in picking out a person in a crowd in terms of skin color as the sole mark of identification. For 'black' and 'white' are never single shades of skin hue, indeed, are rarely properly black or white in colour at all, and are often confused with one another (as in the case of 'passing' and sun tans). What pigmentation stands for in such cases of ostensive reference, as Wittgenstein (1968) may be read to suggest, is a range of enculturated characteristics that include (but need not be limited to) a model of dress, bearing, gait, hairstyle, speech, and so forth' (Wittgenstein, 1968 after Goldberg, 1992:553)

'Race' as culture can be closely associated with race as ethnicity. The way of looking at 'race' as a fluid, transforming, historically specific concept parasitic on theoretical and social discourses for the meaning it assumes at a given historical moment seems to imply that 'race' is simply a form of ethnicity. In invoking an ethnocentric concept of 'race', ethnicity becomes a mode of cultural identification and distinction. Although the relationship between culture and ethnicity is close, the concepts are not synonymous. In the same way that 'race' is not straightforwardly, reducible to claims of biology it cannot simply or straightforwardly be reducible

solely to claims of cultural difference. The general process of ethnic group formation looks at boundary construction and on the internalization and naturalization of identity by social subjects. Boundary construction involves the erection of more or less set divisions between groups identified as self or other. Boundaries are established by invoking the 'fact' of differences that may assume any combination of identifiable forms, including mental, cultural, social, moral, aesthetic, kinship, linguistic, and territorial divides. In this conception what is more important than the claimed differences are the built boundary and the criteria of group membership. Assigning significance to biological attributes in this way would, for instance, be a cultural choice. The biological in a sense becomes one amongst a choice of possible cultural criteria for determining ethnicity. Many of the groups identified in the past as races are now commonly referred to in ethnic terms, though not all social groups are now specified in the language of ethnicity (Goldberg, 1992:556).

By insisting that 'race' and ethnicity may at times be used synonymously Goldberg (1992), is not suggesting that 'race' be explained in ethnic terms. Indeed we need to avoid the pervasive explanation of race in social science what Omi and Winant (1987), identify as the 'ethnic paradigm', which "reduces racial formations to ethnicity and analyzes the future trajectory of the racial condition to the melting-pot experience of immigrant assimilation. Nevertheless, the paradigm ignores the specific experiences of racially defined groups, and difference within the groups so defined. Because it takes the formative experience of ethnic groups as generally similar, it overlooks experience in the social constitution of groups of oppressive conditions like colonialism, slavery, exclusion, and in some cases, virtual extirpation. Perceived failures of some racially defined groups to advance or integrate are taken to be a function not of dominant boundary construction, restriction, and exclusion but of absence of certain kinds of values on the part of the group itself. This paradigmatic disposition to blame the victim implicitly, reifies as given the very racial definition of otherness that it is claiming to erode, much as it takes for granted the assumption of ethnic identification that it valorizes. The racial other is necessarily different, but essentially alike within this categorical difference" (Goldberg, 1992:556). This type of thinking is said to be central to the logic of apartheid which circumscribed racial others as undifferentially 'other' in order to set them apart, only to later disaggregate them along ethnically defined lines to divided and rule. The ethnic paradigm is thus one possible contemporary meaning of 'race'.

#### **(c) 'Race' as Nation:**

Another contemporary meaning of 'race' comes in the form of its close association with 'nation'. As early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century the sense of nation stimulated the early significance of 'race' as lineage. The enlightenment concern with national characteristics, often explicitly identified these characteristics racially. Similarly the great nationalist drives of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and their imperialist counterparts commonly invoked the banner of 'race' as a conceptual rallying cry for example legislation restricting immigration this century in Australia, Britain, Germany, France and the United States imposed in the name of national self-consciousness was in each case implicitly racialized. That these policies seemed 'natural' for Goldberg (1992), attests to the intersection of notions of native and nation. As concepts 'race'

and nation are largely empty receptacles through and in the name(s) of which population groups may be invented, interpreted and imagined as communities or societies. Under some interpretations then 'races' (as population groupings), can transcend national boundaries, an example of such non-national nations are the Jews. As such we can conclude that each nation must be taken to have a unique set of characteristics that mark them off as distinct 'races', for example Englishness (in the sense popularized by post-colonial theorists).

#### **(d) Prevailing meanings of 'race'**

From section's 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 we can conclude that initially 'race' meant root or pedigree and later with the emergence of formalized studies of population groupings 'race' came to be used synonymously with variety, family or type of population. With the emergence of Darwinian evolutionary theory, 'race' came to signify a common gene pool or breeding population, "very broadly we might be able to say that lineage can be identified with the 'discovery', physical or conceptual, of the racial other, of the initial 'empirical' observation of significant differences in the drive to empire and domination" (Goldberg, 1992:558). The specification of 'race' as population is more or less coterminous with the maturing of the colonial condition, as are 'breeding populations' with separation and subjugation of those racialized others and, gene pools with legally sanctioned segregation. These are simply rough correlations and do not imply that these concepts originated on functional imperatives but, "with the shift in emphasis from explanatory principle to object of explanation, by contrast, race first identified with class or status, and then more emphatically culture, ethnicity, or nation" (Goldberg, 1992:559). Banton (1988,xi;63 in Goldberg,1992:559) correspondingly divides the study of race into three periods; (1) the establishment of the knowledge of races, (2) elaboration and expertise concerning the management of intra- and interracial relations, (3) sociological examination of race as opposed to the biological examination. What alters historically in Banton's (1988) view is not so much the conception of 'race' but rather the way in which the phenomenon of 'race' is explained (theories of and about race).

If we return to the point made earlier that the prevailing meaning of race at any given historical moment is embedded in and influenced by the prevailing conditions of the social milieu at that time (Goldberg, 1992), then we should consider the history internal to racial thinking which sets the limits on the thinkable at any moment, that is the socio-logic of racialized knowledge. If we see 'race' as "a fluid, fragile and more or less vacuous concept capable of alternative senses, then we shall not take the various notions identified above first and foremost as theories about 'race'. We shall take them alternatively as transformed and historically transforming *conceptions* of race, subjective identity and social identification" (Goldberg, 1992:559). Race thus assumes significance both in terms of prevailing social and epistemological conditions at the time whilst simultaneously bearing with it sedimentary traces of past significations. Since its inception 'race' has assumed the symbolic power to colonize the terms of social interpretation, habit and expression at any given moment, "that race, conceptually is not completely vacuous is crucial, for it traces color all social and scientific theorizing into which it is insinuated. The minimal significance that 'race' bears in itself is not of biological but

of naturalized group relations. 'Race' serves to naturalize the groupings that it identifies in its own name. In articulating as natural ways of being in the world and the institutional structures in and through which such ways of being are expressed, 'race' both establishes and rationalizes the order of difference as a law of nature. This law may be of human and not merely of biological nature" (Goldberg, 1992:560 after Guillaumin, 1989). In so doing 'race' gives to social relations a veneer of fixedness and long duration (a historicity) and moreover invokes "the tendency to characterize assent relations in the language of descent. As such, group formation seems destined as eternal, fated as unchanging and unchangeable" (Goldberg, 1992:560)

In short, "race creation emerges out of the creations, the fabrications, the real social relations in their constructed reproductions and transformations of given discursive formations and expressions. These creations are products of actual relations: it is real people, after all, who express themselves by means of a given discourse or set of discourses, who make meaning and history. Yet these social (self-creations come as though given, fixed from on high, seemingly natural phenomena imposed almost unchangingly upon an innocent and so non-responsible social order" (Goldberg, 1992:561). In order to understand how this process can come about and in order to understand just how 'race' can seem reasonable, it is necessary to return to the point at which raciology emerged, that point from which 'race' has been an inextricable part of our thinking and social ordering processes.

### **3.3 Modernity and 'Race'**

Thus far I have alluded to the fact that racialization took place within (and necessitated), a very specific intellectual and material context. It has become increasingly evident throughout this research that if we are to understand the emergence of 'race' we need to look at the history of ideas alongside the history of social and economic relations, and need to explore the mutual constitution of patterns of knowledge production alongside social and material conditions. According to Bonnett (2000), "one cannot grasp the development of the modern world, and more specifically the notion of what is modern and what is not without an appreciation of the racialized nature of modernity, and, more particularly of its association with a European identified race" (Bonnett, 2000:2).

Paul Gilroy (2000), is one of the few critical theorists who has begun interrogating the relationship between 'race' and modernity. His contention is that by looking at Enlightenment assumptions about culture, cultural value, aesthetics, ethics and universal moral standards for instance alongside the emergence of 'race' thinking, it becomes evident that there is a unique epoch in which an ethnically absolutist and culturalist racism was produced. The age of imperialism and colonization is said to have contributed to the development of political discourse that aligned 'race' closely with the idea of national belonging and which stressed complex cultural difference rather than simple biological hierarchy. It is in this formulation that 'blackness' and 'europeaness' suddenly appeared as mutually exclusive attributes divided by a terrain of culture and not of 'politics' marking the beginning of a new socio-political and philosophical episteme. For Gilroy (2000), interrogating the relationship

between capitalism, industrialization, democracy and, the emergence and consolidation of 'race' thinking through the lens of modernity allows us to grasp how, "knowledge and power produced the truths of 'race' and nation close to the summit of modern reflections on individuality, subjectivity and ontology, time, truth and beauty" (Gilroy, 2000:56).

'Race thinking' may have existed in earlier periods but modernity transformed the way 'race' was understood and acted upon. The relationship between how 'race' was/is presented as a permanent extra-historical principle of differentiation (i.e. naturalized) and the implications of conceiving 'race' as such are, most constructively comprehended as a specific social product constituted through a number of historical processes which can be mapped in detail. For Gilroy (2000), it is a short step from appreciating the ways in which particular 'races' have been historically invented and socially imagined to seeing how modernity catalyzed a distinctive reign of truth known as raciology (raciology being his shorthand for the variety of essentializing and reductionist ways of thinking through 'race' that are both cultural and biological in character). This idea of 'race' was made epistemologically compatible through the modern human sciences especially geography and anthropology. This required novel ways of understanding embodied alterity, hierarchy and temporality in which the body was made to communicate an irrevocable otherness (as will be discussed in chapter 4). In short, the development of the tenets of modernity as a social ordering process and the development of raciology are inextricably linked.

For Gilroy (1987), reconsidering the empirically narrow focus of our considerations of ethnicity, culture and 'race' involves, "tracing the racial signs from which discourse and cultural value were constructed and their conditions of existence in relation to European aesthetics and philosophy as well as European science can contribute to an ethnohistorical reading of the aspirations of western modernity as a whole and the critique of Enlightenment assumptions in particular" (Gilroy, 1987:8). In addition when considering this era Gilroy (2000), proposes that we cannot understand raciology without connecting it to the expansion of modernity from Europe to the rest of the world. This specifically involves an understanding of how the dominator group came to be marked as 'modern' and 'others' as premodern. That is, how notions of "primitive and civilized which had been integral to the pre-modern understanding of 'ethnic' differences became fundamental cognitive and aesthetic markers in the process which operated a constellation of subject positions in which Englishness, Christianity, and ethnic and racialized attributes would finally give way to the dislocating dazzle of whiteness" (Gilroy, 1987:9)

In particular, manifestations of the modern order such as: democracy, liberal capitalism and the nation state required a particular interpretation of polity, the role of the subject, governance and nationality. However, changes in political, economic and social organization are fundamental changes and took place alongside a change in dominant philosophies (that is during the historical period here named 'the Enlightenment'), without which, raciology could not have been conceptually or empirically possible. These changes include (amongst others) a change in the registration of time and space, a reconfiguration of the public and private sphere,

the emergence of widespread urban living, a new relationship between Europe (the 'white' west) and the rest of the world.

Politically territorial sovereignty meant that governmental powers had to adopt new communicative and cultural apparatuses, in their struggles to consolidate the 'new' nation state. These 'apparatuses' in particular resulted in the emergence of a distinctive quality in both individuality and ethical life. In short, the nature of polity (during the same time as raciology emerged), can be noted to have prompted/forged a new relationship between place, community and identity. But the extent to which these 'apparatuses' were implicated in raciology, that is, just how 'race' fitted into this new order has had little interrogation by critical theory. For instance, just what is the relationship between 'race' and the new subjectivities of the time and their relationship to 'western civilization'?

Emphasizing the junction of 'culture', 'race' and 'nation' provides an interesting space in which to consider this moment. Ethnicity and cultural integrity are characteristically modern phenomena. The moment that exposes the link between raciology and the modern political order for Gilroy (2000) is the nature of colonial and imperial power. He contends that modern political theory was annexed even in its emergent phase by the imperatives of colonial power. That is, the statescraft in place reasonably allowed for a racialized hierarchy to be in place which enunciated standards which in turn enabled or provided an opportunity for Europe's geo-body to entrench itself in terms of (a) its political imaginations; (b) its communicative systems or ideologies; (c) its imperial systems.

A number of complex processes culminated in the governmental order of the modern nation that was also an imperial state. "This new pattern of power rewrote the rules of political and ethical conduct according to novel principles that were opposed to ancient and modern notions of political rationality, self possession, democracy and citizenship" (Gilroy, 2000:62). Wherever the modern idea of 'race' took hold, a characteristic perversion of the principles of democratic politics resulted and "modernity's new political codes must be acknowledged as having been compromised by the raciological drives that partly formed them and wove a deadly exclusionary force into their glittering universal promises" (Gilroy, 2000:62). The conjunction of capitalist commerce and national governments associated with Anglo-centric modernity inevitably projected onto the rest of the world, a number of discreet cultures arranged into antagonistic national units or states (as geographers we need particularly consider our role in this set of processes). For Gilroy (2000), realizing this relationship raises the question- "in what sense does modernity belong to a closed entity, a 'geo-body' named Europe? What forms of consciousness, solidarity and located subjectivity does it solicit and produce? What might modernity compromise if the unspoken link with European planetary consciousness was broken, stretched or even tested" (Gilroy, 2000:57). If 'race' is comprehended as a specific social product an active and dynamic principle that assists in the constitution of modern social reality then, it is a short step from appreciating the ways in which 'race' was historically invented and socially imagined to seeing how modernity and raciology intruded on moral and political conduct and culminated in



the governmental order of the modern nation that was also an imperial state (Gilroy,2000).

"The ideal of humanity emerged not only as something that was monopolized by Europe, it could take place only in the neatly bounded territorial units where true and authentic culture could take root under the unsentimental eye of a ruthlessly eugenic government" (Gilroy, 2000:62). In addition, this was also a new type of contractual unity "which could demand the sacrifice of individual life in the service of collective goals. In sharp contradistinction to mechanized conceptualizations of modern government, raciology required the state to be an organism, rooted in and acting on the volk" (Gilroy, 2000:63). Freedom for the subject consequently became located in, "a private inner world rather than in any opportunity created by modern social and political institutions. This inner freedom required a voluntary submission to outward political authority that could be justified in turn as a matter of biological necessity. The commitment to an organic ordering of humankind was important because it endorsed the claims of racial science to observe, organize and regulate the social body" (Gilroy, 2000:63).

At the same time the emergence of these subjectivities, "spatiality, place territory and location were ontologized and history reconceptualized in elaborate geographical and geopolitical designs. Inferior and no longer merely different, other races were completely excluded from its compass and became prehistoric as well as extracultural. Their exclusion by means of a racialized rationality had the clearest implications for the cosmopolitan folly of imagining human beings to be essentially undifferentiated collectivity" (Gilroy, 2000:63).

The different statuses of people, their cultures, destinies and different racial and national spirits, for Gilroy (2000), are circulated through modern discourse on nation states. Entering into this equation a reflexive stance on the politics of time (a concept often called historicity by critical theorists), at this stage allows for an additional link to be made between ontology, nationality and theories of racial difference. Presupposing a politics of time enabled specific ideas of authenticity or national principle to elevate "'race' to a determining position in theories of history, especially those that pronounce war and conflict, naturalizing them in the convenient idea if specifically race based imperial conflict. Historically thus conveys the raciological rationalization of history" (Gilroy, 2000:64).

Considering the plausibility of the modern project in the context of its contingent political choices forces us to question "whether enlightened modernity may have been compromised if not undone by its tolerance of, and collusion with, the rational irrationalism of emergent social sciences. This is another way of saying that enlightenment pretensions toward universality were punctured from the moment of their conception in the womb of colonial space. Their very foundations were destabilized by their initial exclusionary configuration: by endorsement of 'race' as a central political and historical concept and by the grave violence done to the central image of man by the exigencies of colonial power, which offered a path towards the prison of exotic status as the only escape route from terror" (Gilroy, 2000:65). Here again we need to consider our specific role as geographers, both in terms of

our present projects and in terms of our disciplinary history. To what extent are our discourses still enforcing exclusionary configurations new and old? How accountable are we for letting whiteness take place, past and present?)

The racialization of the nation state and the consequent transformations of national community involved a comprehensive change from how politics had been understood in the past. In the space created by geopolitical statescraft and, imperialistic propaganda, politics no longer involved the ideal of managing inescapable plurality and multiplicity in a clearly demarcated, public realm for which participants took full responsibility. Rather, the idea of citizenship became transformed once the unanimity of the mass could be orchestrated from above by government. The effects were not felt only by the victims of raciology but also by the supposed beneficiaries who, although offered superiority in the new racial hierarchy, lost a universal humanity. The transformation of the nation state into a "new type of collective body integrated; metaphorically, culturally and politically" (Gilroy, 2000:67), was, in part, thus aided by racial discourse.

The progression from an anatomo-politics of the human body to a biopolitics of the population reiterates this close relationship between scientific raciologies and the workings of imperial nations, "right at the summit of imperial power, the combined impact of anthropology, raciology and nationalism further reduced the already truncated civic functioning of the nation state. The nation was invested with characteristics associated with bio-cultural kinship in which new forms of duty and mutual obligation appeared to regulate relationships between members of the collective, while those who fell beyond the boundaries were despised, reviled and subjected to entirely different political and judicial procedures, especially if they did not benefit from the protection of an equivalent political body. In fulfillment of the organic imperative, the integrity of imperial nations was actively re-imagined to derive from the primordial particularity of pre-modern tribes" (Gilroy, 2000:68)

What legitimacy can we accord the partial and particular that opted to represent them as totalising and transcendent? "Universality, reason and progress, modernity and enlightenment: these glorious ideals were once the sturdy cornerstones of an all-conquering Occidental mentality. They have recently registered the shock of the postmodern critique of knowledge, truth and science" (Gilroy, 2000:68). This is not to say that the confidence and authority of western political culture can never be restored. Instead a partial and pragmatic reform can proceed only if the depths of these traditions difficulties with 'race' are fully appreciated. Any sustained engagement with the problems of 'race' will have to acknowledge that the recurrence of terror and barbarity associated with 'race' communicates more than a lapse from the more exalted standards of rational conduct, "we need to consider the circumstances in which the application of terror can merge as a rational, legal or acceptable option. What varieties rationality sanction radiological brutality? How has the human, ...circulated in those lofty attempts to differentiate epistemology and morality, aesthetics and ethics?" (Gilroy, 2000:72). Once the exclusionary character of modernity's inclusive 'aspirations' have been exposed alongside its humanistic rhetoric, then the image of humanity it projects can be exposed as fraudulent. "As the history of colonial conflict suggests, European enlightenments

universal aspirations were undermined where they have been reinterpreted as tied to local and parochial preoccupations or read ethnohistorically. So that their portentous, timeless promises appear context-bound and are associated with the desires of particular populations in particular predicaments" (Gilroy, 2000:72).

This task requires that 'race' appear at the centre rather than on the fringes of reflection. Recognizing the power of raciology is an essential part of confronting the continued power of 'race' to orchestrate our social, economic, cultural and historic experiences, "the principles upon which our complex social and political systems operate allow for unprecedented opportunities for people to do the wrong thing. They multiply the possibilities in which evil can be done and it is done more easily by people who are not in themselves evil, brutal or blindly animated by hatred" (Gilroy, 2000: 76). For Gilroy (2000) it is thus central to keep 'race' at the forefront of our thinking when considering 'universal' standards of morality, truth and justice (even more so in a post-September 11<sup>th</sup> era when we are increasingly seeing new global divisions and associated rationalizations for a range of brutalities). Even if we choose not to recognize how 'race' acquired epistemological value, the history of the idea and the trajectory it presupposes between the rational and irrational, scientific and religious, physical and metaphysical according to Gilroy (2000:76) pose a variety of political and moral problems.

In short, "noting that the political logic of 'race' works within a distinctive temporal and spacial framework that made empire a vital force within as well as without, here as well as there" (Gilroy, 2000:76) allows us to consider (a) the racial signs from which the discourse of cultural value was constructed and (b) their connection to European aesthetics, philosophy as well as European science. This enables an ethnohistorical reading of the relationship between 'the European', the aspirations of western modernity, the 'universality' of Enlightenment assumptions, the idea of 'race' as a principle of moral and political calculation, a confrontation with the human body being represented as the fundamental repository of the order of racial truth, and with the idea of culture (Gilroy, 1987:8). All of these concepts become exposed as highly problematic and as implicated in modern social ordering processes. This forces us to "identify again the distinctive rationalities. Logics, metaphysics, pathologies and possibilities of a more complex cultural ecology: one that sees species life as the outcome of play between communicative systems and the environments they incorporate, but also modify and transcend" (Gilroy, 2000:77).

Fully comprehending the geopolitical interaction of space, identity and power within modern raciology for Gilroy (2000) exposes modern pretensions of universality and democracy to the point of purporting that, "modernity is besieged. As democracy, as creativity, and as cosmopolitan hope is pitted against a moribund system of formal politics and its numbing representational codes against the corrosive values of economic rationality and the abjection of postindustrial urban life. The persistence of fascism and the widespread mimicry of its styles constitute only the most alarming sign that modernity's best culture is assailed from all sides by political movements and technological forces that are working towards the erasure of ethical considerations and the deadening of aesthetic sensibilities. The

resurgent power of racial and radicalizing language, of raciology, is a strong link between the perils of our own dangerous time and the enduring effects of the past horrors that continue to haunt... Europe. Modernity is on trial, fascism is on hold.” (Gilroy, 2000:93).

Conceiving of modernity as both period and region opens a range of questions “Can we proceed confident that modernity is not a handy and exclusive codeword for social relations in certain favored parts of Europe? Can an engagement with translocal histories of suffering help accomplish the shift from Europe-centered to cosmopolitan ways of writing history? More controversially, how do we keep that duality of modernity as progress and catastrophe, civilization and barbarism, at the forefront of our deliberations? How does placing racism’s at the centre of our thinking transform our command of those dualities? Does it help to address enlightenment through its vernacular codes as an ethnohistorical phenomenon? Should it become nothing more than the distinctive burden of particular groups, which through it, points beyond their particularity to an emergent universalism, has grave difficulties in making this desirable adjustment?” (Gilroy, 2000:95) These are substantive political questions for which, according to Gilroy (2000), superficial methodological disputes are an inadequate cloak. (Gilroy, 2000:95) Metahistorical, philosophical and sociological pretensions towards universality become undone by microhistorical narratives and real people’s stories. Generalization is no longer possible lest we become politically inert, “secure in the confidence that we have the best interpretation of the available data” (Gilroy, 2000:95). These types of considerations as noted in the first few pages of this research need to persistently remain at the forefront of our thinking as we seek to (re)consider whiteness and ‘race’.

### **3.4 The Crisis of Raciology**

Thus far it has been concluded that racism’s are social constructs whose ideological constitution is of strategic social, political and economic importance and which emanate from a whitened *status quo*. Moreover, there is little doubt as to the effect and range of racism’s past and present or, the ideological effects and material implications of ‘race’ in decision making frameworks (from the level of individual subjectivity to global processes) under the effects of a racially structured modernity shows little chance of abating. But, for Gilroy (2000), “we are living through a profound transformation in the way the idea of race is understood and acted upon. Underlying it there is another, possibly deeper problem, that arises from the changing mechanisms that govern how racial differences are seen, and how they appear to us and prompt specific identities. Together these historic conditions have disrupted the observance of ‘race’ and created a crisis of Raciology, the lore that brings the virtual realities of ‘race’ to dismal and destructive life” (Gilroy, 2000:11)

For Gilroy (2000), there exists potential at this point in time to challenge notions of ‘race’ in the space opened by the ‘crisis of raciology’ but the multiple effects of past ideologies will easily circumscribe this potential. For one, raciology has saturated the discourses in which it circulates to the extent that it can no longer be readily re- or de- signified. To imagine that its meanings can be re-articulated into benign

democratic forms is to exaggerate the power of critical and oppositional interests and underestimate just how ubiquitous racialized thinking is to the ordering processes of modernity. Equally to erase racial-erasure/colour-blindness is an unhelpful tendency.

Actively engaging a space for change requires more than the political will to overturn thinking through 'race' or a semantic re-orientation, it requires motivation as to why this would be worthwhile or a desirable outcome in terms of the range of sound ordering processes (re)producing 'race'. The first task is to make obvious why the demise of 'race' is nothing to be feared. This needs to be made true both for the beneficiaries of racial hierarchy who don't want to give up privileges and, for those subordinated by 'race' thinking (and its associated social structures). Those subordinated have had a long history of employing the categories of their oppressors to resist the place 'race' has allocated their lives. In many cases these groups based on racialized thinking developed 'dissident' or 'vernacular' cultures which evolved out of a need to absorb or reflect abuse have developed into complex cultural traditions of politics, ethics, identity forming an important source of pride and solidarity. For these groups, oppositional identities have become difficult to relinquish (as they form the basis of solidarity and community), and it is a difficult task to convince them that there is gain in renouncing 'race' as a basis for belonging (here Gilroy (2000) is specifically thinking of dissident 'black' American subculture).

For those endowed with racial mastery, raciology has distorted and delimited their experience and consciousness in other ways, "they may not have been animalized, reified, or exterminated, but they too have suffered something by being deprived of their individuality, their humanity, and thus alienated from species life. Black and white are bonded together by mechanisms of race that estrange them from each other and amputate their common humanity" (Gilroy, 2000:15). 'Race' thinking has the capacity to make its beneficiaries inhuman even as it deprives its victims of their humanity.

There are a number of examples where possible 'threats to raciology' exist. For example, as a consequence of globalisation there has been a number of forces weakening the cultural specificity of 'black' subcultures. The planetary commerce in blackness for instance which homogenized and sold 'the black experience' and other essentializing moments have reduced complex cultural traditions into simple processes of invariant repetition. For example, the appearance of a rich visual culture in the West that allowed 'black' bodies to be perceived as beautiful (think of the activities and exposition of 'black' models athletes and performers), has in many instances translated blackness in certain instances from a badge of insult to one of prestige. Moments such as this have the danger (despite being in many instances oppositional identities) of 'fixing' or essentializing categories of racialized otherness. A possible challenge to this moment identified by Gilroy (2000) is the substantive political disagreements which have arisen over the nature of black particularity and its significance relative to other contending identity claims: religion, sexuality, generation, gender etc. In addition, the nature of the global reification of 'blackness', despite promoting the racial category simultaneously feeds a fundamental lack of confidence in the body to hold the boundaries of racial

difference and keep the bases of raciology *in place*. In short, racial hierarchies may actually be disturbed by images of non-white beauty, grace and style that somehow make the matter of 'race' secondary particularly when graphic manipulation has increasingly fudged the boundaries of racial difference. Racialized bodies for Gilroy (2000) especially when presented as objects (objects among other objects) will not be enough to guarantee that racial differences remain what they were when the particularities of racial difference seemed obvious. Here new racisms are not created by the ruthless enforcement of stable racial categories but by an inability to maintain them (for an interpretation of challenges to whiteness see Bonnett, 2000, Dyer, 1997 or the electronic journal *Race Traitor*).

Another area of engagement that contributes centrally to a crisis in raciology is challenges to gene-orientated or genomic constructions of 'race'. Their distance from older 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century versions of 'race' thinking means that the meaning of racial difference itself is being changed as the relationship between human beings and nature is reconstructed by the impact of the DNA revolution and associated technological developments. The modern idea of 'race' belongs to a certain scale and operates within strict perceptual limits that make sense within novel historic conditions, but these perceptual regimes have been left behind. The anatomical first yielded to the microscopic which has now yielded to the molecular and, "where screens rather than lenses mediate the pursuit of bodily truths, 'race' is best approached as an after-image a lingering symptom of looking too casually into the damaging glare emanating from colonial conflicts at home and abroad" (Gilroy, 2000:193).

New technology enabling smaller perceptual scales has changed the threshold of visibility and contributed to an enhanced sense of power in the unseen and unseeable with a number of moral and political repercussions. Fanon identified how the emergent epidermal thinking of colonial reparations estranged the authentic human being 'in the body' and 'being in the world', 'epidermalized' power is seen to have violated the body in its symmetrical, intersubjective, social humanity, in its species being, in its fragile relationship to other fragile bodies and inherent corporeality. In the period since modern scientific racism's have amalgamated with 'common sense' and perception to make the external surface of the body the focus of our gaze. But, "in the instability of scale that characterizes our time, how is the racialized and racializing identity to be imagined? Is there still place for 'race' on the new scale at which human life and difference is now being contemplated" (Gilroy, 1997:193).

Modern gene technology is an epoch making shift that forces a re-comprehension of the ways we analyze and understand our humanity. This technology signals a fundamental change of scale in the perception and comprehension of the human body. (Yet most writers on 'race' have neglected its impact on racial typology). For example:

- the cultivation of cells outside of the body
- the speculative manipulation of genetic material between species (transgenetic plants and animals including the insertion of human genes)
- 'transracial' trade in internal organs and other body parts for transplant

- the manipulation and commerce in all aspects of human fertility (including whether mothers of one race should choose to bear children of another)

According to Gilroy (2000), "all these changes impact upon how 'race' is understood. Awareness of the indissoluble unity of all life at the level of genetic materials leads to a stronger sense of the particularity of our species, as well as to new anxieties that its character is being fundamentally and irrevocably altered. With these symptomatic developments in mind, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that this biotechnological revolution demands a change in our understanding of 'race', embodiment, and human specificity. In other words, it asks that we reconceptualize our relationship to ourselves, our species, our nature, and the idea of life. We need to ask for example, whether there should be any place in this new paradigm for the idea of specifically racial differences" (Gilroy, 2000:20).

Such developments stem from and contribute to the same uncertainties over 'race'. Bodies may still be the most significant determinants in fixing the social optics of 'race', but bodies is now being seen, imaged and figured differently. The self-evident authority of racialized appearances and common sense 'race' typologies have become destabilized and the meaning and status of old racial categories are being unsettled. But this does not make the idea of 'race' automatically redundant. As noted, 'common sense' and popular ideology are not necessarily equivalent to empirical consideration of changes in the perception of our internal composition. Bodies are still the most significant determinants fixing the social optics of 'race' (but these are now being seen, imaged and figured for instance because of developments like the proliferation of ever cheaper cosmetic surgery and the routine enhancement and modification of visual images). The self-evident authority of familiar racialized appearances and racial topology may be disrupted but not necessarily the underlying cultural assumptions they signify. These occurrences are nonetheless timely if placed in the context of the leveling forces of placeless development and commercial planetarization. The meaning and status of old racial categories are further unsettled by substantial linguistic and cultural practices being flattened out by the pressures of the global market and increased travel and communications technology.

If there exists a space for overcoming 'race' this is not the inevitable outcome of our current trajectory. For Gilroy (2000), the raciological hold of modernity is increasingly being diverted through 'marginal cultural territory' and, "the smallest cultural nuances provide a major means of differentiation" (Gilroy, 2000:24). It is here that the relationship between cultural differences and racial particularity are becoming increasingly complex. Culture has become akin to a form of property attached to history and traditions of a particular group and an emphasis on culture as a form of property to be *owned* rather than *lived* compounds problems arising from associating 'race' with embodiment or somatic variation. For Gilroy (2000) "We must be alert to circumstances in which the body is reinvested with the power to arbitrate in the assignment of cultures to peoples. The bodies of a culture's practitioners can be called upon to supply the proof of where that culture fits in the inevitable hierarchy of value. The body may also provide the preeminent basis on which that culture is to be ethically assigned under contemporary discussions of how one knows the group to which one belongs and of what it takes to be



recognized as belonging to such a collectivity. Differences within particular groups proliferate along the axes of division: gender, age, sexuality, region, class, wealth and health. They challenge the unanimity of racialized collectivities. Exactly what, in cultural terms, it takes to belong, and, more importantly, what it takes to be recognized as belonging, begin to look very uncertain. However dissimilar individual bodies are, the compelling idea of common, racially indicative bodily characteristics offers a welcome short cut into the favored forms of solidarity and connection, even if they are effectively denied by divergent patterns in life chances and everyday experience" (Gilroy, 2000:24/25).

How can we then conceive of ourselves and our relationships beyond 'race'? How would a postracial, postanthropological version of what it means to be human change the conceptual landscape on which 'essential' human attributes are calculated? For Gilroy (2000) in considering some form of 'pragmatic planetary humanism' (beyond religion, science or commerce as we see them), insight can be gained from systematically returning to the history of the struggle over the limits of humanity in which the idea of 'race', became especially prominent as was discussed in the last section and in which the boundaries of humanity were negotiated. This is not to suggest that by revisiting our racialized past we renounce all that modernity as a socializing process has to offer, "there need be no concessions to the flight from embodiment that has been associated with the consolidation of abstract, modern individuality. Here the constraints of bodily existence (being in the world) are admitted and even welcomed, though there is a strong inducement to see and value them differently as sources of identity and empathy. The recurrence of pain, disease, humiliation and loss of dignity, grief and care for those one loses can all contribute to an abstract sense of human similarity powerful enough to make solidarities based on cultural particularities appear suddenly trivial " (Gilroy, 2000: 17).

Geographers have, over time, been widely implicated in the construction, naturalization and reproduction of raciology. Before concluding this chapter, the following section provides a summary of Bonnet's (1996) interpretation of this relationship. This relationship should be placed alongside the social and epistemological context in which the moments here articulated emerged, given Goldberg's (1992) contention that 'race' is a virtually vacuous concept reflective of the milieu in which it is produced. In terms of this paper, understanding geography's relationship to 'race' over time is vitally important if we are to plot an accountable geography of whiteness.

### **3.5 Geography and 'Race'**

*"the indolent and sun-loving people of the southern latitudes have everywhere proved more easy to dominate than those who have been nurtured in a colder atmosphere"* (Sir Thomas Holdich 1916 - past vice-president of the Royal Geographical Society in Bonnett,1996:866)

The relationship between geography 'race' and racism (or racialized expression), is long and complex. Over the past 30 years, this relationship has been constantly

reconstituted (both theoretically and empirically), in the light of changing perceptions about the nature of 'race' and the changing ambitions (and self-image) of the discipline. Bonnett (1996), maps the terrain of geographers engagement with 'race' chronologically, delineating three broad approaches; (1) empiricism, (2) the geography of 'race' relations and (3) social constructionism- each reflect a different object and method of geographical 'racial' inquiry within the shifting terrain of geographers engagement with 'race'.

Geography's relationship to 'race' has shifted considerably over time. From contributing fundamentally to the initial construction of 'race' to actively fighting racism to viewing 'race' as a conceptual tool for understanding how it is that modern society actually works (Hall, 1981 after Jackson, 1987). It is essential to reiterate that contemporary social science could potentially play (and indeed has already been implicated in), in playing a similar role to 19<sup>th</sup> century natural science in providing academic legitimation for raciology (see Goldberg, 1992). This criticism is at present particularly pertinent for academic arguments that presently represent inequality(s) as in some way related to cultural predispositions or as inevitable outcomes of particular socio-economic circumstances thus perpetuating ideologies of self-perpetuating socialization towards inferiority. These said to be, "no less ideological than previous biological or psychological explanations, as both prevent us from perceiving an appropriately individuated and differentiated black community" (Jackson, 1987:8 after Prager, 1982). Development as a concept is one such area in which the victims of raciology (in this instance 'the poor', 'the uneducated' for example), are both positioned as inferior and are in a sense 'blamed' for their lesser position (Rist, 1997). It is with this warning in mind that I turn to the relationship between the discipline of geography and 'race'. As geographers we need to be insistently aware of the subtle ways in which we geographers may unwittingly be reinforcing racially structured thinking, mores and norms.

### **3.5.1 Empiricist Geographies of 'Race'**

The view of this paradigm is that the 'proper' method or legitimate topics for 'geographical racial inquiry' lie in an, "objectivist abstraction of racialized meaning in to quantifiable 'facts'" (Bonnett, 1996:865). Although this paradigm's "hegemonic post-war moment was in the 1960's and early 1970's, it is important to appreciate both its continuation within the 1990's and, perhaps even more revealingly, its resonances with much earlier work" (Bonnett, 1996:865). Empiricist geographies of 'race' can be traced back for at least a century and have posited a reliance on quantitative methodologies throughout.

It is widely recognized that 'race' was once central to the geographical curriculum (as was geography to the establishment of raciology), indeed 'racial geography' was more than a well established subdiscipline, but was at the core of the discipline, "its theoretical assumptions and global perspective permeating both its physical and human branches. The political and intellectual axis of this dominance revolved around the imputed influence of the physical environment upon the social and intellectual characteristics of different races" (Bonnett, 1996:865). This ideology

encouraged racial geographers to amass sets of 'objective' 'racial' data, and geographers during the first 2 or 3 decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century set about, "enumerating the nature and movements of different 'races' and plotting and quantifying their migratory and mental potentials" (Bonnett, 1996:866), a relationship which, as noted earlier, was to be closely tied to the expansion of western modernity and colonial regimes.

The presumed utility and popularity of 'racial geography' was corroded amongst other factors by, the decline in Britain's imperial ambitions, "between 1940 and 1960 British geographers turned away from the subject of 'racial' difference, apparently unable to reconceptualize, and thus revitalize, its relevance to their work. This period represents a time of stagnation rather than a development of any explicit critique of the assumptions and methodology of 'racial geography'. This intellectual vacuum is significant because it provides both testimony to, (a) how completely wrapped up the issue of 'race' was in the imperial project and (b) geographers' continued adherence to empiricist, and 'racially' reifying, suppositions. Thus, when 'race' was 'rediscovered' by British geographers in the 1960's, it was interpreted from within an unbroken empiricist tradition. 'Race' continued to be understood as connoting a set of objective facts amenable to quantification and correlation. Instead of being subjected to scrutiny, 'racial geographies' essentialist notions of 'race' were, (albeit unconsciously), reproduced and reworked as part of the common sense of an intellectually highly conservative discipline" (Bonnett, 1996:866).

According to Bonnett (1996), "'race' returned to geography when 'Empire returned' to Britain" (Bonnett, 1996:866). That is the timing of the rediscovery of 'race' in Britain can be traced to the large-scale immigration of 'non-white' subalterns into the United Kingdom. Prompted by this influx of explicitly racialized minorities, "geographers once again set about plotting and mapping biologically defined, discreet, 'racial' entities" (Bonnett, 1996:866). Simultaneously American geographers were indulging in the quantitative, urban models and indices developed by the Chicago school and concentrated on tracing the effects of an 'objective' environmental influence (understood as 'space'), on the movements and behavior of non-whites.

By the late 1960's despite empiricist echoes, geographer's estimation of their own social and intellectual role had completely changed, "under the influence of a quantitative revolution within the discipline, geographers were attempting to carve out a highly specialized academic niche for themselves as 'spatial scientists'. This tendency became woven with a more general drift within the social sciences towards a welfare managerialist, policy orientated, research agenda. These two trends encouraged geographers to identify a number of very specific and limited topics of legitimate and useful geographic inquiry. The two central social processes that were deemed to fulfill these conditions, and which came to preoccupy the empiricist tradition, were the mapping of 'non-white' immigrant settlement and the development of indices of 'racial' segregation. In the 1960's and 1970's these interests, who dominated both the student and research literature, became

established as representing the geographical perspective on issues of 'racial difference' (Bonnett, 1996:867).

However, this resurgence of empiricist hegemony was short-lived and, by the mid 1970's critiques of its theoretical and empirical limitations became increasingly common. The limited methodology and empirical foci of the empiricist tradition increasingly shifting geographical focus (although it is noted that some geographers have been freshly 'seduced' by its statistical clarity especially with regards to new social modeling and data collection technologies). Whatever the value of specific pieces of empiricist work, the grander ambitions of this paradigm to represent (a) the sole legitimate methodology of geographical 'race' study, and (b) an objective representation of unproblematic 'racial' categories, are no longer credible, yet despite these assumptions now being widely rejected many contemporary empiricist's claim that "they are merely making a limited, problematic, yet strategically useful, contribution to the wider debate on 'race' and 'place'" (Dorling, 1995 after Bonnett, 1996:868)

### **3.5.2 The Geography of 'Race' Relations**

The 1970's and early 1980's saw a series of attempts to expand, both theoretically and, to a lesser extent, empirically, the geographical perspective on 'race'. This was part of a new interest in relating geography to social theory that more generally encouraged increased engagement with sociological theories of 'race' relations. At the time there were also a number of largely critical engagements with Marxism, which broadened the focus of 'race' relations and introduced into geography a focus on the relationship between social context(s) and systems of oppression (Bonnett, 1996).

The geography of 'race' relations is characterized by attempts to analyze the social, cultural and economic interactions and impacts on/of different 'race' groups. The identity of these groups was viewed by the paradigms more sophisticated adherents as historically contingent, yet even where this is the case, "the 'race' relations problematic, by focusing on the relationship between communities and individuals as determined by their 'racial' identification, often comes to instate 'race' as a real, concrete, social agent. With the application of reflexive discursive interventions, this tendency could be resisted. However, geographical studies in 'race' relations have not been notable for such interpretative nuances" (Miles, 1993 after Bonnett, 1996:869).

The work of geographers is here framed by a specific set of assumptions concerning what constitutes a legitimate geographical approach to 'race' issues, "their focus is on the spatial consequences and causes of minority agency and constraint. Thus, 'racial' and ethnic groups are seen to be making spatial decisions in the context of 'racially' interactive processes of discrimination, assimilation, voluntary separation and so on. It is equally evident from these contributions that 'racial' identity is being reified, whereas the process of racialization, of the contingent social production and management of racial meaning, is neglected" (Bonnett, 1996:870).

'Race' relations geography tends to focus on very conventional spatial topics (that is topics that were established as 'legitimate' geography during the period of empiricist hegemony). Although the increased interdisciplinary ambitions of geography at the time fed into the development of the 'race' relations paradigm it didn't encourage much interaction with broader sociological methodologies or interpretations beyond mere 'spatial sociology' although liberating geographical research horizons to some extent. In addition, it allowed more fluidity between geographical subdiscipline such as 'racial' studies, development studies, and urban geography. The central tenet of much of this work was the spatial contingency of ethnic interaction. National and regional ideologies came to be seen as ethnicized phenomena, amenable to both historical and spatial analysis, thus signaling that issues of 'race' and ethnicity were relevant to a number of geography's manifold sub-disciplines. It also undermined the assumption that issues of segregation and dispersal were, in some way, more essentially geographical than any other spatially differentiated racializations (Bonnett, 1996).

However, with such a seemingly unlimited expansion of empirical focus, came a crisis in sub-disciplinary identity. The distinctive and specialized topics of study that geographers had become associated with, were superceded by work that could have emanated from many other branches of the social sciences. Although this process reflects a more general drift within geography, it provokes an interesting, subtext of self-legitimation. There arose a need to assert the essentially geographic nature of work while defending its increasingly broad empirical range. It is here that we find geographers increasingly drawing on the concept of 'place' to determine that their work is firmly geographical (Bonnett, 1996).

### **3.5.3 Social Constructions of 'Race' and Place**

By the late 1980's a group of social geographers most notably Peter Jackson had reconstituted, and promoted, a sub-field heavily influenced by the social constructionist movement. The term social constructionism may here loosely be understood as "referring to the interrogation of the formation of socio-spatial meaning" (Bonnett, 1996:872). The longstanding view that some categories are 'natural' is explicitly rejected and the task becomes one of identifying the components and processes of category construction. For geographers this signals a move away from the 'race' relations paradigm towards studying of the processes of racialization, Jackson (1992:90 in Bonnett, 1996:872) opines that, "although the idea of race as a naturally occurring category is a persistent tone, as geographers we can contribute to its general disillusion by tracing its specific constitution and variable effects in particular historical and geographic circumstances. As this concern with the 'dissolution' of 'racial' reductionism implies, social constructionists tie their studies to an explicitly egalitarian political project. The knowledge produced by constructionist study can, "be used to reconstruct categories in ways that allow their inherent power to be used in the pursuit of equality. Alternatively, we can use the theory to deconstruct categories such that their power to engender inequality is dissolved" (Jackson and Pentrose, 1993:3 in Bonnett, 1996:372).

This perspective betrays the influence of postmodern deconstructionism and neomarxism on the social constructionist perspective in human geography. More specifically, a critical agenda of this nature brings about an uneasy alliance between the deconstructionist tendency to privilege the discursive nature of meaning and a neo-Marxist cultural politics. As this implies, although social constructionism has a long and complex theoretical lineage within sociology, its impact within geography has been largely mediated through two relatively recent theoretical traditions. This focus may, in part, be explained by reference to human geographers' aim to finally extricate themselves from the narrow concerns that dominated the discipline in the past. (Bonnett, 1996:872/873).

"However, despite this embrace of contemporary critical theory, social constructionist geographers have remained relatively reticent about the tensions, and discontinuities, that exist between their two favored theoretical influences. More specifically, they have rarely confronted the fact that while deconstructionism draws from an anti-foundationalist concern to view all meaning as inherently fluid, unstable and contingent, the predominating tendency within neo-Marxism is to engage with an overtly politicized, and foundationalist, set of debates grounded within the 'socially concerned' and/or materialist analysis of power" (Bonnett, 1996:873). In sum, "Geographers appear to want the best of both worlds: to embrace anti-foundationalism and foundationalism; to be post-modernists with a modernist ethical foundation" (Bonnett, 1996:873).

Despite the continued strength of both the empiricist and race relations traditions within geography, the last decade has seen the social constructionist paradigm achieve significant advances. "The rapidity and ease of this process has been assisted by the immanent and explicit tendencies already at work within the 'race' relations approaches. Thanks to the latter, an orientation to interdisciplinary and social theory is widely considered a valuable characteristic of the sub-field" (Bonnett, 2000:873). Moreover, constructionists distance themselves from the established tradition of the geography of racial and ethnic minorities - that is to neglect to question about the meaning and significance of racism. Jackson (1987), is one such critic, nominating such past traditions as "narrow empiricism" at best and "socio-cultural apologism for racial segregation at worst" (Jackson, 1987:4). Jackson (1987), writes that recent attempts to recast theories of ethnic pluralism have not resolved the issue satisfactorily by "failing to recognize that questions of ethnicity and ethnic identity involve social relations in which differences of power are fundamentally at stake" (Jackson, 1987:176 in Bonnett, 2000:874). This stance is indicative of the influence of 'black' radical scholars on the tradition, especially their assertion it should be "racism, rather than 'race', which should be the focus of academic study." (Bonnett, 1996:874). "Such attempts to privilege the study of racism provide a new identity, a new coalescing principle, for the sub-field. This process evidences a paradoxical concern to maintain and justify the existence of a distinctive and discrete 'geographical contribution' to 'racial' studies on the one hand, while, on the other, suggesting that racialization process is inherently geographical and cannot be properly understood otherwise" (Bonnett, 1996:874). There exists for the constructionists a difficult process of both reproducing and transgressing the boundaries of the sub-field "the constructionists appear to be both

missionaries for, and subverters of, 'the geographical contribution'" (Bonnett, 1996:875).

"The majority of geographical work within the social constructionist paradigm has been focused on the ways 'places' are assigned 'racial' meaning(s). Thus, geographers have studied how different areas of cities, and different national and international categories, have literally and metaphorically been developed and 'invented' through their racialized interpretation"(Anderson, 1993 in Bonnett, 1996:876). It is here that geographers first began to consider the semiotic and material processes constituting racialized space and the construction of racial meanings from the multiple and contradictory discourses and the practices inherent to processes of spatialization. For Keith (1991 in Bonnett, 1996:876), places are moments of arbitrary closure for these forces. It is this 'closure' or contingent completion which can give clues to spatial meanings of racialization .

The constructionist approach is now the dominant paradigm for geographical 'racial' study. It posits more confidence in the relevance of the discipline to a broad range of racial issues (than either the empiricist and race relations traditions), and despite offering an interdisciplinary intellectual trajectory, there still exists difficulties with the paradigm - most especially the incoherence of anti-essentialism and the tension between constructionist politics and theory. "The intellectual strain between constructionist theory and politics encourages the paradigms adherents to 'ring fence' or 'bracket ' categories deemed to be 'egalitarian' and 'progressive' from rigorous critique. Thus, for example, notions of 'equality', 'racism' and 'anti-racism' tend to appear in constructionist work as taken-for-granted foundations, providing 'common-sense' moral and political coherence and direction. Indeed, constructionists, when not assuming the meaning of such terms to be obvious, will often attempt to communicate their 'real' and single essence by *defining* them" (Bonnett, 1996:878). Such definitions mostly "fix and universalize the central moral categories of constructionist thought. The implication is clear: the racialization process is historically and geographically contingent and contested but the meaning of 'racism', 'equality' and 'anti-racism' is not" (Bonnett, 1996:878). For Bonnett (1996), as constructionist study itself shows, meaning is neither fixed or unidimensional, nor is it ever innocent of power relations "the unreflexive political categories of constructionist work, then, are profoundly at odds with the theories own deconstructive agenda" (Bonnett, 1996:878).

For a more sympathetic ear to such thinking Bonnett (1996) turns to Fuss (1989) who maintains that anti-essentialism cannot be dispatched, only deferred. This is a sympathetic critique in which, "the strength of the constructionist position is its rigorous insistence on the production of social categories like 'the body' and its attention to systems of representation. However, this strength is not built on the grounds of essentialism's demise, rather it works its power by strategically deferring the encounter with essence, displacing it, in this case, onto the concept of sociability" (Fuss, 1989:6 in Bonnett, 1996:879). As will be discussed in chapter four, this criticism is particularly relevant for geographies of whiteness, given that the deconstruction of 'white' remains far behind that of 'other' races.



What Fuss (1989) is asking is, why the category of 'social' automatically escapes essentialism? She contends that, "social constructionism can be unveiled as merely a form of social essentialism, a position predicated on the assumption that the subject is, in essence, a social construction" (Fuss, 1989:6 in Bonnett, 1996:879). This argument is difficult to refute not because 'the social' cannot in purely theoretical terms, be thought of in an anti-essentialist manner, but because of the way it has, in practice, been used by constructionists. For constructionist geographers tend to treat 'the social' in precisely the manner Fuss (1989) describes, "It seems that the irony of social constructionism is that it is unprepared to investigate the construction of its own defining term, 'the social'" (Bonnett, 1996:879).

To conclude, it has been argued that the postwar empiricist tradition represents a reformulation of the objectivist, and 'racially' reifying, assumptions associated with imperial 'racial geography'. 'Race' relations geography is also noted to incorporate some of these assumptions, despite encouraging the growth of interdisciplinary and social theorization within the subfield. Whilst social constructionism, despite defining itself against both the empiricist and 'race' relations schools, has developed along a similar intellectual trajectory (Bonnett, 1996). "It is now increasingly widely accepted that geography should be as central to the study of 'race' as is history or sociology; that it is impossible to understand the categories of 'race' ('European', 'African', etc.), or the development of different racial identities, without the assistance of spatial analysis. Yet, for many geographers, the restrictive, self-deprecating tradition of offering 'geographical perspectives', of bolting spatial data on to what are perceived to be essentially spatial phenomenon, retains its stultifying grip. Thus, even within the social constructionist paradigm, geographers still communicate a certain disciplinary anxiousness: the word 'geography' is repeated a little too often; the truism that 'space matters' arrived at a little too breathlessly." (Bonnett, 1996:880).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

'Race' is noted to be a social construct that acts as a complex means for differentiating life opportunities for the members of a variety of social signified hierarchically ranked groups. 'Race' structures all people's lives (both the oppressed and the oppressors) and undoing 'race' requires challenging both racial identities and the racialized material and ideological constitution of the contemporary. In attempting to articulate 'race' it is suggested that we map the space of intersection between our discursive repertoires (manifestations of meaning) and material realities (manifestations of socio-economic power). In addition, in returning to the history of the concept it is important to focus simultaneously on the changing social manifestations in the context of changing conceptions of 'race'. 'Race' assumes significance in terms of prevailing social and epistemological conditions whilst simultaneously bearing traces of past significations. Moreover, it is noted that 'race' is a virtually vacuous concept. The minimal significance 'race' bears in it is not biological but rather a sense of naturalized group relations. 'Race' serves to naturalize the groupings that it identifies in its own name, through articulating as natural ways of being in the world

and the institutional structures in and through which such ways are expressed, 'race' both establishes and rationalizes its order of difference as the law of nature. In so doing, 'race' lends to social relations, a veneer of fixedness and long duration rendering group formation fated, unchanging and eternal. With regards our geographies (and our disciplinary history) we need to continually question to what extent our discourses are still naturalizing and (re)producing exclusionary configurations. How accountable are we for letting 'race' take place? Racisms are social constructs whose ideological constitution is of strategic social, political and economic importance and which emanates from a whitened status quo, and making these processes visible involves a simultaneous interrogation of space identity and power. It is to the nature of whiteness that I now turn. Making whiteness visible allows geographers to map its influence and resist its effects, but as chapter four demonstrates, this is a very difficult process.

## Chapter Four: Considering Whiteness

### 4.1 Introduction to Whiteness

One of the great paradoxes of the modern world is its ability to deny what is most obvious: one such thing is the privileged position of whiteness. We continue to live in a collective delusion epitomized by a belief in a just and free world of equal opportunity. "I was born white; so were my parents and grandparents. For all of us Europeans dominated the world. It was Europeans who were shaping the planet and its peoples. And it was the white skin that symbolized who was European. The ultimate marker of power and modernity was a symbol of the natural, a sign beyond dispute. Thus the ideology of racial whiteness transformed political and economic processes into 'facts of life' things that were above question and beyond challenge" (Bonnett, 2000:143).

While no one really knows what exactly constitutes whiteness, "most observers agree that it is intimately involved with issues of power and differences between white and non-white people. Whiteness cannot be separated from hegemony and is profoundly influenced by demographic changes, political realignments, and economic cycles. Situationally specific, whiteness is always shifting, always re-inscribing itself around changing meanings of race in the larger society" (Kincheloe, 1999:1). If we are to critically engage whiteness we need to do so in a manner which takes account of the intersecting social, political, ideological, cultural and psychological manifestations (to name a few) of this set of social ordering processes. To do so enables a critical approach in which it is possible to understand and map the specificity and multiple meanings of whiteness in a way that recognizes, how it is historically structured and socially inscribed. If we are unable to enact a study of whiteness that approaches the concept in this way, it will be difficult to expose how the privilege or dominance of whiteness is able to evade recognition whilst ensuring its own invisibility.

The ideological and material colonization of the world and the continued domination of whiteness have left little mark on our collective memories. We seldom consider how so many of the world's people came to speak European languages or, how it is that so much of the world's wealth is concentrated in white-dominated societies (it just seems 'natural'). Despite the formal emancipation of colonial states, power and influence still accrue to earlier colonialists, through a range of economic and political (and increasingly military), ordering processes for example the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, structural adjustment programs, neoliberal economic regimes- all ensure a racialized global *status quo*. The nature of world markets and associated wealth among the 'white' dominated nations perpetuates itself through the dynamics of the exchange of knowledge, political power, world economic and social systems, cultural values and technology for example. There is a perpetual imbalance which secures dominance for former colonizers over the colonized (see Rist, 1997). Yet, Wander *et al.* (1999), remind us that it is our everyday discursive practices which reproduce and perpetuate whiteness as well, "the patterns that emerge in what we remember and what we

don't remember belie any randomness; the patterns expose a pattern of whiteness at work. Our words and ways of thinking unwittingly reproduce these patterns of whiteness"(Wander *et al.*, 1999:24). For example, Dachau and Auschwitz may remain in our social memories and may carry linguistic weight, but we don't feel the same weight when we mention other signifiers masking genocidal horrors; Australia, New Zealand, The US Midwest, for example. Our notions of the past are guided by ideological blinders that allow us to reflect selectively on the forces that have shaped the world today (Wander *et al.*, 1999), never mind those shaping the world today, such as American military campaigns in the name of *regime change* or *democracy*. Similarly how might we feel looking back at the overdeveloped world's inaction regarding the status accorded to Palestine for instance?

Exposing the 'invisibility' of whiteness implies making the mechanisms of 'white' power, domination and privilege evident. Such an approach signals a conceptual shift from earlier theories of overt 'white' racism to theories of whiteness which allow us to identify how white privilege functions (as processes of domination), without naming anyone a 'racist' in the process. This is an important conceptual shift given that the social functioning of whiteness operates insidiously allowing 'white' people to benefit unwittingly (simply by leading 'normal lives' and making 'reasonable' decisions). Such an approach for instance disturbs the types of social memories mentioned above and exposes how they are implicated in a 'white' world. By interrogating the largely hidden ideology of 'white' supremacy, the ways in which it continues to perpetrate a social order dominated by 'white' people may be challenged. This process involves making the range of strategic devices through which racial categorization frameworks reinforce historically established hierarchies apparent.

The invisibility of the experience of whiteness is for many the most important element in its constitution. This is true of whiteness both in terms of the way it structures our collective and personal identities (or sense of self) and for whiteness as a social ordering process, "for those in power in the west, as long as whiteness is felt to be the human condition, then it alone defines normality and fully inhabits it...the equation of being white with being human secures a position of power. White people have power and believe that they think, feel and act like and for all people; white people unable to see their particularity, cannot take account of other people's; white people create the dominant images of the world and don't quite see that they thus construct the world in their own image; white people set standards of humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others bound to fail." (Dyer, 1997:9).

As noted, individual 'white' subjects may not necessarily do this deliberately or maliciously. Realizing how we are implicated in whiteness requires in-depth socio-political and self-examination for white people. Although we cannot be held accountable for creating racial hierarchy we nevertheless benefit from the advantages of a racially structured existence. In everything we undertake, there are undeniably inherent privileges to being 'white'. Whether we ask for a job, apply for a loan or seek entry into a nightclub there may be no racial intention, but in each instance whiteness plays a role in the outcome (no matter how anti-racist we may imagine ourselves to be). One means through which this 'white obliviousness' is

maintained is through the privilege of 'race' being projected as not 'racial' but in terms of our individual feelings, attributes or dispositions (as was discussed in the previous chapter), instead of as set systematic structures or privileges. For McIntosh (1998), just as male privilege is protected from being fully acknowledged, lessened or ended by men being unwilling to grant that they benefit from women's disadvantage, that they are overprivileged (despite acknowledging that women are disadvantaged), so too are 'white' people unable and unwilling to acknowledge that they are 'overprivileged', that they benefit from the disadvantage of others.

We are taught that racism is something that puts other people at a disadvantage but not ourselves at an advantage. Our schooling gives us no training to see ourselves as oppressors as 'unfairly' advantaged persons. For Dyer (1997), there is a need to begin to look at (or analyze) 'white' people in the same way that post-colonial, postmodern and feminist critics deconstructed the 'Other' for, "as long as race is something only to be applied to non-white peoples, as long as 'white' people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as the human norm" (Dyer, 1997:1), and there is no more powerful position than just being human. The claim to power is to speak for the commonality of humanity (raced people can only speak on the behalf of their race, but non-raced people represent the interests of all). The privilege of being 'white', "is not to be subjected to stereotyping in relation to one's whiteness. 'White' people are stereotyped in terms of gender, nation, class, sexuality, ability and so on, but the overt point of such typification is gender, nation etc. Whiteness generally colonizes the stereotypical definition of all social categories other than those of race. To be normal, even to be normally deviant (queer, crippled) is to be 'white'. 'White' people in their whiteness however are imagined as individual and or endlessly diverse, complex and changing" (Dyer, 1997:12). As 'white' people McIntosh (1998), reminds us, we are taught to think of our lives as, morally neutral, normative and average and thus allowing our privilege to remain fugitive. We are unable to see the benefit received through no virtue of our own. The project for geographers is thus to engage the unseen dimensions, the silences and denials surrounding the privilege of obliviousness which maintain whiteness as it is underpinned by myths of meritocracy, and of democratic choice for all.

The invisibility of whiteness in dominant ('white') discourse, representations and social institutions does not mean that 'white' people are not everywhere represented. Rather, because of our placing as the norm, 'white' people are not represented as 'whites' but as people variously gendered, classed, sexualized and labeled. At the level of racial representation 'white' is not a certain 'race' it is *the human race*. How, given the pervasiveness of whiteness, can any specificity to whiteness be perceived or mapped? It is suggested that one way to see the "structures, tropes and perceptual habits of whiteness, to see past the infinite variety, to recognise white qua white, is when non-white (and above all black), people are also represented" (Dyer, 1997:13). What is found is that 'white' discourse implacably reduces the non-white subject of being a function of the 'white' subject, "not allowing him/her space or autonomy, permitting neither the recognition of similarities nor the acceptance of differences except as a means for knowing the white self. This cultural process justifies the emphasis in the work on the representation of white people, on the role of the non-white people in it" (Dyer,

1997:13). The point of seeing "the racing of whites is to dislodge them/us from the position of power, with all the inequalities, oppression, privileges and sufferings in its train, dislodging them/us by undercutting the authority with which they/we speak and act in the world" (Dyer, 1997:2). This is an important process because even those 'white' people who think themselves the least racist (such as white liberals), become disorientated when attention is drawn to their whiteness, "often their rage erupts because they believe that all ways of looking that highlight differences subvert the liberal belief in a universal subjectivity (we are all just people) that they think will make racism disappear. They have a deep emotional investment in the myth of 'sameness', even their own actions reflect the primacy of whiteness as a sign informing who they are and how they think" (hooks, 1992:167 in Dyer, 1997:3)

Exposing the particularity of how whiteness shapes our identifications disrupts the 'white' myth, "We are living in a world of multiple identities, of hybridity, of decentredness and fragmentation. The old illusionary unified identities of class, gender, race, sexuality are breaking up; someone may be black and gay and middle class and female; we may be bi-, poly- or non-sexual, of mixed race, intermediate gender and heaven knows what class. Yet we have not reached the situation in which white people and white cultural agendas are no longer in the ascent. The media, politics, education are still in the hands of white people, still speak for whites while claiming- and sometimes sincerely aiming- to speak for all humanity...we might be on our way to genuine hybridity, multiplicity without (white) hegemony, and it may be where we want to get to- but we aren't there yet, and we won't get there until we see whiteness, see its power, its particularity and limitedness, put in its place and end its rule. This is why studying whiteness matters" (Dyer, 1997:3/4).

To invest in the myth of whiteness is to subvert opportunities for change, for as long as those who occupy a position of cultural hegemony carry on as if what they have to say or do is neutral and unsituated, then the racialized ordering processes of society will remain hidden, human not 'raced'. "There is something especially white in this non-located and disembodied position of knowledge, and thus it seems especially important to try to break the hold of whiteness by locating and embodying it in a particular experience of being white"(Dyer, 1997:4). The nature of raciological ordering processes and attendant discourses reinforcing the invisibility of whiteness suggests that three moments in the constitution of whiteness need to be simultaneously interrogated if it is to be exposed. This approach suggested by Ruth Frankenberg (1993) has been widely adopted by critical whiteness theorists and reads as follows:

- Whiteness needs to be considered as a **location** of cultural advantage (of race privilege)
- Whiteness should be considered as a **standpoint**. From which white people look to themselves and at others in society
- Whiteness should be seen to refer to a **set of cultural practices** that are usually unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg, 1993:1).

Frankenberg (1993), developed this approach after seeking to interpret how the daily experiences and significance of 'race' structured 'white' women's lives and

how 'race' privilege might be cross cut by other axes of differentiation and inequality (such as class, culture, ethnicity, gender and sexuality), in order to place 'race' in the social structure as a whole. For Frankenburg (1993), 'white' women are located in and speak from physical environments shaped by 'race', and are also located in and perceive their environments by means of a set of discourses on 'race', culture and society whose history spans this century and beyond (including the history of western expansion and colonialism). As such, the discursive and material dimensions of whiteness are in practice always interrelated. Discursive repertoires may reinforce, contradict, conceal or explain away the materiality or history of a given situation but, it is their interconnection rather than material life alone that generates the experience of whiteness (Frankenburg, 1993). Such an investigation requires an analytical commitment to three axioms (drawing from the lessons of social constructionism and feminism from the 1980's):

- That in societies structured by dominance we act from within the social relations and subject positions we seek to change
  - That experience constructs identity
  - That there exists a direct relationship between 'experience', 'worldview' or 'standpoint' such that any system of domination is seen least clearly by those benefitting from it
- (Frankenburg, 1993).

As noted in the last chapter during the late 80's and early 90's there was a movement away from an emphasis on studying 'race' in terms of racism and its effects on people of color (that is studying 'race' as something external to 'white' people, not linked to their own lives but as something which openly shapes only the daily experiences and sense of self of 'others'), to acknowledging that 'race' structures all positions in society. In short, to consider *the social construction of whiteness* asserts that there are locations, discourses and material relations to which the term whiteness applies, which are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and that are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination. Naming whiteness displaces 'white' culture from its unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance and acts strategically to ensure its invisibility.

To speak of the social construction of whiteness thus assigns everyone to a place in the raciological orderings of modern society and reinforces that 'race' shapes 'white' peoples identities in ways that are inseparable from the daily experiences of life. To name whiteness thus:

- makes room for the linkage of 'white' subjects to histories not encompassed by, but connected to, that of racism, colonialism, imperialism etc
  - allows certain practices and subject positions to be viewed as racialized (that is, structured by relations of race, usually alongside other structuring principles), rather than necessarily racist
  - by examining the terrain of whiteness it may be possible to generate or work against anti-racist forms of whiteness, or at least work toward anti-racist strategies for reworking the terrain of whiteness
- (Frankenburg, 1993:7).



Through transforming personal experience into political and theorized terrain, private, daily and 'trivial' experiences come to be understood as shared (not individual) and their socially and politically constructed nature becomes apparent. Before turning to explore in more detail the social construction of whiteness, I wish to reflect briefly on the critical study of whiteness.

#### **4.1.1 Critical 'White' Studies**

Critical enquiry into the formation of racial whiteness began in the USA during the 1980's and over the past 10 years critical 'white' studies has transformed the landscape of racial discourse, research and ideology (Bonnett, 2000). 'White' peoples position as privileged, normalized, reified and raceless has been challenged through "averting the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject, from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served" (Johnson, 1999:90), and any attempts to portray whiteness as a natural identity have become increasingly discredited.

'White' studies emerged in the wake of a number of political and intellectual challenges offered by both *anti-racism* and *radical multiculturalism*, which led to a shift in enquiry away from the study of non-white behaviour and attitudes towards a focus on 'white' racism. The earliest critical consideration of whiteness came from 'black' men who challenged 'white' supremacy and privilege (during the 1960's) and by the 1970's the relationship between whiteness, eurocentricism and the academy was slowly coming into focus (Frankenburg, 1993). Institutional racism became named as a societal problem and, the link between racialization and, 'white' assumptions of objectivity, universal truth, absolute knowledge, moral and religious superiority and cultural and intellectual hegemony became apparent (Johnson, 1999). This led to a movement in social science and history which starting in the 1980's and developing during the 1990's aggressively challenged whiteness, raciology and processes of social control. Through highlighting the relationship between whiteness and ideologies of 'white' supremacy the social meaning of whiteness and its religious, gender and class underpinnings in the historical and colonial contexts of The United States and Europe became apparent. Critical whiteness studies and considerations of alterity has gained intellectual legitimacy and 'white' scholars themselves increasingly became more involved in (de) centering whiteness (Johnson, 1999).

A second major factor contributing to the focus on whiteness was the impact of deconstructionist theories and themes in contemporary social science. Through addressing the reliance of what is privileged and what is marginalized, deconstruction provided an intellectual climate that has enabled researchers to interrogate the privilege center of a number of different social arenas and the interconnections between them. Additionally it is noted that a set of political agendas which constituted 'white' people as unable to experience 'real' racism (given their position in raciological systems) and, as incapable of being tenable commentators on racial oppression of 'others' not being subject to such racial structuring themselves. This, for many anti-racist commentators, proved a critique of their right to speak for others but similarly made a racially self-reflexive mode of

address and analysis increasingly tenable for white commentators. The central device of this new introspective praxis is to place oneself as a 'white' person within the spectrum of identity politics, and to speak from this position. Although this approach has become increasingly acceptable political terrain it is not without dangers (see Bonnett, 2000; Dyer, 1997).

Bonnett (2000) reminds us that, sensitivity to the importance of mapping 'white' racial identity should not be confused with an anti-essentialist agenda. Whiteness is still seen within much anti-racism as a monolithic stable racial identity and moreover as a 'monoculture' consisting of a triple conflation of religion, culture and race. Thus, although much of the 'new white consciousness' has encouraged 'white' people to think about their attitudes to 'others', it has not enabled us to understand ourselves as racialized subjects, or, how we are implicated in (re)producing a racialized *status quo*. Nor, has it attempted to explain why/how or what the stake for white people in anti-racism might be (Bonnett, 2000). In short, the 'new white consciousness' which emerged in the academy during the 1980's and 1990's in response to the challenges from 'black' academics, feminists and increased self reflection by critical 'white' theorists, set a critical agenda but is yet to map the unnamed or invisible nature and power of whiteness or the visible discourses through which it is perpetuated.

We are thus poised to challenge 'white supremacy', its (re)production and influence on ways of 'being' and 'acting' in the world. We are challenged to interrogate the 'invisible (and unnamed nature and power) and visible nature of discourses that perpetuate whiteness as an unreflected norm and the way in which 'white' privilege is asserted in strategic and diffused ways. Whatever biological characteristics constitute 'white' skin; the meaning of 'white' skin is constructed through the ways we communicate about it and the ways we are communicated to concerning whiteness in various contexts and media. For instance, we need to particularize the experience of whiteness until now seen as universal for example being Christian, engaging in heteronormal relationships, being middle class etc. (or more radically we need to consider how we might address say alienation, anomie, or the, lack of sensual contact associated with modern subjectivities). Understanding these larger social discourses means that the challenge of whiteness studies lies not in any individual attempting to change his/her communication patterns but rather, understanding the way(s) in which whiteness is embedded in the social fabric. It is important that, "we will not re-inscribe white hegemony by merely interrogating its subjectivity and particularism, but that we will create new intellectual space for relational understanding, and more important, racial justice" (Johnson, 1999:5).

If whiteness or 'white' identity is assumed to be socially constructed then just as the category was capable of being created and inhabited it can be transformed and destroyed. This is difficult because "white mythology metaphysics has erased within itself the fabulous scene that has produced it, the scene that nevertheless remains active, stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible design covered in palimpsest" (Derrida, undated, 203 in Martin *et al.*, 1999:44). It is the elusiveness, resistance to exploration and the ideological character of whiteness that makes it difficult to study, "the place from which power is exercised is often a hidden place.

When we try to pin it down, the center always seems to be somewhere else. Yet we know that this phantom center, elusive as it is, exerts a real, undeniable power over the whole social framework of our culture, and over the ways we think about it" (Ferguson, 1990:19 in Martin *et al.*, 1999:47). According to Hurtado (1996:125 in Johnson, 1999:2), whiteness can be decentered in a number of fundamental ways for instance;

- by questioning the naturalization of whiteness
- by questioning the language of a 'special needs population' and the relationship between privilege and subordination in defining white identity
- by examining the rituals, networks, social capital and games that serve white domination and power
- by questioning the pleasing game of boosting, stroking and silencing the centers of whiteness
- by discussing the power solidarity of whiteness in constructing individuality and group identity
- by asserting the ignorance of those suffering under 'white' supremacy and constructing /using knowledge of 'the other' against them

What this implies is that we need to "interrogate privilege in our explorations of the racializing process...the missing part of the puzzle in dismantling domination is interrogating at the core a reflexive mechanism for understanding how we are all involved in the dirty process of racializing and gendering others, limiting who they are and what they become".

The earliest paradigm to explicitly engage with whiteness was the 'confessionist paradigm'. Through 'conscious raising' and 'awareness training' the challenge was for 'white' people to face up to and expunge racism. This invoked individualistic and moralistic programs such as 'racism awareness training', but neglected or erased all questions relating to the slippery and contingent nature of whiteness, offering instead a moral narrative based on the presumed value of white self-disclosure (Bonnett, 2000). Within such strategies whiteness assumes a fixed and pivotal role as both a 'racial' community and as a 'site of confession'. As such, whiteness is established not as an area not of engagement with anti-racism but, as a self-centered altruistic interest for 'others' as well as for 'white' peoples own moral well-being, "indeed, it is tempting to argue that white confessional anti-racism established whiteness as the moral center of anti-racist discourse. For whilst non-white anti-racists are cast as taking part in an instrumental politics of 'resistance' and 'self preservation', 'white anti-racism' is continually elevated to a higher ethical terrain, removed from the realm of co-operation and participation to the more traditional (colonial, neo-colonial and anti-racist) role of paternalistic 'concern'" (Bonnett, 2000:128-129). In addition it is noted that within the confessional approach 'coming out as white' is treated the same way as for closet homosexuals it is thus being suggested that whiteness is being interpreted as a fixed disposition or trait that needs to be admitted to and exposed and once uncovered 'lived openly' (as opposed to a strategic social deconstruction) thus, undermining anti-essentialist advances. In general Bonnett (1999) sees the confessional approach as a destabilizing and unhelpful tendency.

The counter-tendency of the above is to interpret whiteness through an analysis of the social contingency of whiteness and to critique the category 'white', as it is currently constructed and connoted as racist (but not necessarily a belief that all those assumed/labeled white are necessarily racist). Of interest are the processes of racialization that produce whiteness. That is, how whiteness is constructed and maintained. The political problematic becomes how to engage process(s) of whiteness without simultaneously reproducing 'white' essentialisms. Bonnett (2000) offers two broad theoretical tendencies as examples of alternative approaches. He turns first to the tendency in current critical thinking around issues of racialization to subsume the analysis of whiteness within a class analysis of the racialization process. Theorist activists (such as Theodore Allen (1994), David Roedigger (1992:1994) and Noel Ignatiev usually associated with the radical electronic journal *Race Traitor*), provide an example of this tendency. *Race Traitor* is well known for its abolitionist motto "treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity" ([www.racetraitor.org](http://www.racetraitor.org)). They see whiteness not as a natural but rather as a historical category. All trace and accord whiteness as a product of US capitalism and labour organization, calling explicitly for its abolition, "these scholars and activists view white identity as the creation of racialized capitalism, an ideology that offers false rewards to one racialized faction of the working class at the expense of others" (Bonnett, 2000:134), the task therefore is not to encourage white people to confess their own identity but to enable them to politically and historically contextualize, then resist and abandon whiteness. But, Bonnett (2000) notes that the political conclusions of these historical studies derive, in the main from a limited reading of the synchronic social context of whiteness. Even though whiteness is identified as the overriding jetstream that governs the flow of American history it is analyzed as if it were almost entirely a product of class and labour relations. Thus, although a useful account of the construction of whiteness emerges from these texts it is not one that opens itself to dialogue with other intersecting technologies of otherness.

In addition Bonnett (2000), notes that this tradition posits an unhelpful romanticization of blackness, like other 'white' abolitionist movements, the aim is not merely to *destroy* whiteness but to enable 'whites' to assimilate blackness. Blackness too is seen as a social construction, but one that needs to be supported and reproduced, this romantic stereotyping of blackness condemns black people to reification in order to liberate white peoples from the racialization process they created (Bonnett, 2000:135). Moreover, there are a number of implications for essentializing 'blackness' most often moving critical theory further from a position of ultimately transcending whiteness.

A second tendency in studies of white racialization is to recognize the plural constitution and multiple lived experiences of whiteness. This tendency for Bonnett (2000) is far more fruitful and he turns to Frankenburg's (1993) presentation of the slippery, incomplete and diverse nature of 'white' identity. Addressing the multiple and shifting boundaries of whiteness, looking at its diverse cultural, legal and social constitution here provides insight into a number of, "articulations of whiteness, seeking to specify how each is marked by the interlocking effects of geographical origin, generation, ethnicity, political orientation, gender and present day geographical location" (Frankenburg, 1993:18 in Bonnett, 2000:135).

Now that I've briefly introduced the emergence of the different approaches to the study of 'whiteness' (see section 4.4 for specific reference to geography and whiteness), I turn to the terms on which whiteness is engaged.

## **4.2 Engaging Whiteness**

"As we have seen, whiteness has developed, over the past 200 years, into a taken-for-granted experience structured upon a varying set of supremacist assumptions (sometimes cultural, sometimes biological, sometimes moral, sometimes all three). Non-'white' identities, by contrast have been denied the privileges of normativity and are marked within the west as marginal and inferior" (Bonnett, 2000:140). Unfortunately, those seeking a politically engaged anti-essentialism have rarely considered the implications of these positions thus leaving some of the most important questions for an anti-foundationalist anti-racism undiscussed, "perhaps the most pertinent of these is how whiteness can be made visible, presented for critical inspection, whilst at the same time exposed as a myth, a racist construction that needs to be, if not abolished, permanently caged in inverted commas" (Bonnett, 2000:140). As geographers we need to consider ways in which the enormous power of whiteness (through institutions, power dynamics, modes of individual action etc.) can be acknowledged and confronted at the same time as essentialist pretensions are denied?

How should we consider the social power and existence of whiteness, whilst not claiming that it is a fixed or natural category? An example of a position which bridges the tension between the two positions outlined above may be termed 'strategic deconstruction'. The problematic of 'strategic deconstruction' is not when and how to 'stick to', 'preserve' or 'save' whiteness, but when and how it should be revealed and confronted.

One possible route from this dilemma is to view whiteness as a political category. 'Black' has long been used to incorporate and cohere a transracial community of resistance (Gilroy, 2000), but a political reading of whiteness has remained a minor theme within anti-racist work. Political whiteness may most usefully be viewed as an intellectual resource (see Goldberg, 1992) rather than as a universal solution, one which "in certain circumstances may provide an appropriate way of approaching white identity that is able to remain both theoretically and practically adroit. However, in other contexts, political whiteness may appear too resolutely negative, offering white people nothing but a set of indulgent guilt complexes and erasing the multiple and fragmented ethnicities that overlap with whiteness" (Bonnett, 2000:141). One of the most important tasks of contemporary anti-racism is to engage 'white' people, to bring them 'inside' the anti-racist project, "this implies that the notion of political whiteness should be set within a wider and more sophisticated anti-racist project that enables the historical, international and personal experiences of whiteness to be explored in the context of a changing global economy. Such a process could provide white people with a stake in anti-racism as a project that talked to and about them, whilst weakening the commonsense, normative nature of white identity. Whiteness has traditionally been

the invisible centre of the 'race' equity debate. It is now time to draw it into an explicit engagement with the anti-racist project" (Bonnett, 2000:141).

In order to approach this dilemma Bonnett (2000) returns to Terry's (1975) book *"For Whites Only"* which was an early attempt to expand on anti-racism by providing a trajectory for alternate models that could conceivably replace the present white-male-dominated society. Terry (1975) advocated an examination of the oppressor (as opposed to the oppressed) through the lens of interrogating oppressive *systems*. Anti-racism was seen as insufficient because it provided no 'direction' or way 'forward' from an initial point of recognition and moreover did not advocate societal restructuring (only individual change). This early radical work has yet to be surpassed in many instances and his call for a society which requires "equitable distribution of resources (equitable meaning distributed according to what is needed for each group to become active participants in society), shared power (not separate power), flexible and responsive policies, procedures, and practices, and a pluralistic culture (one that moves beyond superficial differences toward a serious wrestling with deeper values). Such a society will move in directions that generate the support and self-interest of all its citizens" (Terry, 1975:3 in Bonnett, 2000:41).

At an intellectual level, it makes sense to isolate and nominate the 'white' community as the real problem, "But it is not easy to make the shift, because we have been taught for too many years that we have a 'black' problem. Awareness of the contradictions inherent to whiteness, means that for 'white' people who want to face the contradictions head on we need to begin to look at ourselves our institutions and our culture from a new perspective if we hope to solve the real race problem" (Terry, 1975). This leaves Terry (1975) in a similar position to that of Bonnett (2000), how could we forge a new white consciousness?

Terry (1975) provides a useful distinction between societal and individual racism. Societal racism includes the cultural assumption of power, resource and institutional dimensions implicit in any social context, and individual racism is any action (conscious or unconscious) that perpetuates societal racism. But as noted many argue that such a conception still emphasizes 'color' and perpetuates, instead of challenging a racialized consciousness. To embrace humanness is said to ignore whiteness and disregard the color of racism. But it is not the consciousness of color that is the issue according to Terry (1975), its what has been done with that consciousness. Thus, what needs changing are both attitudes (what we deem as normalistic) or ideologies and our actual experiences or practices.

For a long time bad 'white' attitudes were understood as the block to good 'race' relations. Thus, it was believed that changing people's attitudes would ensure behavioral changes given that attitudes were seen as primary determinants of action. Attitudes usually involve feelings, convictions, or moods toward individuals, groups, institutions, or things, and any change in these would ensure behavioral adjustment. The alternate option reversed the order, changing behavior (behavior being any outward observable action such as language, physical appearance or other public expressions), would result in adjusting people's attitudes. But, it is not enough to change 'white' attitudes and behavior we must also change 'white'

consciousness. To be conscious for Terry (1975), is to be always actively aware of ourselves in relation to other selves and things around us. To understand 'whites' as the racial problem makes us conscious of how our experience (the intersection between commonsense and action) may be affected by a racialized commonsense. Attitudes and behavior are interdependent, attitudes will be misplaced and behavior misdirected if we leave our 'commonsense' untouched. "We neither always do what we feel or have strong feelings about what we do. In either case, the sense we make of our attitudes and behavior is dependent on the orientation we use. If we see blacks as the problem, then both attitudes and behavior will flow from that definition of the situation. If, on the other hand, we become orientated so that we understand ourselves as the problem, then it becomes possible to explore new behavior and re-evaluate earlier attitudes" (Terry, 1975:26). This takes us once more to a point where it is the experience of whiteness that is important. That is the point of intersection between the material and ideological realms. We act in accordance to social processes and common knowledge, it is thus to the social construction of whiteness that I now turn.

#### **4.2.1 The Social Construction of Whiteness**

In order to effectively challenge whiteness the mechanisms maintaining its hegemony or rather, the social ordering processes through which it is constructed need to be made apparent. The ubiquitous and dynamic nature of whiteness and the social space it occupies makes any comprehensive coverage difficult (especially given its social context and power relations, read - inscriptions of class, gender, sexuality etc) that give rise to particular moments and rhetoric's of whiteness. To expose the territory of whiteness is to map the (social) space it occupies and, mapping the discursive territory of whiteness is thus seen to be the first step in exposing it as rhetorical construction.

According to Supriya (1999), the intervention of post-structural and post-colonial theory into discourses of gender and 'race' have done much to reconfigure essentialist notions of racial (and gender) identity. Racial identity has been reconceptualized as the effect of an elaborate system of discourses and practices through which those not classified 'white' have been constructed and positioned as 'other', but there has been a virtual absence of interpretation of racial identity specifically conceptualized as 'white' identity. This produces an ironic circumstance in which it is acknowledged that the 'race' of the 'other' is a discursive construct but not whiteness. This implies two problems; (1) **logically**, there exists a position of partial metaphysics, in which whiteness remains essential, static and unchanging across space and time and (2) **politically**, there exists the risk of impairing a collective ethos by excluding considerations of whiteness, particularly 'white' maleness in constituting a multi-cultural society. Thus, there exists both a political and intellectual need for considering the complex and dynamic politics of 'white' identity (Supriya, 1999).

Whiteness and especially 'white' maleness is often perceived as a monolithic, undifferentiated static 'essence' and, remains relatively under theorized in euro-american feminist, post-colonial and post-structural scholarship. In Cultural studies



it is noted that power reproduces itself through the construction of females or the colonized as 'other'. For Supriya (1999), this construction of identity through language and social practices, becomes a conceptual trope for; the performance of (patriarchal and) colonial power that effectively represents (women and) colonized persons in particular ways. The performative practices through which (women and) the colonized discursively and materially position them within the social order become internalized and become central to identities of both those in the west and subalterns themselves. That is, racial/colonial/imperial/western power was and continues to be reproduced through the construction of racial identities of the racial/colonized subject in contradistinction to a normative euro-american (hu)man subject. Within this range of thinking Supriya (1999:131), identifies 3 interrelated arguments, namely that;

- (Women and) the colonized have been differentiated from and opposed to (men and) colonizers within a (patriarchal and) colonial social order
- Such practices subordinates (women to men and) the colonized to the colonizer within such an order
- Subordination takes the form of particular ideologies of (womanhood and) racial identity that are reproduced through the discourses and practices of (patriarchy and) colonialism that takes the form of descriptions of the attributes of (ideal women and/or debased nature of women and) colonized individuals who are constructed as being constituted by the 'essence' of derogatory moral and psychological traits or discourse. This takes the form of prescriptions for the appropriate roles for (women or) the colonized in the light of their subordinate natures and capacities

It is noted that mapping the various ways in which the identities of 'the other' are represented and therefore constructed through power laden discursive repertoires and social practices has done much to rethink identity in general and racial identity in particular as well as exposing both the constructions and effects of constructions (subjectivities) of both dominant and marginalized groups. But these enquiries have neglected the ways in which the same forms of power explicitly and implicitly construct 'white' and specifically 'white' male identity through similar discourses (Supriya, 1999:135). There is a twofold elaboration to this claim;

- It is argued that both post-structural and post-colonial literature leave whiteness as an unobstructed, undifferentiated category and therefore produce the claim that whiteness and white maleness in particular is a metaphysical essence that works by differentially positioning the other as other
- It is argued that while some work acknowledges that whiteness and 'white' maleness may be variously constructed along a set of binary oppositions such as reason-emotions and subject object, the analytical emphasis placed on the construction of African and Indian otherness in both imaginary and symbolic fictions overwhelms considerations of the construction of whiteness in the diverse forms within the problematic of 'white' identity as the oppressor identity

Supriya (1999), is not arguing that there is theoretical blindness but rather an analytical elision of whiteness in which whiteness can be (re)presented both as a construction and an 'essence' of domination. This paradox calls for a closer inspection of whiteness at both at a theoretical and empirical level and becomes a question of intellectual necessity if critical scholars are not to face the charge of theoretical and historical reductionism and empirical simplification. Supriya (1999), feels it is thus important to analyze the discursive construction of whiteness for 3 reasons;

- To act as a theoretical corollary of the axiom of (gender and) racial identity, as constructed through discourse
- Historically speaking, the analysis of constructions of whiteness may enable us to mark the complexities and contradictions that constitute the terrain of white and white male identity over space and time
- The analysis of 'white' and 'white' male identity enables us to mark moments of discursive transformation and identify spaces for the formation of imaginary and material multi-cultural co-alitions, thus offering resistance to the reification of white identity as a transtemporal and transhistorical essence of oppression and instead as a historically and geographically specific construction

Although 'white' maleness represents the archetype of the normative 'race' this is not the 'white' 'subject position' which most interests me. Women in 'white' culture are said to be the dominant carriers of culture and creators of 'identity', and it is the 'bourgeois class' whose social construction of whiteness through the lexicon of my gender, women, are 'archetype' of this process. Being a 'white' woman I thus wish to (re)present the many 'black' feminists that have argued that "as (often-silent) benefactors of both 'white' privilege and the legal protections that were made possible by civil rights movements led by people of color, 'white' women have a particular moral and ethical responsibility to place the abolition of 'white' privilege supremacy at the forefront of their personal and political agendas. I turn to Moon (1999), for whom the construction of a bourgeois notion of womanhood plays a central role in the production and reproduction of a particular type of whiteness closely aligned to relations of domination and 'white supremacy'. "As primary socialization agents of white children, white women can build 'home' as antihegemonic spaces in which engagement with the movement against white supremacy is made a cultural norm" (Moon, 1999:195), and as such 'white' women carry a particularly important social responsibility. Also, 'white' enculturation for Moon (1999), can be framed within two interrelated ideological discourses. The first she terms the **evasion of Whiteness** (a term adopted from Frankenburg, 1993 after Moon, 1999:178) and refers to the way in which 'white' people experience a disconnection with issues of 'race' and neglect to see that issues of 'race', racism and racial formation are related to their lives. The second she terms '**white' solipsism** (a term adopted from Rich, 1979 in Moon, 1999:178), here the world is configured as a white 'space' wherein whiteness is perceived as a normative and universal condition. This does not necessarily point to a belief in 'white' superiority

but rather to a worldview that simply does not see not-white experience or existence as significant.

For Moon (1999) the construction of whiteness through which 'white' women are enculturated depends on simultaneously embracing and denying whiteness. The 'trick' of white enculturation is to racially (re)produce 'white' people through the creation of the illusion of a 'white' world, whilst simultaneously draining 'whiteness' of a specific structural or cultural location (Moon, 1999:179). The discourses of whiteness evasion and white solipsism, are made material in everyday practices and are in turn reproduced by them. A primary site for such practices in private space is most often the white home (Moon, 1999). Given that this research predominantly focuses on whiteness in public space dedicating some time to Moon's (1999) consideration of the 'white' home as a space in which to map articulations of whiteness provides an interesting moment to (re)present my understanding.

#### **4.2.1.1 The White Home as a Cultural Space and White as a Bourgeois Construct**

The cultural space of *the home* is widely noted to be an important influence on the formation of our identity(s). The home is the first and perhaps most influential space we experience (not simply as a physical location but as a cultural space of learning and socialization). Our first home is likely to be a space of cultural learning about dominant relations of 'race', class and gender and of enculturation into these relations. Although the 'white' home could potentially be a revolutionary site for resistance to processes of 'white' supremacy and relations of domination it is most often "a space in which [we] are trained to take [our] 'proper' place within these relations, in particular those of white supremacy" (Moon, 1999:180). Moon's (1999) central argument is that, "the enculturative process is *racialized* within the cultural space of the white family/home in that the patriarchal production of 'good girls' within the family is inextricably linked to the racist production of 'good *white* girls'" (Moon, 1999:181). That is becoming a 'good girl' in the context of 'white' family relations is frequently bound to issues of racial loyalty and solidarity. Rather than as a site of liberation for 'white' women the home is often a hegemonic space of indoctrination into processes of 'white' privilege, "interrogating the ways in which a certain notion of womanhood is interpellated into this interstitial space, white women's respectability within white communities is seen as deeply implicated in their production of 'good (white)girls', girls who are racially loyal" (Moon, 1999:195).

Moon (following Davy, 1995:205 in Moon, 1999:181), notes that "the gendered racialization process is seen as infused with class ideology so that 'good girl' status functions as a bourgeois construct that provides white women with full access to the privileges of white womanhood".

Traditionally women of color and poor/low class 'white' women have been excluded from 'true' womanhood (see Dyer, 1997). Thus it is at the intersection of 'race' and bourgeois ideology that 'white' women embody 'institutionalized whiteness'. In the context of this argument bourgeois is not merely an economic position but instead

denotes a, "kind of hard earned 'gentility' in the form of civility (a bedrock concept of imperialism) that encompasses a plethora of values, morals, and mores that determine the tenets of respectability in general" (Davy, undated:198 in Moon,1999:181), (also see Young, 1995). 'White' women's credibility within 'white' communities is deeply intertwined and dependent on their 'respectability' or production as 'good (white)girls'. The construct of respectability serves (it is argued by Moon, 1999:182 after Higginbotham, 1993:14) to contribute to the construction of whiteness by way of its appeals to bourgeois characteristics or traits that 'good-white-girls are expected to acquire (e.g. purity, refined manners, industriousness), thus allowing 'white' women (regardless of objective class location), to aspire to being a good-white-girl through the acquisition of a racialized notion of respectability; "the white girl learns that whiteness is dignity and respectability... Adopting and cultivating whiteness as an individual character seems to put it in the woman's own power to lever herself up out of a kind of nonbeing (the status of women in a male supremacist social order) over into a kind of being (the status of white in the white supremacist social order)" (Frye, 1992:160, Moon, 1999:182). For Moon (1999:182), "this 'empowerment' for white women is accomplished by aligning themselves with white hegemony and supremacy, a strategy many white women willingly deploy."

For the purposes of this research Moon's (1999) argument serves a twofold purpose (a) it demonstrates how 'space' and 'race' interact in terms of socialization and (b) it is an example of the way in which oppression through 'race' always intersects with other modes of oppression. Moon (1999), identifies and outlines three different sets of **discursive strategies to which 'white' women are expected to acquiesce** (and through which oppressions of 'class', gender and 'race' intersect). I outline these below and given that throughout this research I refer to the intersecting processes of oppression it is interesting to see how this might occur in practice.

#### **(a) Bourgeois Decorum and the Reproduction of Whiteness:**

In order to achieve/maintain 'good (white) girl' status 'white' women must engage in the reproduction of 'white' supremacy (if not actively at least complicity). hooks (1994) notes that racialized notions of respectability can be played out through 'bourgeois decorum' which Moon (1999:183), describes as "a repertoire of strategies that censor rigorous opposition and resistance to party lines". Through silencing dissenters, bourgeois decorum creates 'safe' spaces in which dominant ideologies go unchallenged, and dissenting voices excluded or ostracized.

Bourgeois decorum dictates 'respectable' ways of handling decent or avoiding conflict through the suppression of 'critical comments or making them in private, individualized settings where there are no witnesses. Enactments of 'optic whiteness' "require the public presentation of a united (white) front wherein white solidarity and supremacy are discursively reproduced through bourgeois communication practices" (Moon, 1999:183). Through public interaction, "whether one is observing or participating, whites learn the penalties for racial betrayal and rewards for remaining silent in the face of enactments of white supremacy", to display racial disloyalty publically, is to violate the tenets of 'true' (white) womanhood and bourgeois decorum, moreover not to do so is to disrupt the safety

space for enactments of 'white' supremacy. "It seems clear that the decision to engage with white supremacy, particularly within the context of family relations, is not one easily made nor, once made easily implemented. Here, racial, gender, and class expectations intersect on the bodies of 'good (white) girls' and encourage acquiesce to the dictates of 'Optic Whiteness'" (Moon, 1999:187).

#### **(b) Euphemizing White Racism:**

"Once established, relations of domination do not persist on their own momentum but must constantly be reproduced in material and discursive ways" (Moon, 1999:187). For example, the use of euphemisms work to mask the facts of domination, rendering them 'sanitized' and, "cloak racist expression with a veneer of 'bourgeois civility/gentility', while enabling white people to freely express racism- in coded ways- as a signal of white solidarity" (Moon, 1999:188). For instance, Moon (1999) notes that when discussing issues of 'race' 'white' people often employ what may be referred to as 'whitespeak' (a type of linguistic code which, permits 'white' people to enter discussion on 'race' related matters in such a way that renders the *status quo* 'natural'). For Moon (1999) it is often *what is not said* or the absence of language which is most revealing, especially in the way, "whitespeak functions to disrupt effectively full and direct engagement with 'white' supremacy and its implications by providing white people with discursive and psychic distance from matters of race" (Moon, 1999: 188). Moon (1999) notes how this allows one to evade one's own whiteness and thereby maintain the integrity of 'white' solipsism. For Moon (1999:188), ***"one of the most crucial elements of Whitespeak is the way in which its strategic use depends on the lack of necessary correspondence between symbols and meaning."*** She identifies 3 commonly used euphemistic strategies;

1) Subjectification: "subjectification allows white people to engage in disengaged discussions of race and racism in ways that clearly communicate that these topics have little to do with them. This disengagement allows white people to deny their own complicity in relations of racial domination as well as any awareness or understanding of the historical legacy of white supremacy" (Moon, 1999:189).

2) Passive voice, the agent of an action is made to disappear completely, this enables white people to recognize particular sensitive 'racial' events (and thereby demonstrate their tolerance and empathy for racial others) while repressing any connection to them, or acknowledging their social or historical origins.

3) Disembodiment, here whitespeak is manifest through the employment of disembodied subjects, anonymous agents who are ultimately responsible for the perpetration of racism. These unmarked bodies make life difficult for the rest of 'good white people'. Here contrary to the usual absences noted in whitespeak remarks reveal a marked level of awareness about the operations of white supremacy but, this realization is couched in language that attributes this oppression to a disembodied 'they'. To acknowledge actively white social responsibility and accountability in relation to racist oppression is to name names and that would constitute a violation of the tenets of whitespeak. Such a violation would betray racial solidarity and perhaps require the speaker to engage personally with the implications of white supremacy.

### **(c ) Hyperpoliteness:**

Whereas the operations of whiteness are most easily identified through attending to the 'not-said' the discursive practice of hyperpoliteness is overtly concerned with what is 'said' and represents "the way in which bourgeois ideology functions to shore up the operations of white supremacy through the privileging of form over content" (Moon, 1999:192). Hyperpoliteness signifies an excessive concern with language forms, similar to political correctness eg. 'white' women are taught during childhood not to make use of racist epithets, but not given an explanatory context that would situate such language/epithets historically or engage children in understandings of 'race' relations or our place in them. We aren't taught to understand the historical derivation of the racial epithet as a 'white' cultural construct rather than simply as an impolite word or language. In the absence of a historical context or explanation, the deployment of hyperpoliteness tends to reinscribe racism and support 'white' silence around issues of 'race', so racist stereotypes of others remain while bourgeois decorum discourages the articulation of such attitudes. Moreover, "the tenets of hyperpoliteness shore up both white evasion and white solipsism by requiring that white people don't 'see' race, which then allows us to deny our own racial situatedness" (Moon, 1999:194).

This 'self imposed blindness' ensures that white people continue not to see 'whiteness' as a salient aspect of their identity *per se* (despite 'race' being a powerful organizing principle within society). Liberal white people 'don't notice' skin color and other bourgeois 'white' people see it as rude to mention skin color. For many white people not noticing race is polite and humanistic and translates into political consciousness (Moon,1999). But, Gotanda (1991:195) notes, "nonrecognition of race- assuming that this is even possible or desirable- fosters the systematic denial of relations of racial domination and subordination, and the psychological repression of individuals' recognition of those relations (and their place within them), thereby perpetuating them" In sum, hyperpoliteness often acts as a play that enables 'white' people to avoid engagement with the realities of white supremacy and its implications in their own lives.

I have used Moon's (1999) arguments of the whiteness and the 'white' home to provide an example of a space in which specific discursive practices operate to maintain whiteness. I shall now turn to looking at the discursive strategies employed by 'whites' more generally to ensure that 'white' hegemony is maintained. Increasingly scholars have been encouraged to rethink the ways individuals and groups construct identity, ensure power, and make sense of their everyday lives, through means such as analyzing their own discursive practices. Of interest here is the discursive space which enables whiteness to remain dominant whilst resisting any categorization that would allow for the mapping of its contours, allowing whiteness to yield power but ensure an unarticulated position. "The place from which power is exercised is often a hidden place. When we try to pin it down, the center always seems to be somewhere else. Yet we know that this phantom center, elusive as it is, exerts a real, undeniable power over the entire framework of our culture, and the ways we think about it" (Ferguson, 1990:19 in Nakayama and Krizek,1999:88). Exposing the territory of whiteness can be achieved through investigating the strategies that mark the space of whiteness, that is through

employing nominalist rhetoric (that is by naming whiteness), we displace its centrality and reveal its invisible position in order to gain insight in the social construction of locations of whiteness (Nakayama and Krizek, 1999).

Following Foucault, Nakayama and Krizek (1999), note that, we know power relations are not localized at any given moment but constitute a strategy. In addition we know that these power relations are anonymous and evade all stable forms of the visible and articulatable. It is this anonymity of power that is seen as significant in conceptualizing discursive formations. That is, when looking at whiteness, we should not look for some major imposition of 'white' from above, (power is not exercised in a naked manner) but rather try to negotiate the ways it is multiply constituted and continually reinscribed on our social landscape) through our everyday discursive practices. "If whiteness is everything and nothing, if whiteness as a category does not exist except in conflict with others, how can we understand racial politics in a social structure that centers whites, yet has no center?" (Nakayama and Penalzoa, 1993:54 in Nakayama and Krizek, 1999:95).

The risk for critical researchers choosing to interrogate whiteness, to seek out the center or map the contours of the discursive processes through which whiteness is re-inscribed by our everyday practices is the risk of essentialism. Whatever whiteness really means, it is only constituted through the rhetoric of whiteness, there is no 'true essence' to 'whiteness' there is only the historically contingent construction of that location. By viewing whiteness as a rhetorical construction we avoid searching for any essential nature to whiteness. Instead, we seek an understanding of the ways this construction makes itself visible or invisible, eluding analysis yet exerting a real influence. The invisibility of whiteness is manifested through its universality that resides in its already defined position as everything. In the realm of categories, 'black' is always marked as a color and is always particularizing whereas 'white' is not anything really, not an identity, not particularizing, not a social position. The experiences, discourses and material spaces created by white people are taken as the norm from which others are marked (Nakayama and Krizek, 1999). If we are to understand how it is that whiteness functions as such, many theorists suggest we are to return to the moment in which whiteness first became a dominant social ordering process.

#### **4.2.2 Whiteness and Modernity**

I have thus far alluded to 'universal' aspects of whiteness such as invisibility, cultural authority, normativity and the like. In addition, it was noted that there was little room for maneuvering out of the power relations embedded in whiteness. But the nature of the relationship between processes of global whiteness and processes locating and constituting individual racialized subjects has thus far been omitted. For Bonnett (1999), "the emergence of white racial identities is an integral component of the development of modernity across the world. Indeed it is [Bonnett's] contention that one cannot grasp the development of the modern world, and more especially the notion of what is modern and what is not, without an appreciation of the racialized nature of modernity, and, more particularly, of its association with a European identified race" (Bonnett, 1999:2). In addition Bonnett



(1999) notes, "the uncomfortable truth is that white identity resides in social forces and categories, such as 'modernization', 'development' and civilization, with which we are all engaged in some way. We must justifiably hope to encourage the de-racialization of these processes, to open them up to less Eurocentric ends. Whiteness can, and I am in no doubt will, be superceded, and made to appear as archaic an identity as Tuton or Gaul. But to imagine that it is a homogenous and alien 'enemy'- something other to, or inherently outside of, anti-racism- is a romantic delusion" (Bonnett, 2000:4). Thus, it is to the formation of Euro-American racial whiteness that I turn.

There is evidence of the pre-modern existence of groups seeing whiteness in or amongst themselves (eg. in China and the Middle East). But, whiteness was not necessarily seen as a racial or ethnic identity. The Modern idea of 'race' is distinctive because it emerged amid modern attitudes towards nature and politics (i.e. it is a product of naturalistic science and, Euro-colonial and imperial power) that rationalized and naturalized racial discrimination. Whiteness could not have existed prior to the invention of a racialized social order and attendant attitudes. Modern whiteness as a construct is thus not the result of the seizure of a pre-formed identity, it is rather "a narrative of the ability to marginalize and forget other forms of white identity and to create, assert and disseminate a particular vision of human difference...whether positively or negatively connoted, whiteness was employed within the identity constructs of non-European and pre-modern societies. All these forms of whiteness have now been either forgotten or marginalized" (Bonnett, 2000:14). The attempt to construct an exclusionary and eventually, highly racialized interpretation of whiteness can be traced along a number of intersecting paths in European history. There existed in ancient and medieval Europe a cultural tradition that valued the color white as a symbol of purity, religious devotion and nobility. The pale complexion attributed to aristocrats provided the physical marker of their noble descent. These traditions were interwoven with a number of Christian representational tropes that privileged whiteness by associating it with chastity and godliness (Bonnett, 2000).

By 1680 'white' was connoted as an ethnic type or distinction (and is) first thought to have been documented by a cleric C. Nesse who made the distinction between 'the white line' (decendent of Seth) and 'the black line' (the cursed blood of Cain). Here whiteness and non-whiteness were associated with distinct moral biblical lineages. This distinction was strengthened by an interpretation of the post-flood division of humankind, by a 16<sup>th</sup> century chronicler, George Best who demonstrated the widespread acceptance that Noah's sons founded three branches of mankind. Drawing on a mixture of Jewish and Christian traditions the 'heathen' came to be associated as not being 'white'. 'Ham's progeny was 'marked' with a black badge to symbolize loathsomeness and banished to Africa. This association was reinforced by the intellectual fusion of the concept of 'Europe' with older categories of 'Christendom' that developed from the late medieval period onwards (it is important here to remember the point raised in the last chapter that 'race' is a relatively vacuous concept reflective of power relations through which it is reproduced, see Goldberg, 1992). That is, "a triple conflation of white=European=Christian arose that imparted moral, cultural and territorial content to whiteness. The broad

constituency of this latter identity is suggestive of the transformation of the concept of race from a category denoting nobility, more specifically a noble line of descent to the more socially inclusive idea of a people or nation" (Bonnett, 2000:17).

According to Bonnett (2000) the earliest and most widespread employment of 'white' to refer to a European people(s) is to be found in colonial settings, in association with new modes of political identity based on distinctions between colonizer and colonized, dominant and subject peoples. Early colonial understandings of the peoples and social order of the new world wove together themes of nobility, skin color and Christianity with the language of 'race', transmuting whiteness into a colonial discourse of 'white' superiority and 'black' inferiority. This facilitated the adoption of 'race' as an integral part of ideologies of colonial expansion. Within colonial settings the terms Christian, free, English and 'white' were deployed indiscriminately as metonymns, this is to be understood within the context of large scale mobilization (both physically and ideologically), of European-heritage peoples as agents of colonialism and imperialism. The world's population was subjected to a new representational legacy in which traditional notions of whiteness and 'race' were drawn into new models of the world's population that asserted a hierarchy between 'races' with whites/Europeans at the top as both tautology and group beyond compare (Bonnett, 2000).

The expansion of European power was legitimated through the development of racial science (as discussed in chapter 3), but this "was a semi-autonomous discourse, one capable of throwing up material that contradicted European's attempts to claim an exclusive stake in whiteness. Many racial scientists drew upon cranial and linguistic investigations as well as, or instead of, skin color to establish the boundaries of race. Sometimes these investigations were used to confirm that Europe had sole claim to whiteness" (Bonnett, 2000:18). Although some theorists at the time saw Europeans as but one expression of a wider 'racial' community the apparent inclusivity of such an opinion is deceptive. The apparent extension of whiteness to non-Europeans was consistently undermined both by more powerful and more popular discourses affirming European racial supremacy which found Europeans to be the most authentic and best examples of the 'white' 'race', "the central imperative behind the west's racialization of the world was to legitimize Europeans as part of a superior race. The ideology of race, with its concomitant divisions was disseminated across the globe, making profound inroads into non-Europeans sense of self and other" (Bonnett, 2000:19).

"Modern European white identity is historically unique. People in other societies may be seen to have valued whiteness and to have employed the concept to define, at least in part, who and what they were. *But they did not treat being white as a natural category nor did they invest so much of their sense of identity within it.* Europeans racialized, which is to say naturalized, the concept of whiteness, and entrusted it with the essence of their community. Europeans turned whiteness into a fetish object, *a talisman of the natural* whose power appeared to enable them to impose their will on the world" (Bonnett, 2000:21).

These claims of European 'white' difference and superiority informed almost every aspect of social and political life in Europe and the territories it dominated. The obsessive, excessive nature of Europeans' discursive employment of whiteness is increasingly drawing critical consideration. Not only by those theorists interrogating the 'white' center but by those 'othered', who are trying to map how they became located as such and how they are themselves implicated in raciological ordering processes (see Gilroy, 2000).

No matter how slippery or contingent whiteness may seem to be when we're trying to map the concept, Kincheloe (1999), reminds us that whiteness cannot escape the materiality of its history, in particular its relation to 'white' reason. For Kincheloe (1999) what we have lost sight of is, the socially constructed nature of reason itself as a signifier of whiteness. The womb of whiteness in Bonnet's (2000) formulation above could be said to have been, "the European Enlightenment's notion of rationality with its privileged construction of a transcendental white, male, rational subject who operated at the recesses of power while concurrently giving every indication that he escaped the confines of time and space. In this context whiteness was naturalized as a universal entity that operated as more than a mere ethnic positionality emerging from a particular time, the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and a particular space, Western Europe"(Kincheloe, 1999:163). In this configuration reason becomes whitened and human nature grounded on the reasoning capacity.

It was in this context that whiteness was established as a norm and came to represent "an authoritative, delimited, and hierarchical mode of thought. In the emerging colonial contexts in which Whites would increasingly find themselves in the decades and centuries following the Enlightenment, the encounter with non-whiteness would be framed in rationalistic terms- whiteness representing orderliness, rationality, and self-control and non-whiteness as chaos, irrationality, violence, and the breakdown of self-regulation. Rationality emerged as the conceptual base around which civilization and savagery could be delineated" (Kincheloe, 1999:163). 'White' people thus came to differentiate themselves from 'others' who were supposedly unable to regulate their own emotional predispositions and who were unable to enact a rational objective view of the world. The 'others' who were being "colonized, exploited, enslaved, and eliminated by Europeans during their Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment eras- were viewed as irrational and, thus, inferior in their status as human beings. As inferior beings, they had no claim to the same rights as Europeans- hence, white racism and colonialism were morally justified around the conflation of whiteness and reason. In order for whiteness to place itself in the privileged seat of rationality and superiority, it would have to construct pervasive portraits of non-Whites, Africans in particular, as irrational, disorderly, and prone to uncivilized behavior" (Kincheloe, 1999:165), in which the modern social science (and geographers) are heavily implicated. The relationship between whiteness and rationality was further shaped by this association with science in that "as a scientific construct whiteness privileges mind over body, intellectual over experiential ways of knowing, mental abstractions over passion, bodily sensations, and tactile understandings" (Kincheloe, 1999:163), which were projected onto the raciological other. "To western eyes the contrast between white and non-white culture was stark: reason as opposed to ignorance;

scientific knowledge instead of indigenous knowledge; philosophies of mind versus folk psychologies; religious truth in lieu of primitive superstition; and professional history as opposed to oral mythologies. Thus, rationality was inscribed in a variety of hierarchical relations between European colonizers and their colonies early on, and between western multinationals and their 'underdeveloped' markets in later days. Such power relations were erased by the white claim of cultural neutrality around the trans-historical norm of reason - in this construction rationality was not assumed to be the intellectual commodity of any specific culture. Indeed, colonial hierarchies immersed in exploitation were justified around the interplay of pure whiteness, impure non-whiteness, and neutral reason" (Kincheloe, 1999:164)

"Colonialism was grounded on colonized people's deviation from the norm or rationality, thus making colonization a rational response to inequality. In the twentieth century this white norm of rationality was extended to the economic sphere where the philosophy of the free market and exchange values were universalized into signifiers of civilization. Once all the nations on earth are drawn into the white reason of the market economy, then all land can be subdivided into real estate, all human beings' worth can be monetarily calculated, values of abstract individualism and financial success can be embraced by every community in every country, and education can be reformulated around the cultivation of human capital. When these dynamics come to pass, the white millennium will have commenced - white power will have been consolidated around land and money" (Kincheloe, 1999:164)

"The notion that it is a white world appears both obvious and faintly ridiculous. The idea that those social, economic and cultural forms that dominate the planet may be characterized as white, whether in terms of their origin, their values or which group benefits from them is a ubiquitous one "(Bonnett, 2000:46). The notion that western ideologies and practices, economic and social influences have expanded/intruded/been assimilated across the earth is a leitmotif of nearly all studies of historical global development. But, the way in which these ideologies and practices were racialized remains relatively under-discussed, "for European social and economic paradigms were connoted through the symbols of race, symbols that gave capitalist incursion and modernity a European, and hence white, identity. It follows that the history of this era may benefit from the consideration of the relationship between whiteness and modernity. More specifically, that any understanding of the interpretation; or translation, of 'western modernity' into different cultures around the world demands an understanding of these cultures adoption and adaption of notions of racial whiteness" (Bonnett, 2000:48).

How does whiteness work as a process of social change? In what way does whiteness reflect and shape other dominant socio-economic discourses? Well, for one to be modern demands a break from a non-European past and a movement or "progression" toward the ways and attitudes of 'European civilization'. To be 'culturally sophisticated', to adopt modern economies to build cities, roads, infrastructure etc. all symbolized European civilization. But more fundamentally for those not European, "the practices and ideologies of modernity were embodied in the figure of the European, in the person of the white who offers progress as a

universally obtainable project, a distributable gift, but whose own body is its defining symbol" (Bonnett, 2000:56) (also see Rist, 1997).

The problem of modernity's symbolic reliance on something as apparently fixed and limited as 'white' skin was exacerbated by the impact of social Darwinism and Eugenics. Although the notion that whiteness represented the most advanced 'race' was current before these forms of Socio-biology, they further naturalized white supremacy in racial discourse, "Social Darwinism and Eugenics were incorporated into the emerging narratives of national identity. The conquest and/or assimilation of other races by whites was increasingly deemed not only justifiable but a reflection of the basic law of nature, an inevitable part of national growth. Thus, the presence and history of people with significant native or African ancestry was increasingly deemed to belong to a 'dark past', a past which the nation had to struggle against, a past to be contrasted with the white (or at least whiter future)" (Bonnett, 2000:56). Bonnett (2000) thus implies that the racialization of modernity was also a spatialization, with 'European' as an identity premised on the existence of a racial homeland: Europe. Modernity thus became both epoch and region, but how did this process or way of being come to be embodied? How did 'white' bodies come to (re)present and (re)produce processes of whiteness?

#### **4.2.3 The Embodiment of Whiteness**

For Dyer (1997), whiteness is something in but not of the 'white' body. Yet to represent 'white' people is to represent 'white' bodies. This relationship to our white body(ies) was said to have been constituted through the social ordering processes of, Christianity, 'race' and empire/imperialism. These provide, for Dyer (1997), more than the intellectual foundations for thinking about the 'white' body, they also constitute in part the structures/cultural register of whiteness.

##### **4.2.3 (a) The Embodiment of Whiteness through Christianity**

The European feeling of 'self' and world has been given a particular inflection by Christianity. Western dualist thought, is believed to be based on the form of carnation (-being in yet not of the body) that stems from a Christian culture and consciousness. In addition, "many of the fundamentals of all levels of Western Culture- the forms of parenting, especially motherhood, and sex, the value of suffering, guilt, the shock of post-Enlightenment materialism- come to us from Christianity" (Dyer, 2000:15). Christianity provides a particular cosmology, a set of images and narrative tropes, which survive as the characteristics of western culture, whether, their biblical origins are acknowledged or not.

The body is the basis of Christian imagery (notably the nativity and crucifixion), Christianity, for Dyer (1997), is very concrete, physical and body-minded. But, despite the emphasis on the body and materiality in Christianity, it is actually the spirit that is 'in' the body that becomes the locus of whiteness. "What has made Christianity compelling and fascinating is precisely the mystery that it posits, that somehow there is in the body something that is not of the body which may be variously termed spirit, mind, soul or God" (Dyer, 1997:16), this is the distinctive

inflection Christianity gives to western dualistic philosophy. While, “the Enlightenment’s largely aesthetic shift away from God to Man as the center of human endeavor and consciousness felt like a drastic break with Christianity, it was in many ways a continuation of the same way of thinking and feeling, simply breaking with the sense of divinity, but not the presence, of the spirit within” (Dyer, 1997:16). There is a conceptual split between mind and body which regards the latter as inferior (if not evil), which is the major contribution to ‘race’ from Christianity.

“Mary is a vessel for the spirit; she does nothing and indeed has no carnal knowledge, but is filled with God; her purity (of which her virginity is only one aspect) is given of her nature, not something achieved. Christ on the other hand is God, or rather he is simultaneously, again incomprehensibly, fully divine and fully human. The signs of his humanity are his appetites, his temptations and his suffering” (Dyer, 1997:15-16). Both Mary and Christ provide models of behaviour and being to which humans may aspire. Women are given the model of passivity, expectancy, receptivity and a kind of sacred readiness- motherhood is the supreme fulfillment of one’s nature, in sum women are posited with a given purity and state of grace. (Dyer, 1997:16). In men the model is of a divided nature- an internal struggle; between mind (God) and body (man), and of suffering as the supreme expression of spiritual and physical striving (Dyer, 1997:16). Mary and Christ are ambiguous models, they are what one should aspire to be like, yet what one can never be.” This sets up a dynamic aspiration, of striving to be, to transcend, and to go on striving in the face of the impossibility of transcendence” (Dyer, 1997:17). Such striving is registered in suffering, self-denial, self-control and material achievement, which come to constitute something of the ‘white’ ideal. Dyer (1997) is not suggesting though that Christianity is necessarily ‘white’, but that it became the religion and religious export of Europe, marking it’s culture and consciousness. It has also been thought and felt in distinctly ‘white’ ways for most of its history, its primary contribution to whiteness being the underlying motif of embodiment, which enables us to “think of all bodies containing different spiritual qualities, or some having such qualities and others not having them (a trope of white racism), of bodies containing that which controls them and then extends beyond them to the control of others and the environment (a trope of enterprise and imperialism), all this requires the first conceptual leap represented by the bodies of Christ and Mary, the sacraments, observances and theologies that rework them and the distinctive European culture founded upon all of this “ (Dyer,1997:17-18).

#### **4.2.3 (b) The Embodiment of Whiteness through ‘Race’**

As noted in chapter 3, it was during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that philosophers and politicians set about detailing the innate qualities of different ‘races’ and of ‘white’ people that still informs the way we are now imagined and represented. Within this legacy ‘white’ people have a peculiar relationship to ‘race’, and have always been conceptually different to other ‘races’.

The history of being ‘white’ suggests, that whiteness is a very fluid and mutable category with unstable shifting boundaries. “European racial whiteness is an

extraordinarily ambitious social project. It makes enormous demands, both on 'other races' and upon its European progenitors. The latter are required to be the epitome of civilization, of purity, of morality and virulent strength. The central irony of this process is that this set of expectations is placed upon societies riven with, and based on, the existence of hierarchies that deny these very qualities to most of their population. Whiteness both as the ultimate symbol of superiority and as the legitimizing authority and mobilizing ideology for national imperial and colonial enterprises must simultaneously be made available to all Europeans and denied to those deemed unfit or unwilling to carry its burden. Thus, the excessive nature of the European construction of whiteness, its exclusionary zeal, brings about its own impossibility: most whites are unworthy of whiteness" (Bonnett, 2000:21-22).

Whiteness is said to be strengthened by the instabilities of such coalition. In one sense it creates a category of 'maybe', sometimes people may only be included into whiteness in particular historical circumstances (e.g. Irish, Mexicans, Jews and people of mixed race). The shifting border and internal hierarchies of whiteness suggest that the category of whiteness is unclear and unstable, yet this proves a strength, "because whiteness carries such rewards and privileges, the sense of a border that might be crossed and a hierarchy that might be climbed has produced a dynamic that has enthralled people who have had any chance of participating in it." (Dyer, 1997:20) (see Gilroy (2000) for a discussion of the way the racially oppressed engage in and reproduce raciological ordering processes).

But how do 'race' and whiteness come together in/on the body? For Dyer (1997), all concepts of 'race' are always concepts of the body and of heterosexuality. 'Race' is a means of categorizing different types of human bodies (which reproduce themselves), and seeks to systematize these differences relating them to differences in character and worth. Heterosexuality is thus one means of ensuring (but hence may act as a site for endangering), the reproduction of these differences. As noted in chapter 3, there are two broad ways of categorizing 'race'; genealogically or biologically. Embodiment works through both, but does so more uncomfortably in the latter, "this is partly because to have a history is one splendid thing; to be defined by one's own body is quite another - the former accords with the white concept of self, but the latter is uneasy with it" (Dyer, 1997:20). It also has to do with the nature of the intellectual operations involved, "the archaeological and historical work of genealogy was bound up with European's quest for forbears: 'white' people saw themselves in what they were investigating. Biology on the other hand, has traditionally been based upon a model of scientific knowledge as separate from that which it investigates. It is thus not surprising that the biology of 'race' should sometimes seem to have written whites out of the account, for whites are those who have such knowledge, but are themselves less readily the object of it" (Dyer, 1997:20).

Racial genealogy maps histories of populations, generally 'proving' how environment and tradition have molded the character of the people in question. 'White' genealogy has focused on the Aryans or Caucasians. The former are said to be the ancient inhabitants of Northwest India and Pakistan, who emigrated to 'the west' and founded Europe (it was believed that they immigrated via the Caucasus mountains). The Aryan/Caucasian myth established a link between Europeans and



a venerable culture known to pre-date Europe's oldest civilization, ancient Greece. It was essential to find a 'white' origin for Greek society, which before the 19th century had been thought to be of Egyptian or Phoenician descent (which was problematic given that European's sense of self and could not therefore be located in Africa).

Biologically, natural science of the 19<sup>th</sup> century posited an emphasis on measurable biological distinctions between 'races' (as was discussed in chapter 3) from phrenology and craniology to anthropometry to genetics, difference was carefully documented. But the biology of the 'white' 'race' was little documented. It is difficult to separate this biological 'race' research from the imperialism and attempts for domestic control at the time. The aim to 'know', fix and place the 'white' 'race' rather than establish the characteristics of whiteness makes sense in this context. For Dyer (1997) the, "significance of biological approaches to race is precisely their disinterest in, and even perhaps unwillingness to consider, the racial character of 'white' people, for that would be to understand white people as, like nonwhites, no more than their bodies. Thus, while biological approaches to race seek to pin down the racial characteristics of white people, a countervailing discourse has stressed that which cannot be scrutinized, that little something more that makes 'whites' different" (Dyer, 1997:23). What distinguishes 'white' people from all others is their 'race-soul'. It is not 'spirituality' or 'soul' but rather a sense of 'spirit' - an intangible character, energy and high-mindedness, an aspiration and awareness of the highest reaches of intellectual comprehension and aesthetic refinement. Above all, the 'white' spirit could both master and transcend the 'white' body (the non-white soul was conversely tied to the fallibilities of the body). "A hard, lean body, a dieted and trained one, an upright, shoulders back, unrelaxed posture, tight rather than loose movement, tidiness in domestic arrangements and eating manners, privacy in relation to bowels, abstinence or in any rate planning in relation to appetites, all of these are the ways the white body and its handling display the fact of the spirit within. But that spirit itself cannot be seen" (Dyer, 1997:24).

Genetics likewise locates 'race' within the body and as un-seen the concept of *racial blood* or, conceptions of *racial genes* have been said to carry more of the purely mental properties that constitute white superiority, "in these discourses, all blood and genes carry mental properties, but, invisibly, white blood and genes carry more intelligence, more spirit of enterprise, more moral refinement. Thus, our bodily blood and genes give us that extra-bodily edge" (Dyer, 1997:24). These biological concepts of 'race' created a number of problems for the representation of 'white' people. On the one hand they reinforced the notion of the inescapable corporeality of non-white peoples, while leaving the corporeality of whites less certain, "something that fed into the function on non-white, and especially 'black' people in representation of being a kind of definite thereness by means of which white people can gain a grounding in materiality and 'know who they are'" (Dyer, 1997:24). Yet, at the level of representation, 'whites' remain (despite their 'transcending superiority'), dependent on non-whites for their sense of self (just as they are materially in many imperial, post-imperial material circumstances). This, for Dyer (1997), presents a source for anxiety in the space between an emphasis on 'white' people being distinguished by that which cannot be seen (either spirit or genetically conceptualized intelligence), whilst on the other they need to be visually represented given the weight placed on the visible in western modernity.

'Race' is about bodies and consequently the reproduction of those bodies (through heterosexuality). Implicit in notions of genealogy (the chain of sexual reproduction leading back to the origins of the race), degeneration (the bad chain of such reproduction) and genetics (the way we now understand the passing on of characteristics through reproduction), is the centrality of reproduction to heterosexuality. This can be sensed in the anxiety surrounding inter-racial sexuality which threatens the power of whiteness because it breaks the legitimization of whiteness with reference to the white body "for all the appeal to spirit, still, if white bodies are no longer indubitably white bodies, if they can no longer guarantee their own reproduction as white, then the 'natural' basis of their domination is no longer credible" (Dyer, 1997:25). If 'races' are conceptualized as pure, then miscegenation threatens that purity.

The recurrent motif of rape of 'white' women by 'non-white' men makes sense in this perspective. It (re)presents threats to 'white' men's control over their property (both their women and their chattels), as well as displacing their control over the inheritance of their property and possessions. "Inter-racial (non-white on white), rape is represented as bestiality storming the citadel of civilization- but this often implies that sexuality itself was bestial and antithetical to civilization, itself achieved and embodied by whites. What this discloses is the conundrum of sexuality for whites, the difficulty they have over the very mechanism that ensures their racial survival and purity, heterosexual reproduction. To ensure the survival of the race they have to have sex- but having sex, and sexual desire, are not very white: the means of reproducing whiteness are not themselves pure white" (Dyer, 1997:26). This is the logic behind the common fear that the 'white' 'race' will fade away, especially given that the number of 'white' people in the world is proportionally small. The language of outnumbering is fundamental to 'white' racial politics (alongside discourse tactically emphasizing the importance of 'white' reproduction and especially 'white' women's responsibility in this regard). Feminists have long purported that the role of compulsory heterosexuality, and the pressures of compulsory motherhood on 'white' women are not just pressures to keep 'white' women in their place, but also to keep the 'white' population up, "demand that white women make white babies to keep the race afloat has not been overt, but I think it is being made over and over again in disguised form as a preachment within an all-white context about our duty to keep the species afloat" (Frye, 1983:124 in Dyer, 1997:27). But again paradoxically the qualities of the spirit that make us 'white' detract from our capacity to achieve this end, our minds control our bodies and therefore both our sexual impulses and our forward planning of children, "the very thing that makes us white endangers the reproduction of our whiteness" (Dyer, 1997:27).

For Dyer (1997), the intricacies of whiteness and sexuality are projected differently onto men and women. Western heterosexuality implies gendered sexualities, which underpins male: female power difference. "White men are seen as divided, with more powerful sex drives but also a greater willpower. The sexual dramas of white men have to do with not being able to resist the drives or struggling to master them. The drives are typically characterized as dark" (Dyer, 1997:28). The projection of sexuality on to dark 'races' is said to have been a means for 'white' people to

represent yet disassociate themselves from their own desires. But there need not be explicit or even implied racial reference. The heterosexual functions by separating desire from what whites aspire to "dark desires are part of the story of whiteness, but as what the whiteness of whiteness has to struggle against. Thus it is that the whiteness of white men resides in the tragic quality of their giving way to darkness and the heroism of their channeling or resisting it" (Dyer, 1997:28). The divided nature of 'white' masculinity, expressed in relation to sexuality but also to anything that can be characterized as low, dark and irredeemably corporeal, reproduces the structure of feeling which Dyer (1997) attributes to the Christ story, "his agony is that he was fully flesh and fully spirit, able to be tempted though able to resist. In the torment of the crucifixion he experienced the fullness of the pain of sin, but in the resurrection showed that he could transcend it. The spectacle of white male bodily suffering typically conveys a sense of dignity and transcendence in such pain" (Dyer, 1997:28). The presence of dark within the 'white' man also enables him to assume the position as the universal signifiers for humanity; he encompasses all the possibilities for human existence, the darkness and the light. Gradations of whiteness complicate this, "the really white man's destiny is that he has further to fall (into darkness) but can aspire higher (toward the light)" (Dyer, 1997:28). But there is a further twist, "not to be sexually driven is to cast a question mark over a man's masculinity- the darkness is a sign of his true masculinity, just as his ability to control it is a sign of his whiteness- but there can be occasions when either side discredits the other, the white man's masculinity 'tainting' his whiteness or his whiteness emasculating him. These contradictions constitute the fertile ground for the production of stories and images of white masculinity seen as exemplary of the human condition" (Dyer, 1997:28).

The construction of sexuality is different for 'white' women, "the white man has- as bearer of agony, as universal subject- to have the dark drives against which to struggle. The white women on the other hand were not supposed to have such drives in the first place. She might discover that she did and this is the stuff of a great deal of western narrative, but this was a fall from whiteness, not constitutive of it, as in the case of the white man's torment. The model for white women is the Virgin Mary, a pure vessel for reproduction who is unsullied by the dark drives that reproduction entails" (Dyer, 1997:29). There are special anxieties surrounding the whiteness of 'white' women's sexuality, "as the literal bearers of children, and because they are held primarily responsible for their initial raising, women are the indispensable means by which the group-the race- is in every sense reproduced. Women are also required to display the signs, especially the finery, of the social group to which they are bonded in heterosexuality, be it class or race" (Dyer, 1997:29).

Individual 'white' women are poised to either (re)produce or betray the hopes, achievements and character of the 'race'. They can guarantee its reproduction (even though not succeeding to its highest sights), and are constructed as the embodiment of beauty and refinement. But their sexuality is a disturbance. Their role in reproduction at once 'privilege' and subordinates them although they are given power over non-white people of both sexes, 'white' women do not have the same relation to power as 'white' men, their occupation of power is always temporary. They foster individualism in 'white' men while denying it to themselves,

thus 'white' women are often represented as standing for 'white' power, yet are unable to exercise it (Dyer, 1997:29).

In short, 'race' and gender are ineluctably intertwined. The primacy of heterosexuality lies in reproducing the former and defining the latter, yet we consistently see that this is an unstable alliance. The idea of 'race', locates historical, social and cultural differences in the body, "in principle this means all bodies, but in practice whites have accorded themselves a special relation to race and thus to their own and other bodies. They have more of that unquantifiable something, spirit, that puts them above race. This is a badge of superiority, yet it also creates instability for whites at the heart of the notion of race, namely heterosexual reproduction and its attendant sex roles. Whites must reproduce themselves, yet they must also control and transcend their bodies. Only by impossibly doing both can they be white. Thus are produced some of the great narrative dilemmas of whiteness, notably romance, adultery, rape and pornography" (Dyer, 1997:30).

#### **4.2.3 (c) Embodiment, Enterprise and Imperialism**

All concepts of 'race' emerging from 18<sup>th</sup> century materialism are concepts of bodies. Notions of embodiment and incarnation are used to distinguish 'white' people and give them a special relationship to race, "black people can be reduced (in white culture) to their bodies and thus to race, but white people are something else that is realized in and yet is not reducible to the corporeal or racial" (Dyer, 1997:15). At some point, the embodied 'something else' of whiteness became material in relation to the physical world, "the white spirit organizes white flesh and in turn non-white flesh and other material matters: it has enterprise. Imperialism is the key historical form in which that process has been realized. Imperialism displays both the character of enterprise in the white person, and its exhilaratingly expansive relationship to the environment" (Dyer, 1997:15).

The 'white' man has long characterized himself as knowing how to manage and control things, to use his head, to be enterprising, "'enterprise' is an aspect of both spirit itself- energy, will, ambition, the ability to think and see things through- and of its effect- discovery, science, business, wealth creation, the building of nations, the organization of labour (carried out by racially lesser humans)" (Dyer, 1997:31). Enterprise is closely associated with the concept of will (the control of self and the control of others). Will is a central value in western culture and is literally mapped on to the world in terms of those who have it and those who do not, the ruler and ruled, colonizer and colonized (Hodge, 1975 after Dyer, 1997:31).

The most important vehicle for the exercise and display of enterprise is imperialism, which gave enterprise an unprecedented horizon of expansion (for material-goods, terrain, and people to organize). "The history of colonialism as popularly imagined and promulgated could be conveyed in terms of the excitement of advance, of forward movement through time, and of conquest and control of space" (Dyer, 1997:31), "the very existence of empire was viewed [as] the outcome of the struggle between superior and inferior 'races', an outcome in which the labor of the inferior 'races' had been appropriated not only to ensure 'their' advancement towards

'civilization' but also, and especially, 'our' advancement to the position of *Great Britain, workshop of the world*" (Miles and Phizacklea, 1984:12-13 in Dyer, 1997:32).

The temporal, spatial and racial moments constituting 'whiteness' is a product of the same template of enterprise and imperialism exemplified in fictional escapist and entertainment forms, such as the Victorian adventure story or American Western. The Western (novels, shows, comics, advertising and television as well as films), for example, was one of the founding myths of the USA, a country that for Dyer (1997), has symbolized the direction, hopes and fears of the 'white' world. The Western as an imaginative form purveyed the experience, the thrill of exhilaration, of the exercise of enterprise" from the first, the properness of the white occupation of the North American continent (and indeed other territories to be colonized) was argued in terms of the fact that the indigenous people did not cultivate the land, did not order it and therefore did not realise the true human (but we will now say 'white') purpose towards creation. White cultivation brings partition, geometry, boundedness to the land, it displays on the land the fact of human intervention, of enterprise. The frontier, and all the drama and excitement its establishment and maintenance entail, is about the act of bringing order in the form of borders to a land and people without them. A whole series of tropes of whiteness proceed from this, widely noted in cultural history though not always named as 'white'" (Dyer, 1997:32).

"White identity is founded on compelling paradoxes: a vividly corporeal cosmology that most values transcendence of the body; a notion of being at once a sort of race and the human race, an individual and a universal subject; a commitment to heterosexuality that, for whiteness to be affirmed, entails men fighting against sexual desires and women having none; a stress on the display of spirit while maintaining a position of invisibility; in short, a need always to be everything and nothing, literally overwhelmingly present and yet apparently absent, both alive and dead. Paradoxes are fascinating, endlessly drawing us back to them, either in awe of their unfathomability or else out of a wish to fathom them. Paradoxes provide the instabilities that generate stories, millions of engrossing attempts to find resolution. The dynamism of white instability, especially in claims to universality, is also what entices those outside to seek to cross its borders and those inside to aspire ever upwards within it. Thus it is that the paradoxes and instabilities of whiteness also constitute its flexibility and productivity, in short, its representational power" (Dyer, 1997:40).

For Dyer (1997) it is these forms of power that ensures that 'white' people are everywhere represented yet remain invisible, simplifying that overcoming whiteness is a complex task. Thus far in this chapter it has been noted that whiteness is a hegemonic social construct diffused through and intersecting in a number of social ordering processes. How then could we set about plotting a trajectory that seeks to escape the allure of whiteness?

### 4.3 Escaping whiteness and Anti-racism

#### 4.3.1 Escaping Whiteness

To be outside whiteness in the context of this research implies being outside modernity, "if we agree that whiteness is associated with the dominant social and cultural forces of the modern era, then it is logical to proceed to speculate that resistance to these forces may have been articulated in terms of a rejection of, or escape from, whiteness: in other words, that critiques of the mechanical nature of 'western reason' and of the alienated nature of industrial society are likely to contain an implicit or explicit moment of racialized politics. Central to this moment is the forging of non-whiteness as an identity that is *not* alienated and *not* dominated by instrumental logic. Thus, non-whiteness is constructed as an oppositional identity, a site from which to critique modernity" (Bonnett, 2000:78).

Anti-modern critique has taken many forms, from radical protests to movements in art and philosophy. As an example, Bonnett (2000) draws on the primitivist movements in western art from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These western artists were amongst the first to reject representational forms of modernity through introducing into their work apparently non-western forms of subject matter. For example the *avant-garde* tried to reject the ideological and representational ordering processes of modernity, "we fight like disorganized 'savages' against old, established power. The battle seems unequal, but numbers never decides spiritual matters only by the power of ideas. The dreaded weapons of the 'savages' are their new ideas" (Marc, 1912 in Bonnett, 2000:80). Expressionist artists sought similarly to attack what they saw as the outmoded and alienating nature of European culture. For them it seemed obvious that the place to look for models and inspiration to oppose the modern west was the non-west and pre-modern.

In the arts, the *avant-garde* is associated with a shift from representational realism to more reflexive and non-naturalistic forms of expression (such as impressionism, cubism, expressionism and abstraction), designed to break down the barriers separating art from everyday life in an attempt to disrupt the specialized status of art. This was in part a revolution/reaction to those social processes associated with bourgeois capitalism, such as alienation and instrumentalization, and for many an explicit reaction against the values of modernity. The practices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century *avant-garde* shows practitioners repeatedly position themselves as modernity's other, as the non-instrumental, non-rational, spontaneous opposition to the regime of regulation and dehumanization. Since these characteristics were seen as attributes of western civilization the *avant garde* articulated its oppositional status by turning to the non-west. For example the Dadaists (of the late 1910's and 1920's), sought the destruction of bourgeois art and society, a society whose instrumentalization, rationality and alienated nature for them enabled the mass slaughter of WW1 and was everywhere subverting humanity and creativity. Rather, they sought to embrace emotional release, spontaneity and the evocation of freedom as a form of escape from western 'white' identity. Indeed, Bonnet (2000) notes that a 1998 edition of *Race Traitor* (an electronic journal dedicated to the

destruction of the 'white race') was dedicated to surrealism as a revolution against whiteness.

A second and more recent example provided by Bonnett (2000) is, the establishment of a number of men's journals and men's movements in the USA which, during the 1980's and 1990's, aimed to get in touch with the 'essential' or 'deep male', seeking a space for 'masculine renewal'. For the most part the theories and practices of these groups draw on non-western and pre-modern cultural forms perceived as representing the unfeminised essential man. Such activities include group drumming, group incarnation, wilderness retreats, mens councils and the invocation of age-based male hierarchies. Primitivism is often treated as a rather eccentric and minor example of social fantasy, "yet, if we accept that modernity was and is racialized, that it is Eurocentric, then primitivism- as a voice of pre - or non-modernity starts to appear as an imminent and inevitable moment of critique, as site of resistance to modernity produced within modernity. That this site of resistance has also often been a site of racist fantasy is a dilemma faced by all those who wish to confront and re-define the meaning of modern" (Bonnett, 2000:116). Another example could be the prevalence of 'wiggers' ('white niggers'), the popularity of R&B, Hip-Hop, and House Music in Western Europe, dreadlocks, ethnic outfits or exotic cuisine embraced by young 'white' people.

#### **4.3.2 Anti-racism**

But what have the academy and escaping whiteness? Bonnet (2000) notes that if one looks at how whiteness has traditionally been addressed by both racist and anti-racist commentators, there has been a shared tendency to naturalize whiteness and to treat it as an ahistorical and geographically undifferentiated norm. That is the representation of whiteness has treated it as the natural order of things, "the meaning and formation of whiteness are taken for granted; the history and geography of the subject made invisible" (Bonnett, 2000:120). A naturalized or normative identity is not necessarily undiscussed or not represented (as highlighted throughout this chapter). The discussion of whiteness is of a very particular kind. It is inevitably grossly generalizing, reifies the subject matter, and is often prone to cliché or the repetition of common sense. For Bonnett (2000), whiteness should no longer be conceptualized by anti-racists as a homogenous essence. Indeed, as has been reiterated throughout this research it is this reification of whiteness, which has enabled white people to imagine that their identity is stable and immutable, and allowed it to remain unengaged within broader interrogations of anti-racist de-naturalization of racial meaning.

If anti-racism is to be effective it must interrogate the terms under which it operates. Recognizing the inadequate and simplistic modes of racial representation that are unprepared to acknowledge the contradictions, inconsistencies and ambivalence's within whiteness. Orthodox anti-racism for Bonnett (2000) appears ill equipped to engage creatively with the fluid forces of the racialization process. He argues that whiteness has been approached as a fixed, asocial category rather than as a social construction and process for too long. Whiteness can no longer be a static, aspatial, ahistorical 'thing', something set outside social change, something central and permanent, something that defines the other but is not itself subject to the



others' definitions, this reification subverts the anti-racist struggle. Through creating an, "essentializing dynamic at the heart of a project that is necessarily critical, not only of racial stereotypes but also of the 'race' concept itself. They also lead towards the positioning (or self-positioning) of white people as fundamentally outside, and untouched by, the contemporary controversies of racial identity politics. From within much contemporary anti-racist debate whiteness is addressed as an unproblematic category (albeit with negative attributes), a category which is not subject to the constant processes of challenge and change that have characterized the history of other ethnic and racial names. This process enables white people to occupy a privileged location in anti-racist debate; they are allowed the luxury of being passive observers, of being altruistically motivated, of knowing that 'their' racial identity might be reviled and lambasted but never actually made slippery, torn open, or indeed, abolished" (Bonnett, 2000:121).

Anti-racism has a long tradition of insisting that racial terms are neither neutral nor static, and has encouraged the use of nomenclature that enables political reflexivity and discourages imposed, offensive or phenotypically reductive experiences. But, 'white' has been excluded from acceptable or debatable nouns and adjectives, for the majority of anti-racist work the meaning of whiteness has escaped dispute, enabling the reification of whiteness to be enacted as erasure-whiteness is simply left out of the debate. Whiteness is thus; "employed as both the conceptual center and 'other' of anti-racism, the defining normative term of anti-racist praxis and theory. As this implies to define whiteness, to acknowledge its contingent, slippery construction would radically destabilize orthodox anti-racism" (Bonnett, 2000:124). The whiteness myth at the centre of anti-racist discourse views being 'white' as an immutable condition with clear and distinct moral attributes namely: being racist-not experiencing racism; being an oppressor-not experiencing oppression; silencing not being silenced. People of color are defined in relation to this myth, defined as non-white, people who are acted upon by whites, peoples whose identity is formed through their resistance to others repressive agency. The experience of 'white' people is presented as manifest and unchanging; the characteristics of whiteness are removed from a social context and set outside history and geography. The problem is not simply a lack of sensitivity to the plurality of whiteness but faith in whiteness as a commonsense, obvious and discrete entity at the heart of racial history. How then should we proceed if we are to adopt an approach to whiteness which does not essentialise but, which aims to transcend raciological thinking?

#### **4.3.3 Ethical Clarity for a New Approach**

For Terry (1975), a new orientation is required if we are to live in a more 'just' world (but as has been noted this cannot be achieved until structural and subjective 'racism' have been engaged). Set ways of thinking are deeply ingrained, and our common sense acts automatically in ways that support the processes of whiteness, "it is rare that a person is lucid about his evaluative criteria. The criteria are present but only implicitly" (Terry, 1975:28). A change requires implicit standards to become explicit in order for us to become aware of and oppose our action(s) being dictated by old orientations. Moreover an emerging consciousness needs to organize data into meaningful alternatives if actual transformation is to occur "if the data are too complex and orientation too uncertain, we will revert to older, more

familiar ways of thinking. When one is traveling over unfamiliar terrain an old map is more comforting than no map at all". Thus, we need to know what we stand for and why (Terry, 1975:28). Such a process is prone to self-justifications and rationalizations (especially when we feel threatened) and it is difficult given that most ideologies express some dimension of truth to nominate our 'real' motivations. Moreover, even an exceptionally self-reflexive and considered approach to (re)considering whiteness may fall prey to what Terry (1975) terms the 'liberal tragedy'. I have alluded to this point throughout this research and wish briefly to elaborate, "the liberal tragedy is that good intentions are blurred by implicit racism. The result is the liberals' inability to support healthy movements in society. In his view blacks cannot be healthy; they are the problem. The liberal sees himself as necessary for blacks to become healthy" (Dyer, 1975:59). The liberal in this sense is an advocate of healthy societal growth, and in his mind fights for a free and just world. But in reality this position has been denounced as more dangerously racist than many conservative positions. The implicit assumption of 'white' liberals is that white-dominated and white-controlled institutions, culture and way of being are normative and that 'black' people can be developed, educated, uplifted and assimilated from their different (and 'lesser') position(s). We locate the position of 'self' and other in this formulation, ie. when whiteness is exposed it is the 'white' community who become 'the problem'. 'White' liberals are here accused of blurring the real issues, sidestepping the basic problem of whiteness despite 'good intentions'.

The 'white' liberal has consistently argued for open structures and pluralism but, instead sets standards and creates closure that has enhanced assimilation or alienation, "the white liberal is not a happy man...he is the Jew admitting that he is no longer a chosen man but silently wondering why Negroes don't stick together and help each other like the Jews do; he is the Catholic appalled by the fact that he has so long prayed that God would forgive the perfidious Jews but unable to forsake a faith whose every trapping suggests that there is something wrong with all non-Catholics; he is the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant marching along on the road from Salem while his eyes dart furtively toward the rising Negro crime rate; he is the clergyman torn between the new gospel he must now preach and the conservatism of the flock he must feed and which feeds him as well; he is the businessman quite willing to accept change so long as things remain the same; he is the parent welcoming the new Negro neighbor and praying God that his daughter will marry one of her own kind...; he is the child of the psychiatrist's couch, a man of conflicts, not contradictions; an advocate of change but an arch foe of revolution" (Lomax, 1966:41/42 in Terry, 1975:54).

Even for the well-intentioned 'white' standards dominate. In South Africa this criticism may be particularly leveled at the Democratic Alliance whose persistent calls for a 'color blind society' implicitly deny the racially structured nature of post-apartheid South Africa, as will be discussed in chapter 5.

#### **4.4 Geography and Whiteness**

Given that this research is about geography and whiteness and although I have in certain parts alluded to the relationship between geography and whiteness, I wish for the purposes of continuity to reiterate the nature of this relationship. I turn to Kobayashi and Peake (2000) who provide a succinct presentation of the basic relationship between geography and whiteness, their argument reads as follows;

Whiteness is a normal and normalized part of modernity and refers to the ordinary power to enjoy social privilege by controlling dominant values and institutions that shape interactions in and of space and mediate senses of/attachments to place, it is thus a difficult task, "to situate our conceptual categories effectively within a deeply normalized intellectual context, or to pry them loose from the bonds of normalized thinking. The recursivity of the whiteness of the social world, as our object of study, and the whiteness of the discipline as our medium of study, operates to make opaque the whitening process" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:393).

For Tomas (1998:140 in Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:393-394), "in its construction against all other differences, it had to achieve a 'super-naturalness', to the point that it becomes invisible, so that all other differences stand out against it. It becomes the backdrop of nature itself, the omnipotent position of the gaze. As such, geography is deeply embedded with 'whiteness'...it is one of the disciplines that Europeans used to discover and define others and their worlds. And it is the discipline through which constructed social relations and ideologies are grounded and spatially organized. Deconstructing whiteness is in fact not just about confronting the geography it produces, its spatial absence, or the inability to speak about its meaning, it is also about the very discipline of geography".

Thus far in this research it has been noted that whiteness is socially constructed and is a position associated with privilege and power on which our normative conceptions not only in academia but also in the practice of our everyday life are highly implicated, yet are not immediately apparent as a source of power. For critical cultural geographers the myriad of ways public discourse and the places and spaces we associate with are dominated by whiteness, is becoming apparent but looking back, "our disciplinary history is one of near silence on issues of racialization, silence based on an almost overwhelming inattention to the details of racial practice, a silence, in other words, dominated by whiteness" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:399).

For Kobayashi and Peake (2000:399), the discipline of geography is, "directly or complicity racist in a number of ways, beginning with a thoroughly racialized disciplinary past. From its origins in exploration and scientific classifications, the discipline played a founding role in establishing the systems of imperialist expansion and colonial power through which the Western world became a dominant center and its white inhabitants became normative, authoritative, and privileged. The Royal Geographical Society, formed in 1830 during the ascendancy of British imperial power, sponsored regular presentations in which concepts of racial difference were legitimated, and non-white areas of the world were mapped into marginality and subordination". In addition, it is noted that the discipline received its

own legitimation as a result of the relationship established between colonial power and the map as a "rhetorical device of persuasion to justify the authority of its practitioners' assertions" (Livingstone, 1993:141 in Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:399). For Kobayashi and Peake (2000), perhaps the strongest of imperial geography's metaphors was that of the "moral-climatic-idiom" (Livingstone, 1993:139 in Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:399) which through naturalizing racial differences in accordance with climatic classifications placed 'others' at the bottom of geography's moral terrain.

Geography as a discipline may, in this sense, be said to be founded on difference and hierarchy. For Kobayashi and Peake (2000:400), as the discipline developed through the twentieth century this foundation became entrenched, "concepts of areal differentiation and regional geography take difference as an article of faith, but fail to acknowledge the implications for creating a racialized geography" and even since geographers (during the 1960's) began realizing the importance of and mapping racial discrimination, "those concepts of difference have ironically been reproduced, making it difficult for us to get beyond essentialized notions of 'race', in order to highlight the complexity, the historical contingency, the fluidity and the richness of even the most extreme and therefore painful, racialized circumstances" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:399).

"The contemporary discipline remains insufficiently critical of its past, and therefore reinscribes many of the racialized metaphors upon which it was established. The preoccupation with space, for example, often reflects the modern concept of territoriality and the positioning of dominant groups, instead of recognizing that such outcomes are deeply implicated in the rationale of a spatial organization of society based on Enlightenment notions of imperial civilization. Part of the agenda for the new millennium, therefore, must be the pressing need to make considerations of racialization a fundamental aspect of geographical understanding, in much the same way that more and more geographers have recognized that no human geography is complete without a consideration of gender" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:399).

Part of this realization thus requires that we 'unnaturalize' geographical stories in which the effects of racialization are left out or normalized. This agenda is urgent not only "because of the theoretical need to recognize racialization as fundamental to social formation, but also because the effects of racism present a serious threat to the well-being and safety of racialized people" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:399). In a world that is re-orientating along a number of ideological and racially influenced ways this seems an increasingly important task. Right wing politics is gaining ground in Denmark, Germany, France and Britain. America is fighting a war against 'terror', Palestine is under siege and Argentina is experiencing a subversive 'economic racism'. But noted throughout this research "white peoples lives, including the lives of dominantly white geographers, are sites for the reproduction of racism, but they also hold the potential of being strategic sites of resistance. This resistance, can come firstly in the form of finding 'places of contradiction'" (Frankenburg, 1993 in Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:399), spaces in which the norm is unsettled. These can help to unnaturalize, re-examine and facilitate the unlearning 'race', "unlearning the whiteness of geography is a difficult but important

goal" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:399). This task requires a recognition of "the extreme difficulty in shifting racist patterns of thought, many of which are reproduced unconsciously, requires a more fundamental revolution in subjectivity and, affirming otherness in ourselves" (Walter, 1998:228 in Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:400). "For white people, this means replacing an inadequate sense of personal culpability with that of a social and historic responsibility for whiteness. It means understanding not only the social locations of 'others' but also being able to name one's own location" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:400). The purposes of such 'self-location' is to be able to begin to be accountable for the effects of social and political practices (to account for our over-privileged position), the doctrines and ideologies they encompass and their meanings in a way that does not (re)inscribe but rather (re)assess and (re)presents our place in a racialized modernity.

How then do we challenge whiteness? How do we change what it means to be 'white'? How do we open ourselves to the possibility of a radical 'white' identity? Well as asserted throughout this research this requires making visible the whiteness both of our societies and our geographies, and that we need constantly to interrogate both. Moreover, if whiteness is invisible then the possibilities for such interrogation involve questioning the 'spaces of silence' and 'challenging the normativity of whiteness'. For geographers specifically this involves challenging the invisibility of whiteness in mediating our landscapes. This involves reopening a view of past landscapes where the terms of today's normalization were laid down and in critiquing the way difference was/is encountered and (re)presented in such landscapes. Moreover, this process involves for geographers, not only questioning the ways in which whiteness works, but on how we have imposed whiteness onto the spaces and subjects in *the field*, "Crucial here is the displacement of both the questioning researcher and the questioned research subject: the exploration of the intersections among subjects involves the interrogation of all subjects involved in research and the displacement of the privileged fixed position of the 'same' from which the author/researcher speaks/writes and interrogates" (Robinson, 1994:221 in Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:400).

For Kobayashi and Peake (2000:400), "critical race theory is fundamentally transformative; it is 'theory' only in the sense of providing a standpoint from which to engage social change. It is therefore as much about how to achieve political ends as it is about what 'race' is and how 'racism' works. There is a huge and growing critical literature from a critical perspective, much of which does not sufficiently recognize the role of geography (in all senses of the term) in structuring both the conditions of racism and the possibilities for change. On the other hand, geographers have had recent and fairly limited engagement with critical anti-racist theory, and further exploration will help to dispel any lingering notions that an anti-racist geography can be narrowly conceived according to an agenda based on spatial distributions (Bonnett, 1997). At the very least, a spatial interpretation needs to take into account 'empty spaces' that result from silence, exclusion, and denial, and that serve as a basis for reproducing normative whiteness. We believe that the geographical contribution here is important, and potentially can serve to bring about social change" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000:400).

## 4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, whiteness is represented as a set of processes of social domination functioning to (re)produce 'white' privilege. This set of processes has come to signify ideological discussion and material colonization. It is suggested that within the contemporary, whiteness has become normalized and enjoys social privilege by controlling dominant values and institutions. Whiteness is said to shape interactions in and of space and the social, cultural and economic forms that dominate the planet can be characterized as 'white' whether in terms of their origins, values or which group benefits from them. As whitened modernity expanded, intruded and became assimilated globally, so the racialization of modernity also became a spatialization and whiteness also became epoch and region. There is no doubt that the 'white' world (read in particular Western Europe and North America) is shaping the planet and its people. Whiteness symbolizes modernity, civilization and power. It represents the ideological and material colonization of the world and ensures a perpetual imbalance through our words, ways of thinking and our normal or reasonable decisions and practices of our everyday lives. The social order perpetuating whiteness is here seen to be maintained through the ability to both define and fully inhabit normality, thus rendering itself invisible. The sense of being 'nothing in particular', of having no content means that the particularity of whiteness is continually evaded, as whiteness becomes 'the human condition'. The most important task for the critical theorists is thus to challenge the taken for granted experience and varying set of supremacist assumptions (such as the moral, cultural, ideological, religious or biological) of whiteness. That is to make whiteness visible. The most popular approach being to map how whiteness acts (a) as a location of advantage (b) as a standpoint from which to evaluate 'others' and (c) as a set of unmarked and unnamed practices. In considering these alongside (dis)placing assumptions of objectivity, universal truth, absolute knowledge and moral, cultural intellectual hegemony, the means of social contact become increasingly evident. In short, through questioning the naturalization of whiteness, its relationship to privilege and subordination and how the centers of whiteness are advanced or hindered, overcoming whiteness becomes exposed as a product of social restructuring versus individual change (and whiteness as a social ordering process and not an individual disposition), located at the intersection of experience, practice and ideology.

I now turn to considering how a geographical approach to whiteness might be practically (re)presented within a geography specific to South Africa.

## Chapter Five: A Geographical (Re)presentation of Whiteness

### 5.1 (Re)presenting Whiteness

Goldberg (1997) reminds us that 'race' is a fabrication of and about the modern subject. 'Race' is written into our daily lives and experiences and is at the heart of our social fabric. "It is everywhere- on the street and at work, on the radio and television, in just about every magazine and at the movies, at schools and colleges, in the playground and on the playing field" (Goldberg, 1997:8). Realizing the range and influence of racialized thinking in our modern social ordering processes and recognizing how dynamic, multiple and numerous racisms are, makes evident just how complex the task of addressing 'race' is. 'Race' "ranges across social space, a hybrid mutation of social life, embedded in expressions large and small that are often socially legitimate" (Goldberg, 1997:12). The task for geographers in my understanding is thus to make visible the processes through which racialized identities and social process inform our everyday understandings and practices in order for us not to continue acting them out. For geographers it is exposing the influence of 'race' in our social spatialization that is particularly important that is- *how 'race' takes place*.

In (re)presenting whiteness these difficulties are amplified because whiteness is noted to be an invisible, hidden center, indeed the power of whiteness is said to be in its ability to evade responsibility. Recognizing and (re)presenting the range of social process named whiteness is additionally made more difficult by the realization that these processes are diverse and contradictory with no apparent logical consistency. How can we map the ways in which whiteness manifests its power and shapes larger socio-political structures in relation to the microdynamics of everyday life? How does whiteness function in the daily lives of 'white' people? How do experiences of whiteness differ at various intersections of race, class, gender, religion, identity or locale? Understanding and locating the manifestations or expressions of the social construction of whiteness is important, because only in exposing the mechanism of 'white' power can we challenge its manifestations. Whiteness acts as an invisible norm, a standard by which everyone is measured, 'white' ways of being and practices are seen as universal and are seldom viewed problematically. When we expose whiteness this apparent trans-cultural domain is displaced and we learn to recognise that 'we' do not see as objectively as 'we' first thought as geographers in a 'white' academia. So long as whiteness is plausibly denied, shielded or masked, the stronger its position. The facts of oppression and the privileges it confers are the mechanisms enabling, maintaining and extending this oppression and these can only be effectively challenged once the racialized nature of the *status quo* is engaged.

"I suppose I too have realized that my education, my brick house, my wonderful childhood, my privilege, come at the expense of someone else's everything" (November 2002, a friend). There are unique challenges to realizing our whiteness in South Africa, specifically, the recognition of our own implication in the monumental inequalities in which we operate daily and our role in reproducing the



effects of a social ordering forged during our brutal racialized past. Trying to (re)present whiteness is a journey which has left me simultaneously ashamed, guilty, hopeful, fearful, purposeful, unsettled, confident and despondent, in short, very confused. Part of this confusion stems from the complexities of whiteness itself. In addition, recognizing how our geographic ontologies and epistemologies are themselves implicated in whiteness has left me with a great deal of academic/intellectual uncertainty. There seems to be no escape from whiteness in either the world I'm trying to (re)present or the academy from which I investigate.

When I began this research, I wanted to know how being 'white' in the context of a 'new' South Africa might influence 'our' interactions, movements and understandings in/of public space. The major difference I found between the 'white' South Africans of my experience and the opinions expressed by the 'white' writers of the west (re)viewed during the course of this investigation, is that the influence of our whiteness for me seems to run 'much deeper'. The particularity of our 'white' positioning forces an engagement with whiteness that is more fundamental to our daily existence and in which we feel more intimately and directly implicated. We are consistently and increasingly being forced to engage with our racialization. As we move further from the formal end of apartheid we find our whiteness becoming increasingly exposed and ourselves increasingly visible. As a standpoint, as an identity and as a socio-economic location, our whiteness is being disrupted and (de)constructed. This is not to say that our South African whiteness is fully visible, only that we are slowly beginning to find ourselves 'raced'. There is also the particular trauma of finding our majority status for the first time displaced as we face the eminent disruption of our 'white' material and ideological privilege. The social processes which for so long located our sense of self and group identity are being placed for review alongside our understandings and expectations. Where does this leave 'white' South Africans?

Although there is no universal response to the crisis signaled above, there is a question seldom articulated but implicated in so much of what we are collectively being forced to deal with- *is what we got, what we deserved?* For my generation, we may not have invented apartheid, but we have certainly benefitted from our whiteness. Just how accountable are we for apartheid and raciological brutality? What consequences does this implication imply? There is culpability inherent in our 'social positioning(s)' that at a structural level cannot be justified and at a personal level so much of who we are and what we think ourselves to be is becoming discredited. 'White' people in South Africa are still in control both materially and as regards dominant cultural apparatuses. Apartheid may have signaled a political break but not an epistemological break from the structures of 'white' liberal humanism or the overprivileged socio-economic location of 'white' people. Dominant values, ideologies, norms, ideals and languages are still 'white'. Realizing that we are no longer the majority, that we too have been racialized, that our supremacy is going to be disrupted, means that 'white' people are beginning to consciously engage in their raciological positioning in the face of the realities of imminent change and disruption to our domination. In the books I read, western authors spoke of fighting to be free instead of settling to be 'white'. In theory such principles seem sound but they offer less comfort when this 'freedom' signals

material and social revolution with all the uncertainty a new epoch in South Africa implies for 'white' people.

At a trans-national level, the present American (re)colonization of the Islamic and underdeveloped worlds or, the nature of the global social and political regulating mechanisms and processes cannot but make me feel additionally frightened by my racial marking. I grew up in a 'white' neighborhood during the height of apartheid (with all the social regulating mechanisms and privileges this implies). I received a 'good' ('white') education and was supported by a materially privileged and socially 'normal' family and community. I was enculturated into a 'white' world and received all the privileges 'white' manners, understandings, ways of being, seeing, acting and morality implies. The full meaning of apartheid and whiteness is yet to become visible to me, and understanding myself as 'white' in this space has been an extremely unsettling experience.

Recognizing the absolute tyranny implied by whiteness and acknowledging that 'white' people are unfairly advantaged/privileged at both an individual and societal level does not automatically imply a revolution in our social ordering processes or geographies. How can we begin a process of disrupting the institutions and behavior patterns that reproduce the privileges of whiteness? The first step is to recognise that 'our' knowledge and understanding are themselves 'white'. Not only do our material and social realities signal absolute tyranny, but our ideologies as well. Recognizing;

- the pressures of institutional location
- the contingencies of truth seeking
- the complexities of language and (re)presentation
- the active power of knowledge to shape enquiry
- the located nature of scientific enterprise
- the ability of the powerful to sustain their order by changing others

brings to the fore, for geographers considering whiteness, questions like; whose reality counts? Whose reality acts as a benchmark against which all 'others' are measured? Whose knowledge, whose mores, whose norms? Whose conception of right and wrong, desirable and undesirable? Who sets the standards and signals the definitive? From where do we enact our 'white' gaze and more fundamentally from where do we begin to perceive and unravel the complexities of our own implication in whiteness?

Once we have acknowledged the need for more self-reflexive and accountable geographies as well as new representations, then the task becomes how to incorporate an understanding of whiteness into our critical agendas? How do we begin to map the influence of whiteness, its relationship to modernity and more specifically the whiteness of the post apartheid social and spatial formations and practices? How does whiteness shape our everyday practices, identities and social spatialization? Specifically how does whiteness influence our spatial imagination(s), interaction(s) and experience(s) in/of space in urban South Africa?

As stated in chapter one, the aim of this research is to tell the story of the diverse ways in which the set of social ordering processes, here termed whiteness, works within systems of social relations and spatial configurations to shape our social relations and the spaces of our cities through our everyday practices and experiences (as well as through our intellectual inquiry). How then could a critical geography of whiteness look given the literature I've come across, my personal communication(s) and experience(s)?

## **5.2 How could a critical geographical approach to whiteness look?**

The understanding(s) I have gained from interacting with a range of international literature and through my experiences in and of a 'white' South Africa is that whiteness is as much a subjective identity as it is a concept signifying a modern era of western capitalism, the nation state or western media. That is, whiteness both as an identity and as an epoch urgently needs to be made visible. At present in South Africa, there is a tendency by the majority of 'white' South Africans not to want to develop a racial cognizance, but rather to pretend that racialized social ordering processes no longer exist (barring the few 'racist' misguided individuals frowned upon by 'the rest of us'), that is to enact racial erasure in the name of a 'color-blind society'. A primary task for geographers is thus to make visible how not only 'black' South Africans, but all South Africans are positioned, shaped and identify themselves through racialized social ordering processes. That is to convince those around us that in our highly racialized society, there is no racial justice, and moreover that a lack of proactive racial cognizance may itself account for perpetuating the racialized *status quo*. This is a difficult task for we seem better equipped to explain 'white' privilege (or the so-called unearned wages of whiteness) than to explore and coherently (re)present the set of social ordering processes which constitute whiteness and the ways in which it is socially, materially, culturally, politically or spatially inscribed by ourselves.

Many social forces work together to construct the meaning of whiteness, how do we go about making sense of them? More specifically, how do we come to terms with the spaces in and of the social construction of whiteness? In part the problematic established in this research points to the need to adopt an approach that is able to separate whiteness from 'white' people. Such an approach enables geographers to adopt a position in which different 'white' people are shaped differently by whiteness and in which; individual 'white' subjects can experience whiteness differently at different moments. Moreover, such a position enables the individuals in our enquiries to simultaneously be able to engage multiple and contradictory identifications in multiple locales. It enables us to explore contradictory articulations of what it means to be or feel 'white' yet also engages the range of social, political, economic and cultural dynamics which constitute whiteness. How can we perceive of the intersecting trajectories of whiteness in the context of socialization, material culture, economic location or political orientation? How do we (re)consider without disregarding the value of 'white' attitudes, behaviour, beliefs, norms or identities for example? Can we simultaneously recognize whiteness as a powerful personal psychological reality and a point of identification but also as a set of social ordering processes outside of the individual? How do we enunciate whiteness without

destabilizing our sense of self? How do we enter into our geographies the recognition that our history, perspectives, experiences, subjects and spaces are not those of humanity but of 'white' (hu)manity? Goldberg (1997), suggests that due to the nature, complexity and range of racisms across social space that the only way in which we can coherently address them is in response to particular racialized expressions. We should not focus our attention on abstract conceptions but rather to site-specific expressions of racialized thinking.

Before considering how such an approach might look, I wish to outline a few potential problems such studies might face. As 'white' people gain consciousness of the racialization of their identity, few tend to engage whiteness directly. Either, they exhibit a form of self-denigration, rejecting what other 'white' people stand for and have done. Here whiteness is portrayed as alienating, as having lost touch with the 'true' self, as lacking spiritualism, meaning and harmony. The quintessential thrifty, sober, honest, intelligent, industrious, moral, decent, Christian, modest bourgeois 'white' man is questioned alongside civilization, rationality and reason. In placing whiteness outside of the individual these types of representations act to deny the personal culpability and social responsibility complicit in being 'white' people for all 'white' people. Often as discussed in chapter 4 such ideology is additionally accompanied by reification of non-white culture as more authentic, sacred and as superior (as discussed in chapter 4 the electronic journal *Race Traitor* is frequently accused of this tendency).

At the opposite end of the spectrum, whiteness is articulated as superior. Most often this tendency is accompanied by a concept of 'white' victimization in which 'white' people are portrayed as scapegoats and whiteness as under siege. Both positions need to be taken seriously if we are to understand the social and cultural forces that shape the way 'we' see the world. "The white identity crisis is real and cannot simply be dismissed as the angst of the privileged. While it is in part such an angst, it is also a manifestation of the complexity of identity as class and gender intersect with racial ethnicity, an expression of the emptiness of the post modern condition, and an exhibition of the failure of modernist humanism to respond to the globalization engulfing it" (Kincheleo, 1999:171).

The problem with especially the liberal, but also the right-wing position outlined above, is that both tend to emanate from a belief in a color-blind society. 'Race' neutrality is not seen as a way of maintaining the *status quo*. The color-blind construct, discourses of 'white' victimization or a rejection of whiteness at an individual level only work if we assume that being 'white' is no different to being any other 'race' in the present social milieu. The history and reality of our contemporary privileged social location is consistently ignored.

In considering a possible space for a new progressive counter-hegemonic whiteness in the light of progressive democratic social goals and social justice, as 'white' geographers we need to consistently take responsibility and acknowledge culpability in our racialized social order. This needs to be enacted in a way that confronts 'white' tyranny, avoids the projection of guilt and allows a sense that we can transform the reality of social inequality. This is essential if we are to fight the

nihilism associated especially with the liberal position. This involves a new sense of 'white' identity, a new way of theorizing the world, and new ways of acting and perceiving the subject space and whiteness.

In order to practically include such a re-orientation in our geographies, the first step is to consistently conceive of whiteness as both an identity and as a set of social ordering processes. In terms of identity, 'white' people are the product of the particular discourses that their highly racialized society has provided for framing their understanding of self. The momentary articulations of whiteness in terms of identity are constantly remade and traversed in the fluid context of normalized, racialized discourse, rhetoric and ideology. Whiteness is here a function of the subject and experience, but this understanding cannot be removed from an understanding of whiteness as a function of 'system' or 'structure'. That is, whiteness is a process or set of social ordering practices. As a process we understand whiteness primarily in terms of its ability to control conceptualization, in terms of its *products* and thus we need to look to and map its material and ideological manifestations. In terms of its *producers* we need to focus on racialized institutions and practices. Whiteness as process and whiteness as identity are mutually constitutive and if we wish to understand how whiteness takes place in the urban spaces of South Africa we need to understand how whiteness shapes our identity and structures our experience or everyday practices.

### **5.2.1 Whiteness in our public imagination**

For 'white' people in South Africa it is not only the way in which whiteness comes from and contributes to the crisis of the contemporary or, the way it shapes our identity that makes exposing whiteness integral. For us we still need to come to terms with a culpability so numbing that we barely talk about it amongst ourselves and are far from public acknowledgment. We not only have 350 years of colonialism to comprehend (and amend for?), but 100 years of apartheid. A brutal racialological history with seemingly irreparable scars both for 'our' victims and ourselves. For over 350 years 'white' people have been negotiating a relationship with Africa and incorporating its people and resources into a 'modern' world order. According to what I learnt at school, it was late in the 15<sup>th</sup> century that South Africa was 'discovered' and that by 1652 the Dutch had an official immigration policy, locating 'settlers' in what is now Cape Town in order to provide a stopover for replenishing the supplies of their trades en-route to the 'East-Indies'.

By 1806 the British are purported to have noted the strategic importance of the 'Caffre-Coast' for securing their interests in India and took control of the colony. This marked a bifurcation in the cultural identification of South African whiteness between *the English* and *the Afrikaners* that is still strong today. The Dutch settlers, by now called the Boers, dissatisfied with the *status quo* headed inland ('The Great Trek') and so 'white' people progressively came to settle in the interior, later encouraged by the country's mineral wealth. During the following half-century or so (the late 1800's to 1948) the foundations of apartheid were laid and cemented in the Group Areas Act of 1950. By 1960, 'black' opposition was banned and during the following year South Africa left the Commonwealth and became a republic. For the

next quarter century apartheid matured. By 1986 the apartheid regime entered crisis and pass laws were repealed and the end of the era was signaled by the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990. With the promotion of the National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995, a new regime was signaled with Apartheid officially ending in 1998 marking the end of some 400 years of 'white' control.

Steyn (1999), notes that, the rhetorical Africa which we inherited from this tumultuous racialized past has inspired fear and pessimism in South African 'whites'. Africans have always been constructed as the most primitive of people, the most 'other', the darkest of all, both in our 'white' South African and in the European psyche. The people and the place "lacking the political power to enter into a dialogic relationship with Europe, took the role assigned to it by European definition and became the continent of mystery... Africa sucked in the deepest projections of the European unconscious, a process that gave an 'edge' to the brand of whiteness that evolved on African soil. The 'other', women, mysterious, deep, unfathomable, the cerous, Africa needed to be controlled with a long arm if it was to be rendered fit for 'civilization'" (Steyn, 1999:268).

European settlers sent to colonize Africa arrived with an adversarial mindset, "to prove mastery here driven by the ego-need of the Enlightenment male psyche, would be particularly demanding. This mastery was achieved through imaginatively castrating the continent. It was conceived as a continent without rights, a troublesome, but ultimately passive, open space without a fully humanized identity of its own... its people were cast as the nearest to animals of all people being conquered by European expansion; perhaps of dubious humanity, almost certainly incapable of development in a world where the European was on an upward spiral of progress that would never end. The innate ability of 'white' settlers to make better use of resources gave those of European descent entitlement to Africa's land: to own it; to use it; to exploit its natural resources, which included the labour of indigenous inhabitants" (Steyn, 1999:270). Today still I have heard 'white' elders speaking of how *"these people are incapable of running anything efficiently"*, *" why did one continent become so much more developed than others?"* or as a letter to the editor in the Natal witness dated 20/07/01 states, *" looking at the broader picture and going back through time, and presuming the African continent land mass was populated at more or less the same time as other land masses. Logic dictates that all peoples had a similar amount of time in which to develop their continent and themselves. In theory there should be absolutely no difference between the fortunes and growth of the east, west, north or south"*. I have often heard similar discourse amongst elders and to a lesser extent, my contemporaries. What this extract, or rather the thinking that it typifies demonstrates is, just how easily 'white' South Africans abstract their understandings from broader historical, political, social and economic contexts and realities. In addition it demonstrates a deeply internalized colonial framing in which the western enterprise and its attendant values, norms and achievements remain the normative means of evaluation against which an Other (typically; 'uncivilized', uneducated, unproductive, undeveloped, savage, brutal, traditional and the like) is constructed.



Steyn (1999) notes that as permanent settlers we saw our task as needing to "improve the continent" to "develop its people" a "permanent corrective to cultures that had little or no inherent value. The appropriate way for cultural influence would always be from 'us' to 'them'." (Steyn, 1999:270). 'White' South Africans still do not evaluate 'other' people on any terms other than our own criteria and norms that we perceive to be universal, neutral and value-free.

According to Steyn (1999), although the racial imaginations of 'whites' in the overdeveloped and colonized worlds were originally framed by the same colonial master narratives of 'race', our South African whiteness has retained a more colonial texture and lies closer to its formative imperialism. In South Africa the 'Others' in contradistinction to whom 'white' identity was initially framed, did not recede in our consciousness (or could not be placed as far back in the colonial mind) as was the case in Europe. In Europe and North America, the 'other' became less visible (as colonization ceased) and minorities became enculturated or assimilated into mainstream western society. In the psychological map of the 'white' center thus, the 'other' could be rendered 'far, despite being constitutive of that center. In contrast to this 'distant-other-whiteness' Steyn (1999) suggests that its early colonial framing shaped 'whiteness' in South Africa. 'South African whiteness' retained a colonial grain, the 'other' is for us is said to be psychologically much closer and a more active presence in 'white' psyche (a 'present other whiteness'), "the particular circumstances of being a small group of 'whites' isolated from the rest of the European tribe (both in distance and expense) but still in enough contact to retain a measure of identification with Europe's elite 'whites' elsewhere, and, most significantly, living in Africa among those who were marked in colonial discourse as the utter antithesis of 'whites', lent an intensity to the salience of 'whiteness'. The Africans, among whom the whites had come to settle, had legitimacy on the continent (determinedly undermined by the successive 'white' regimes) and series of connections with their ancient cultures (damaged, but never destroyed by colonial conquest and apartheid). And given the numerical superiority of Africans, their reserves could always be replenished, despite repeated defeats. Deep-seated feelings of alienation, personal threat, and fear of being overrun were held in tension with an intense competition for resources and an absolute belief in entitlement to dominate people with whom one had daily contact in one's home, on one's farm. The issue of one's 'whiteness' was greatly magnified in such psychological circumstances" (Steyn, 1999:267-268).

The 'white' South African psyche is opposed within itself as well. As just noted, South African whiteness is divided along two main axes of differentiation - English/Afrikaner, which has resulted in two versions of (patriarchal) whiteness. Afrikaners have a closer relationship to the continent; literally translated they are people of Africa and speak Afrikaans (the language of Africa). For Steyn (1999) 'white' South Africans never felt 'European' in the way the USA, Canada, New Zealand or Australia did. We have always retained the sense of being surrounded by Africa. In our collective imagination, "this was a small group of 'civilized whites', fending off the savagery to which Africa constantly strained to revert... Africa belonged to us, but did we belong to Africa. We never called ourselves Africans. We were South Africans. The appellation identified our nationality, a term that, in



the 'white' psyche, significantly distinguished us from the indigenous Africans, who did not qualify for citizenship" (Steyn, 1999:269/270).

English speaking South Africans are noted to have disassociated from the continent, to a greater extent and retained strong lines of identification with Europe, "drawn toward a more cosmopolitan world view, adopting a more liberal lifestyle, showing a disdain for the Afrikaner lack of 'class', preferring the case of the 'natives' over those of the Afrikaner's while their own 'whiteness' was safely protected by their cultural chauvinism, these people held the moral high ground. They taught their children to call their servants by their (English) names, to say 'thank you' when their polished shoes were brought to them in the morning before school" (Steyn, 1999:269).

As part of a western enterprise 'white' people perceived their role as providing order, governance, education, services, civilization, infrastructure and medicine. Our identity is said to be closely tied to this position, "a deeply internalized colonialism meant that we could not make the most of Africa, because at a deeper level we had not let go of Europe" (Steyn, 1999:271). Standards of culture, morals, language, music and art all came from the Euro-American world, "we could not expect our nation to produce anything of quite the same standard as Europe... a consumer who wanted a 'good' product preferred the expensive imported item" (Steyn, 1999:271), the natural order of thing is that the (white) west was superior. Ours was a civilizing mission made more urgent by the 'blacks' of our collective imagination. "They were always wielding sticks, burning people alive in inter ethnic violence, delighting in plots of bloody revolution, acting out grisly crimes on innocent (especially women, frail, old) 'white' bodies" (Steyn, 1999:272). Reinforcing that there was no option but to control 'them'. 'Black' people were for 'whites' during apartheid, "difficult to civilize, but possible to tame. Domestic workers were tame. In fact most black women were tame. Laborers were tame. It was possible to be affable, even jocular with such people" (Steyn, 1999:273). But in the 'white' mind set the terrorist beneath was always nearby, "the black male switched between images of laborer and terrorist in the 'white' mind, his power either reassuringly neutered or unleashed an unmitigated menace" (Steyn, 1999:273).

Another aspect of the positioning of the 'other' in the 'white' psyche is that 'black' men (indeed 'black' people) were never conceived of as normal sexual beings. 'Black' men were associated with rape, and rape dominated the 'white' imagination of sexual encounter (Dyer, 1997). This is an assumption that still resides in popular discourse today, indeed all perpetrators of violent crime are assumed 'black' and 'white' perpetrators are usually represented as exceptions. For 'white' women our identifications with both our sexuality and vulnerability as women are forged in part by these assumptions about 'black' men. "*It is certainly sad that all black men are tarred with the same brush. I often find myself self-consciously locking my car door as a black man approaches and I hope that he understands that I just can't take the chance*" (Natal Witness, 28/08/00).

How are some of these themes played out in whiteness of the town in which I grew up? To what extent can I recognize the whiteness (re)presented in chapter four reflected in the 'white' public imagination of Pietermaritzburg? The first 'white' people in Pietermaritzburg were the Voortrekkers who settled here in about 1838. The British took over in 1842 and from then on Pietermaritzburg has been identified as an English speaking 'liberal' constituency, until the ANC took control of the council in 1994. Nevertheless, as in much of the rest of South Africa despite political change whiteness still predominates and 'white' people remain socially, materially, culturally, economically, educationally, vocationally and politically advantaged. The means through which I have chosen to (re)present the whiteness in which I am implicated is through the discursive (re)presentations found in my daily Newspaper (as outlined in chapter one). The Natal Witness is the only daily newspaper in the region and is widely read. It has a readership of 58% male (70 000 readers) and 41.7% female (60 000 readers). 40.9% of its readers are 'white', 24.3% 'black' and 33,9% Indian ([www.witness.co.za](http://www.witness.co.za).) After two years of archiving exchanges in the editorial section (as outlined in chapter 1), alongside simultaneously interrogating 'white' people around me, I came to understand something of the contemporary 'white' public imagination in the city. This research being geographical, my intention was not to document attitudes or compare them to 'white' behaviour rather, my aim was to consider the implications of the shape of the 'white' public imagination with regards to its spatial manifestations. What follows is thus a representation of whiteness as it came to interest me during the study period. It is also a (re)presentation of whiteness constructed specifically with a geographical agenda in mind. As noted in chapter 1 and 2 this is a very specific (re)presentation and is in no way reflective or comprehensive. For instance I have little interest in sport and therefore a large amount of what could have been informative dialogue was left unexplored. So what can be said about the whiteness I perceived?

A dominant theme of which I took note during my study was *denial* in 'white' public discourse of our overprivileged position and the perpetuation of the social ordering processes of apartheid. Much 'white' public opinion and politics (notably the Democratic Alliance), continually calls for a 'color-blind' society. There are continual claims of 'white' people not being prejudiced whilst a *status quo* of exclusion and privilege is maintained in the city. The way in which we continue to reproduce a racialized *status quo* through our daily activities and everyday practices in commerce, industry, the public sector, educational organization etc is seldom acknowledged. Indeed much of the public opinion gauged during my archiving activities is typified by the sentiments expressed by the following reader (reader being person reading the Natal Witness and responding through a letter to the editor), *"How ironic that the ANC, who supported the struggle against harmful white racism in the former apartheid system, is practicing black racism in some of its own policies as ruling party- affirmative action, black empowerment and transformation, employment equity principles, compulsory quota compositions etc- and in such dishonest propaganda statements that the Democratic Alliance is for rich whites only. The ANC is practicing harmful black racial discrimination against minority groups. No matter how they try to justify these actions as a means to*

*redress past wrongs, they amount nevertheless, to black racism” (Natal Witness, 28/07/2000). This example and the two that follow both display themes of ‘white’ victimization and a feeling of whiteness being under siege. This is typical of a position that omits the history and reality of the contemporary privileged social location of ‘white’ South Africans. As demonstrated throughout this thesis the tactic of assuming all things equal and simultaneously calling for an end to racial cognisance is a prime means for maintaining the *status quo*. Moreover, as noted when ‘race’ cognisance persists, intense feelings of injustice may be demonstrated, such as is evident in this extract; “I agree that maybe the British are to blame or the whites who created such oppression. However, these oppressive acts happened so long ago and are today’s whites to blame? This does not make sense. I live in the new South Africa. I was born in the old South Africa and, because of that, am I to blame? Has Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe ever wondered if today’s white farmers are to blame or their ancestors? Surely today’s and even tomorrow’s white farmers cannot be held liable for oppressive acts carried out by their forefathers. All they want is to pursue a peaceful livelihood along with many other white southern Africans. Most of them agree that what happened in the past was wrong but they certainly had nothing to do with it as most of them were not even born. Blame yesterday’s whites but not today’s. Often a black person will remind me of what ‘you people have done’. My answer is; ‘take it up with the ghosts of the past, my friend, for I have had nothing to do with it” (Natal Witness, 24-08-2001).*

Here is a similar example taken from the Natal Witness dated 03/08/2001, “*Are whites privileged and can they be considered as Africans? Whites were definitely privileged by apartheid. But in relation to whites in the rest of the world, South African whites are no more better off. There is a perception that whites are well off only because of the ‘A’ word. If there had been no apartheid everyone would have been better off because the economy would have been 5 times as big. The reality of apartheid also presupposes that black South Africans are worse off than any one else on the continent. Two facts suggest this is not true: South Africa is the number one destination for job seekers in Africa and our president spends most of his time trying to sort out the problems of this continent instead of Africa helping poor old South Africa. Are whites Africans? This is just another invention of the ANC- just like the racism conference- designed to keep whites on the defensive. What is so special about Africa that being born here is not enough? Would Smuts or Winnie like to suggest to Frank Bruno that he is not British or Mike Tyson that he is not American?*”

In chapter four it was demonstrated how the mechanism of *invisibility* functions to replicate ‘white’ hegemony. It was noted that through displaying no apparent sense of content or providing no sense of there being anything to account for ‘white’ privilege or power, whiteness becomes associated with ‘humanness’ and normalness. Through constructing ‘the world’ in their own image and though setting the ‘universal’ standards for humanity ‘white’ people, become incapable of seeing their own particularity. The cultural agendas represented through the media, politics and education as well as our everyday discourse whilst projecting themselves as universal, neutral and unsituated are fundamentally whitened. For instance universal ‘norms’ through which ‘we’ construct ‘our’ world such as

Christianity, bourgeois lifestyles, capitalism or our notions of self and society are all whitened. The invisibility of whiteness is regularly represented in the 'white' public imagination for example, *"Please allow me as an African Caucasian of four generations a few thoughts on racism, as this is the current buzz word in the media today. Prior to 1994 I was not unduly perturbed to admit to some form of racism since I subscribe to certain thoughts and mannerisms that previously one did not need to even think, let alone write, about. Since I have done both it seems that-although to ask 100 people would elicit 100 replies - I am still racist if;*

*- I refrain from affording fellow human beings courtesy according to their tradition, culture or ethnicity*

*- I deliberately thwart attempts by previously disadvantaged people to better themselves by legitimate means*

*- I ignore the teachings clearly put forward in the Bible when the question of who is my neighbour is very graphically and unequivocally dealt with in the story of the good Samaritan*

*But I don't consider myself a racist if;*

*-I object strongly to people urinating in public places whenever the need arises*

*-I object to excessive loud thumping from loud speakers in minibus taxis*

*-I object passionately to the wanton and indiscriminate discarding of any and every form of waste from the windows of vehicles.*

*-I object to loud, brash, often uncouth behaviour of certain people in public places like beaches in total disregard of others who do not go along with shouting, spitting and loutish actions.*

*-I get completely incensed at the yearly burning of grass, trees and road signs by people who are bored, ignorant and clearly a damn nuisance, and who make the lives of protection officers hell from April to September each year.*

*- I abhor blatant flaunting of basic rules of the road, excessive hooting and illegal parking.*

*I believe that the issues at hand are not so complex that an eight-day conference needs to be held. All we need is an inbred respect of each other's property, culture, religion and all that is part and parcel of our many and varied compatriots of one of the potentially greatest countries in the world" (Natal Witness, 5-08-2001).*

It is clearly evident in this example that *the reader* clearly cannot identify the space from which they speak or the highly racialized implications in the apparently normative values they purport as 'universal'. This represents a deeply internalized whitened sense of order, governance, values, norms, standards and mannerisms, which are instead presented as universal, value free and neutral. What is also interesting to note in this example is that whilst obviously thinking through 'race' *the reader* seems to see 'race' as unimportant. Rather the central issue is a distinction between self and other which is constructed more along the lines of developed:undeveloped, civilized:uncivilized, educated:uneducated, clean:dirty progressive:backward etcetera. In this manner society becomes divided without using 'race' as a definitive category.

There are instances though when the racial dimension of our thinking or acting as 'white' South Africans cannot be denied and where explicit racism is exposed. When this happens there are usually two main responses. A notable response of

the 'white' public when racism is exposed seems to be to counter attack often highlighting the racialized thinking of the other in interpreting the scenario. Secondly, there is a tendency for 'white' South Africans when faced with overt instances of 'racism' to attribute these actions to a misguided and pathological fringe element in the community, thereby renouncing culpability. A good example can be found by looking at public discourse at the end of 2000 when the SABC made public a video of police dog trainers who had severely abused 'black' foreign nationals illegally resident in South Africa. Amid much debate the typical response displayed by *Witness* readers was not to look more deeply into the inherent racialization this might signify in the 'white' community or thinking or to how this might represent the perpetuation of deeply racialized thinking in our society but rather to "counterattack". To question what the motives behind showing the videos were, to question just why the video was shown. Here are a few examples from the extensive discourse surrounding the screening;

*"As has been questioned by many, why has the dog video footage lain dormant until now? Could it be- no, surely not!- that the ANC controlled television corporation has had this awful expose up its sleeve to be used strategically to still up raw racism on the eve of the national municipal elections, to once again polarise political parties along racial lines to achieve landslide victories? Surely not! Perhaps I had better turn my attention to my professional field where the foot and mouth disease disaster is currently paramount, where politics and elections could never be involved...no, never...surely not!" (Natal Witness, 15-11-2000).*

*"The recent video showing the disgusting attack by the police and their dogs against illegal immigrants has been widely condemned by both black and white South Africans. Rightly so, as nobody can defend such inhumane, sick behaviour. The outrage shown by all good thinking South Africans both black and white, is well justified. We certainly don't need these setbacks to our young democracy. But what is the difference between the brutality displayed by the Dog unit and farm attacks? The difference lies in the fact that there were no video cameras to record the violent murders of over 700 farmers, the people who put the food into our mouths. There were no videos around to record the panga slashes, the hammer and shooting attacks on these poor people and the rapes that followed. It is therefore now time for both blacks and whites to be equally shocked and say enough is enough. Let more people recognise that violence is unacceptable in our lovely land" (Natal Witness, 15-11-2000).*

*"Please do not judge the entire white population by the despicable actions of the white men whose brutality was screened for all to see. Many white and black people have been subjugated to horrific acts of brutality by black men( beatings, rape and murder) which have not been recorded on film to be viewed by the nation. If they had , the response would have been much the same as what the response of all descent South Africans of all colours has been to the programme in question- shock and disgust. Don't promote the deterioration of race relations - evil is being perpetrated by both blacks and whites and this is the issue which needs to be addressed. Violence in our society threatens us all and the colour issue will not go*

*away until our children learn to see each other as people and not as belonging to a specific race group” (Natal Witness, 15-11-2000).*

*“On behalf of all criminals, I write to thank the six police dog handlers who have so brutalised themselves and their fellow human beings. The result has been to the advantage of all criminals in that we need no longer fear being tracked down by police dogs. The chances of our not being arrested for our crimes are getting better all the time. We also thank the authorities for over-reacting to this brutal racism. We are glad that our criminal rights continue to be respected far more than the rights of our victims” (Natal Witness, 15-11-2000).*

Similar examples of ‘white’ denial and ‘colour-blindness’ in ‘white’ South African society can also be found in the opinions expressed and public debate around two conferences on racism held in South Africa during 2000. The National Conference on Racism held in August 2000 hosted by the Human Rights Commission and the World Conference Against racism (WCAR) both took place amid protest from the ‘white’ camp. For those opposed to the conferences that racism is to be morally condemned is without question but this understanding is framed by a narrowly defined and specific expression of what *racism* in society means. The social production of difference and a commitment to transform economic and political conditions is not here coupled to a renunciation of ‘race’. Instead for this camp it seems imperative to write ‘race’ out of the equation. The discourse around the conferences also needs to be seen in the context of a strong reaction in public opinion, which was already in part instated, by President Mbeki’s controversial State of the Nation address in February 2000. It is here that the President spoke for the first time of the need to redress the problem of the ‘two nations’ in South Africa and part of this for the President was a national offensive against racism. For ‘white’ people there is a strong belief that all individuals should enjoy equal rights under the law without reference to ‘race’, and that we should let go of the past in order to progress. With regards to the national conference public opinion (or the collective ‘imagination’ of the ‘white’ people of Pietermaritzburg) concentrated on the question of the position of ‘whites’ in post-apartheid South Africa. When President Mbeki started the proceedings of the national conference by elaborating his premise that in South Africa there are two nations, one ‘black’ and poor whose resentment and expectations need urgently to be addressed and one ‘white’ and wealthy whose alienation, insecurity and fears need to be addressed. Public opinion (again mainly from the liberal ‘white’ camp) posited that President Mbeki’s aim was to re-polarize South African society and was trying to “*block efforts to redress apartheid*”. What follows is a typical example of much public opinion at the time, “*So another conference on racism, another opportunity for mealy-mouthed politicians and their camp followers to enjoy luxury dinners and accommodation while polishing their egos...we do not need leaders who pursue rectitude uncluttered by selfish agendas. Sure, there are racists but I suspect there are a lot fewer than we are led to believe. I feel that it is culture that separates people more tangibly*” (Natal Witness, 1-08-2001).

Discussion over the next fortnight included whether such a conference was necessary or appropriate and what ends it may achieve and whose purposes it was

to serve. Discourse rallied around fears of *'not belonging'* and having *'no place'* as well as fears of imminent social, political and economic alienation. Whether *'we'* have a *'place'* in South Africa post 1994 seemed to dominate public discussion. *'We'* were by the end of these debates no longer Europeans or *'whites'* but *Anglo-Africans* and *Euro-Africans*, *'we'* suddenly became for the first time, *African*. Concerns over alienation were coupled often with denials of racism, racism was admitted to exist but in a narrow and specific definition of racism and apartheid coming about, very few of *'us'* were or are racist. As Goldberg (1997) notes, a narrow and specific definition of racism which reduces racist acts to specifically acts of prejudice such as those of extreme bigots (usually seen if not named as right wing Afrikaners in our case) denies the way in which a range of interlocking societal structures and processes leads to racial oppression. What is denied in these formulations is the daily experience of hostility and discrimination but also the way in which commerce; educational institutions and the media were (and still are) structured in such a way that perpetuates *'black'* disadvantage and *'white'* privilege. Institutional culture remains *'white'* and the way in which this fosters past inequalities is easily denied when racism's are defined as specific acts of discrimination or prejudice.

Discussions around the WCAR also gave insight into the collective *'white'* imagination. First and foremost it was noted that African nations or *'beggar'* states (as they were referred to by many readers) may have a right to ask for an apology for slavery but that it should also be asked what their culpability was (again a form of *'counter-attack'*), *"how many leaders sold their own kind?"* Moreover it was noted by many that prior to colonialism in Africa, things had in no way moved towards *'development'* or *'civilization'* and that in fact Africa had much to be grateful for- roads, infrastructure, hospitals, educational institutions and the like. Moreover, given the amount of aid received since independence, had repatriation not yet been sufficient? Indeed it was noted that it is not for the rest of the world to continue *'pouring aid'* into Africa when it was her leaders that were *'corrupt'* and wasteful.

*"The world lent Africa money in good faith. It is not their fault we squandered it. As for the 'odious debts incurred by the apartheid regime' perhaps we could remind the archbishop that every time he drives on our roads he might remember that we have the best road structure in Africa. And every time he picks up the telephone that we have more telephones than the rest of Africa put together. Apartheid was undoubtedly one of the more iniquitous systems of government but lets not lay every fault at its door. Much of those odious debts built one of the best infrastructures in the Third World. And if our president was so concerned about 'eradicating poverty' he would not have bought a brand new jet for himself despite the old one being very adequate. In fact, does he need a jet at all? What's the matter with SAA are they so poor? Nor would this government have just spent R45 billion on arms if we were so poor a country. We are not a poor country at all. It's all about priorities"* (Natal Witness, 29-07-00)

*"The so-called 'developing nations' at the conference on racism have called for financial repatriation for what they perceive to be the evils of colonialism. Their assessment of colonialism is that had the colonial powers stayed out of Africa, Africa*



would be in a far stronger position than it is now...forty years ago when colonial governments were running several African countries, development on a major scale was taking place and these countries were self-sufficient in food production and were major exporters of food. Since independence came to these countries, they have slid rapidly downhill to beggar nation status, and now rely heavily on the US, Japan, and several European nations to fund virtually any new development or repairs to colonially produced infrastructure. I travel extensively throughout Africa and I am constantly amazed to see that just about every new development in these countries, from the supply of taxis to the resurfacing of roads, is funded by external donors. The capitals of the countries to the North of us are filled with aid organizations' staff busy disbursing millions of US dollars to these beggar nations, who have proven themselves incapable of governing themselves properly, through both mismanagement and corruption. This aid money has been paid out year after year, with demands for more money continually being put forward by the various governments. And now these useless government officials have the cheek to demand repatriations for colonialism! What have they been getting for the past 10-20 years? And more to the point what have they been doing with the money? When you give a beggar food or money, and he ungratefully demands more, I know what my response would be. The lack of gratitude, morality and self-respect in these beggars at the conference defies description. They would be far more productive if they were looking to solve current issues of concern and expressing extreme gratitude to the donor nations for their kindness over many years in preventing them from total collapse " (Natal Witness, 10-08-01).

*"With the ANC- dominated committee preparing for the Durban Conference on Racism, which, like death, inexorably approaches a-pace, it appears the infamous President Thabo Mbeki begging bowl is being polished and loudly rattled"*(Natal Witness 20-08-2001)

In general public discussion emanating from both conferences centered around the continued 'obsession' and 'pre-occupation' of 'black' people with 'race' and, the perceived threat to progress and hindrance to good 'race' relations such a preoccupation posed . Again thus denial prevailed in public discourse despite a thin veneer of 'apartheid was terrible but...', 'colonialism was unjust but...', 'slavery was inhumane but ...', 'but'... we cannot be held responsible for or accountable for the past and 'black' people have a lot to explain in their own present. The unjust acquisition or maintenance of privilege was seldom mentioned or discussed.

For many 'white' people it is not only the denial of unjust privilege that dominates their imagination. For some their identity has shifted from that of oppressor to neutrality as is the case for many older 'white' people who place their hope in "the future" feeling that challenging the effects of apartheid will "take time" and that change must occur "naturally".

*"Politicians play on everyone's feelings and emotions with promises at election times, with subsequent events showing these promises as false. To believe that racism will disappear over a few short years is being particularly naive but verbal 'panelbeating' will not help this issue with such a diverse population. When I take a*

*look at our creches, primary and junior schools however, I see a different scenario where different races are growing up together harmoniously, which shows me that racism will become less only as our next two or three generations are growing" (Natal Witness, 10-01-2001).*

For other 'white' people they have not shifted to neutrality or colour blindness but to a feeling of victimization. Many 'white' people feel that they have become scapegoats for the ANC government's ineptitudes. "Black' people are accused of 'playing' the 'race card' in order to distract attention from their own shortcomings usually named as-declining standards of education, an economic crisis, low standards of health care, a poor level of service provision, inadequate housing, low levels of investment and job creation, and the like. The public discourse I observed posited numerous claims of reverse racism and so called 'white' bashing. A rich source though which to interpret these tendencies and in particular their geographical implications is to look at discourses around emigration. With popular perception purporting that ten percent of South Africa's 'white' population have permanently emigrated since 1994 'white' South Africans spend a great deal of time discussing the relative challenges of 'staying' or 'going'.

*"Recently, returning from the UK, I was seated next to a young man who was returning home on one months leave. On leaving school here with the highest of educational qualifications, he could not find a job and his parents packed him off to Britain. The youngster soon found a job with computers and in a few months became a manger. Just one of the thousands who had to leave South Africa because of affirmative action. I asked the lad if he would ever consider returning here. He answered that he would not" (Natal Witness, 27/07/00).*

*"I sincerely fear that South Africa is going down Robert Mugabe's pathway. The terrible punitive price increases we're being subjected to are traumatic not only for pensioners such as I, but awful to most of the victims I know of. Over and over again, I hear educated people say that the price of water and the cost of using a telephone are sure to bring society to its knees in due time, because these frightful penalties upon general society are too painful to bear. One gentleman, a retired economist, said to me:, it cannot be sustained...eventually the economy will fold under the burden; its outright theft of course" (Natal Witness, 29-11-01)*

*"The editorial comments regarding expats (Witness November 23) have reference. You state that 'people with obvious talent and character have denied this country their continuing contributions'. What, might I ask, do you think the policy of affirmative action is doing, if not denying these very people the ability to make 'continuing contributions'? The same could be said for the crime rate, high taxes, dismal health care standards and a host of other third-world maladies that continue to worsen by the day...to state that emigrants are 'denying' the country their contribution cannot go unchallenged. These people took the difficult option, leaving behind loved ones, friends and the country of their birth. Most made this choice under duress, as the country of their birth has made it patently clear through the policy of affirmative action and adverts stating that 'only affirmative action candidates need apply', that no longer requires their services" (Natal Witness, 27/11/01)*

*"It's all been said before and our very own Nero carries on fiddling while Zimbabwe crashes and the rand puts another foot on the slippery slope. But where should all this direct the South African farmer? As it is, we have to factor the costs of security and ever-increasing fuel, equipment and fertilizer costs into our budgets. Now if we are able to come out ahead, what automatically would have been ploughed back is pondered over. Are we reinvesting for our children or will we be forced from the country we consider our own? The financial wizards say that our economy is too strong to let this happen in South Africa but I bet that those selfsame economists have substantial holdings in offshore accounts" (Natal Witness, 1-08-2001).*

*"In 1994, after bitter years of apartheid repression, we were promised a new, improved, non-racial South Africa. Seven years alter, for many people it seems that white South Africa has merely been replaced by a black South Africa. There is this view, wether accurate or not, that while the 'privileged minority' is expected to provide a whole range free services for the disadvantaged minority, it has no moral right to claim anything back. The social contract has become a one-way street. Politicians like president Thabo Mbeki add to the problem by constantly reminding us that we are a country of two nations, the intention being to play on the consciences of the rich half so that they 'pay up and shut up'. But who is looking after minorities? Certainly not a bunch of geriatric judges in the Constitutional Court. Crime is out of control and popular wisdom sees much of it stemming from anti-white racism. But government remains silent on the issue and instead blames farm murders on white racism, as if the victims are somehow always responsible for their own murder. There is the worrying widespread view that black policeman are not interested in solving crimes against whites and one hears accounts of policemen who are too lazy to get out of their chairs and fill in the case form. And service in government departments is so appalling that the raison d'etre of many civil servants seems to be to find any excuse possible to avoid doing any work....add to this excessive rates of crime and violence that are virtually unmatched elsewhere, land invasions, rampant lawlessness and a disregard for the rights of others and rapidly declining roads, schools and hospitals and we sadly see a country that is nowhere near what we had hoped for in 1994. The market is not easily fooled, which explains why the rand has fallen by 33% in less than two years. Overseas investors seem to have little confidence in the performance of South Africa PTY LTD.. Australians in London know that if they return home their prospect for finding work will not be undermined by degrees of skin lightness. They know that if they become victims of crime, the state will deploy its resources. South Africans know that the police, at best, solve a minute fraction of serious crimes and often don't even make an effort to pursue criminals. Australians also know that their government will act against corruption and that a significant portion of their taxes is not being squandered by corrupt officials" (Natal Witness, 31-07-2001).*

There seem to be two frequent themes that arise in discourse around emigration which I feel represent the wider concerns of 'white' South Africans, and which might provide a fruitful area of geographical interpretation. Firstly, there seems to be a great deal of concern around financial and material vulnerability, from theft to inflation to market security and employment opportunities. Affirmative action, high

taxes, corruption and material deprivation (as in the case of 'white' farmers in Zimbabwe) for instance all reflect a common fears of material vulnerability. Secondly, 'white' South Africans feel physically vulnerable, for example concerns around high levels of violent crime, declining levels of health care services or poor care of the elderly all frequent areas of concern in this domain.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This chapter briefly provides an example of the type of lens which can be constructed as a means to read whiteness, in this case the collective 'white' imagination of my city. The excerpts provided are by no means comprehensive, but I feel that they are reflective of the 'white' imagination, as I perceive it. Whiteness being 'normal' makes exposing its particularities difficult (especially given the pervasiveness of 'white' values, judgements, assumptions and standards). One need only turn to global news coverage on television, the packaging in the supermarket or the norms and expectations of the residents of our neighbourhoods to see 'whitened' agendas. To say that 'white' people cannot see whiteness is a truism and it makes whiteness especially difficult to (re)present. Given the assumption reached in this thesis that whiteness is so widespread, how might we include this realisation in our geographies? How do we begin to recognise 'white' places and the influence of whiteness in space? How do we expose whiteness in our geographies or make it visible to our neighbours? 'White' people literally cannot see or acknowledge their whiteness, but are fundamentally shaped by it. What follows is a consideration of how this imagination might shape and is shaped by the spatialities in the city?

## Chapter Six: Concluding Reflections

### 6.1 Whiteness in our urban imagination

For Shields (1991), social divisions and cultural classifications are often spatialized and become incorporated into our imaginary geographies. In so doing, space becomes imbued with meaning thus guiding or constraining action. Places are continually constructed at the level of our collective imaginary in relation to and in turn our social performances, interactions and presuppositions about appropriate activities in particular places. Spatialization and spatial practices arising from and shaping discourses about place (and space) in part co-ordinate collective perceptions and ground hegemonic systems of ideology and practice. Once absorbed into the public imagination spatial discourse becomes directive, influencing how and *where* our daily lives are experienced or lived. Our public imagination also, as noted in chapter 4, influences how we experience space and collectively understand place(s). Of interest for cultural geographers is not space(s) or place(s) themselves but their production or social construction. Moreover notions of place are not as important as practices in space for cultural geographers. With regards whiteness what is important to note is that dominant groups attempt to normalize their practices and conceptions of place. Popular images/representations that directly associate people to place are a significant manifestation of the ways in which territory bespeaks power. Whiteness is maintained in our social landscape through maintaining cultural and moral legitimacy and political and economic hegemony in both the spaces of our collective imagination and also in our place perceptions.

Given that whiteness retains its power through appearing 'normal' through rendering itself invisible in the landscape for geographers it is difficult to map this racialized spatial imagination or to cease operating within its ideological constitution. Racialization is fundamental to social formation and it is important for geographers to pay attention to the variety of practices and experiences of ordinary people in landscapes of normalized spatial segregation. Remembering that imagination is a crucial part of remaking city spaces highlights that overcoming whiteness is as much about 'real' spaces and activities as ideological and institutional reform. Remembering that space and place are implicated in the production of social relations and that they are themselves socially reproduced, additionally reminds geographers to situate considerations of space and place alongside relations of power and power knowledge, (here it is important to remember that both social divisions and cultural classifications are spatialized.)

Given that the empirical datum of geographical space is mediated by an edifice of social constructions which become guides for constraints upon action and that the spatial is continually constructed at the level of the collective social imaginary and acts to frame social performances, interactions and presuppositions about appropriate activities in particular places. The importance of entering into our geographies other spatialities beyond the rational 'real' ones of planners architects and capitalists is again becoming highlighted. In short, the important thing for cultural geographers to remember is that spaces exist as much in our imagination

as in physical reality. The co-ordinating role of social spatialization is said to represent an overlooked part of hegemonic systems of thought and supposition, spatialization provides part of the necessary social co-ordination of perceptions to ground hegemonic systems of ideology and practice which play a significant role in the rationale by which we live our daily lives. This is important when we remember that imagination is a crucial part of (re)making city spaces and reminds us that spaces are not blank arenas in which we live and act.

In a post-apartheid era, the divided landscape of the old South Africa is gradually breaking down forcing 'white' people to re-evaluate our place in the social order. As the status quo increasingly becomes disrupted by material and political transformation so too does our sense of self and place. In addition, a changing sense of identity and place in the social landscape is changing our relationship to place. Locale is an important part of self-definition and when physical settings and valued places become disrupted so too does our collective identity and imagination. For cultural geographers, people use place to locate themselves and others and it is the social construction or the collective nature of the relations between persons, identities and material setting that is of interest, for example how do places come to be imbued with meaning and how these places in turn guide our actions and identities. Places are here considered to be created in the space of interpersonal communication. Our collective spatial imagination is said to be constructed through language that, in this understanding, is the binding force between people and place. It is through language that places are imaginatively constituted and socially constructed.

If spaces are both socially produced and produce social relations then the edifice of social constructions (our collective social imaginary) mediating space act to guide or constrain social action and frame social performances for cultural geographers. If spaces/places are as much imaginary as real then the task is to be consistently aware of the underlying hegemony in our understandings of the places we inhabit. How does whiteness shape the geographies enacted by our socialization? How does spatialization enact racialization?

For de Certeau (1984), in understanding the spaces of our cities, we should focus not on the individual subject as a locus for action but rather on modes or schemata for action. That is on how representations of a society and its modes of behaviour are put to *use*. What is important for the purposes of this research is that for de Certeau (1984) the presence or circulation of a representation tells us nothing about what it is for its users for example, "the analysis of the images broadcast on television (representation) and the time spent watching television (behaviour) should be complemented by a study of what the cultural consumer 'makes' or 'does' during this time and with these images. So the same goes for urban space, the products purchased in the supermarket, the stories and legends distributed in the newspapers and so on" (de Certeau, 1984:xii). There is always a difference between representation and utilization, users transform representations to suit their own ideologies and interests and it is in the difference between representation and utilization that for de Certeau (1984) we can determine the nature of the social ordering processes. In terms of the cultural geography implied above, this suggests



looking at the intersection of our 'white' actions in space/everyday practices and imaginations. The focus thus translates into gaining insight into how "the 'ways of operating' constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users re-appropriate the space organized by techniques of socio-cultural reproduction" (de Certeau, 1984: xiv), that is, we need to look at the 'tactics' articulated in the details of everyday life- the logic or rules by which practices operate, "those practices of everyday users form foreseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across space. Although they are composed with the vocabulary of established languages (those of television, newspapers, supermarkets, or museum sequences) and although they remain subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of spaces, etc.) the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop" (de Certeau, 1984:xiii). These movements are named 'trajectories' by de Certeau (1984).

For our purposes then what trajectories can be mapped in the schedules, routines and individual everyday practices of the apartheid city? According to Robinson (1999), moving within the spaces of the apartheid city has different qualities and meanings for different people, "the domestic worker in the white home, for example, whose crossing of the divide meant she was cruelly separated from her children; the family who visited the old neighborhood they had been forced to leave; the nurse working in a suburban rest home; the man visiting his lover late at night; night workers waiting in the inner city for the first bus home; men waiting on street corners for casual work; the soldier riding on top of the armored vehicle watching for stone-throwers; the madam taking her domestic worker (almost) to her home with her extra baggage " (Robinson,1999:163).

The changing spaces of the post-apartheid city are not just about re-organizing social, spatial, economic, or political relations, they are about imagining new identities and new meanings for people, places and communities. For Robinson (1999), in order to come to understand the (r)evolution taking place in our public spaces we need to move away from reading the experiences of ordinary people through the dominant categories of social science "just as 3<sup>rd</sup> world cities have been seen through the lens of 'developmentalism' South African cities have been seen through the lens of 'apartheid' - as sites of domination through spatial segregation and racism" (Robinson,1999:168) The creative capacities and imagination of these places and people is neglected in these traditional approaches to public space. What is needed is thus an approach that recognizes that the people who live in them inhabit places and as such it is "their cultural resources and creative enterprises which transform city space, as much as- or perhaps even more than- political struggle and institutional reform. The imagination, then, is a crucial part of (re)making city spaces" (Robinson,1999:168).

The task is for cultural geographers wishing to interpret/make visible a space for imagination in our geographies, a space akin to Lefebvre's representational space (discussed in chapter 2). That is we need to include in our geographies a space that draws on cultural and historical resources, on memory and imagination alongside spatial practices (how space is produced) and representations of space (conceived



space). Representational space is the space of intersection between the body (which directly interacts/ lives in space) and the space of the unconscious. "the unconscious represents (an element of) the subject which is at the same time present and denied; and the realm of affectivity, Lefebvre suggests, stands in a similar relation to abstract space. The unconscious supposedly consists of material that cannot be symbolized, which we cannot put into words, formally excluded from the unconscious world of language. Similarly abstract space, which is founded upon rationality and symbolism, cannot make sense of the realm of affect, which it excludes from and subordinates to the ordering regimes of the visual, the geometric, the planned. It is to these excluded, subordinated, repressed realms of emotions, affect and physical sensuality that Lefebvre looks for the possibility of new space" (Robinson, 1999:165).

In Robinson's (1999) interpretation of Lefebvre, as geographers we need to consider more closely the production and meaning of space as, "the subject moves in space, experiencing and remaking the meaning of spaces initially constituted to speak of power. In their everyday activities, subjects are witness to the possibility of other forms of spatiality through their bodies and their movements, as well as their imaginations, in the dynamism of their inner worlds which are both made through, and themselves remake, the 'external' spaces of the environment" (Robinson, 1999:168). In short, representational space is fluid, dynamic, qualitative and linked to spaces hidden in our minds. It is also the space that allows affectivity of subjects to be included thus signaling the possibility of other ways of creating spaces, of other spatialities beyond those of planners, policy makers or capital.

Lefebvre's notion of representational space also provides a means to provide an intellectual framework for how we might imagine spaces changing, "every time we move around the city we potentially use spaces differently, and imagine them differently. Walking down the street, differently. Walking past another person, next to me, then far away. Walking past and hiding inside. Walking past and smiling. Stopping in the street. Not walking. Driving. Hair streaming out of the window. Driving. Windows up..." (Robinson, 1999:163).

In South Africa there are a multitude of different resources different people can draw on in imagining the city and shaping new kinds of space. But the unconscious is not necessarily a positive force in transforming space in everyday experience, "insofar as the unconscious is a place where we hide horrifying experiences and feelings, where we lock up our secrets, it is potentially as much a source of immobility as of mobility. There are some memories we never dream of or cannot recognize in the guises they have adopted to save us from their horror. Are the doors before which we stand immobilized? Places we cannot bear to enter or ever know about? And who are 'we'? Whose fears and anxieties will immobilize the city? Whose dreams will reshape it" (Robinson, 1999:169)

The role of this research is to place such questions alongside our understanding of whiteness. How is the 'white' collective imagination shaping post-apartheid urban spaces? What is the nature of the everyday practices/trajectories that the white imagination informs? Before proceeding to consider the implications of these

questions for myself I shall provide Robinson's (1999) interpretation of this space informed by the 'white' peoples imagination(s), "White South African's have enormous resources of repression at their disposal. There are no longer armoured vehicles, administrative sanctions and legal exclusions of apartheid. Rather they are the private security arrangements around every home, the constant search for exclusive, safe, white neighborhoods, the retreat to the shopping mall with its security guards and sanitized aisles, the rising fear of driving around town, the no-go areas (downtown, townships, 'white' areas that have become 'black', roads past new shack settlements, certain freeways at certain times of the day or night, the street outside after dark), the reluctance to walk anywhere at all, the anxious looking around as they get out of their cars. Keeping (black) danger out has become an obsession, and spaces are made and used in ways that reflect these fears. Long traditions of maintaining separateness in situations of intimacy (such as sharing a home with a domestic servant) inform these spatial practices. White urban dreams are nightmares of anxiety, of danger and loss of self- if they emerge at all, that is, from beneath the everyday rituals of security, shopping, television, sport, and travel. The city is the scene of nightmares, and changing social practices work to repress anxiety. Defensive, immobilizing and horrifying, these practices find their counterpart in the waking decisions of capital, whose expanding spheres of operation try to impose their (abstract) logic on the shape of cities" (Robinson, 1999:168/169)

If we are to consider new relationships with and within space and if we wish to imagine and contribute to a new and just (social) order in South Africa, how should these considerations inform our geographies? Given that a revolution that does not produce a new space does not realize its full potential (indeed is said to have failed because it hasn't changed the everyday practices/operations of life only superstructures/ institutions/ political apparatuses). Then a true social transformation must manifest itself in the effects of daily life, in the language of spatial practices. For decades South African social and spatial planners worked to produce homogeneous ordered urban spaces and to eliminate difference or diversity. Homogeneous single-use, single-race neighborhoods and segregated cities were produced through a careful ordering according to a specific racialized ideologies translated into the ordering of space. To what extent have these homogenized city spaces been re-used/re-imagined and to what extent are today's social imaginings reproducing the difference of apartheid spaces? In terms of this research how do whiteness and spatialization interact in our urban spaces?

As a historically constructed position of power and privilege whiteness is not recognized as being about 'race'. According to Kobayashi and Peake (2000) "living in privileged and virtually all- white neighborhoods, with 'good' schools, safe streets, and moral values to match" (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000: 394) may seem to have nothing to do with being 'black', but a 'safe' neighborhood for example is assumed safe precisely because it does not carry any landscape features associated with unsafe areas. A 'safe' neighborhood (read - peaceful, functional, 'white') reinforces difference by default. In analyzing beyond spatial divides and connecting 'safe' neighborhoods to their conceptual opposites 'no-go' areas, the naturalizing discourse (utopics) of place becomes apparent. Racialized spaces can thus be

made visible and invisible through particular representations of space, and making visible the (unwritten) relationships between different spaces (heterotopia). Representations of space and place reflect dominant ideologies and through making visible the ways in which places associated with difference (especially those associated with racialized people) become apparent we can develop a geography in which we can begin to see racialization and whiteness in our social landscape. What narratives can provide insight into the place myths underlying the racial spatialization of our post-apartheid urban spaces? How does the 'white' collective imagination influence the spaces of our cities? How is whiteness implicated in the social production of racialized landscapes or in terms of the central problematic in this chapter, how does whiteness take place in urban space?

How can we examine whiteness in our urban landscapes given its invisible yet defining characteristics? McCann (1999) notes that Lefebvre's conceptual triad provides an opportunity for including racial identity in understanding urbanism (although Lefebvre does not directly address such issues himself). Although issues of public space and social justice cannot be reduced to racial identity alone in modern racialized cities, 'race' is an important force in the social construction of the spaces and places in our cities. The racialized imagination informing the contemporary production of space for McCann (1999) can be addressed using Lefebvre's conceptual triad because it allows two important questions to be included in the problematic of racialized space. Firstly, it allows us to consider the role of racialized experiences, perceptions and imaginations in the production of public space, and secondly it allows us to consider the representational space of the 'white' imagination.

Representational spaces as noted in chapter 2 are the spaces of the imagination. These spaces provide a commentary on the spaces of everyday life and through informing perceptions of space they influence experiences of that space and our actions within that space. For Lefebvre (after McCann, 1999:178), "representational spaces can be pulled apart from spatial practices and representations of space for heuristic purposes, but in the end they are mutually constitutive moments in a single process. They are part of the social/physical spaces we experience, perceive, and imagine on a daily basis. These spaces are always already racialized".

## **6.2 A Geography of Whiteness**

In our cities racialization reproduces itself spatially and institutionally through the informalities of our preferences, choices, common sense and socio-spatial imagination. The formal spaces of apartheid may have been renounced but our South African landscape remains deeply racialized. Nevertheless since 1994, there have been far reaching changes in urban South Africa and public space is increasingly being occupied in a range of new ways. One notable difference is on our streets. In the liberated space of our cities, formerly all 'white' commercial, retail and residential centers, 'black' people have converged, taxis, hawkers, informal hair salons, restaurant, traditional healers all trade on the pavement and live their daily lives on what were once regulated, homogeneous spaces. Our urban spaces have become heterotopic. That is, within single real spaces several sites, which are in

themselves incompatible, are juxtaposed through a range of 'transgressive performances'. We are witnessing in our cities a range of new practices in 'old spaces'. As 'white' people find the established attributes of place and boundary that allowed whiteness to take place disrupted they display a variety of responses. Mainly they try to maintain their sense of identity and normality by fleeing to 'safe' suburban areas and 'white' commercial and residential nodes. They barricade themselves, desperately trying to cling to the illusion of 'clean', 'safe', spaces. Despite these changes 'white' especially middle-class, middle aged, non-disabled and heterosexual men and their ideologies (for me) continue to seem better placed to assume authority in the city. 'White' spaces also remain the dominant spaces of our imagination, these are assumed to be the most valuable, most desirable safest spaces towards which we should once more strive. Koyabashi and Peake (2000), note that processes of racialization are present throughout landscapes seemingly free from racial structuring because whiteness is taken for granted or normal. Because whiteness provides the moves and norms in our ideologies of landscape and place it is too our normalized landscapes that we should thus focus our attention if we are going to *place* whiteness. If as geographers we often enunciate and evaluate the spaces of our cities and our landscapes without realizing their implicit whiteness we may be tactically (re)producing them through our assumptions and value judgments. By not disrupting established attributes of, and attitudes towards place and boundary, we may not only be letting whiteness take place but we are ourselves culpable in (re)producing whiteness. In disrupting place myths and exposing landscapes of whiteness and in challenging the socio-spatial orderings we disrupt whiteness. By making visible the range of social actions and discourses constructing whiteness and through coming to understand their relationship to spatiality we can hope for more accountable geographies. To what extent do our geographies perpetuate whiteness? How are our actions and conceptions of space implicated in perpetuating a racialized *status quo*? These questions should remain at the forefront of our thinking in all geographies.

Apartheid mapped social relations in order to bring about racial outcomes. If we are to understand the form of today's cities then we need to understand how people experience and identify with the built environment and how they actively shape their own socio-spatial realities in terms of the cultural geography outlined in this research. This process involves reconsidering how our collective socio-spatial imagination informs our everyday practices. How does our collective racial imagination influence our social landscapes and how do our social landscapes shape our racial imagination? Entering into our geographies the realm of imagination is not to discredit the 'realities' faced by 'white' South Africans. These include a crisis of identity, lower incomes than during the apartheid years, a narrower range of job opportunities, increasing racial tension and the fear and the threat of crime, violence and material loss. The task is to link representation and imagination to the physical spaces and social realities in our cities and to note how these influence the practices of our everyday life. For cultural geographers it is the processes producing cultural conceptions of, and practices in, space that become important.

For instance, much of the 'white' public imagination I come to perceive during the course of this study was dominated by fear, how might this influence perceptions of place and interactions in space? Young 'white' people with whom I engaged all expressed a feeling of economic, political, social and material and bodily vulnerability (similar sentiments come across in the excerpts above). In South Africa, in the pub or in the gym, in the supermarket 'white' people frequently discuss crime. Discourses around crime are numerous ranging from petty to organized crime to violent crime and anti-white conspiracy theories. People are afraid to park on the road. We are afraid to walk on the streets. We look north to Zimbabwe and feel afraid to have children in Africa. We have an uncertain future and are assured of a lower standard of living than our parents. According to Agric SA, there were 902 farm attacks in 2000 and a sum of 142 farm murders. As geographers, it is important to take note of the worry and fear crime discourse precipitates because whether we deem such discourse paranoia and prejudice or as indicative of a real social problem it is having numerous effects on both our social and spatial landscapes.

During apartheid crime was primarily confined to 'black townships' and a range of strategies and tactics protected 'white' people. Ordinary white people find themselves increasingly exposed to armed robbery, petty crime, assault, mugging, rape (and the associated risk of HIV infection), hijacking and motor vehicle threat and murder. Residents of traditional 'white' middle class suburbs see the effect of these threats and occurrences as the primary threat to the New South Africa. *"I am irritated by the measures we take to protect ourselves, our homes and our cars. The lack of personal freedom to walk wherever I want to frustrates me"* (Natal Witness, 29-07-00). *"I am sad that crime has become so entrenched that if you have been robbed, raped or hijacked, there is a South African attitude that easily turns it into the victim's fault. What do you expect if you drive along that road / walk along that path by yourself / live on the outskirts of town"* (Natal Witness, 29-07-00).

Crime seems to symbolize the weakness of the government and law enforcement agencies to 'keep control'. Control seems to be seen as necessary given the 'chaos' to which Africa may 'revert'. Popular opinion has it that since 1994 ten percent of 'white' South Africans have chosen to immigrate primarily because of crime. The rest have barricaded them with visible effect on our landscape. Sophisticated security measures, high walls, razor wire, spikes, electric fences, secure perimeter, automated gates, burglar proofing, pro-active patrolling, and armed response. All signal a growing spatial manifestation of 'white' public imagination.

### 6.3 Conclusion

'Race' is a construct that continues to serve certain interests and which continues to influence our social space and whiteness is an invisible racial construct defining our sense of self and shaping our society. Our whiteness in South Africa is inherited both from the legacy of apartheid and from our modern world order and is fundamental to our daily existence.

The biggest challenge for 'white' people in South Africa seems to be to come to know our whiteness. This whiteness is simultaneously protected and denied. Making it visible involves recognizing that our history, perspectives and experiences are not those of humanity but of 'white' humanity and that our attitudes, behaviour, identities, socialization, material and economic culture our social and cultural location are all 'white'.

Whiteness is a position from which we receive unprecedented privilege but over which we seem to have no control. Many theorists contend that in interrogating whiteness guilt is an unhelpful tendency in that it avoids the moral and political implications of whiteness and keeps our whiteness at individual psychological level as opposed to a moral and political one. Denial is equally unhelpful because no matter how strongly we feel against racism we enjoy the privileges of whiteness.

So how have I come to understand and assimilate my whiteness through the process of this research? In chapter 1, I stated that the aim of this research was to construct an ensemble of conceptual considerations relevant to a project of geographically (re)presenting whiteness. By telling the story of the diverse ways in which whiteness functions through ordering social relations and spatial configurations, I hoped to enable a more reflexive approach to my geography. I have come to learn that not only is whiteness signaled by the clothes we wear, the food we eat, or the ways we act, but more fundamentally through the ways in which we perceive, construct and (re)present our world. The real power of whiteness seems to be in its ability to control our conceptualization. Whiteness is maintained through appearing normal. If whiteness truly is an absolute tyranny, what does that mean? What are the practical implications for us personally and for our geographies? If there is one thing that critical theorists are certain of then it is that the primary means through which 'white' hegemony is maintained is its invisibility. The only thing we never question is that which we take as normal, that which we take as for granted. If the 'white' centre is invisible then given the nature of our social ordering processes and the way in which we think, how should we expose it? Making whiteness visible may be seen as the primary objective of this research but it is essential to once more re-iterate that this is not a witch-hunt. This research is not necessarily trying to discredit 'whites' or all that we've done or stand for. There are good white people, kind, decent, well meaning, just and moral 'white' people as there are racist, bigotted and mean 'white' people. Moreover, my personal contention is that young 'white' South Africans have a unique understanding being both of and outside modernity and Euro-American whiteness. In so many ways we personify a post-colonial subjectivity that enables an unique insight borne of the contrasting social positionings through which we are constituted. This uniquely

places us not only to potentially play a crucial role in re-constituting South Africa but moreover if we are going to justify our place in a re-newed Africa I doubt that a space will exist (or could justly do so) if we cannot articulate and negotiate the importance of our particular contribution. So this is a journey which aims not only to contribute to the processes of challenging our raciological ordering but, also aims to liberate a space in which our 'white' voices can be heard and ultimately transcended. It is thus a position that acknowledges that differences still exist and, will only be transcended once the nature and particularity's of whiteness (amongst other oppressions) are better understood and mapped.

## **A White List** (Ware,1997:251)

White House  
White Race  
White Lies  
White Power  
White Bread  
White Supremacy  
White Wash  
White Skin  
Whitewash



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