

Strategies of whiteness and the counter-potential of shame in the production of 'Afrikaner' femininity in postapartheid South Africa

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In South Africa, race has been subverted by the fall of official apartheid. Specifically, the invisibilisation of whiteness is overturned and white-black relationality problematized, thereby deeply troubling whiteness. However, the logic of race continues to reverberate through social relations against a global backdrop in which this category proves remarkably adaptable as purveyor of inequality. The end of official apartheid is not the end of the power effects of the apartheid discourse. The postapartheid field is a site of contestation over previously normalized hierarchies, including over gender and class. Applying a discourse analysis to texts generated in research interviews with respondents who self-identified as women, white, Afrikaans-speaking and middleclass, this study finds attempts at re-securing race. First, the strategy of 'elision and misattribution' seeks to recuperate apartheid's racial binaries to bolster present-day whiteness. Second, 'intersectional shifting' of social markers aims at ameliorating the secondary status of femininity through the wielding of whiteness and middleclassness. These strategies are complicated by affective practices. Particularly the social emotion shame holds transformative potential, but with a caveat. Shame brings self into relation with the other and the social and can usher white subjects into an expanded conception of being human, but only if acknowledged.