



A Non-Linear Style Contradictions Surrounding Dreadlocks

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Abstract. – This article revolves around the question why people in “Western” cultures grow dreadlocks based on observations on social media and participant observation. It addresses the issue of cultural appropriation and moves on looking at certain motivations. It is striking that many aspects are two-sided if not contradictory, e.g., the strong connection to naturality, though for the most part dreadlocks are not a natural style, being sectioned, crocheted, dyed, extended, etc. They seem to stand for harmony and stability and yet signify rebellion. They visualise people’s inner self – yet should not be taken too seriously. By these contradictions, dreadlocks seem to give a post-modern statement. [*dreadlocks, hair, style, look, cognitive dissonance*]

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Our hair is certainly one of the few parts of our bodies that represent our character, that present us towards the other. But why would people – across almost all cultures – willingly “destroy” their own hair? Furthermore, why would they transform it to a style, which they cannot fully control, which will cause them to commit to it, as it is not easily changeable? Even more, why should one choose a style which carries some negative associations such as dirtiness and rather low class?

This seems to be the case with dreadlocks – a style which by now has crossed cultural and class borders. Embedding dreadlocks into the broader

topic of hairstyles, in general can help to approach the topic. “Hairstyles serve as important cultural artefacts, because they are simultaneously public (visible to everyone), personal (biologically linked to the body), and highly malleable to suit cultural and personal preferences” (Weitz 2001: 667, see also Hershman 1974: 291), or, as Monica Arac de Nyeko (2018) puts it pointedly: “Everyone will tell you, hair is what makes a person, hair is sexy, hair tones attire, hair defines character, hair accessorises appearance, hair is imperative – it’s all about hair, hair, hair.”

Suiting this context, Robert Gugutzer introduces the distinction of *having* and *being* a body referring to the sociologist Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985): “The relation of a human to his own body is twofold: The person *is* his body, and he *has* his body. Being and having are the two ways, in which the body is given to a person” (Gugutzer 2015: 13). *Being* stresses its limits in space and time, *having* includes positioning oneself “outside” the body, to look at oneself from a distance. Gugutzer links it to anthropology by stating: “Man is a creature of *nature*, insofar as he *is* his (biological) body, and he is a creature of *culture*, insofar he (by socialisation), *has* his body” (2015: 15). By changing and modifying their hair individuals stress the *having*, the empowerment.

“Most people strive to attain a certain ideal of beauty currently prevalent in their culture. A beauty ideal is an overall ‘look’ incorporating both physical features (e. g., ‘pouty’ lips vs. thin lips, large breasts vs. small), and a variety of products,

services and activities. These can include clothing, cosmetics, hairstyling, tanning salons, leisure activities (e.g., aerobics, tennis, or weightlifting), and even plastic surgery (e.g., breast or lip implants or liposuction)” (Englis et al. 1994: 50). For the United States, Tracey Owens Patton (2006: 30) argues with Rose Weitz: “The three most common standards of White beauty ... that women are subject to include: (1) women’s hair should be long, curly or wavy-not kinky-and preferably blond; (2) women’s hair should look hairstyled-this requires money and time; and (3) women’s hair should look feminine and different from men’s hair.” On first sight, the dreadstyle seems to invert this ideal.

“The human body has long been recognized by scholars as a central location for the expression of social and cultural messages, at least since the pioneering work of Marcel Mauss on ‘les techniques du corps’” (Bogin 2008: 87, see also Van Wolputte 2004: 264). Beauty, at least as long as it transcends some very basic biological notions, thus, does not exist *in vacuo* but includes messages and is connected to values, lifestyles, and identities. In postmodern, advanced capitalist societies, there seem to be “do-it-yourself identity kits consumers can use for a customized self” (Buechler 2016: 219) or, how Walter Leimgruber puts it: “The body becomes the shop window of the personality” (2005: 229) and identity. Due to social changes, identity is described as more eligible and flexible: “Some critics view such social changes as transforming identity in potentially positive ways, for example resulting in increasing levels of self-reflexivity. Other critics, however, discern in such transformations a thoroughgoing liquidation of human bonds – on consequence of which has been an increasing emphasis on self-reinvention in daily life as a means of keeping at bay the insecurity that new individualism inspires” (Elliott 2016: 74). Dreadlocks seem to be an example of a self-reflexivity resulting in a self-reinvention, but why would people pick this style?

“Dreadlocks are not a linear hairstyle” argues Bert Ashe in his amazing and hilarious self-account (2015: 2). Ashe found a very well-suited metaphor on many layers: Dreadlocks do not usually happen by going to your nearest hairstylist and taking an hour. Also, when looked at its history, dreadlocks do not have just one origin, just one story. The individual motivations why to get and to keep dreadlocks can vary just as much as the historical traces.

A Short History of Dreadlocks

Various origins are mentioned for dreadlocks, most prevalent the connection to the Rastafari culture dating back to the 1920s, in which dreadlocks began to serve as a sign of Black strength and unity (Guilford 2007: 66), as well as a marker of distinction and a conscious rebellion against White beauty standards. The Rastafari movement has its origins in Jamaica but looks at African cultures in which dreadlocks are worn for a long time and had various renaissances, e.g., “at a ... point in history, dreadlocks were also common during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya in the 1950s and 1960s when the top leaders often wore dreadlocks. They are said to have used dreadlocks as a sign of African identity and a religious vow of separation from modern, corrupt and unfair society” (Arac de Nyeko 2018). As a different source, the Kelts are said to have had locked hair – sometimes not described as equivalent to dreadlocks though. One more dread tradition is shown by the Hindu and Buddhist sadhus, the wise men. Possibly inspired both by the sadhu tradition as well as by African and Rastafari culture, some hippies featured dreadlocks as well. “The hippies are sometimes referred to as a counterculture because of their wholesale rejection of wider values and lifestyles ... Hippie clothing also set them apart. Cheap, tie-dyed, patchworked cotton or hemp clothing, flared pants, op shop and vintage items, colourful beads, feathers and headbands gave the hippies an unconventional, uncoordinated appearance. Long, tangled, braided, big and dreadlocked hair were also ‘fashion musts’” (Furze et al. 2015: 74). In recent times, dreadlocks became associated with “The Politics of Consciousness” (Dunning 2000) associated with vegetarianism/veganism and sustainability. But there are more subcultures featuring dreads, such as the gothic and the punk subculture (see Hannerz 2013: 58). For hipsters it seems to be more ambivalent: “While hipster men clearly didn’t invent dreads ... it’s something that some hipsters have adopted as one of their own regardless” (Harriet 2017) and Lisa Nakamura names them as signifier for looking hip (2001: 10), whereas Robert Lanham’s humourist “The Hipster Handbook” (2003) lists dreadlocks under the styles Hipsters avoid.

My Dread-Sample

Besides informal interviews with dreadheads in real life, I joined several social media groups ded-

icated to the hairstyle in order to find out why people have dreadlocks and what they mean to them. These groups consist mostly of Europeans and to a lesser extent of dread enthusiasts from all over the world. I mention “enthusiasts,” as not all individuals in the observed groups have dreadlocks themselves, for some it is their past and they are playing with the idea of growing them again, for others it is a plan for their future or just a phantasy. The boundaries of “Black” and “White”, anyway being extremely hard to define, are quite unimportant in these groups. However, it is often difficult to trace back certain statements to either Black or White origin and hardly any thread evolved through the topic of ethnic groups. Looking at profile and posted pictures one could conclude that especially in German groups by far the most individuals are of European descent. The groups are dedicated to the experiences made as a dreadhead in job and private life but also to hairstyles, hair care, and hair accessories. Some commercial aspects also play a role, offering dread service or dread jewellery, usually as small-scale entrepreneurs catering individual needs and wishes.

Cultural Appropriation

In these social media groups, people usually are not confronted with the topic of cultural appropriation. Still, when talking about dreadlocks on White people, the topic of cultural appropriation often pops up. The public debate was intensified through a video, which went viral in 2016 and showed an African-American woman debating with the White student Cory Goldstein about his dreadlocks.¹

The Rastafari movement, which typically features dreadlocks, is based on the “bipolarization between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Africans,’ expressed through the categories of Good and Evil” (Daynes 2008: 164). Therefore “the entry of white individuals into Rastafari is an important event, for its black members as well as for its white members, and a paradox that is still a source of conflicts today” (Daynes 2008: 166) – even more though as also non-Rastafaris might have dreadlocks, such as Cory Goldstein. Much of the discussion following the video took place on various internet forums and in newspaper articles. Taiwo Ogunyinka (2016) identifies three reasons for White people to

wear dreadlocks: appreciation of Black culture, which would be misunderstood, fashion, which would show ignorance of significant contemporary history, and to wear them as a symbol of a humanist ideal, which would be the wrong political meaning. Otis Robinson (2018) critiques similarly: “The white body utilising a dreadlock is a cosmetic decision, showing preference to the ability to do ‘whatever we want’ as opposed to showing understanding. The dreadlock is redundant for the Western white identity.” Benjamin Davis (2017) replies, that people are not entirely products of their cultures and that Ogunyinka’s approach would declare it as impossible to ever understand other cultures: “One is reduced to their cultures, automata like, byproducts of cultural domains into which they were born, as being constrained by the background of shared practices (and a shared background intelligibility) that is exclusive to their cultural domain. Worryingly, this has been a longstanding social malady: the Nuremberg Laws, the Eight Banners under the Qing dynasty, the caste system in India, apartheid in South Africa, slavery and racial segregation in the US – all underpinned, to whatever degree, by a rationale that reduces an individual to a particular fixed cultural (or at times racial and social) domain without the epistemic and normative capacity to adopt and assimilate into different cultural domains if they should *choose*.” Kris McDred (2018) wants to settle the feud with his YouTube video mentioning biological and historical arguments why everyone can have dreadlocks.

Coming back to the initial notion of religion, some Rastafarians argue that ethnic background does not matter but spirituality. When I was in Jamaica, a woman asked me, whether my dreadlocks were just fashion or “meaningful” referring to the Rastafari culture, obviously accepting the latter, but not the first. Moving a step further, this argument could be held against Black dreadheads, which are not Rastafari as well.

Addressing the topic, it is useful to look at cultural adaptation in general. It has always occurred in history, so it is nothing extraordinary, specific to dreadlocks. In this process, often new meanings came into being. Therefore, a symbol having a strong meaning can seem to be devaluated by people sharing it for a completely different purpose, which probably happens to a vast number of symbols. The discussion here is even more sensitive, as an underprivileged group claimed dreadlocks as an identity marker and now feels deprived of it – so a fundamental root of the discussion is not the adaptation but a huge inequality as a polit-

1 Cf. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AaPYVOne64>> and <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQSJnE1dmG4>>

ical dimension. Yet from another perspective one could argue that dreadlocks themselves have a democratising potential.

The Equality Hairstyle?

“The gender blending of long hair on both sexes was a clear sign of disorder, anti-capitalist, military draft-dodging, and sexually-liberated leanings. When the musical ‘Hair’ played in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1970, conservatives picketed the theater with signs reading ‘God Hates Hair’” (Duncan 2013: 158). So, do dreadlocks have a democratising ability? “You Can’t Tell the Girls from the Boys” titles one chapter in Luther-Hillman’s book “Dressing for the Culture Wars” (2015). The gender blending featuring long-haired men is nothing new nowadays. But in dreadlocks, labelled as “androgynous hairstyle” (Binias 2018) in a blog article, there might be more dimensions, as men and women, people of any age, and any so-called “ethnic” background can wear it, there is no inherent exclusivity to it.

However, when looking closer at it, segregation aspects become discernible: As any in-group, the dread community constitutes itself by looking at out-groups, even though – as mentioned before – dread enthusiasts, which do not have any dreadlocks themselves, usually are allowed to join their social media groups. It is more obvious in daily life, that as a dreadhead one would greet or smile at each other even if one does not know the other person. Moreover, within the group of dreadlocked people some gender-markers are apparent. Men often wear their dreads thicker and with closed ends, women often prefer thinner dreads and want their ends often to be open. In some cases, women start dreadlocks with the main intention to thicken their hair rather than to become a dreadhead, thus having very long open ends.

Discussions about the number of dreads, their look, the years, people have grown them, their development, and the general expertise might create some hierarchy, but in general the groups in social media indicate a rather inclusive behaviour towards any enthusiast. Yet there are smaller groups dedicated to purely natural dreads and some dread stylists who would not work with extensions. In most groups, from time to time, comments on “isn’t it strange/disgusting to have extensions” appear, slightly devaluating these with extensions.

When it comes to political aspects in the narrower sense, rather few are posted in the observed social media groups. However, the social media

offer groups specifically dedicated to politics, thus, the small number of political statements does not indicate that dreadlock enthusiasts would not be politically involved. In the dreadlocks groups, I noticed some statements showing a positive attitude toward or engagement in the protection of environment, the integration of migrants, and development cooperation which could be interpreted as a moderate left-wing attitude. Further, there is a remarkable number of individuals mentioning that they work in the social field, are vegans, etc. Dreadlocks seem to come as a signifier for certain values.

The Journey

The time during which people have dreadlocks is referred to as the “dreadlock journey,” a term, which already implies a development, a transformation happening over time. Some of the favourite topics in dreadlocks fora are, e.g., how long people have their dreadlocks already, which ups and downs they have gone through, etc. Even though extensions can make it easier to achieve the expected look, the beginning can be hard: Dreading – if not using the despised method – can be painful, can take many hours up to days, and can be expensive as well. Right after having the dreadlocks installed, most people do not yet see the intended result – real dreadlocks – but have to wait for some month until the felting process starts. Fresh dreads might stick to various directions and show a lot of scalp – not a great look at least for some weeks. Further, they might itch, and it can take some time to find routines in sleeping and hair washing. Dreadlocks need time. This is not only true for the “Western” way of wearing dreads but there is also a strong connection to the time passed which is known by the term “retreat hair” (Bogin 2008: 108), thus referring to Hindu/Buddhist monastic practises as well. Dreadlocks thus could be testing the own patience and signify to others a high degree of patience and commitment, traits that might be untypical in postmodern times.

The dreadlock journey usually is not gone alone completely. Apart from eventually having other dreadheads as inspiration, most people need somebody to install and to maintain their dreadlocks. This act of grooming is described as a sensual relationship: “The important thing about grooming is that it creates a relationship between the groomer and the groomed which is directly sensual in nature” (Hershman 1974: 276). If the dread-

locks are not installed by friends, the future dreadhead usually has to find help on the internet, where self-described specialists offer their services. Often, they connect with others in social media. Dreader typically either would come to one's home or do it in their home, which gives it a rather informal, intimate touch. Almost all these specialists wear dreadlocks themselves. The receiving of dreadlocks shows similarities to initiation rites: There is a certain, defined process, which leads from one stage to another and gives way to a new group membership. The designation "dreadhead" – a special term, which does not exist for the vast majority of hairstyles – makes it obvious, that the individual is transferred to a new identity.

Fragmentation

Compared to other social media groups, one aspect is remarkable when looking at the pictures posted there: Most people show their hair, which is best visible from the backside and hence stress a part they usually cannot see themselves, something hidden from themselves. In focus is a body's fragment, its upper backside. A certain fragmentation of the body has been addressed as a metaphor for today's *conditio humana*: "We all are Creoles of sorts: hybrid, divided, polyphonic, and parodic – a pastiche of our Selves. This contemporary body-self is fragmentary, often incoherent and inconsistent, precisely because it arises from contradictory and paradoxical experiences, social tensions, and conflicts that have one thing in common: They are real, that is, experienced. Therefore, the anthropology of the body focuses no longer on the abstract or ideal(ized) body, but on those moments during which the body and bodiliness are questioned and lose their self-evidence and on the experience or threat of finiteness, limitation, transience, and vulnerability" (Van Wolputte 2004: 263). Yet, in our case the fragmentation seems to imply more, as it is characterised by the concentration of the back: The backside is rather unknown to an individual itself and it is said to make a person less identifiable and, thus, is often used to make people anonymous. However, these individuals identify with their backside as it is best showing their peculiarity, their dreadlocks. Following this reasoning there could be an integrative perspective on the body, getting a picture of one's entire body through the focus on the backside. It might lead to a more conscious positioning in the room, considering the back as well. Thus, one

could suppose a more reflective attitude, which suits some of the following aspects.

In Search for the Natural

Hair is locking up if kept natural, if it is not affected by any culture technique. Thus, dreadlocks can be seen as the most natural hairstyle and, therefore, signify a deeper connection to nature. This goes well with the usage of certain petnames which dreadheads give their locks, such as "roots" or "worms," both connected to nature. The appearance can mirror the strong emotional connection to the environment, and the style is quite common for people with strong commitment in this field, e.g., vegans or straight edgers up to activists. Looking at the Environmental Direct Action Group (EDAG) Clare Saunders notes: "For instance, a belief that global capitalism is an underlying source of environmental and social problems tends to encourage certain types of behaviour, such as growing dreadlocks, attending counter-cultural festivals and engaging in direct action, as symbolic identifiers of beliefs. On engaging in these behaviours, beliefs are reinforced" (2008: 241).

Yet in practice, most dreadheads, especially fresh ones and especially those with straight Eurasian hair, require a lot of effort and maintenance. Most people do not just stop combing and end up with nicely sectioned and tightly crocheted dreadlocks after a while. In this way, dreadlocks are a hairstyle like any other, which needs a clear decision, which needs certain steps to achieve it as well as a specific maintenance.

In addition, quite numerous people on social media groups dye their locks, partly with "natural" products such as henna. The colouring includes mere bleaching to achieve an *ombré* look, which reminds on sun-bleached hair, hence on people spending most of their time outside and in so far is an artificial imitation of naturalness – but at the same time can be seen as a subordination to the beauty paradigm of "californication" (Van Wolputte 2004: 264). Some hair colours used create a clearly artificial look, such as shades of blue, bright red, or green. Still some of these unnatural colours are considered as mirroring the style of nature, the green standing for mossy forest grounds, etc. This is especially the case when it comes to the marketing of so-called "accent sets" small-scale businesses offer, sets of artificial dreadlocks made with synthetic material or wool to add colour or to create variety in one's styling

options. A full set of synthetic or wool dreadlocks even allows giving the dread-look a trial without committing to it and changing the colour as often as it pleases. Further, many fresh “real” dreadheads start with extensions either made of synthetic or human hair to add extra length or rather to compensate for the hair length lost during dreading.

So, for most dreadheads their hairstyle is not natural in the sense of “just letting the hair as it is” but can be rather described as an imitation of naturalness. It might stand for the longing for a life in harmony with nature, which corresponds with “the staging of the realness” (Kautt 2011: 111) or “staged authenticity” (Venohr 2010: 47, see also Jerrentrup 2018: 62 f.).

Even though the “free formed” dreadlocks – just letting the hair completely unkept – are an exception in the European dreadlock scene, the aspect of – after a while – eventually having little effort with the hair is sometimes stressed, especially in punk subculture. “It was validated as being natural: ‘Having dreads is practical, you never have to wash your hair or comb it, you just cut in front so that you’re able to see what you’re doing’ (Interview, Sweden 2007)” (Hannerz 2013: 58). This attitude has a certain attraction when wanting to set a statement against society’s mainstream with its focus on investing continuously a lot of time and money in one’s appearance. Even though this investing actually might be similar to that of dreadlocks, it *prima facie* gives a different impression.

Wish for Stability, Commitment

Commitment seems to be indispensable when becoming a dreadhead, as this hairstyle usually cannot be changed easily, at least not without a drastic step as cutting off the hair or the very painful, time-consuming, and not always successful act of brushing part of them out. This leads to two assumptions: Individuals getting dreadlocks will think about it before, probably more intensely than before changing to the most other hairstyles, and they do not oppose a certain fixation or might even look for stability. As mentioned earlier, this can be seen in the context of identity. Many dreadheads show more permanent commitments; among them those visible features as tattoos or piercings, as well as lifestyle characteristics such as committing to a vegetarian, vegan, or straight edge style. The fixation might be interpreted as a statement to today’s blurring of boundaries and the need for

flexibility required by nowadays’ job and private life, to the speed in which identities can be reinvented and transformed (see Elliott 2016: 73).

However, there is a significant amount of posts on the social media groups about the end of people’s dreadlock journeys, indicating numerous reasons for this decision, ranging from medical problems, such as neurodermatitis, medical necessities such as EEGs to job issues, or the mere wish for a change. The cut locks are often kept and with them the option to use them as extensions for a later reinstallation. Once more an opposition can be found, i.e., the strong aspect of commitment and the ways to bypass it.

Resistance and Rebellion

A certain radicalism and the search for the natural might seem as two opposing poles, but both still can be attributed to dreadlocks (see Hannerz 2013: 58). “In western societies purposive body alteration has been, and continues to be, primarily a mechanism for demonstrating one’s disaffection from the mainstream. Tattooing, body piercing and, to a lesser degree, body sculpting are employed to proclaim publicly one’s special attachment to deviant groups, certain activities, self-concepts, or primary associates” (Sanders 1989: 2). For dreadlocks, this can be traced back to its origins: In the Rastafari uprising dreading became a “key boundary marker of Rastafarian identity symbolizing defiance against the establishment” (Johnston and Lio 1998: 463, see also Ashe 2015: 42). Also in Tibet, “the importance of ‘not fitting in’” is seen “as one of the defining characteristics of dreadlocks” (Bogin 2008: 109). The same can be said about the hippie culture: “It is impossible to exaggerate how much hair was on display. There was so much hair! The ‘Age of Aquarius’ rolled along on an ocean of hair and beards, ‘long beautiful hair, shining, gleaming, streaming, flaxen, waxen; give me down to there, shoulder length or longer, here baby, there mama everywhere daddy daddy hair. Flow it, show it, long as God can grow it, my hair’” (Duncan 2013: 158).

From a psychoanalytic point of view, dreadlocks can be seen in context with a violation of society’s values, as celebrating unrestrained sexuality. “An astonishingly high proportion of the ethnographic evidence fits the following pattern in quite obvious ways. In ritual situations: long hair = unrestrained sexuality; short hair or tightly bound hair = restricted sexuality; close shaven hair = celibacy” (Leach 1958: 154). Even if this con-

nection might not be very obvious in many “Western” societies nowadays, the association of “wild” and “unrestrained” still includes a subversive element. As “the profane world is an ordered universe where boundaries are clear and hair, like people, can be properly kept in place” (Hershman 1974: 290) dreadlocks became an “‘in your face’ form(s) of overt resistance” (Williams 2009: 28). This can be shown, e.g., when looking at advertisements connected to hair, which are all about “healthy,” “strong,” “shiny” hair, about “untangling.” Dreadlocks are just the opposite. The exact wording might vary, but dreadlock specialists tell that “damaged” hair is best for the style, that dreading means “destroying” the hair in a certain way and, therefore, violating the common beauty standard. As such, it can be seen as a self-stigmatisation (see Leistner 2017: 282), which comes close to an informal political resistance (see Weitz 2001: 668) or at least make a statement about its wearer’s independence. Dreadlocks have become a declaration of determination to succeed in life on his own terms (see Arac de Nyeko 2018).

Still it has to be mentioned that many dreadheads working in the social or artistic field, at least in Germany, do not need to worry too much about the job market, as in these sectors the hairstyle is more common and more widely accepted than, e.g., in the financial sector. Therefore, if considered as a visual statement, it is likely to encounter consent or indifference. The connection to rebellion and resistance seems to be opposed to common attitudes among the dread enthusiasts, such as a moderate left-wing, social mindset, which instead of radicalism rather includes a stress on peace and harmony.

A Perfect Way to Be Imperfect

Once more I would like to address the initially asked beauty question: Can dreadlocks be beautiful? It can be considered as common sense, that there are some biologically determined universals, which take different manifestations in different cultures. The dreadlock case shows how cultural aspects can cover biology and, within a culture, completely change the notions of beauty, as well as how a more abstract and less body-centered notion of beauty comes into play, which purposely distances itself from the focus of mere physical beauty. If not looking at synthetic dreadlocks, the style probably would never be “perfect,” even with a great effort regarding maintenance. Any-

way, right after maintenance, as well as after installing, the dreadhead often does not look the way it is supposed to look, but has to wait for the hair to grow a little, has to wait for the imperfection to make the style perfect in its own terms. Moreover, dreadlocks are relatively unpredictable. When the felting process starts, one does not know beforehand, whether the deadlocks would form loops, would tighten a lot, etc. It reminds on the statement that dreadlocks are not a linear hairstyle and, therefore, might be considered as a postmodern, in many ways contradictory hairstyle. It is one’s own choice, needing thoughtful decision and commitment, yet there are ways to undermine the latter. It builds on various cultures and can be regarded as a very basic hairstyle not “belonging” to any tradition in particular. It is often regarded as strongly connected to nature, yet in practice turns out more as an imitation of naturalness and, therefore, more “artificial” as many other styles. It can stand for rebellion and resistance, but can be seen as signifying peace and harmony as well. It can be the base of what people consider as their identity and at the same time superficial, and, thus should not be taken too seriously. Dreadlocks seem to be a contradictory style and therefore demand the ability of coping with cognitive dissonance. As such, it might be the most postmodern hairstyle.

When I asked my dreader, who had his dreadlocks for more than 10 years and lives on doing and maintaining the hairstyle for others, what would happen if his dreadlocks would be ruined or fall off one day, he answered in a laissez-faire attitude: “No worries – after all, it is just hair.”

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Appendix

Foto 1: Annika und Dennis



Foto 2: Daniela



Foto 3: Elisa



Foto 4: Jamaica

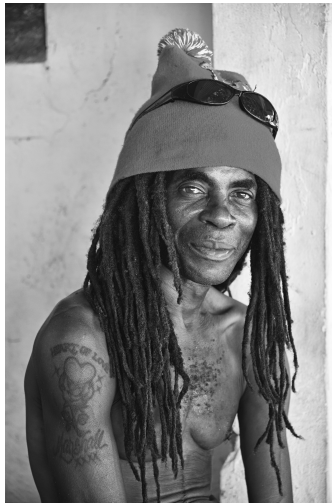


Foto 5: Jamaica

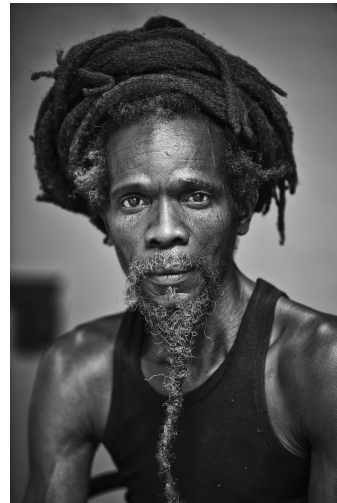


Foto 6: Jamaica



Foto 7: Jamaica

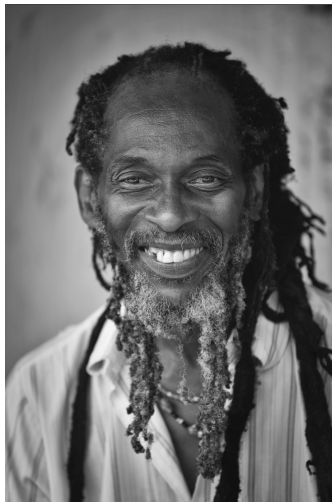


Foto 8: Jamaica



Foto 9: Jamaica