Nation building, social identity and television in a changing media landscape

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Historically, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) played an important role in both constructing and supporting the apartheid structures of pre-1991 South Africa. In the 1980s the SABC explicitly supported the then government in its effort to combat the 'Total Onslaught' of revolutionary forces, seen to be spearheaded by the ANC in exile (Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1996). With the general transformation of South African political imperatives, being the voice of the government was no longer an option – it was a liability. From January 1991 began a process of restructuring, in which pragmatism, rather than propaganda, became the dominant ethos.

The structural change was in part a result of a prolonged campaign to 'free the airwaves', which culminated in the establishment of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). This statutory body was a council established to operate independently of government and commercial influences, with the mandate of regulating broadcasting activities in the public interest.

It was charged with promoting diversity in a range of sound and television broadcasting services on national, regional and local levels. Of particular note in this regard, the IBA was charged with ensuring that broadcasting services, when viewed collectively, should 'develop and protect a national and regional identity, culture and character' (IBA Act, October 1993, Section 2(c)).

One of the first tasks of the IBA was to carry out a 'Triple Enquiry', which would cover the protection and viability of the public broadcast services, cross-media control of broadcasting services, and locally-produced television content. The Report was released in September 1995.

After an extensive process of public nominations and hearings, the election of the new Board of Directors of the SABC, announced in May 1993, can be seen as the point heralding the 'new' broadcast environment. In line with the social, economic and political changes taking place within the country as a whole, the SABC was in the vanguard of visible change. To this end, much creative energy was expended on nego-

tiating a new 'Vision and Values' framework which would act as the blueprint for the task of transforming a former *state* broadcaster into a fully fledged *public* broadcaster. Summarised briefly, this vision was:

> a commitment to deliver full-spectrum services to all South Africans, in all parts of the country, and in each of the eleven official languages. Their programme content is aimed at protecting and nurturing South African culture and creativity, and reflecting the reality of South Africa to itself, and to the world, South Africa from a distinctly South African perspective.
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> SABC 1996, p. 2

The most visible evidence of the SABC's new approach has been the reconfiguration of television channels. Prior to this repositioning, television in South Africa served the interests of the middle classes only: predominantly, white, 'coloured' and Indian, with an increasingly large percentage of black[1] people falling into this category.

The aim of the 're-launch', which took place in February 1996, was precisely to move closer to delivering public broadcasting by providing more of the country's eleven official languages, as well as ensuring that the seven which were already broadcast, did so with greater equity. The SABC television service has three channels at its disposal: SABC1, with the largest footprint, or signal distribution network, broadcasts programming in the Nguni family of languages, that is isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele and isiSwati, during peak hours, filling in the morning and afternoon schedules in a mixture of these languages interspersed with English. Similarly, SABC2, with a strong signal network in the northern part of the country, uses the Sotho language family, that is SeTswana and SeSotho, during peak viewing time; while SABC3, the smallest signal footprint covering predominantly urban areas, broadcasts only in English. Smaller language communities, for example, Tsivenda and Xitsonga, are provided for only sporadically through windows of breakaway programming.

The various languages are scheduled in blocks in order to provide a continuity for viewers: for example, on SABC2, the main News bulletin on a Tuesday evening will be in Zulu, preceded by a Zulu-language game show, and followed by a Zulu-language drama. The predominance of English in the schedules is premised on the notion of English as a core language, understood as the second language choice of most South Africans, and more practically, on the wide and inexpensive availability of English-language programming on the international market.

While much of the transformation work was aimed at television, in radio too, substantial changes needed to be implemented, most notably the upgrading of the African language channels, and the extension and improvement of the news division. In order to put into effect such an ambitious plan, the mandate of the SABC was stretched considerably. Among other projects, the following targets were aimed for:

- extension of language services towards full equity on television
- increase in local content programming
- extension of TV footprint to reach all potential viewers
- introduction of regional television slots in all provinces
- equity and universal access to religious programming
- provision of curriculum based education on both radio and television
- upgrading of the African language radio services.

The Broadcasting Bill 1998

The Green Paper[2] identified a number of alternative models for the structuring of the SABC. The most crucial finding of the consultative process surrounding the Green Paper was the realisation that any restructuring of the SABC would have to take account of the realities of the commercial market place in which the SABC found itself. Two issues were foremost in the collective mind of the drafters:

- the SABC should maintain its financial viability
- in doing so, the commercial activities of the SABC should not threaten other commercial broadcasters through the massive advantage of belonging to a national corporation with a huge economy of scale, particularly in the marketing of advertising time.

The Broadcast Bill presented to Parliament for enactment on 3 November 1998[3] replaced the Broadcast Act of 1976. This is the first South African broadcasting legislation explicitly to take account of three separate arms of the broadcasting: public service; commercial and community, across various means of signal distribution: radio and television, both terrestrial and satellite. In doing so, the Bill took account of the provisions of the IBA Act of 1993.

In some respects the Bill also curtails the powers of the IBA, since it was the government's position that the IBA's powers should be curtailed. As a regulatory, rather than a legislative body, the IBA should be responsible for the monitoring and enforcement of broadcast policy within the industry, rather than its formulation.

In terms of public service broadcasting per se, the Bill's most important contribution is to set up a Charter for the SABC, another first in South African broadcasting legislation, bringing it into line with other public services, particularly those in the commonwealth countries, such as Britain (BBC); Australia (ABC) and Canada (CBC).

Structurally, the Bill makes provision for the division, or corporatization, of the SABC into two arms: the 'public commercial arm' and the 'public service arm'. It is anticipated that there will be four radio stations and one television channel presently

operated by the SABC, along with merchandising, programme sales and other commercial activities relating to those services. The thinking behind the legislation has been in keeping with the world-wide trend towards deregulation, which has seen the opening up and liberalisation of public service enterprises, from power provision through to national airlines.

Funding for the public service arm will still come from licence fees, grants, advertising and sponsorship. The public broadcasting arm of the SABC will be required to report to the Minister from time to time on the profile of its revenues. The purpose of separation is to ensure that the commercial activities of the SABC do not enjoy an unfair advantage over other commercial broadcasters – a fear that had been vociferously expressed by some broadcasters prior to the passing of the act, in the consultation stage of the legislation process.

It is envisaged that the commercial arm of the SABC will become a Section 21 company, which will allow it to trade on the stock exchange, undertake the acquisitions, co-productions and sales necessary to be a fully-fledged commercial enterprise. Profits from this arm will be used to cross subsidise the public service mandate. The predominant form of revenue for the commercial arm of the SABC will be sourced from the sale of audiences to advertisers. The commercial arm of the SABC will be expected to conduct itself in a fully commercial fashion and provide dividend payments to the portfolio Minister (of Broadcasting and Telecommunications).

Reallocation of these dividends to the public arm of the SABC will be in the hands of the Minister. Any surplus will be paid into the Nation Revenue Fund (the general Fiscus), This provision is a cause for concern among some critics, who counter that apart from the fact that under this scheme, the identified revenue mix is too unstable, making it difficult for the public service sector to plan ahead, the corporatization arrangement seriously compromises autonomy.

If the commercial arm is to return a dividend to the Fiscus, there is no guarantee that the money will find its way back into the public service arm: in fact, given current budgetary constraints, especially for the social services, it may well not ... open the door for political manipulation of the PBS arm through financial control.[4]

This criticism hits not only at the business objectives of the business of broadcasting, but takes seriously the compromising possibilities of interlocking between financial vulnerability and political interference. Independence from the government of the day is a vital component of the legitimacy of any broadcaster, a theme I will return to at the end of this paper. In this respect, the London-based campaigners for human rights in the media sector, *Article 19*, conclude in their research on the organisation and funding of public broadcasters that 'it remains our view that adequate public funding should remain the rule for public broadcasting'.[5]

Challenges facing public service broadcasting

The now classic version of public service broadcasting is an essentially modernist one. It incorporates all the optimistic hope of rational discourse and the firm belief in the edifying and uplifting potentials of broadcasting as a conveyer of 'culture'. It is also indicative of colonial belief in upliftment. This is despite the very limited view of who constitutes 'the people' broadcasting was to serve, an understanding which in the South African case was confined to white, English speakers, and only grudgingly extended to white Afrikaans speakers.

Public broadcasting was premised on the understanding that the broadcasting spectrum is limited, and belongs to the nation. The government, while it may act as the guardian of the nation-state, should be kept at arm's length from the day to day operations of the broadcaster. Broadcasting, in this view, is a public good belonging to the whole nation, not to be exploited for private or sectarian gain of either a monetary or ideological kind. Conceptually the appropriate place for the broadcaster is the public sphere (Habermas 1989; Calhoun 1992; Garnham 1993; Thompson 1993).

From its inception, politically and commercially powerful sectors of society expected public service broadcasting to accomplish an important democratic and cultural mission. It was given the task of providing the entire population with information, education and quality entertainment. For both economic and ideological reasons, the tasks implied in this mandate could only be performed by a state-regulated monopoly – i.e. public broadcasting services. This was the rationale which governed public service broadcasting until the early 1980s. From that period, the global media landscape underwent fundamental changes. National broadcasting systems were deregulated, or rather re-regulated, private providers were admitted to the market and the state facilitated and promoted the development of the technological infrastructure, and was occasionally involved in its operation. All these developments jeopardised, or at least undermined, the economic and political system under which public broadcasting presently operates. In the South African situation, the main issues we can identify here can be summarised under three strands:

- the end of the monopolisation of the media environment by the SABC, through the largescale introduction of competition and deregulation
- the developmental imperative for the provision of information, education and entertainment to those sectors of society which are economically non-profitable
- the economic decline of the pre-eminence of the nation-state as the primary economic structure, with the concomitant issues involved in the rise in nationalism and cultural identity.

In this paper, I will survey these trends briefly, paying particular attention to the broadcaster's implication in the rise of a South African nationalism through the promotion of the 'African Renaissance' and inclusion of local content programming on television.

Recent trends in media industries

Throughout the world, media industries are undergoing major changes both at the level of technology as well as at the level of political economy. Most obvious have been the twin processes of technological advancement – explosion would not be an exaggeration – together with the trend towards deregulation and corporatisation. New technological opportunities imply a nearly limitless spectrum capacity. Since the original notion of broadcasting as a national asset was premised, in part, on the argument of the scarcity of the spectrum, the new spectrum abundance brings into question the right of the nation-state to continue to regulate broadcasting as tightly as previously, and makes the idea of the monopolistic public service broadcaster a total anachronism. The advances in digital transmission, satellite technologies and broadcasting through the Internet have changed the face of broadcasting forever.

The international movement towards *deregulation*, or rather *re-regulation*, through the opening of opportunities to new market entrants, which has characterised the ideological perspective of the post-cold war era, has impacted on South Africa to a notable extent. In 1996, the SABC was close to a monopoly, with three television channels, twenty-two domestic radio services, and the effective control of *Channel Africa*, the external broadcast channel of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Only M-Net, the encrypted subscription television channel (which includes a two hour unencrypted 'open window') provided television competition. Two regional commercial radio stations – Capital Radio in Durban, and Radio 702 in the Witwatersrand (now Gauteng) area, broadcast on medium wave as opposed to the SABC's stronger and clearer FM services.

In 1998, the position is vastly different. As a consequence of the Triple Enquiry undertaken by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), a recommendation was made to Parliament that the SABC divest itself of its regional commercial radio stations in order to hasten the establishment of a competitive broadcasting environment in the country. The move was seen as the first round of privatisation of state assets in the New South Africa. Six of the most lucrative regional radio stations were sold at the behest of the IBA in 1996, and the money transferred directly to state coffers.[6] A further eight 'greenfields licences' (i.e. licences without existing stations attached to them) are in the process of being allocated by the IBA. M-Net developed *Supersport*, a second channel dedicated to sports programming; satellite broadcasting is a reality under the auspices of DSTV, another subsidiary of the M-Net stable; and in

October 1998 the first free-to-air television channel began broadcasting. Monopoly is a thing of the past. The growth of *media technologies* and *convergence* which threaten the pre-eminence of the public broadcaster as the chief articulator of the nation-state must be seen in conjunction with a growing *concentration* of resources within media industries, which occurs at the same time as the contrary process of fracturing and *diversification*. Industries based in one sector of the economy spread their investments, and their risks, not only into horizontally and vertically integrated activities, thereby expanding into areas which are traditionally outside their core business. At the same time, there is evidence of a dialectical process of decentralisation and de-diversification, as huge conglomerates disentangle their various components in the understanding that economic efficiency demands meticulous attention to specific tasks. All the above takes place against a tendency towards *globalisation*, set against the antithetical processes of localisation and the rise of the politics of identity.

Public Service Broadcasting and the universal provision of programming

What purpose does public service broadcasting serve? This simple question has been the subject of a great deal of argument, debate and deliberation over the past six years in South Africa, and indeed in every country in which there has been a strong tradition of public broadcasting. As a point of departure, I take the purpose of public service broadcasting to be the provision of a universal service of excellent programming, while maintaining public legitimacy through an editorial independence from both the government of the day and rampant commercial interests.

By 'universal' I mean programming which covers a full range of genres, from information through to education and entertainment, for the widest possible audiences, over the greatest possible geographical coverage. The early McBride reports on the New World Information Order stressed the understanding of cultural rights as human rights. Culture, education and the provision of information were seen as basic human rights, alongside and equal to, the material rights of food, water, health and housing. These informational 'needs' have to be provided as social goods – and not simply as commercial commodities. This debate has been revived by the recent publication of the UNESCO report 'Our Cultural Diversity', which stresses the intimate connection between culture and development (UNESCO 1996, p. 24).

One of the most important indicators of the difficulties inherent in fulfilling the public service mandate has been in the provision of *universal service*. Both in terms of complete geographic coverage of the country, as well as in terms of programme type and language, universal service largely has been a myth. In the case of South Africa, for instance, the issue of language on radio must serve as exemplary.

Reith's understanding of 'the people' was confined to those people who spoke

English, and in this vein, initially only English language radio was set up. By the late 1930s, an hour of Afrikaans was introduced, becoming a separate, but not equal station in the 1940s, aptly labelled the 'B service'. In similar fashion, 'Bantu language' radio programmes were introduced in the 1950s. With the technical advances made possible by the introduction of FM, the now infamous 'Radio Bantu' became a set of fully-fledged array of stations mirroring and contributing to the apartheid grand narrative of separate nations, speaking separate languages, and living in separate areas of the country.

Arguing for the protection of cultural educational and social value broadcasting, or what Jay Blumer (1992) has eloquently referred to as 'vulnerable values', is not the same as distinguishing between needs and wants. Put in those terms, 'wants' are thought of as the legitimate desires of the audiences, signalled through the two mechanisms of *audience research* - that is, ratings which signal audience preferences and appreciation indices, and measure off the intensity of those preferences – and *the market* – that is, consumer support for encrypted or encoded channels. In the same framework, 'needs' are envisaged as the paternalistic response of whose who know best - a top-down approach compared with the more participatory approach of 'wants' (White 1984).

There is enormous competition to provide information goods to those who can pay for them, or those whose economic status defines them as attractive audiences to advertisers. This affects the ability of the public broadcaster to provide some categories of programming which may be seen to be in the public interest. The issues of programming for the very young; curriculum-based education; the elderly and disabled, including close-caption broadcasting or sign-language inserts for the deaf; as well as minority language and cultural groups; readily come to mind here. But broadcasting is big business commanding big capital outlay, and nowhere is this more evident than in the question of sports rights. When these rights involve national teams, they are seen by many as national assets and not only as a right of the privileged few.

Nationalism and nation building

Social solidarity is reinforced when consumers share the same cultural and informational environment. John Reith, the first Director General of the BBC and the father of public service broadcasting, opined in 1925 that 'public service broadcasting should act as a national service. It should act as a powerful means of social unity, binding together groups, regions and classes through the live relaying of national events' (cited in Keane 1996, p. 33). He argued that this is best achieved when audiences share common cultural resources, and are subjected to a monopoly provider of a single service.

Although the ideal of a universal single-channel environment is now an anachro-

nism, nation-building continues to be an over-riding consideration with many public service broadcasters, not least the SABC, as is evidenced by the Corporation's *Guidelines for Programme Content*:

> In a multi-cultural society, the SABC needs to ensure not only that the diversity is reflected, but that it is reflected positively ... Programmes should contribute to a sense of nation building and should not in any way disparage the lifestyle or belief systems of any specific cultural group or in any way attack the integrity of such a group, unless it is established to be in the public interest. However, the news and beliefs of different groups are obviously open to honest, thoughtful scrutiny in programmes like documentaries.
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> SABC 1996b, p. 10

These sentiments are repeated so frequently, and have become so entirely self-evident, that they have now become a canon of common sense assumptions. Therefore, it is worth critically reconsidering the concept of 'nation building', and the part that television, and especially programming broadcasts by the SABC, plays in this process.

'A powerful means of social unity'

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1983) reminds us that 'the Nation' is an abstraction , a construct of the imagination. It is a community which is imagined as both sovereign and limited. In his view, 'the nation' emerges when the realm of the church and dynasty recede, and no longer seem to answer to mankind's craving for immortality. The nation, with its promise of identification with history, enables people to surpass the finality of death and eradication. The need to create a view of the nation arises most profoundly in periods of distinct social stress: when new developments within, or pressures from outside, undermine a sense of continuity, then most strikingly, is there a 'need for "ethnic revival"' (Smith 1986, p. 17).

The need for the consolidation of national identity is keenly felt in developing countries, and the role of the mass media rightly has been foregrounded in this debate. Media provides the self-image of a society. In their exposition of 'bardic television', John Fiske and John Hartley (1978, p. 86) note that

> the bardic mediator occupies the centre of its culture: television is one of the most highly centralised institutions in modern society. This is not only the result of commercial monopoly or government control, it is also a response to the culture's felt need for a common centre, to which the television message always refers. It's centralisation speaks to all members of a highly fragmented society.

In somewhat more colourful language, Colin Morris (cited in Tusa 1992), one-time documentary commissioner for the BBC, makes a similar point:

> In the Book of Genesis, it is God who brings order out of chaos; in the modern world, television journalists have to make a stab at doing it. They subdue into harmony a mountain of telex printouts, miles of video tape and a pandemonium of ringing telephones. They organise into a coherent picture, a riot of impressions, a chaos of events, a bedlam of attitudes and opinions that would otherwise send us scurrying to the hills in panic. And they have to construct this world view at lightning speed, in a welter of instant judgements. Not for them the luxury afforded to philosophers of earlier ages who could reflect at leisure on the fitness of things. Aristotle had no six o'clock deadline to meet.

Nations are created in the historical and sociological imagination through identification with generalised communal heroes set in equally generalised, but dramatised, locations and times. Eric Hobshawm (1983, pp. 13–14) regards 'that comparative recent historical innovation, the "nation" with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest' as closely bound up with 'invented traditions' which are 'exercises in social engineering ... often deliberate and always innovative'.

Anthony Smith (1992, p. 68) points to the 'instrumentalist' conception of nation-construction, in which nationalism is 'an instrument of legitimation and mobilisation, through which leaders and elites stir up mass support for their competitive power struggle. Elsewhere, he notes that central to all modern ethnic mythology is the idea of linear development:

> Communities exist in nature, as it were, and obey the same laws of birth, growth, maturation and decline - and rebirth. The development is linear rather than cyclical, because the period of decline is regarded as 'unnatural', a matter of 'betrayal' from within, or 'subjugation' and decay from without.
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> Smith 1986, p. 191

Smith suggests that in recounting the history of nations, both historicist intellectuals and political commentators fail to conform to later canons of historiography and scientific method; indeed, objectivity is not their main concern. Their aim is to retain the 'past', in such a way as to 'explain' the lot of their community and prescribe remedies for its ills.

Typically, such national mythologies devolve into a series of motifs or elements and commonly follow a set pattern:

1   A myth of origins in time; i.e. When the community was 'born'.
2   A myth of origins in space; i.e. Where the community was 'born'.
3   A myth of ancestry; i.e. Who bore us, and how we descended from him/her
4   A myth of migration; i.e. Wither we wandered.
5   A myth of liberation; i.e. How we were freed.
6   A myth of the golden age; i.e. How we became great and heroic.
7   A myth of decline; i.e. How we decayed and were conquered/exiled.
8   A myth of rebirth; i.e. How we shall be restored to our former glory.

Apart from the second and perhaps the fourth motif, all these elements require the mediation and inspiration of superhuman agents, or 'heroes' to be either present or to have been taken forcibly out of the narrative. Although ostensibly the story of a 'community', the narrative requires human and superhuman agency to bring it to fruition. The legends are to be personalised: they are the stuff of drama. These dramas, in turn, are often elaborate 'reconstructions of the communal past, mixing genuine scholarship with fantasy ... legend with objectively recorded data, in the service of an ethic of regeneration' (Smith 1986: 191).

Nations learn to 'know' these people, these events and myths, through what Anderson (1983, p. 49) calls the 'technology of print capitalism'. The rise of printed literature and the press made it possible to 'narrate' the nation and to imaginatively 'construct' it. All the more powerful is the rise of radio and television culture, which has allowed national leaders unimpeded access to their constituencies, while at the same time providing a fertile ground for the re-articulation of stories, mythologies and romances of the past. Nostalgia for the past, especially the ethnic past of 'one's own' people has indeed been a feature of society in all ages and continents. As Walker Connor (1992, p. 50) reminds us, 'nationalism is a mass phenomenon' and what exemplifies the phenomenon of massification better than the electronic media?

'In dying we are born again'

In one of the clearest examples of the remembering of a golden age, and rebirth and restoration to former glory, come the mythologies which make up the 'African Renaissance'. The SABC has taken it upon itself, as part of its Vision and Values, to promote the African Renaissance with missionary zeal. In fact, they have gone beyond the narrow ambition of nation building, and in the spirit of global (or at least supra-regional) enterprises, have taken on the challenge of spiritually revitalising the entire continent: 'As a nation builder, the SABC is committed not only to our country, but to the rebirth of the whole continent'. This disclaimer echoes the words of an SABC spokesperson:

> The SABC has a major role as nation builder in our own country, and being the
> 'pulse of Africa's Creative Spirit' we have a responsibility to spread the African
> Renaissance message to all corners of the continent.[7]

The occasion of the statement was the pre-publicity for a banquet hosted by the SABC
at which Deputy President Thabo Mbeki delivered his 'African Renaissance' address.
The event was televised lived on SABC2 for the full period of 2 hours, and by satellite
to the rest of the continent. Similarly, a theatrical production entitled, tellingly, *An
African Dream*, 'examines Africa, past and present historical epochs, in a quest to find
those values and experiences that imperatively facilitate a smooth transcendence into
the Renaissance'. The communiqué goes on to tell us that 'the play illustrates the
history of the values embroidered in Africa's quest to realise a vision that will usher in
a new beginning and rebirth of the African soul.'

Thus, in the most unambiguous terms, the SABC has associated itself with the
process of mythology-building. Not only in its celebrations and the provision of a
platform on which national leaders are able to articulate their vision of the African
Renaissance, but also through the everyday programming. Most notable, in this regard,
is both the sheer amount, as well as the thematic content, of local drama productions.
In the following section, I look at the *context* of local content production, examine the
amount and patterning of local productions, both drama and news, and finally, end
with some remarks on the themes carried in local television series.

Local is lekker[8]

The Triple Enquiry Report of the IBA laid a considerable emphasis on local content
programming in South Africa, and imposed significant quotas on the public broad-
caster.

> Through local music, and through locally produced, entertaining, informative
> and educational programming, produced by a wide range of South African
> producers, television and radio will make a vital contribution to democracy,
> nation-building and development in South Africa.
> Local quotas will protect and develop our national culture, character and iden-
> tity, and will address needs and extend choice for the public and will enable
> growth and development in the South African industry.
>
> IBA 1995

The regulations seem to address two separate, but interlinking goals:

- the ideological, directed towards the purposes of building a nation and an identity
- the economic, direct towards the development of a film, television and recording industry.

<div align="right">Simons 1998, p. 22</div>

In this paper, I will interrogate only the first, leaving the second for another occasion. The IBA argue that South Africa, as a nation with diverse cultures and languages, has not sufficiently seen itself reflected on the country's television screens (IBA 1995, p. 134). Fears of imported foreign programming over-running the national culture and identity of nations are commonly expressed, and even more so in a deregulated, multi-channel environment of satellite and cable, which is able to offer a myriad of programmes simultaneously. This, of course, is the case throughout the world, where the great bulk of television programming is procured from the cheapest possible source – mostly in English, and typically from the United States. The latter country has enjoyed a 'first mover advantage', allowing it to dominate the global audio-visual market. In the United States, the domestic broadcasting sector is structured on a private basis, with networks related to a tangle of stations and affiliates. This allows for great economies of scale, since the cost of production is recovered in the primary, domestic market, and copies can be sold into the foreign market at a far lower price than the original. Michael Ward (1997) reflects that in the audio-visual industry, unlike almost any other industry, it is far more expensive to produce a television or radio programme, a compact disk or film than it is to copy it. Thus, it is always cheaper – indeed up to thirty times cheaper – for a broad-caster to buy a programme than to produce it for themselves.

Local content programming, particularly when it includes a high proportion of drama, documentary and sport, is an enormously expensive enterprise, as any national broad-caster world-wide will testify. Nevertheless, it is essential to the project of protecting national identity and national culture, as well as providing for the diverse language needs of the audience. It is worth noting that a locally produced drama could cost as much as R15 000 a minute (the norm is R8 000) while a drama of the same standard produced abroad, in English, could sell for as little as R600 a minute. Audiences used to exogenous programming, in which the quality is typically very professional, are not prepared to settle for inferior productions, simply on the grounds that they are 'local'. One way around this dilemma is the large-scale use of dubbing into a local language. An added advantage of dubbing is that the original imported soundtrack can be 'simulcast' on another audio channel – either through the television set, or synchronised on radio.

As a means of achieving its policy goals, the IBA was able to prescribe specific conditions regarding programming, including the broadcasting of local programming

both during the daily schedules and at prime time. Different quotas were set for the commercial channels, since it was argued that the SABC had to carry higher local content obligations to meet its specific mandate as a public broadcaster. A median of 50% of local content was set for the SABC, to be complied with over three years.[9] In subsequent modifications the level was adjusted to 30%, to be complied with over five years.

The IBA reports to Parliament through the Department of Broadcasting, Posts and Telecommunication. But that is not the only government department with an interest in broadcasting, and more specifically, with the broadcasting of local content. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology hosted a two day seminar in 1997 in order to explore the question. Its interest in local content stems from its responsibility for ensuring that all South Africa agencies, including the broadcasters, consider the cultural implications of their policies (Mtshali 1995, p. 5).

In this regard, the Department has been active in developing its own position on local content, a position which is unequivocally ideological in its orientation. According to Minister Mtshali, the cultural policy of the department is based on the concept of the African Renaissance referred to above. Within the broader concept of the African Renaissance, suggests Mtshali, lies a notion of what can be called a South African Renaissance; the emergence of a new consciousness and a sense of shared heritage, culture and history, and according to him, local content on television is a prime contributor to this.

The SABC's position towards local content is best reflected in its submission on the question to the IBA (SABC 1994). In 1994, the SABC was prepared to comply with a requirement of 50% broadcast time, or 70% of programme origination budget, whichever was the greater, on local content. A revised submission put the figure at 30%. This commitment was to be phased in over five years. In reality, these levels have not been met to any substantial degree so far. While different sources of statistics differ widely, indications are that the figures are still below the envisaged 30%.[10] The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology quote figures for the years 1992-1997 which vary from 26% to close to 33%.

Yet Media Monitoring Project research done during the year 1994 indicates up to 44% local programming. Figures from the SABC Broadcasting Research Unit (1997) indicate that while the total proportion of local content fell from 40% to 25% directly after the publication of the McKinsey Report, a management audit which advised the considerable down-scaling of production expenditure. While the proportion of local content is climbing slowly, it is still far from the promised 50% optimistically suggested to the IBA in the SABC's 1994 submission.

Table 1   SABC Local Content levels for October 1997 in percentage of broadcast
               minutes

	Local	Imported
SABC1	29,34%	70,66%
SABC2	53,64%	46,38%
SABC3	28,80%	71,20%
TOTAL	37,26%	62,74%

Source: SABC Broadcasting Research Unit 1997.

Not only do figures from different sources tell a slighly different story, but more importantly, local content across the three channels differs widely. From 1994 on, TV1, relaunched as SABC2, popularised with the catch-phrase 'Come Alive with Us', had the highest levels of local television content, and met the revised quota of 30% within the first two years of implementation. However, neither SABC1, branded with the slogan 'Simunye – we are one', which broadcasts predominantly in English and the Nguni Languages (isiZulu and isiXhosa), nor SABC3, an all-English channel catering for a more upwardly mobile audience, and branded as 'Quality Shows', have reached the 30% goal.

News, views and legitimacy

A more intriguing anomaly is the situation in prime time, that is, the hours between 18:00 and 21:30, during which the greatest numbers of viewers are attracted to television, and broadcasters are thus able to charge premium rates on advertising space, is the reverse of normal schedules. During these precious hours, local content is above the 30% mark for all channels. SABC3, with its notoriously low levels of local content overall, is particularly striking. The explanation for this anomaly appears to lie in the amount of news and current affairs programming put out on SABC3 during this time, which raises the local content level substantially.

Table 2   SABC Local Content levels for October 1997 Prime-Time
               (18:00–21:30) in % of broadcast minutes

	Local	Imported
SABC1	59,18%	40,82%
SABC2	68,76%	31,24%
SABC3	24,15%	75,85%
TOTAL	50,70%	49,30%

Source: SABC Broadcasting Research Unit 1997.

The English language *News* of SABC3 features significantly among the top ten most highly rated programmes broadcast during prime time. However, there is a 'double value' in these news programmes: not only are they very popular, and therefore, in a semi-deregulated market very profit programme genres, but they are also prime carriers of legitimacy. The trinity of the public service mandate is to educate, entertain and inform, and as broadcasters internationally have learnt over the past sixty years, information is a highly powerful, as well as profitable, enterprise. Indeed, it can be asserted that *News* is the most important part of the public service mandate. John Fiske (1987, p. 281) notes:

> News is a high-status television genre. Its claimed objectivity and independence from political or government agencies is argued to be essential for the workings of a democracy. Television companies applying for renewal of their licences turn to their news and current affairs programs as evidence of their social responsibility.

In line with this, the SABC increased its daily news bulletins from September 1998 from four to seven a day.[11] However, even if news conveys legitimacy onto the public service broadcaster, this is always measured in terms of its editorial independence. The SABC, particularly, remembering its historically close connections with previous political dispensations, is aware that one of the most significant threats to the ethos of public service broadcasting is the international phenomenon of the loss of legitimacy and credibility in the face of pandering to governments. With the heavy emphasis on nation building, there is always the danger that unbridled Nationalism may disintegrate into unashamed apologies for sectarian interests. Traditionally, public service broadcasters have looked to the legislation to protect them, and maintain a degree of independence from the government of the day. This is a theme to which I will return at the end of this paper.

Television drama and national cultural reconciliation

Although the popular media are frequently commercially driven, there has been an increase in the use of television to promote social change in many parts of the world (Brown 1992). Local content programming not only transfers legitimacy onto the broadcaster, it is popular and attractive to audiences. In the first quarter of 1998, the two most popular programmes in South Africa were the local production, *Suburban Bliss,* which heads the audience appreciation index for adults, and with the international soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful.*[12] In a recent ethnographic reception study, Dorothy Roome (1997, p. 17) investigated audience's responses to two locally produced drama/

sitcom programmes, *Going Up* and *Suburban Bliss*. Her purpose was to evaluate the SABC's success in using humour as a catalyst to transcend the aftermath of apartheid, and in addressing sensitive social and cultural issues which has arisen in the transition to a more inclusive democracy.

Going Up was produced by Penguin Productions, an independent production company with a long history of programme production for the SABC. Set in a law firm in Johannesburg, the series depends on the inversion of a number of well-recognised stereotypical characters, whose good humour, tolerance and teasing illustrate the changes faced by all races and socio-economic groups in the New South Africa. The main characters include Jabulani Cebekulu, a colonial style general factotum; Reginald Cluver, an elderly liberal white lawyer; Edward Tsaba, the black law associate, representing the new black elite in South Africa; and Mrs Jakobs, the 'coloured' secretary, always helpful, always politically correct (she answers the telephone in four languages) and just a little ditzy. Secondary characters include Squeeza, an ex-jazz queen and owner of the black shebeen (informal pub) and Klein Piet Gouws, a lower-working class white Afrikaans-speaking security guard in the foyer of the building. The narrative of each episode is motivated by the introduction of new clients. The producer wanted to produce a series representing a microcosm of the whole of South African society in a series which would bring together music of the 1950s and 1960 rendering the colonial/ apartheid era, and also be reminiscent of what it was like in the days of prohibition, when blacks were not allowed to be served liquor. This harkening back to a golden age of township jazz, shebeens and the whole ambience of the freehold culture of the 1940s and 1950s, is typical of Anthony Smith's typology of mythological national building.

The programme ran for three seasons, and the differences in the direction and ethos over the three years is telling. In the first series, the producers described their aim as one of creating 'a vehicle for a multi-cultural/multi-lingual "melting pot"' to an attempt in the third-year season 'to make people speak and respond to events the way they occur in South Africa'.[13]

Suburban Bliss exploits the situations which arise between a black and white family who are in business together, but fortuitously end up living next door to each other. The characters in *Suburban Bliss* are portrayed in the process of cultural integration. Their ultimate goal is to achieve social mobility (Roome 1996: 2). The concept behind the *Going Up* series was to reach a white viewership, to cross over the divide between different cultural (read 'racial') groups, to provide a greater understanding of the differences and commonalities of all South Africans in the post-election milieu. Since most whites could not understand Zulu, the programme made extensive use of subtitles. Most of the dialogue – nearly two thirds – was in English.

Such programmes would not have been possible even a few years ago. During the apartheid era the SABC had been completely under the control of the government, spreading the ideology of apartheid through both news and narrative. The extent of

the of the SABC control is illustrated by the fate of the forerunner to *Suburban Bliss*, which was refused permission for broadcast. The story involved a coloured doctor living in a white neighbourhood, and hearsay suggests the decision not to air was made at the highest level of government, since in 1987 the Group Areas Act made it illegal for coloureds to live in white neighbourhoods.[14] Similarly, the producers of *Going Up* tried from 1989-90 to persuade the SABC programmers to air the pilot production before the programme was commissioned.

Simunye – we are one

At the outset of this paper, it was pointed out that the mission statement of the SABC included the sentiment that programming content was 'aimed at protecting and nurturing South African culture and creativity, and reflecting the reality of South Africa to itself, and to the world, South Africa from a distinctly South African perspective' (SABC 1996a, p. 2). I have endeavoured to show how, through restructuring and reconfiguration, as well as the increased amount of local content – a process not without its financial and logistical contradictions - the SABC attempted to fulfil this mandate. In doing so, it has consciously aligned itself with the process of the African Renaissance, in attempt to re-find the spirit and values of 'Africanness' through harking back to a past Golden Age with the objective of creating a sense of national solidarity and oneness.

Notes

1   Racial categories are used in this paper not to imply any pejorative distinctions, but to indicate the manner in which the broadcast sector was historically segmented.
2   Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting: 'Green Paper for Public Discussion on Broadcasting Policy', 6 November 1997.
3   Republic of South Africa: 'Broadcasting Bill', introduced to National Assembly in November 1998.
4   FXI *Response to the Broadcast Bill*, September 1998, p. 4.
5   FXI *Response to the Broadcast Bill*, September 1998, p. 2.
6   Radio Oranje in the Free State was sold for R11 million, and East Coast Radio in KwaZulu Natal for R45 million to the New Radio Consortium. Radio Algoa in the Eastern Cape went to Umoya communication for just over R10 million. Highveld Stereo in Gauteng was sold to Newshelf 63, while a sister consortium, Newshelf 71, bought Jacaranda Stereo in the Pretoria region for R70 million. KFM Stereo in the Western Cape was acquired by Crescent Consortium at a price of R65 million.

7 Enoch Sithole, Senior General Manager: Audience Service, in a press release on the African Renaissance Dinner hosted by the SABC, 12 August 1998.

8 A colloquial expression which translates literally as 'local is nice'.

9 In meeting the 50% quota, the IBA established specific minimum quotas for different programme categories, as follows:

Drama	20%
Current Affairs	80%
Documentary and Informal knowledge building	50%
Education Programming	60%
Children's programming	50%

10 The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology quote the following average figures for the years 1992-1997:

1992	32,6%
1993	30,2%
1994	32,8%
1995	29,4%
1996	30,3%
1997	26,3%

Source: Cited by Newman 1997.

The Media Monitoring Project conducted research on local content performance of the SABC, based on two months of programming schedules during 1994. Their findings show a ratio of time devoted to local content versus time devoted to foreign programming as 1:1,28, or 44% local to 56% foreign.

11 Up until September 1998, there were television news bulletins at 07:00, a short headline bulletin at 13:00, a national news bulletin at 18:00, the main news bulletin at 20:00 followed by news headlines at 22:30. Under the new arrangement, short bulletins were added at 10:00 and 16:00, while the lunchtime bulletin was extended to a full service, including live business reportage, together with information and stock prices direct from the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

12 According to an SABC Press Release, 17 April 1998, the ten most popular television programmes in South Africa were:

1	*The Bold and the Beautiful*	SABC1	12.7
2	**Suburban Bliss (English)*	SABC2	12.7
3	**Emzini Weziniswa (Zulu)*	SABC1	12.4
4	**Generations (English/ Multi-lingual)*	SABC1	12.4
5	**Xhosa News (Thursdays)*	SABC1	11.9
6	**Footprints (English)*	SABC1	10.9
7	**Xhosa News (Tuesdays)*	SABC1	10.2
8	**Jam Alley (English)*	SABC1	9.8
9	**Kelebone (Multi-lingual)*	SABC2	9.6

10   *Pacific Blue*   SABC2 9.3

13 Personal interviews with Roberta Durrant, 1995, and Richard Benyon 1996, cited by Roome 1997, p. 69.

14 Personal interview with Carl Fisher, cited in Roome 1996, p. 2.

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Literary studies in post-apartheid South Africa

Johannes A. Smit and Johan van Wyk

Background

With the first non-racial elections in South Africa in 1994, the period of apartheid officially came to an end. Many apartheid attitudes, institutions and structures within institutions established in the apartheid era nevertheless persist. Many South Africans anticipated the end of apartheid though. Some developed blueprints for transformation as early as the late 1970s. During the 1980s, this tendency reached a climax. This double bind of intransigence and radical transformation also affected literary studies.

Apartheid's segregationist institutionalisation of the study of literature within separate language departments was grounded in its view that South Africa consists of a number of nations that should develop as separate independent entities. The alternative view was that South Africa is an integrated society in which people of different language groups and cultures are interdependent economically, politically and socially. The assumption for this view is that South African society is a complex and diverse whole which develops its own identity and a shared culture. The aim was to transform hegemonic and segregationist values and attitudes by strengthening and extending the network of interdependencies and co-operation outside the heterogeneity which served as alibi for apartheid mentalities and segregationist institutionalised power. This, many felt, would eventually lead to a shared dominant culture.

In the period between 1910 – when the Union of South Africa came into being – and 1961 when South Africa became an independent republic, British Imperialism and Afrikaner Nationalism combined to dominate South Africa. The whites-only South African parliament determined policy. In literary studies this meant that in English Departments the focus was mainly on the literature of Britain and the United States, with hardly any attention given to South African literature. In Afrikaans Departments, Afrikaans literature was studied as that of an independent nation. African language literary studies slowly emerged, but were strongly influenced by anthropological, mis-

sionary and linguistic interests and in accordance with the 'homeland' policy of the Apartheid government. Between 1961 and 1976 the situation did not really change much. This is evident in the virtual non-existence – except for a few rare exceptions – of any literary histories of South African English literature or any histories of literatures in the black languages during this period.

In the 1970s, things started to change. The first major political crisis after the Sharpeville riots (1960) was the 1976 Soweto uprising of school children and increased international economic pressure on the apartheid government. This is the period that marks the emergence of a generation of prominent black poets such as Oswald Mtshali, Wally Serote and Sipho Sepamla, as well as the establishment of the journal Staffrider. Anti-apartheid publishing houses such as Ravan Press and Ad Donker that nurtured this new literature also came into being. Theory also came to the fore, particularly Marxism. Marxist scholars emphasised a historical approach to literature, especially in relation to South African working class culture. Scholars such as Tim Couzens and Isabel Hofmeyr made an important contribution in this regard. The interest in black working class culture also had a major impact by focusing attention on oral tradition and oral performance as an important literary form in South Africa.

In Afrikaans literature, authors unified against stricter censorship laws. After his stay in Paris in the late 1940s, the Afrikaans author Jan Rabie broke away from the literary concern with the 'poor white' problem, opening avenues to broader views of international culture and life. This, however, was not heeded by the white apartheid ideologues who won the 1948 election on an apartheid or 'separate development' platform.

Having already scrapped black and coloured voters from the roll during the 1930s and 1940s, the Afrikaner Nationalist Government systematically introduced apartheid legislation during the 1950s and 1960s. With the events around Sharpeville, the popular dissent, organisation against, and resistance to apartheid, became more vocal, visible and pronounced both locally and internationally. Within the Afrikaans writer community, the so-called 'sestigers' - Afrikaans authors from the 1960s - attempted to refract what was becoming a predominantly Afrikaner apartheid system in South Africa. During the 1970s, this changed dramatically when some Afrikaner authors started to write some militantly anti-apartheid novels and poetry, most of which were banned.

Authors such as André P. Brink and Breyten Breytenbach became intensely involved in the struggle against apartheid. When the apartheid government banned Brink's book, Kennis van die aand (the English translation, Looking on darkness, did not suffer the same fate) in 1974, he started to write his books simultaneously in English and Afrikaans. The exiled poet, Breyten Breytenbach, returned to South Africa on an underground mission, was caught and imprisoned for nine years. During the 1970s, the increased militarisation of South African society affected particularly young white male South Africans. Many became part of the End Conscription Campaign.

Events and strategies ranging from the Soweto uprising (1976) through to the development of an anti-apartheid discourse within the black and white English and Afrikaans literary community in reaction to the apartheid government's increased militarisation of society, helped to establish a sense of a common South African destiny beyond apartheid among many South Africans.

In English departments, particularly at postgraduate level, there developed an increased focus on South African English literature. The focus though was often too narrowly on what became the canon of South African writing: J.M. Coetzee, Wally Serote, Roy Campbell, Lady Anne Barnard, Ellen Kuzwayo, Breyten Breytenbach. This narrow focus can be ascribed to the absence of a solid South African English literary history[1].

The University of the Western Cape, under the rectorship of Jakes Gerwel, became the intellectual home of the left. The apartheid government established this university to cater for the 'coloured' people. It has a long history of resistance against apartheid and was an integral part of the struggle by the United Democratic Front. Jakes Gerwel, when he was head of the Afrikaans department, established a Marxist approach to the study of Afrikaans literature. This department increasingly went beyond the confines of Afrikaans literature and incorporated South African English literature on a comparative basis, while unearthing a tradition of Black Afrikaans writing.

The 1980s were a turbulent time at the Black universities in South Africa[2]. Annual boycotts, strikes and pressures for institutional transformation towards greater accountability and democracy marked these campuses. These confusing times also created an opportunity for the changing of departments, the renewal of curricula and syllabi and the establishing of new units. It is in these circumstances that the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages was established. In this context, the aim of this article is to position the Centre and its contributions in terms of the transformation of South African literary studies.

The establishment of the CSSALL

The Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages (CSSALL) was established at the University of Durban-Westville in 1994 - the year in which South Africa became a non-racial democracy. It was established in order to contribute towards the transformation of literary studies from ethnically, culturally and institutionally segregated disciplines each with its own history, to a non-exclusionary multilingual, comparative, intertextual and hybrid discourse. This move was made possible by South Africa's new political reality.

During the apartheid era, there were separate departments for the study of the literature produced in different languages. Afrikaans literary studies were generally housed

in departments of 'Afrikaans en Nederlands' (Dutch). South African English literature was studied as a sub-section of a broader English literature (British, American, Australian, African and West-Indian). Literature in African languages was studied in departments of African languages or in a department carrying the nomenclature of the dominant African language of a region - such as a Zulu department.

The establishment of the Centre was aimed at displacing this institutionalised segregationist mentality. The assumption is that South Africans, although linguistically, ethnically and culturally diverse, belong to one nation with a shared and complex history of exploitation, conflict and (often ironic) co-operation. Although fraught with difference, the Centre contributes to South Africa's always to be constructed unity in the areas of literature and language studies.

The Centre thus researches South African literature from an interlingual, comparative and intertextual point of view. For example, Johan van Wyk, Pieter Conradie and Nik Constandaras compiled an 800 page anthology of South African poetry, doggerel and verse, SA in poësie/ SA in poetry (1988). This volume contains representative poems from different South African languages. Translations accompany the poems in Zulu, Sotho, Tswana and Xhosa. The aim of the anthology was not to collect the most aesthetically pleasing poems in South Africa, but to illustrate through poetry the development of different ideological formations over the last century or more.

After much consultation and planning, the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages was at last established. The aim of developing interdisciplinary and intertextual research into South African literature was achieved through close co-operation with various departments in the Arts Faculty at the University of Durban-Westville, as well as with departments at other Universities. It was recognised that the concept 'South Africa' is arbitrary, having at various times in history had different signifieds. Participants in the planning process also did not want to promote a new South African nationalism. Even so, many of the people participating in the projects of the CSSALL are from a Marxist background and have been involved in various projects deconstructing racist nationalist ideology and the economic exploitation it fostered. The decision to retain the designation, South Africa, is due to the fact that South Africans (despite class, culture and language differences) share a history: a history of conflicts and differences that occurred in one geographical area around what increasingly became a shared, if exploitative, economy.

Postcolonial studies

Postcolonial studies have come into focus in nearly every English and Afrikaans department in South Africa. Studies on autobiography, travel writing and gender in colonial texts are abundant. Studies of colonial literature such as Es'kia Mphahlele's

The Non-European Character in South African English Fiction (later published as The African Image, 1962) date from 1956 and could possibly be identified today as one of the early landmarks of postcolonial studies.

From its inception, the Centre has thus had to deal with questions which were already raised within postcolonial studies. In the early 1990s postcolonial studies came into vogue in South Africa - particularly through texts such as Marie Louise Pratt's (1992) Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, Benedict Anderson's (1983) Imagined Communities and Homi Bhabha's (1990) Nation and Narration. These texts deal with theoretical questions such as:

  — the relationship between nationalism and literature
  — the definition of literature away from imaginative fictional works to include travel writing, biographies and autobiographies, historical and anthropological texts, and specifically African forms such as oral traditions, rock painting, and ritual
  — the impact of writings produced in the frontier societies or contact zones on the systems of western knowledge.

Shared with Anderson and Bhabha is the assumption that nation is a shifting signifier with no essential referent[3]. It is a construct of a newly literate native middle-class or of settlers gone native. The ideological uses of literature by these classes make for interesting analysis from Marxist, poststructuralist and psychoanalytic points of view. This is the case particularly in texts which elaborate a national identity through the use of selective and manipulated historical memory and texts that betray their resistance to and mimicry of the Imperial Centre. A stimulating exploration of these approaches and themes can be found in Isabel Hofmeyr's 'Building a nation of words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902–1924'[4] in Marks and Trapido's (1987) The politics of race, class & nationalism in twentieth century South Africa.

From a focus on nationalism there is a shift to a focus on colonialism and its discursive formations around concepts such as reason, civilisation and progress. The discourses around these concepts informed racial prejudice from the nineteenth century onwards and were essential to the marginalising practices inherent in colonial ideology and western empire discourses.

The CSSALL's multilingual approach to colonial literature is an important element of its research. Participating scholars try as far as possible to relate texts in the various African languages to the context of the whole. The consequence is that heroic[5] and African discursive formations have become more important than they have been in other colonial and postcolonial studies.

In Hesiod's (1979) Works and days, the term 'heroic' refers to one of the stages of history dominated by war and migrations instigated by kings and princes. The early

nineteenth century in South Africa was such a heroic period. It is characterised by the wars of dispersal, or the difaqane, which emanated from the Zulu kingdom, particularly around the figure of Shaka. This period more or less coincided with the Napoleonic wars in Europe which also affected South Africa. When the French revolutionary forces invaded Holland in 1795, the Prince of Orange fled to Britain and the Cape went to British control. This happened after some skirmishes in the Cape between supporters of the French republicanism of the newly established Batavian Republic and the invading British fleet. In 1803 the Cape became part of the Batavian republic but reverted back to British control in 1806 after again being invaded by Britain as part of the war between France and Britain.

Ideologically, the French revolution inspired republicanism particularly amongst the white farming community in South Africa. This eventually became a strong motif behind the Great Trek of frontier farmers into the African interior in 1838. The Napoleonic wars also meant the emigration of large numbers of Europeans to the Cape Colony. The British settlers of 1822 are an example of one such migration.

There is therefore a strong sense of overlap and continuity between the heroic and the colonial. In both formations, war and mass migrations are central. It is the CSSALL's mission to explore this overlap, but also the subtle differences. These differences came about with the disciplining institutions and mapping practices which the Colonial powers brought to the region: the institutions include Christianity (which implied a radical new way of looking at the world when compared to the heroic outlook of the precolonial peoples), education, writing and print, the monogamous family unit, hospitals (a whole new way of conceiving health and illness), labour, the law, prisons and the notion of representational politics. These institutions affected particularly those who sought refuge from the difaqane at the mission stations. These refugees became the first converts, the first literate Africans in the South African region. They were also the first to promote a transtribal panafricanist nationalism based on Western party political organisation. This crystallised with the establishment of the South African Native National Congress in 1912.

The study of boundaries and borders in South African literature, on the other hand, is a fascinating area for postcolonial analysis. The border is a notion introduced by colonialism, particularly as colonial forces tried to demarcate the frontier between what was seen as areas under 'civilised' administration and the Other - that which was still to be conquered, subjected to and included in the empire economy. Another colonial strategy was to map areas in such a way that tribes were split. This meant that tribal lands were geographically divided and governed from different colonial administrative centres or even from different countries. Such a state of affairs contributed to the demise of the authority and power of tribal structures. Ultimately, however, imperialism is also a movement against existing boundaries and borders.

The more recent explosion of the South African economy - since the discovery of

gold and diamonds during the late eighteen hundreds - brought about new developments. It was not only from the various South African 'homelands' that black labour was contracted for work on the mines, on farms and in cities, e.g. Johannesburg. This experience was shared by many – black males in particular – from Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and Mozambique. As a magnet for contract workers, South Africa became to many southern Africans a new imperial centre after the demise of colonialism. This reality made South Africa an important theme in the literatures of these countries. It is therefore difficult to divorce the literature of such countries from South African literature.

Apart from the fixation on boundaries and borders, there is also another tradition concerning borders in South Africa - that of an informal borderless world. In 1915, South African socialists interestingly developed the notion of a borderless world. S.P. Bunting, one of the South African leaders of the Internationalist Socialist League, propagated the idea of a socialist 'frontierless empire' (Roux 1993, p. 22). The many South African authors living in voluntary or forced exile in the twentieth century are further examples of modernist universalism or postmodernist globalism if you will. This highlights the fact that the national story is one constituted by exchanges with the rest of the world.

In his article so far, the focus has been on the context and intertexts which made the establishment of the CSSALL possible. The next three sections treat the Centre's various activities, emerging theoretical positions[6] and lecture/learning practices.

Projects of the CSSALL

The centre's projects include:

– the Centre's journal, 'Alternation', facilitates research and the publication of articles on the different Southern African literatures, colonial discourse and the historical conditions of these literatures and discourses. Two issues are published per annum

– the Centre organises an interdisciplinary conference every two years. The theme for the first conference (held in 1995) was 'The Dancing Dwarf in the Land of the Spirits'. This title refers to a hieroglyph depicting an Egyptian expedition to the South of the African continent, and which returned with a 'dancing dwarf from the land of spirits'. In ancient times the area below Sofala was known as Wakwak, the 'land of the shades', inhabited by the Khoikhoi and Khoisan. It is possible that 'the land of the spirits' indicated by this Egyptian hieroglyph is the same as this 'land of the shades'. The image of the dancing dwarf forms an interesting intertext with current

studies on the trance dances of shamans, and we used it as a metaphor for South African literature itself. The focus of the conference was on different micro-areas, or formations, which would contribute towards a South African literary history.

The second CSSALL conference was held in 1997. It focused on 'The body, identity, repression and sub-cultures in texts from Africa'. The idea was to gather papers together that would form a basis for a theory in which the body, and especially the movements of power in the body, would be central. This entailed the study of 'inspiration', trance and states of possession in the production of oral literature. The development of concepts also aimed at explaining some of these phenomena in written texts. The rationale is that such a discourse could link traditional African explanations of power to psychoanalytic models of the psyche, such as Freud's early writings in which he saw the psyche in terms of energy movement. This conforms with the traditional African view of the body in terms of power.

— Due to its focus on South African literature and languages, a third project is the South African Literature Translation Series. This series publishes African language texts translated into English. Andreas Z. Zungu's uSukabekhuluma and the Bhambatha Rebellion is the first to have appeared. Dr. A.C.T. Mayekiso from the Department of isiZulu at the University of Durban-Westville completed the translation of this text just before her death in 1996. It is a transcription of an oral account as told to Andreas Z. Zungu by USukabekhuluma himself - the main strategist of the last great insurrection by the Zulu people. Other texts to be published in the series are two books by John Langalibele Dube, a founding father of the African National Congress. The texts, Isita Somuntu Nguye Uqobo Lwakhe (The enemy is one's self, 1928) and Ukuziphatha Kahle (Good manners, 1935), focus on self-help schemes for African upliftment and explore the customs of the Zulu and the British. These texts reflect on the transition from precolonial society to a Victorian middle-class value system.

— The CSSALL is currently busy developing a computer database containing about 32 000 bibliographic entries of interest to South African literature research. We hope to make this database accessible to researchers on the internet soon. The development of a South African literature encyclopaedia in CD ROM and book form is closely related to the database. This project still has to be developed and will be the product of intensive co-operation with other researchers both in and outside South Africa. In order to develop such linkages, we recently set up a South African literature electronic mailing list.

-   From the latter two projects, the Centre is set to develop a condensed and extensively illustrated history of South African literature aimed at scholars and students. Through this project we hope to lay the foundation for the study of South African literature as a whole.
-   Various theoretical projects intersect with the projects and explanations provided above. They concentrate on problems of literary history when dealing with a multilingual and multicultural society, identity formation in a heterogeneous society such as South Africa – exemplified in the diversity of its texts and intertexts – and challenges of theorising colonial and apartheid literature and ideology.

Theoretical projects of the CSSALL

A group of South African researchers explored the feasibility of a comprehensive South African literary history at a colloquium entitled 'Re-thinking South African literary history' in 1995. A concern of many participants was the totalising tendency of such a project: the fact that many micro-areas of comparative research in South Africa would be ignored. Some participants expressed fears that it might be a new ideological narrative that glosses over the various conflicts and differences in South African literature. The shortcomings of such a totalising narrative literary history had already materialised in Michael Chapman's Southern African Literatures (1996). This is the first South African literary history to attempt to cover the literatures in the various South African languages since Manfred Nathan's South African Literature of 1925.

Chapman described his book as a 'moral narrative': a narrative that, like a soap opera. resolved itself in the political change-over of 1994. He states:

> Without diminishing 'difference', it has been important to examine the potential of a common humanism, whether in the utterance of an ancient Bushman or a contemporary metafictionalist. It has also been important, in an intellectual climate currently favouring decentered subjects, to recover an 'African' justification for the accessibility and sociability of communication as well as for the moral agency necessary to effect change.
> ... What the scars of the emergency have left on the study is a concern for a social contract between writer and citizen that is humanising and democratising in its obligations.

This approach, with its roots in a humanising middle-class morality, is reminiscent of Victorian pietism and didacticism. Chapman does not explore the complex relationship between 'morality' and 'literature'. To him there is no moral unconscious or dark

side to the democratic, representative and 'soap opera' values that he promotes in literature. It is not strange, therefore, that he pleads for a realist form of literature. He finds it difficult to relate to modernism, or to understand it in its historical context, and particularly rejects Afrikaans modernist texts for not paying attention to the political realities of South Africa.

Modernism in Afrikaans developed in the 1920s. It developed in reaction to the narrow-minded demands for socialist realist texts in service of the nationalist politics of the time. In this, these texts were political, but in a different sense. The magic realist novels of Zakes Mda, She plays with the darkness (1995a) and Ways of dying (1995b) point to a similar reaction in black literature, against the simplicities of struggle literature.

The CSSALL's approach to South African literature is different. It is not normative or evaluative in terms of aesthetics or ideology. It rather attempts to explore why a particular literature, ideological phenomenon, or text came into existence: what type of institutions, discourses, social conflicts, economic systems and so on made its emergence possible. In this we owe much to Pierre Macherey (1978) and Michel Foucault (1967). Ultimately, the aim is to produce a new theoretical approach and develop its own terminology, using South African material. The first attempt in this regard is the book Constructs of Identity and Difference in South African Literature (van Wyk 1995), which, in its attempt to explore the relationship between Afrikaans literature, nationalism and the working class, focuses too narrowly on Afrikaans literature. The text combines Marxism, semiotics and psychoanalysis. From a semiotic point of view it uses the concepts of iconic and indexical signs to describe different kinds of identity formation.

In recent research, the focus is increasingly on how institutional changes are depicted in South African literature. Of particular interest are the changes involved in the transition from a heroic/precolonial society to one in which Western institutions became central. Important texts for this approach are transcribed oral histories such as the History of Matiwane and the Amangwane Tribe as told by Msebenzi to his Kinsman Albert Hlongwane (van Warmelo 1938). The comparative terror of precolonial oral society and society based on Western institutions (with reason as the founding principle) is of interest here. The terror of reason in its history is both genocidal and productive. It is its productive element that is enigmatic: the way in which it transforms a heroic society into a middle class one.

An interesting moment in the history of reason in South Africa is the white working class and socialist discourses around the industrial uprisings in the period 1910–1924. Ivon Jones describes the uprising in 1922 as 'the first great armed revolt of the workers on any scale in the British Empire' (Hirson 1993, p. 81). Many of these socialists described themselves as rationalists. What is interesting here are the formulations of a counter-empire. They manipulated the discourse of civilisation and barbarism in such

a way that the capitalist system became equal to the so-called barbarism of heroic societies. The appropriation of Darwinist evolution theory combined with historical materialism features strongly in these discourses. In a completely different context, the first Zulu author, Magema M. Fuze, in his The Black People and Whence They Came (1979) combined genealogy, a prominent feature of praise poetry, with evolutionary theory and genetics. Through this he hoped to challenge the beliefs of his Christian and colonial masters.

The notion of civilisation (which is a product of a history of terror) is inseparable from its opposite, namely regression. To the white socialists this was evident in the First World War. Fuze also uses an image of regression in his text, an anecdote about the Thusi clan who became baboons living in the veld after becoming weary of cultivating crops. These are variations of a theme that were globally prevalent at the time in texts such as Freud's Civilisation and its Discontents (1985)[7]. More recent and relevant is Foucault's Madness and Civilisation (1967)[8]. It is relevant as a deconstruction of Reason and its institutions.

As part of colonial ideology, Reason was instrumental in genocidal projects against the colonised. But this genocidal drive of Reason also turned into a death drive against itself. This death drive is evident in the many intrigues of the Communist Party of South Africa during the early Stalinist period. The texts dealing with this issue make for interesting discursive analyses. Civilisation, reason and progress are discursive objects which are of central deconstructive concern to the CSSALL.

The CSSALL's focus on history is in many ways absurd. As one of the nineteenth century informants of Callaway (1970, p. 18) in the book The Religious System of the Amazulu declares: 'there (is) no going back to the beginning'. There is in the African explanations of the world a concern with the immediacy of visible things and the present. The past is no longer part of the visible and is therefore irrelevant. Yet there are very old visible records in the form of the rock paintings of hunter-gatherers. These form the oldest 'writing' in the region. Similarly, archaeological finds raise the question of humanity's transition to the semiotic realm: when did human beings become aware of death, when did a rock or something from the natural environment become a tool, and is this metamorphoses or shapeshifting not poetry? Is poetry (an opaque sign system) not older than language? The conception of language as a transparent sign system was an invention of the Enlightenment.

The African turn against history and the embracing of the abundance of the immediate is reminiscent of Nietzsche's notion of tragedy from his early The Birth of Tragedy (1967). This text is of central importance to the study of South African literature. Nietzsche wrote this text in order to deconstruct the programs of Naturalism in the literature of the late nineteenth century. Naturalism was an attempt to bring the newly emergent science forms of reasoning into literature: it wanted to portray the effects of poverty and heredity in the world. It wanted to illustrate science. As such it

inspired many movements in literature concerned with development and upliftment programs. Tragedy on the other hand does not see poverty, but rather the omnipotence of the satyr. The satyr is that figure behind all the constructs of civilisation and represents the counter-civilisation, the futility of civilisation. It stands against all blueprints and programs which want people to conform to the image of Reason. The satyr and tragedy express the abundance of nature. Callaway's (1970, p. 24) Zulu informant who says: 'Just as we married many wives saying, 'Hau! we cannot deny ourselves as regards the abundance which uNkulunkulu has given us: let us do what we like' expresses the philosophy of Nietzsche and the world outlook of the satyr. Similarly, the African king embodies a heroic consciousness: a psychology which expresses omnipotence. The death of the king with the tribe as satyric chorus are images of tragedy – of the interaction of individual and group psychology, of the interplay of consciousness, abundance, power and death.

Nietzsche's chorus of satyrs is another version of Bakhtin's (1984) carnival. And South Africa, like many a postcolonial country, is one in which carnival plays a central role. It is a country of mass processions, marches, toyi-toyi, public oratory and mass-gatherings. This is not only part of recent black culture. The 1922 worker uprisings on the Witwatersrand and the Voortrekker Centenary of 1938, amongst others, point to white carnival culture, to continuity between white and black cultures in this regard, and the need for comparative analysis. This is a society in which different carnival formations, different formations of lawlessness, contest with one another. Moreover, '[c]arnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates .... it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part'. Its parody of extracarnival life through folk humour 'denies, but it reviews and renews at the same time. Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture'. In addition, the grotesque 'liberates man from all the forms of inhuman necessity that direct the prevailing concept of the world' (Bakhtin 1984, pp. 7, 11, 49).

Postcolonialism, although recognising hybridity, has been hampered by a narrow focus on the European language literatures from the colonies - also the European language of Reason. We believe that a renaissance could come about through the study of First Peoples' languages and traditions, not as something anthropologically different, but as something continuous with and relevant to our post-modern industrial existences. In the magic realism of Zakes Mda, the return to a rural and traditional past is a rediscovery of spirituality against the materialism of contemporary life.

The Centre's lecture/learning practices

Five elements form part of the Centre's lecture/learning practices: 1) respecting and expanding the resources each student brings into the Centre's programmes; 2) the

intertextual, dialogic and interactive nature of lecture hall practices; 3) the challenging nature of the student or learner-lecturer interface; 4) the fostering of a culture of collective ownership and interactive tolerance; and 5) the empowerment of students and their communities through the creative engagement of life, culture, economy, education and work through literature.

The resources and skills students bring into the lecture hall are respected but also expanded - in terms of challenges to expand the existing knowledges of each, i.e. interactively, intertextually and dialogically. Due to the multicultural backgrounds of students, the resources they bring range from home language, culture, religion, knowledge(s) developed in undergraduate studies to their own personalities. Research topics and programmes are formulated in line with the interests of the student and the Centre's stated area of specialisation – Southern African Literature and Languages. Whereas there are many culture studies, African studies and African Languages centres and departments in South Africa, this focus is informed by broad interdisciplinary studies including historical, cultural, literary, social, economic, political and discursive approaches[9]. This makes for the recognition that all forms of identity – ranging from culture and group identity to that of the self – are different manifestations of distinct but also overlapping hybridities[10].

Further, research and the production of knowledge encourage the intertextual and comparative study of what Foucault (1980, p. 81) calls 'subjugated knowledges' – knowledges which are central to the majority of the people of South Africa but which have been marginalised and subjugated by the savage systems of the past. The re-sources students and researchers bring to the Centre are not only part and parcel of their own lives - these knowledges are also expanded in similar approaches in their own work as teachers, lecturers or community leaders in various professions.

The intertextual, dialogic and interactive nature of lecture hall practices is informed by Bakhtin's notion of 'dialogism', as developed by Kristeva into 'intertextuality', and Freire's 'dialogic cultural action'. The focus on dialogism means that all forms of human knowledge and existence are dialogical to various degrees - existence itself, language, aesthetic expression, history, poetics and the authoring act itself (Holquist 1990). Kristeva's developing of this perception into 'intertextuality' implies that all literary or aesthetic expressions are systems and structures which are not folded into themselves but infinitely dispersed into surrounding texts and environments. 'Intertextuality' therefore indicates the transposition or transformation or multiple intersections of systems of signs with others. This means that systems which have previously been viewed as homogeneous, or disciplines separated into discursive en-claves, are unpacked in their refractedness but also studied in terms of their productive effects. In terms of 'dialogism', the lecture situation itself becomes an intertextual and dialogic space where students, lecturers and researchers interact creatively and learn from one another. As such, intertexts exist and are continuously created and unravelled

at the times of production as well as consumption, reading, listening or communication. This means that all present at a 'lecture', are 'learners' or 'partners' in the production and consumption of knowledge (Freire 1970).

It is for this reason that lecturers foster curiosity by positively challenging students to find out, read, research and develop their thinking and writing. Problems or questions which arise in lectures and during the student's research are further problematised, possible approaches and resources suggested and the student challenged to become and remain a learner - or in common parlance, to be a lifelong-learner. Central to this practice of problematising and challenging while simultaneously enabling research is the fostering of personal responsibility and dignity.

These three processes foster a culture of collective ownership and interactive tolerance. In the context of existing intolerances in South Africa - which were fostered by the apartheid government's segregationist practices - the ownership of land, industry, power and knowledge was usually perceived in racial and class terms as white, upper-class or bourgeois ownership. Through its practices, the Centre nurtures collective ownership in that knowledge produced are continuously shared and contributors recognised. Research topics focused on Southern African realities make for knowledge which is first and foremost to be appreciated by the local market. Where students and researchers engage in cross-cultural research projects or where they participate in lecture situations where they interact cross-culturally, the Other is continuously recognised, thereby facilitating cross-cultural understanding, appreciation and tolerance but also the empowerment of people(s) previously exploited.

The last point, the empowerment of students and their communities through the creative engagement of life, culture, economy, education and work through literature can be best summarised in terms of Foucault's notion of the 'specific intellectual'. Contrary to hegemonic discourse which hypostatised the 'universal intellectual' - notably in his left or liberal guise as having 'the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice', 'the spokesman of the universal', 'the consciousness/conscience of us all' operating in 'the modality of the "universal", the "exemplary", the "just-and-true-for-all"' - Foucault postulates the specific intellectual. Specific intellectuals work in 'specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations). The specific intellectual has a 'much more immediate and concrete awareness of struggles'. Since s/he also - especially in the case of students and researchers at the Centre - often comes from previously disadvantaged or oppressed minority cultures or generally speaking the masses and black proletariat, the activities at the centre empower them to function in society as critical but also facilitating, constructive and responsible intellectuals. Not the image and role of the 'writer of genius' but that of the 'absolute savant', is fostered (Foucault 1980, pp. 126, 129). As intellectuals coming from and functioning in their communities, not only are they as individuals

empowered, but the communities – through their work – are empowered – i.e. in fostering independent thinking and action[11]. This also articulates with Freire's (1972a: 54) 'problem-posing education' which 'involves a constant unveiling of reality' and which 'strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality'.

Gramsci once used the image of the fortress to picture the process of struggle, liberation and the taking of control. This image may lead one to think that, after independence, the only challenge for new powers is to clear out the fortress and its trenches and fill them with new powers. This is not the Centre's approach. Its various practices – as e have attempted to explicate briefly above – are, through its dialogic and intertextual approach to Southern African literature and languages, enabling, challenging, collective, interactive, and empowering.

Conclusion

The CSSALL is not the only place in South Africa researching the complexes outlined in this article or following similar practices; nor is it the intention of this article to devalue the work of other South African scholars in the field. Rather, the purpose is to position the Centre and its contributions in terms of the transformation of South African literary studies. And we think that, in terms of the exciting possibilities South Africa's new dispensation has opened up for the developing of the quality of the life of all its people, the Centre makes an important contribution and may in future continue to develop what is nothing more nor less than a crucial intervention in the refracted South African literary landscape.

Notes

1   Stephen Gray's (1979) *Southern African Literature: An Introduction*, worked in this direction and was followed a decade later by Malvern van Wyk Smith's (1990) *Grounds of Contest*.
2   Under 'black' is included the University of Durban-Westville established for the Indian community and the University of the Western Cape established for the coloured community.
3   To capture the complexities of this understanding of 'nation', Bhabha introduced the notion of 'cultural difference'. 'Cultural difference' does not fall into the trap of retaining and entrenching homologous identities as captured with notions such as 'cultural diversity' or even 'multiculturalism'. Rather, it 'marks the establishment of new forms of meaning, and strategies of identification, through processes of negotiation where no discursive authority can be established without revealing the

difference of itself'. It also 'articulates the difference between representations of social life without surmounting the space of incommensurable meanings and judgements that are produced within the process of transcultural negotiation' (1990, p. 312).

4   Hofmeyr traces the manufacturing 'of an Afrikaans literary culture which was an important terrain in which nationalist ideologies were elaborated' through the 'contours of a broader political, economic and social geography' (1987, p. 95). Similar studies sensitise the reader to the complexities of society and pre-empt homogenising tendencies in scholarly discourse.

5   'Heroic' literature is the term the Centre has adopted for what is elsewhere referred to as precolonial literature. This came about in accordance with the use of the term 'heroic' by H. Munro and N. Kershaw Chadwick (1932–1940) in their volume, *The growth of literature* and because DP Kunene (1971) adopted it to describe the praise poetry traditions of Lesotho in The Heroic Poetry of the Basotho.

6   The assumption is that this might be of interest to other postcolonial societies, which share experiences similar to South Africa's. Like South Africa, other postcolonial countries may have a multilingual society - including two or more European languages - with a variety of minority indigenous languages. Also like South Africa, these countries were frontier societies with a history of conflict and assimilation. Unlike South Africa, they may not have such a strong tradition of nationalism and republicanism, or the variety of precolonial political formations. They also may not have a visible history of institutionalised racism still influencing society, such as Apartheid. In studying the literatures of these societies, the issues which can be explored intertextually are those of multilingual literary heritage, existing anthologies, literary histories and theories that attempt to represent this multilingual literary heritage. The issue of the need for such studies may itself be an important enterprise.

7   Departing from his thesis that the purpose of life is dictated by the pleasure principle, Freud contends that humanity's hostility towards Civilization (which he uses as synonym for culture) is precisely due to the conflict between the pleasure principle and the continuous development of culture. Since the moment someone made a tool to skin an animal, all culture developed to 'control our instinctual life'. Not being able to provide an answer to this conundrum himself, he writes that 'one day someone will venture to embark upon a pathology of cultural communities' (1985, pp. 263, 266, 339).

8   Throughout his career, Foucault aimed to develop a method for the analysis of the ways through which Reason developed discourse (with particular objects, strategies and the establishing of institutions which controlled subjects in particular subject positions). It is precisely the limits which Reason draws within disciplinary discourse which include and exclude. At first focusing mainly on an archaeology of

knowledge(s) and later developing it into a genealogy of power, both these systems of analysis focus on the developing of ways and means which would allow for the analysis of a history which advocates and sustains current west-European modernist practices (1967; 1972; 1973; 1977; 1982).

9 Contrary to the 'implicit generalisation of knowledge' or the 'implicit homogenization of experience' - the two 'major strategies of containment and closure in modern bourgeois ideology' according to Claude Lefort - interdisciplinary studies recognises that one must 'always keep open a supplementary space for the articulation of cultural knowledges that are adjacent and adjunct but not necessarily accumulative, teleological or dialectical' (Bhabha 1994, p. 163).

10 Closely associated with Bhabha's notions of 'cultural difference' and 'interdisciplinarity', is that of 'hybridity'. Hybridity denotes 'the perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life; it is an instance of iteration, in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign - 'the minus in the origin' - through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalisation' (1990, p. 314; 1994, pp. 162–164).

11 Since the various communities in South Africa are – despite their largely racial and class segregations on the basis of previously demarcated group or racial geographical demarcations – extremely hybrid, calling for cross-cultural interaction in many events virtually every day, empowerment at the Centre aims at an informed interaction between people. It addresses local realities in their past and present complexities and challenges.

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