

**Culture in  
the New  
South Africa**

Edited by  
Robert Kriger  
and  
Abebe Zegeye



**After Apartheid - Volume Two**



**SOCIAL IDENTITIES SOUTH AFRICA SERIES**

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# Introduction

Abebe Zegeye and Robert Kriger

This collection includes a myriad of themes and views on the dynamic role of culture in the post apartheid society. As one reads the papers presented, it becomes clear that any review of cultural discourse, space and activity in South Africa would have to reflect upon the duality of cultural production within the former repressive state. While black and white cultures were expressed largely in isolation from each other, they now provide the basis for intercultural dialogue, experimentation and the search for new forms with which to express a new social and cultural identity.

The duality of culture in South Africa arose as a result of one of the premises of apartheid, i.e. that the various racial groups were so inherently different that co-existence or even close proximity would inevitably lead to conflict. Accordingly, these groups had to be kept apart, to practise their cultural traditions and exercise their political rights in isolation. A cultural pattern similar to that found in other areas colonised by Europe followed. On the one hand, artistic forms such as ballet, opera, classical music and theatre were developed and paid for by taxpayers' money to entertain the white minority, while on the other hand the cultural traditions and aesthetic practices of the majority were dismissed as inferior or, at best, encouraged as tourist attractions, and ghettoised as a result.

Most dominant within the 'white' society were the mainly eurocentric productions and products of the various cultural 'factories' such as the provincial arts councils which were heavily subsidised by the state in the interest of 'satisfaction' and ideological domestication. In their attempts to prop up the minority regime, these institutions, such as the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT), the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) and the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC), or the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurorganisasies (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations, FAK), the Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (Afrikaans Language and Culture Association, ATKV) and the National Monuments Council, served the purpose of propagating the ideal of white supremacy and superiority and above all,

sought to maintain the supposed cultural umbilical linkages to the mythical 'European fatherlands'. At the same time, English and Afrikaans were imposed as the official languages of the country. However, even this propagation was tightly controlled by the rigorous (political) censorship laws and regulation. It was, to use a German phrase, *gleichgeschaltet*, i.e. forced into the service of an ideological framework, namely Apartheid.

To illustrate this point: when the film version of Bernard Malamud's celebrated novel *The Fixer* was released onto the South African circuit, it was initially celebrated as a clear indictment of a 'cruel, barbaric and repressive communistic [sic] system'. However, as soon as it became apparent that many blacks were flocking to the cinemas to see the film and making clear analogies with the apartheid state and its fascist tendencies, it was promptly removed from the circuit and banned for black audiences. White audiences, it would appear, were not as susceptible to the implied message and analogies. Although blacks were, by and large, excluded from participating in or attending 'mainstream' cultural events – through the segregation of cinemas, theatres, galleries, museums and so on – these restrictions generally led to a spate of cultural activities in the townships, usually conducted in church halls or at events held in sports facilities. Most of these cultural events had an overtly 'political' message of either resistance to the system and/or served as a platform for boosting (black) self-awareness, especially against the backdrop of the black consciousness movement of the seventies and eighties.

Another major effect – although unintentional – of the restrictive nature of the former government's cultural policies and practices, was to encourage the flourishing of cultural innovation and practice. 'Cultural practitioners' were actively engaged in a new discourse, pre-empting, as it were, the contours, policies and practices of culture in a post-apartheid society. Milestone events, such as CASA<sup>1</sup> or meetings between exiled and internal cultural representatives, served to hone the outlines, issues and concerns of this debate.

Diverse forms of cultural artefacts and practices emerged during this period, especially in literature, theatre and performance, the plastic arts and the revival of traditional modes of dance (including orature, movement, performance). The development of this counter-hegemonic discourse and practice, welded as it usually was to the political resistance movement ('the struggle'), did not go unnoticed by the authorities: works and authors were censored or banned as it was realised that culture was playing a role as a shield for political struggle. Artists were also not issued with passports which denied them the possibility of taking up international invitations, for instance.

However, despite this 'total onslaught' by the apartheid state on liberatory culture and its proponents, many cultural activists simply changed their strategy: instead of expecting visitors to attend their performances at, for example, theatres or central venues, the artists came to their audiences, to political funerals, mass rallies, church

halls in the townships, and so on. Many of these artists were members of collectives, small non-governmental organisations or associations – which in turn became part of a national cultural initiative. Such organisations also advised the then-banned African National Congress (ANC) on the implementation of the cultural boycott, and generally assisted in promoting the anti-apartheid message abroad through exhibitions, plays and festivals focusing on South Africa. In a sense, these organisations were the precursor of the present National Arts Council.

One could, therefore, assume that the progressive, cultural practitioners of the apartheid era would feel very comfortable and satisfied under the present dispensation. That this is (currently) not so, could be explained as follows:

After the unbanning of the ANC, the umbrella cultural organisations mentioned above asserted their political independence by launching the first national, non-racial, non-partisan arts lobby – the National Arts Coalition – to lobby for new arts and culture policies. This led to some tensions with their former partner – the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture – which believed that it should be at the vanguard of transformation in the country, including that of cultural transformation.

By the time the elections were held in April 1994, the National Arts Coalition had developed a strong national presence and formulated a comprehensive set of new policy recommendations. Based on public nominations, the new Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology appointed a 23-person Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) – representing all disciplines, regions and forms of art – to solicit and present recommendations for new policies with the support of the arts community. The ACTAG process culminated in 1995 with the adoption of its proposals by a national conference representing a broad cross-section of artists and cultural institutions. Government published its White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage in 1996, which reflected many of the ACTAG recommendations.

Several cultural activists of that period took up senior positions in government and provincial departments responsible for arts and culture and it was hoped that this would bring about speedy implementation of the policy recommendations. However, the momentum and enthusiasm generated through the ACTAG process has largely been dissipated through the slow process of establishing new government structures, and the equally slow process of preparing and adopting legislation.

Major arts and culture-related bills passed in 1998 include the National Arts Council Act and the National Film and Video Foundation Act which were to become bodies to channel funds to support the development and dissemination of the arts. The process of transforming cultural institutions which were the main recipients of public funds during the apartheid era and which largely reflected apartheid's interests in their

structures, content and aesthetics, has also taken place largely in accordance with policy recommendations. The National Arts Council receives an annual grant from government to support the creation, development and distribution of music, dance, theatre, visual art, craft, literature and community art and it does this through a system of peer review with discipline-based panels reviewing and making recommendations on applications for funding. Much of the R7.5 million (less than one million pounds) of the R10 million government grant distributed by the Council at its first allocations in February 1998, were funds which had been cut from establishment cultural institutions such as the performing arts councils.

In terms of government policy, the councils are to be downsized to serve as metropolitan theatres, with the companies and orchestras attached to them receiving declining subsidies over three years, while diversifying their funding bases. However, the theory of the White Paper - that orchestras, ballet and opera companies could apply to the National Arts Council and its provincial equivalents like any other creative project - is not matched by the reality, characterised by an absence of such mechanisms, and a dire lack of funding. There has been some concern that the small size of the Council's budget will destroy its credibility. (The Council received applications in excess of fifteen times the amount it was able to allocate with its first grant).

Accordingly, questions are being raised about the capacity of government officials to implement the vision and recommendations of the arts community as articulated in the ACTAG Report. While the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology has control over policy and resources, it appears to lack the managerial expertise, political will and vision to effect its own policies.

The National Arts Council is required to serve the arts nationally, but there is concern about its capacity to do this. The rationale for the Council was to ensure the equitable distribution of resources throughout the country, particularly to those areas which had been neglected in the past. They appear to continue to be neglected, at least in the decision-making forums of the Council. It has become increasingly clear though, that the implementation of policy now equally requires a strong watchdog lobby from within the arts community. In this context, the '1% Campaign' is being launched to lobby for increased public funding for the arts, monitor government arts expenditure, and generally represent the interests of the arts community in this phase of policy implementation and review. The independence of the Council will also probably be closely monitored by the arts community, as it is crucial to the freedom of creative expression.

Of particular note and interest is the fact that there has been an exciting resurgence of cultural activity throughout the country. Annual festivals fulfil an important function in providing a platform for newcomers and new work: traditional and experimental dance, music and drama festivals, literary events and exhibitions all seem engaged in celebrating the vibrant opportunities and possibilities of this multi-cultural and mul-

tilingual society which is the 'new' South Africa. Although most of these events are financed with shoestring budgets, it is noteworthy that corporate (financial) support for these domains of creativity and production has shown a steady growth over the past few years. This collection of articles seeks to reflect such changes as have occurred within the cultural space(s) of the 'new' South Africa. The authors were tasked with reflecting on the changes which may have occurred within their particular domain. The brief issued by the co-editors was succinct. It stated the following:

The article/paper should ideally reflect your perceptions of changes of cultural values and cultural identity (identities) in contemporary South Africa, i.e. what is happening currently in South African culture in terms of institutional, policy and value changes?

Although the 'field' was known to be broad and varied, it was our decision to restrict contributions to such areas that were clearly linked to or tangential to that of cultural practice. As such, we were pleasantly surprised by the responses received. Authors, photographers, 'cultural practitioners', reviewers, literary critics all expressed their excitement at being allowed an opportunity to reflect on such changes as may have occurred during the past five years of the 'new' South Africa as this impacted upon the life of our 'cultural practitioners'.

The most critical issues raised are nationalism, the degree and success of institutional transition, creating new historiographies of cultural production, validating the work of artists that were excluded during apartheid and expanding access to government subsidies for artistic and literary work.

There are a number of themes and questions reiterated across several chapters:

- What counts as legitimate cultural practice must be expanded without appeals to cultural nationalism. This is a concern which must be connected to every artistic renaissance. It is our hope that acknowledging 'group identity' does not mean fostering militarism or nationalism, but may also cultivate communalism and 'reciprocity, care and affect' (Sitas).
- How does South African cultural practice confront the debates on modernity/post modernity and colonialism/post colonialism?
- What are the consequences of institutional transition, namely redistribution of state funding in the arts as well as new mission statements and visions for arts agencies?
- Can arts policy remain a medium which can make up the shortfalls in government revenues and party conflicts?
- How can the arts contribute to economic revitalisation without being subjected to naked market commodification?

- What choices have cultural activists and liberation organisations made in choosing their own cultural policies and what new directions can be suggested for them?
- How can discussion of gender be made part of the debate on cultural dynamism? And how can discussion of South African cultural dynamism inform global debates on the meaning of gender?
- How can media create greater access to practitioners, artists and activists yet still consider the conditions of people previously overlooked by apartheid segregation such as the white working class and rural female artists?

It is to such issues that the chapters turn. Alexander and Heugh argue that in post-colonial Africa the hierarchical relations characterising the different languages and varieties of language have been perpetuated *de facto* in spite of legislation and constitutional arrangements providing for equality. In South Africa, English and Afrikaans determined the wealth and status available in the past. Moreover, language continues to be intricately linked to economic exploitation and desires for social mobility. The authors caution that unless a multilingual national language and economic policy is applied, the country will not be able to overcome the economic segregation of apartheid. The democratisation of language must affirm that African languages are valid media for the cultural, scientific, technological, economic and political domains and practice. Political leaders as yet appear not to understand language beyond its connections to cultural identities, histories and discrimination.

Shepperson and Tomaselli attempt to reclaim culture that has been simultaneously trounced by apartheid radicalisation and by the static record-keeping of modernity that results when people are exposed to strictly limited aspects of culture. They suggest that South Africa's media sector has a duty to contribute to the development of the wider regional networking functions of the whole range of governmental, civil and economic sectors. Culture, they argue, is something which people *do*, an action forged in struggle, pluralism and migrating theories and practices. The authors suggest that since culture orients people towards their responsibilities and identities in their communities, a dynamic media must speak to the whole range of people's interests and priorities across generations. The chapter provides an informative view of what can go wrong when people are officially limited in their access to interpreted views of their culture.

Frescura's work on rural female architects rejects the notion that the iconography used by woman designers should be relegated to the natural history of the past. He takes into account patterns of migration, movement and attempts at incorporation into more powerful groups. Their work is contemporary and resonates with our emphasis on dynamic responses to the current situation, especially the creation of new communities and regions. Like others in this collection, Frescura emphasises that these

designs persist despite and in concert with Westernisation and cross-cultural pollination. Frescura states that southern Africa's rural architecture has long been associated with a tradition in wall decoration which predates the arrival of white colonialists to the region's interior. These designs are generally acknowledged to be the product of women and have remained their preserve in rural areas right up to the present. The work is a statement made by women in respect of their fertility, political status, religious cosmology and in certain instances, their family lineage.

Regarding the future of the wall painting tradition in South Africa, it is not easy to make predictions. Because the social and economic inequalities which historically gave rise to the tradition are the subject of revision and redress under the country's new constitution, it appears likely that the motivation for continuing the tradition has either already been lost or is likely to be dissipated once a viable housing programme for rural areas is put in place. One factor that can play a role in resolving the issue is the growth of tourism. The tradition should be treated as a non-renewable resource.

Fleishman's study discusses institutional and administrative change *vis-à-vis* the redistribution of theatre funding and agency subsidies from the Johannesburg Performing Arts Council to the newly established National Arts Council. Since apartheid created racial requirements for access to funds for producers, directors, playwrights and dramatists, the new arts councils advocate increased regional representation to be more inclusive. Fleishman argues that since greater democratisation came about with the elections in 1994, the fabric of the theatre in South Africa is no longer woven from one master thread, but from multiple smaller threads. It is a theatre which focuses more on the many small narratives of the margins than on any single grand narrative of the centre. In so doing, it reflects a new freedom to articulate personal identities and subjectivities. In this respect, Fleishman points out a need for greater support among local authorities for cultural expression.

Teer-Tomaselli's contribution situates public broadcasting in the context of attempts by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) to meet the requirements initiated of the Independent Broadcasting Association Act. Technological advancement and deregulation have made it possible and desirable for the SABC to include more local content in its public broadcasting. Although the 're-launch' of the SABC in 1996 was aimed at delivering more public broadcasting through the eleven official languages, this was offset by the wide and inexpensive availability of English-language programming on the international market and the premise that English was the second-language choice of most South Africans. Accordingly, English remains the dominant language of the SABC.

Within this context, the author's main concern is how the SABC can promote the production of local and diverse programming (the self-image of society, if you will) without reinforcing nationalism, since a majority of local content programming is provided by news programmes. The SABC has, within the limits of financial con-

straints, attempted to fulfil its mandate of 'protecting and nurturing South African culture and creativity reflecting the reality of South Africa and itself to the world, South Africa from a distinctly South African perspective'. Although not expressing a view on the merits of this way of rekindling nationhood, the author claims that the SABC has, in attempting to fulfil this mandate, consciously aligned itself with the 'African Renaissance'.

Smit and Van Wyk use the context of the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages to discuss the transformation of segregationist literary studies to an integrated approach to the historical complexity of South African literature. The expanding curricula of the post-apartheid era lend themselves to a fresh analysis of class, cultural encounters and an expanded notion of what counts as literature. In the context of intolerance existing in South Africa under the apartheid regime's segregationist practices, the ownership of land, industry, power and knowledge was usually perceived in racial or class terms as white, upper-class or bourgeois ownership. Through its practices, the Centre nurtures collective ownership in that the knowledge produced there is continuously shared and contributors are recognised.

The empowerment of students and their communities through creative engagement with life, culture, economy, education and work through literature is summarised in terms of Foucault's notion of the 'specific intellectual'. Such intellectuals have a more immediate and concrete awareness of struggles. They also often - especially in the case of the researchers of the Centre - come from previously disadvantaged or oppressed minority cultures. The activities at the Centre empower them to function in society as critical but also facilitating, constructive and responsible intellectuals. Although Smit and Van Wyk do not discuss this, the relation between 'specific' and 'universal' intellectuals in South Africa appears to be a relevant cultural debating point under the new dispensation in this country.

Wicomb continues the literary theme with an analysis that questions the use of black female suffering as a figure of speech that simultaneously objectifies black women and reinforces the dubious connection between whiteness and leisure and ease. Her logic in discussing familial ties and family breakdown among the white working class reveals the complexity of the betrayals of apartheid. There is now a 'scramble' for 'alterity', by which she means the otherness of the native of Africa. The practice of conjugating a new Afrikaner identity with the ready-made category of black-as-other is not a felicitous one from a black point of view that would question the very category. The scramble for alterity also does not guarantee the rehabilitation of Afrikaner identity.

Commitment to the demise of apartheid does not mean an abandonment of ethnic tags, but it does, according to the texts Wicomb analyses, at least require disaffiliation from whiteness. Whilst 'Afrikaner' has become a disgraced category, the struggle for rehabilitation crucially implicates the binary opposition of relations with Eng-

lishness. And whilst English in fact assumes national language status, cultural and linguistic space is necessarily one where whiteness will continue to reside in silence and anonymity. However, this is not the whole story. In the world beyond texts, where whiteness remains bound up with privilege and economic power, it cannot simply be written off, not least because those who benefit most from its demise are not able to read of such well-meaning resolutions to the narrative of apartheid.

Parker discusses contemporary South African women's writing in Afrikaans, particularly as produced by white women. Long overlooked, this body of work has quickly become the new avant garde of South African writing, reflecting upon and presaging dramatic transformations in the South African social fabric. Mapping the contributions of this writing in Afrikaans, Parker contrasts them with the absence of engagement in South African writing in English with narrative techniques concerned with the nuances and ironies, the boundary and border transgression of women's writing in Afrikaans. In other words, a lack of engagement with traditional styles and themes, standard subjects and narrative technologies of the gendered formation of language itself.

Parker argues that Afrikaans has been perceived as the language of oppression of black people by white people. He refers to the battle between 'Boer' (Afrikaner) and 'Brit' (British people) over who would best be able to dominate black people. He suggests that the lines in this respect be redrawn, away from conventional demarcations along the lines of language usage with affinities between a dominant liberal-humanist and residual black consciousness. Rather, the demarcation should be between an aligned black consciousness and new developments in Afrikaans writing as complementary responses to that dominant tradition. A possible explanation for the processes and outcomes of political alignments currently being negotiated by the main protagonists may be the triumph of the descendants of indigenous communities as well as those of Dutch settlers who speak about land and people and language and nation in terms in which the descendants of British settlers have never done. Parker's analysis may well prove to be correct.

In his appreciation of Thelma Gutsche, Masilela writes that in a real sense the theme of Gutsche's book *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa* is the intrusion of the USA and Europe into South Africa. Gutsche examines the effects of film-making on the cultural fabric of South Africa; thus the book is not really about South African cinema, but about the entrance of European modernity into South Africa through films. Although possibly dismissive of South African films through its silence on them, it may be the best book on South African film, an extraordinary archival retrieval, according to Masilela.

Gutsche was in general not really concerned with films made by South Africans, being contemptuous of films by whites made for whites. She saw Afrikaner nationalists, with the connivance of English-speaking white South Africans, as responsible for

the destruction of South Africa's cinematic visual imagination. This extracted a heavy price: in almost a century of the encounter between the South African visual imagination and cinematography not a single masterpiece has been produced by a South African film-maker. Masilela's analysis, although it appears to underestimate the influence of sheer economic inequality in the etiology of South African film culture, succeeds in focusing the reader's attention on some hitherto unknown dynamics of the cinematic culture of South Africa.

Impey, in perceptively describing one cultural response to the horror of apartheid and its attendant migrant labour system, writes that the Beatrice Street YMCA in Central Durban is a modest establishment. The upstairs hall is unadorned except for a few scattered rows of plastic chairs and several strips of flickering lights precariously fastened to warped and rotten ceiling boards.

At the far end of the hall there is a low wooden platform in front of which is a wooden table and a single chair. Every Saturday night the YMCA is a hive of activity. Zulu migrant workers begin to congregate in tight circles, hands behind backs, facing inwards towards one another and begin to sing softly in close four-part harmony, a cappella. They are preparing for the competition they call *isicathamiya*, which, literally translated, means 'in stalking approach', descriptive of the soft, tiptoed dancing styles, crouching actions and songs they perform.

Each choir is immaculately dressed in matching suits and bow-ties, two-tone shoes, white gloves, pocket handkerchiefs and shining costume jewellery. Each choir is made up of "homeboys", men who share kinship or regional ties from rural KwaZulu-Natal, a province in the northeast of South Africa. The songs are defiant and describe suffering. They represent a hybrid musical style, having originated in American minstrelsy and ragtime. They have also achieved some commercial success. Their explorations are as much an exercise in post-apartheid self-discovery as it is a statement to the world of an emerging national identity. *Isicathamiya* is as significant for the female supporters of it as to the men. The performance would be incomplete without the women. They play an essential role and are emotional benefactors of the genre. Their dedication and zeal has made meaningful the weekly moments of glory to male choristers whose status as migrants rendered them otherwise invisible and socially impotent.

Sitas' autobiography of the trade union movement in KwaZulu-Natal in recent times emphasises the experiences, research findings and narratives of trade unionists themselves. His findings demonstrate the methodological possibility of multiple-author narration and oral history. Sitas made use of a creative workshop involving sixteen writers and cultural activists in COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions). What was brought into the workshop was a simple uncontroversial point that movements in general are challenges to the social or class orders of society and not mere responses to objective stimuli. All the participants stated that black workers joined trade unions in the 1970s and 1980s because of 'terrible wages', because they

were 'treated like dogs' and because they needed a 'shield'. Racial discrimination and apartheid was a constitutive experience. Although bounded by racial oppression, racial oppression does not express the central project in their narrations, namely that they are building a nation. This slippage from race to nation and back and its co-existence with a class perspective has made for a volatile challenge to any *status quo*.

The moral core of the movement is analysed as a new solidarity which was learnt through *umzabalazo*, struggle. The word *umzabalazo* seems to be the qualifying authority for comradeship. This, according to Sitas, points to some profound conclusions, highlighting a class and racial distinctiveness among the participants, who represent over 200 000 members. The chapter is thus an imaginative undertaking backed by a sound theoretical understanding of the issues involved. It also highlights some of the operations of culture in that crucial institutional complex in South Africa – the maze of trade unions.

Vally, in a fascinating and revelatory chapter, shows how car registration numbers have become a visible new expression of cultural identity in Gauteng, a province of South Africa, as well as a source of additional revenue for the Gauteng provincial government. The point she makes is that in these circumstances, the motorist can, at a (sometimes very high) price, have almost any number he/she desires as long as it does not offend citizens of South Africa. The Gauteng provincial traffic authorities, in order to achieve this, block out certain combinations of numbers and letters, which can then be bought at higher than normal prices for motor car registration. For private Internet-based companies specialise in finding the numbers for motorists who want them.

The Personalised Registration Numbers can cost anything between 38 to 5 000 times the cost of an ordinary registration number (R50-00). In the Western Province, there is a R50 000-00 category for sought-after numbers. In Gauteng there is no such category. It appears that the reason for this is that the Department of Transport have the intention of auctioning off certain names in great demand. In South Africa, a mid-level state employee earns R50 000-00 per annum. Vally concludes that the phenomenon of identity and its various expressions to fixed sites and places.

Duncan, in her study of the Johannesburg Biennale project, claims that new South African policies are creating rather than reducing inequality. This reversal is evident in many areas of life, including the visual arts, where a growing emphasis on promoting the country's international competitiveness is marginalising key development needs in that sector. The 'competitiveness logic' requires governments to 'crowd in' resources to industries and areas capable of meeting the challenge. Cities have been identified as the productive engines of the world economy. In Johannesburg the race is on to establish the city as South Africa's first truly global city. But biennales remain blind to class questions regarding the organisation of cultural resources. There is no space for national questions in 'global' mega-exhibitions. However, a fundamental aim of emancipatory theory and practice is to realise a society where all people can live as whole

human beings. A possibly effective approach for achieving this goal is encapsulated by Samir Amin's concept of 'delinking' which recognises that neo-liberal development strategies applied universally result in increasing wealth gaps between and within countries.

Local government cannot be allowed to disintegrate under the weight of global fiscal austerity. Support for arts and culture should be included in an integrated vision of local government. Such support would also promote the creative capacities of all residents, not just those considered to be 'artists'. At the same time it would be parochial: given the realities of globalisation, the vision should be both local and internationalist. Attempting to save the country money by slashing such services will have such an enormous social price that the short-term benefits will soon be swept away. Costing the implications of increasing marginalisation, inequality and alienation of large sections of South African society will be difficult, but the country needs to rise to the challenge.

Duncan's chapter can be interpreted as a remarkable and timely warning to anyone doubting the value of culture freely expressed in building a new nation, a project well underway in South Africa at present. The chapter also points to the crucial role that local government has in this endeavour, warning that any signs of deterioration at that level of government should be immediately countered.

In their concluding chapter, Zegeye and Liebenberg state that change in South Africa has resulted in both good and bad. The good is largely that an authoritarian and racist minority regime known for its brutality has departed from the political scene and that South African citizens have become free to choose their own destiny. The bad is what might be termed 'the burden of the present'. The country and its people tend to suffer from the legacy of different colonialisms, apartheid and separation, a lack of development and potential economic stagnation and high levels of crime. The latter is due to many factors, including a recent past of armed protest politics, the militarisation of the youth and sub-optimum economic conditions. Widespread poverty is one phenomenon responsible for widespread crime and violence.

Apartheid relied on the consequences of material scarcity and the apartheid government easily imposed "nationhood" and sub-nationhood "from above". Added to this were supremacist philosophies such as ethnocentrism and eurocentrism that concretised differences between categories of people. People socialised within one entity were encouraged to fear the culture and manifestations of the culture of 'others'.

Though apartheid failed to create viable, self-sufficient nations for the majority of the people in South Africa, it did create the cultural ethos associated with defending those nations and groups. Both the resistance to inequities and the justification for the inequities came to revolve around a basic belief in political hegemony and culturally exclusive groups. In view of this, the new culture being developed in South Africa should be a culture of consensus, adaptation, process and dynamism and reflect the

complexity of human relationships. The authors in this volume according to Zegeye and Liebenberg aimed to reclaim both the cultures developed "from above" and "from below" and have attempted to make them speak to each other. The volume unmasks the static nature of apartheid and reminds the reader that the struggle against apartheid has had a long history of cultural interaction. The care and affection required to hear multiple voices explain the meaning of a shared experience is the same care that individuals, families and organisations must use to protect the vitality of a democratic South Africa. The South African struggle has generated enormous creativity and inspiration for people world wide. At some point, the legacy of the present must become a celebration of what the transition to democratic rule means for South Africans themselves. That is, the dynamic new cultural process must involve an emphasis on intergenerational communication. The process must somehow pass on the dignity, elegance, innovation and aesthetic character of the persistent struggle for liberation. In these profound interactions the hopes, follies, foibles, negotiations, collaborations and triumphs an honest legacy can be the rich, living history of the present and the future.

## Notes

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- 1 *Culture in Another South Africa*: a conference hosted in Amsterdam in December 1987 which brought together South African cultural practitioners from 'home' and those in exile.

# Language policy in the New South Africa

**Neville Alexander and Kathleen Heugh**

Language policy and planning can assist efforts to change a state and society in radical ways: changing identities, replacing one elite by another in the state apparatus, and altering patterns of access to reflect the replacement of a dominant class or ethnic group. In short, language planning is an important instrument of revolutionary change.

Brian Weinstein (1990, p. 14)

## Some general remarks on language policy

As a general rule, language policy in any country derives from the intersection of the fundamental political principles and objectives of the ruling elites or classes and the historically evolved and inherited language situation on the ground. The language situation includes features such as the number of mutually intelligible and mutually unintelligible languages in the political entity, the number of varieties of the different acknowledged 'languages', the degree of standardisation, whether or not the different languages and varieties have been reduced to writing, the degree of literacy in each of the relevant varieties, the prevalence of a reading culture in the different languages or varieties of languages, the existence or not of a language infrastructure comprising language planning and development agencies, publishing and printing enterprises, translation and interpreting facilities, lexicographic projects and many other essential language services.

In a multilingual country, two exceptionally important features of the language situation are the hierarchical relations between the language groups or linguistic communities and the prevailing language attitudes of the speakers of the different languages. In a largely monolingual country (the minority of modern states, by any definition), the same issues are relevant but they are described in terms of 'dialectal' and

not 'language', variation. Language is an instrument of communication, among other things. As such it is a necessary element of all social intercourse. A fundamental social domain is that of the economy, in which control of the resources on which the survival of the population as a whole depends is competed for. Often, this contest takes on conflictual and even violent forms.

Be that as it may, it is axiomatic that the dominant language or languages in the economy of any society is or are the language(s) of power. This power derives from the fact that in the economic domain, language is a necessary condition of production by virtue of its crucial function as an instrument of communication. Hence, citizens and others who have to engage in economic activities in the country concerned are empowered to the extent that they know the standard form of the language(s) of power.

In post-colonial Africa, generally speaking, the hierarchical relations that characterise the status of the different languages and varieties of languages during the colonial era have been perpetuated *de facto*, even when constitutional and other legislative provision has been made for equality of status of the main, or even *all* the, languages used in the independent state. Pierre Alexandre (1972, p. 86) has accurately described the way in which the peculiarities of colonial conquest and administration have given rise to a class structure in the independent states based to a large extent on linguistic competencies. Referring to the new elites in the post-colonial situation, he writes that:

Power, it is true, is in the hands of this minority. Herein lies one of the most remarkable sociological aspects of contemporary Africa: that the kind of class structure which seems to be emerging is based on linguistic factors. On the one hand is the majority of the population, often compartmentalised by linguistic borders which do not correspond to political frontiers; this majority uses only African tools of linguistic communication and must, consequently, irrespective of its actual participation in the economic sectors of the modern world, have recourse to the mediation of the minority to communicate with this modern world. This minority, although socially and ethnically as heterogeneous as the majority, is separated from the latter by that monopoly which gives it its class specificity: the use of a means of universal communication, French or English, whose acquisition represents truly a form of capital accumulation. But this is a very special kind of capital, since it is an instrument of communication and not one of production. It is nevertheless this instrument, and generally this instrument alone, which makes possible the organisation of the entire modern sector of production and distribution of goods.

Weinstein (1990, p. 10) makes the same point in connection with the contest between English and French on the African continent. He shows that the French colonial regime was afraid that independence would lead to a weakening of the French language

and to opening the floodgates to British and American influences which, in turn, would threaten the economic interests of French business. He adds significantly that:

Weakening of French would also threaten the status of elites whose French education has been one of their tickets of admission to high state and private sector jobs ... They saw a direct link between the status of the French language and the nature of their state and society.

This orientation continues to inform the language policies of the global power elites, including those of international organisations such as the World Bank and the Overseas Development Agency. In spite of all protestations to the contrary, these institutions tend to promote the interests of those who function through the medium of English or some other dominant language at the expense of indigenous languages on the continent and elsewhere (see, for example, Mazrui 1997).

Another issue that should be spotlighted is the well known discrepancy between policy formulation and policy implementation. As intimated above, what is provided for in the constitution, the laws and regulations of the state and what actually happens in the day-to-day practice are usually quite different and often even quite opposite things. In the sphere of language policy, this tendency is as strong as in any other policy sphere. In spite of these reservations, however, the study of language policy and planning does give one a certain measure of insight into the economic, political and broadly social objectives of the ruling groups in any society. To quote Weinstein (1990, p. 1) once more:

If it is true that institutional language choices can influence identity and participation, which are basic political concepts, then the study of the choices should help us understand more about states and public policies: what values underlie the policies; how a state is being maintained or reformed; how the state is trying to transform the society living within its boundaries; who will benefit, and who will lose; what groups, individuals, and elites have the most influence over public policy. In short, a study of language choice or policy and its implementation or planning can shed light on important political processes and political change. It is by no means peripheral to politics or to general public policy making.

### **Policy positions of the dominant group**

A detailed history of language policy in the Union and subsequent Republic of South Africa has yet to be written. The most satisfying – albeit statistically dated – study is

still the work by Dunjwa-Blajberg (1980). More recent, but partial, studies include those by Heugh (1987), Hirson (1981), Reagan (1987), Alexander (1989) and by various authors in Mesthrie (1995).

During the colonial period, the Dutch as well as the British pursued policies that promoted the learning and status of their respective languages by the conquered peoples. A few choice statements emanating from representatives of the colonial-imperial powers will serve to give some sense of their general orientation. The Dutch East India Company, for example, decreed, among other things, that 'the natives should learn our language, rather than we theirs' (cited in Alexander 1989, pp. 12-13). From a narrow language point of view, the main product of Dutch colonial rule in South Africa was the emergence of the creolised form of Dutch which we now know as Afrikaans. The final occupation of the Cape by Britain in 1806 inaugurated a radically different language dispensation. Under Lord Charles Somerset especially, a single-minded policy of Anglicisation was carried out. Indeed, it can be said that a whole century of Anglicisation (of the white colonists) marks the period between the rule of Somerset at the beginning of the 19th century and that of Lord Milner at the end of the century after the defeat of the Boers in 1902. So successful was this policy that by the 1870s, one of the most illustrious of the Anglo-Afrikaner clans of the Cape, Chief Justice J.H. de Villiers, could tell an audience that although the time was still far distant when the inhabitants of the Cape Colony would speak and acknowledge one common mother tongue, that time would come and 'when it does come, the language of Great Britain will also be the language of South Africa' (Alexander 1989, p. 16). Like all such grand predictions, this one, too, would turn out to be only partially correct. By the time the Act of Union was passed in 1909, both English and Dutch (after 1925, Afrikaans) were declared the official languages of the territory. This provision of the constitution of the white supremacist dominion corresponded to the linguistic composition of the social base of the ruling group.

Throughout the colonial period, the languages of the indigenous peoples of the country were treated as necessary evils that had to be harnessed in order to serve the designs of empire. The Dutch did nothing to transliterate, or even understand, the languages of the Khoi and San peoples, most of whom they pushed northwards into the arid interior and across the Garieb into what is now Namibia and Botswana. As for the slaves, they were compelled by the circumstances of their bondage, like slaves throughout the awful history of 'civilisation', to take on the language of the slave master.

This fact explains why the descendants of the slaves, most of whom came to constitute a component of the people labelled 'Coloured', are Afrikaans-speaking today. During the period of British rule, it was the Christian missionaries who were mainly concerned with the taming of the languages of the African people to serve the ends of empire.

In brief, their main concern was to reduce the Nguni and Sotho languages to writing in order to accelerate the conversion of the 'heathen'. By so doing, they unintentionally segmented the speech continua on the east coast and in the interior respectively and standardised specific varieties used by the inhabitants of the region. This proselytising drive, together with administrative and commercial-economic imperatives, was, paradoxically, the reason for the emergence of many of the 'tribes' (today we speak of ethnic groups or ethnic communities) of South Africa. Terence Ranger (1991), in a path-finding article, traced the processes by which this, on the face of it highly improbable, result was achieved in Zimbabwe, and Leroy Vail (1991) in an anthology of significant scholarly contributions, documented the process for southern Africa as a whole. The other thrust of missionary endeavour in the sphere of language policy was to teach what came to be called the 'mission elite' of black collaborators the English language and culture. These people, who were, of course, competent in one or other of their mother tongues, were an invaluable instrument of British colonial policy.

In practice ... British colonial policy was one of tolerating basic (primary-level) schooling in the relevant indigenous languages (i.e. for the small percentage of black children who actually went to school) and promoting English-medium instruction in a classically Anglocentric curriculum for the tiny mission elite. For the colonised people themselves, this meant that English language and English cultural traits acquired an economic and social value that was treasured above all else while their own languages and many of their cultural traits were devalued and often despised. A typical colonised mind or slave mentality became one of the most potent weapons of colonial policy, a programme built into the consciousness of black people (and of many whites) that ensured that the status quo was, by and large, accepted as good and just. All that one had to do was to climb up the socio-economic ladder which stood ready for every competent, abstinent and disciplined person to mount. If one had these attributes and was able to communicate in English, then – in the mythology of colour-blind individual rights – the sky was the limit!"

Alexander (1989, p. 20)

This policy remained in force, by and large, until the accession to power of the Afrikaner National Party in 1948. As is now well known, this event led to a complete change in all domains of social life. Apartheid language policy, like apartheid policy generally, was calculated to bring about and entrench division among black people and their total subjugation to the white supremacist blueprints of the Broederbond and other think-tanks of the new political class. In most respects, this could be attained by means of the intensification of colonial and neo-colonial policies, but in others it was necessary to initiate quite different approaches. This was the case especially in education and

cultural life generally. The new rulers cunningly tried to make it appear that their policies in these spheres were in synchrony with the post-war British, French and Belgian policy of decolonisation and with the movements for independence that were beginning to get momentum on the continent of Africa. Essentially, the apartheid policies were directed towards the reinforcement of caste-like social structures which would prevent social intercourse between different 'ethnic' and 'racial' groups while permitting all essential mixing of the same groups in the economic sphere as long as this buttressed the inherited system of super-exploitation and racial oppression.

In the sphere of language policy, the diktat of Dr Verwoerd says it all: 'Africans who speak different languages must live in separate quarters ...' (cited in Alexander 1989, p. 21). The most notorious and also most profound historic effects of this policy were to become manifest in education where it culminated in the massacres of young students and workers associated with the Soweto uprising of 1976. One of the most poignant ironies of South African history is the fact that a policy which set out to Afrikanerise all of South Africa and to make Afrikaans the dominant language of South African education saw its political source, the National Party, presiding over the installation of a mainly English system of education from about 1977 onwards, as the direct result of the mass action of the intended subjects of the engineering exercise of the apartheid ideologues. For other reasons, we shall have to return to this subject presently.

At all other levels of society, a policy of colonial (Afrikaans-English) bilingualism was put into practice, one which in effect was an affirmative action programme for Afrikaans-speaking whites for most of the apartheid period. During the forty years that the policy lasted more or less intact, the Afrikaans language was promoted assiduously until it became possible to use it in any of the high-status functions which had previously been the exclusive preserve of English. This very fact, incidentally, is of the utmost importance since it represents clear evidence of the possibility of successful planning and at the same time indicates the existence of essential expertise in South Africa for any future language planning initiatives.

The African languages were deliberately developed as *Ausbau*-languages, i.e. even where it was possible in linguistic and political terms to allow the varieties of a particular language cluster or sub-group, such as the 'Nguni' group, to converge into a more embracing standard written form, they were systematically kept separate through lexical and other corpus-planning manoeuvres (for a definition and explanation of this concept, see Fishman, in Alexander 1992). The languages concerned were, moreover, starved of essential resources in such a way that they could not be used in contexts that implied or demonstrated real power. General social and political policies ensured throughout the era of high apartheid that the African languages remained languages of low status. The apartheid governments gave the impression that they were doing their best to develop and modernise the African languages when in fact they were underdeveloping

them quite deliberately. With utmost cynicism, a mere sense of social progress (like special language boards for each of the African languages!) was given in order to impress 'the international community' which was under the spell of the movement for African independence and liberation from colonial rule at the time.

### Language policy orientations of the oppressed and of the liberation movement

As we approach the late eighties and early nineties, which were to become the years of transition to democratic rule, the policy orientations of the oppressed people and of their representative organisations suddenly assume an importance and significance which they themselves had only dreamt of. The jump from theory (and often from mere rhetoric) to implementation was to prove in many spheres to be a perilous venture, the successful completion of which is in many cases hanging in the air.

To understand what the collective wisdom of the victims of racial oppression in regard to language issues in South Africa was, we will summarise here the effects on the consciousness of the dominated groups of the rulers' policies and of their own resistance to these policies. By the time the transition begins, we shall demonstrate, some people in the NGO sector had managed to integrate this wisdom with the results of comparative research on language policy and were thus able to make a significant contribution to the ensuing debates on language policy in the new South Africa.

Besides the virtual extinction of the languages of the Khoi and San peoples as a result of colonial and apartheid language policies, the most important result of this policy for the dominated classes at the level of social psychology was the relegation of the indigenous African languages to that of low-status instruments of communication in all spheres of life. The systematic, indeed systemic, neglect and underdevelopment of the African languages – especially in the economic sphere – engendered language attitudes among the black people of the country that have become the main obstacle to the formulation and implementation of a democratic language policy in the new South Africa. In a nutshell, the attitude took root that all that is worthwhile in life was (and is) accessible only through knowledge of English. (For all practical purposes, with the exception of the Western Cape, where a definite sentimental allegiance to the language exists, Afrikaans was never considered by black people to be anything more than a necessary but burdensome tool which might help to deal with the harsh realities of life in the land of apartheid). The African languages were taken to be good only for domestic and community purposes, languages of the heart but not really of the stomach. Let it be said as clearly as possible that these attitudes are perfectly understandable and are no different from those assumed by other peoples in similar situations in other countries and at other times. The source of the tragedy of the situation is to be sought elsewhere. We refer to the fact that none of the representative organisations of

the oppressed people or of their leadership was able to transcend the limits of the dominant paradigm within which the language policy of the Union and of the Republic of South Africa was conceived and formulated. With two notable exceptions before the mid-eighties, the question of the status and functions of the African languages was never posed as part of a practical programme of political and cultural-political action. The following vacuous pontifications of a Dr Abdurahman on this vital question were, by and large, typical of three successive generations of black leaders:

The question naturally arises which is to be the national language. Shall it be the degraded forms of a literary language, a vulgar patois; or shall it be that language which Macaulay says is 'In force, in richness, in aptitude for all the highest purposes of the poet, the philosopher, and the orator inferior to the tongue of Greece alone?' Shall it be the language of the 'Kombuis' (kitchen) or the language of Tennyson? That is, shall it be the Taal (Afrikaans) or English?

Alexander (1989, p. 29)

With virtually no exceptions, the 'Taal' could be replaced in this quotation by any of the varieties of the indigenous African languages. Tragically, the anglocentrism of the political, and to some extent of the cultural, leadership of the oppressed people in effect, if not in intention, ensured the predictable outcome of the rulers' policies. For it is a sad fact that the African (or black) nationalist movement did not react to cultural oppression in a manner similar to that of the Afrikaner (or white) nationalists. At the critical time when Bantu education was being imposed on the black people, the leadership of the liberation movement across the board made a de facto decision to oppose Afrikaans in favour of English. The option of promoting the African languages while also ensuring as wide and as deep a knowledge as possible of the English language was never considered seriously for reasons connected with the class aspirations of that leadership. In effect, therefore, the hegemony of English, its unassailable position – as Chinua Achebe calls it – became entrenched among black people. Because it was the only other language that could compete with Afrikaans as a means to power (jobs and status) and as the only means to international communication and world culture at the disposal of South Africa's elites, it became, as in other African countries, the 'language of liberation'.

The important point, however, is that because of the attitudes referred to and the lack of foresight on the part of the leadership, the resistance to the cultural-political policies of the National Party did not result in the kind of cultural movement for the development of the African languages which, potentially at least, was completely possible. Unlike the resistance manifested by the *Afrikaanse taalbewegings* (Afrikaans language movements) in response to the cultural-imperialist policies of Lord Milner at the beginning of the 20th century, the even cruder Milnerist policies of Dr Verwoerd

and his brothers merely gave rise to a middle-class strategy of convenience and evasion, namely, the strategy of promoting or tolerating the sole value of English. While there was no policy of actually denigrating the African languages, there was also no deliberate and systematic attempt to develop, modernise and spread the knowledge of the indigenous languages both for the intrinsic empowering value of such an exercise and as an explicit strategy of cultural-political resistance.

### The crisis of language policy

It is our view, therefore, that what can be called the crisis of language policy is to some extent a crisis of our own making, i.e. the leadership of the liberation movement has to take some responsibility for reducing the political struggle to not much more than a struggle for the franchise. Their failure to do what leaders such as Amílcar Cabral did in Guinea Bissau by neglecting careful cultural analysis is now beginning to tell. It is as well to describe the nature of the crisis at this stage of this article since all progressive resistance attempts at grappling with 'the language question' were (and are) ultimately attempts to address this crisis.

In a nutshell, the crisis is characterised by the fact that the vast majority of our people do not at present have sufficient command of the high status languages (English and Afrikaans) to compete for well paid jobs and prestigious career options on a basis of equality with the 20% of the population who do have the requisite language skills. On the other hand, the language resources that the majority do have (most of the metropolitan and urban population can speak with high proficiency at least two – often radically different – African languages), are not validated in the market place. In other words, the indigenous languages are not accorded a status such that knowing them is of material or social benefit to the speaker outside the relevant speech community itself. This situation is made a thousand times worse by the fact that in South Africa, language and colour (or 'race') coincide to a very large extent because of the peculiar historical development of the labour market. Because of Bantu education specifically, a general semi-lingualism prevails and most of our youth have been handicapped in the merciless race for power, position and individual progress in the very competitive society in which we live.

Because the link between language, culture, science and technology has not been explored in depth in regard to the indigenous languages, we are faced with a situation where our children have to acquire the concepts in this vital area almost entirely via what is in most respects a foreign language (usually English) for them. Since they do not live in an English environment normally, there is no spontaneous reinforcement of that which they learn (by rote) in their classrooms. Add to this the fact that their general environment is devoid of print stimuli and of a natural-science culture, and it becomes

crystal clear why it is that despite millions of Rands of investment in English second-language (ESL) programmes, progress in these fields is so slow.

Another derivative element of the crisis is the lack of confidence in the value of their first or home language (mother- or father tongue) that the total situation under apartheid produced. Most people have come to believe, for example, that the African languages 'do not have the words' for most modern objects and scientific concepts. As a result, speakers of the African languages tend to believe that it is essential that they learn English so that they can overcome this 'deficit' of their languages. There can be no more devastating self-inflicted wound than this. The loss of self esteem and of a dignifying self image is fatal. Without oversimplifying the matter, it can be said that this issue constitutes the greatest challenge to language planners and policy people in South Africa. It is at base a matter of cultural policy which is integrally related to the political and economic future of the society.

#### Language planning from below

Developments in the early eighties led to the establishment of the Education Coordinating Council of South Africa (ECCSA). Organisations such as the South African Committee on Higher Education, the Teachers' Action Committee, the Education Opportunities Council, the Trust for Christian Outreach and Education and the South African Council of Churches came together because of the increasing disruptions of the educational process through the tactics of 'ungovernability' to consider what should be done. ECCSA was the result and it was given the task of identifying the main obstacles to effective learning in the schools and universities. It spawned a number of educational initiatives, one of which was the National Language Project (NLP) which was established in 1986 as a community-based project, under the directorship of Neville Alexander. The NLP's purpose was to popularise language policy issues and raise awareness about the importance of African languages in education, especially in relation to literacy and accessible second language programmes in these languages. The focus of the NLP's work was towards rehabilitating the status of African languages and giving voice to proposals 'from below'. Consequently it piloted a number of language teaching and training programmes and a small newsletter which gradually grew into a quarterly magazine, *Language Projects' Review*, which after mid-1993 became known as *Bua!*

In addition to the promotion of African languages, the project staff believed that English would function as a lingua franca or linking language if everyone had adequate access to English Second Language (ESL) programmes. Consequently, ESL courses were designed to suit adult and child learners from community organisations, trade unions and co-operatives. Initiatives in schools only became feasible after resistance

Harmonisation offers an economically feasible opportunity for the maintenance of African languages in schools and in higher education. Thus, this proposal is in part a step to reversing – by means of continuing – the process of standardisation of the African languages. The proposal is to a large extent driven by the educational and economic benefits which harmonisation would contribute to the democratisation of South African society. The issues which it embraces have been hotly contested by two interest groups: those who have benefited from linguistic division and those who fear that this would result in the loss of some spoken varieties of African languages (see Msimang 1996; Alexander 1998). The proposal is in line with similar processes in other parts of Africa; notable examples are Standard Shona in Zimbabwe and Standard Igbo in Nigeria.

By 1992 the NLP's approach to ESL had changed. Information based on linguistic audits on the continent was revealing that exoglossic languages on the continent were not effectively utilised beyond a small middle class. Democratisation in Africa was not advancing, partly because the failure of the majority of people to become proficient in English, French or Portuguese effectively left them on the margins – outside mainstream economic activity and power (Heine 1992). The failure of ESL programmes in South Africa, including the ones initiated by the NLP, was assessed against findings elsewhere on the continent.

The NLP looked also to the work of Jim Cummins (1984; 1988), Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) and their colleagues and readjusted its position. Whilst it had always promoted the use of first language for literacy and as a language of learning throughout the early years of schooling, the project had also been persuaded of the sense of a gradual transition to English. Further research on language policy and planning paradigms and the critiques of James Tollefson (1991), Phillipson (1988) and Mullard (1988) about the international failure of ELT resulted in the consolidation of a proposal that education in South Africa should ensure that additive bilingualism become the focus of language in education policy (Heugh 1992). In essence this means home language maintenance throughout schooling in addition to a language of wider communication (English for most students) or an African language for speakers of Afrikaans and English.

During the period leading up to the finalisation of the interim Constitution (September 1993) the Project for the Study of Alternative Education (PRAESA) under the directorship of Alexander, and in co-operation with the NLP, developed more detailed proposals for multilingual schooling and in particular a new language in education policy (Heugh, Siegrühn and Plüddemann, 1995). PRAESA and the NLP, arguing in favour of a language-as-resource orientation toward language policy and planning, made joint submissions to the multi-party constitutional negotiations. One of their suggestions was that an independent body, a National Institute or Council of Languages, be established for the purpose of developing language policy, planning and

development programmes in the country. Such a body would include the 'voices from below' in order that it might be able to reflect more accurately the language needs and preferences of the majority, as well as avoid the paralysis of centralised control and the potential this has for undemocratic practices.

### The ANC

During 1990, immediately after the unbanning of the liberation organisations, the ANC revived its own internal debates about language policy, beginning with a Language Workshop in Harare. This was followed by the establishment of a Language Commission during 1991 whose role was both to inform and consult with the public on language matters (Crawhall 1993, pp. 20–23). The Commission as a sub-structure of the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture, released a document, 'African National Congress Policy Considerations' (1992) which includes the following:

(T)he ANC supports the deliberate fostering of multilingualism in schools, adult education programmes, in the workplace and in all sectors of public life ... Though language experts argue that initial education is best conducted through the 'mother tongue' ... large sections of black urban communities have already pressurised primary schools into beginning with English as the medium of instruction from day one ... Any language policy must reflect the voice of the people and this voice is more important than any model which emerges.

The ambiguities here were a reflection of those current in the broader context of South African society with regard to the weight given to the role of English *vis-à-vis* African languages. A significant contribution from within the ANC, but independently of the Language Commission, was made via a submission to the constitutional committee by Zubeida Desai and Robin Trew (1992).

They made a distinction between passive and positive rights where, by adopting a strong position on effecting rights (positive rights), citizens could be protected from 'exclusion from effective participation in public debate and to inequitable enjoyment of public services, justice, education, power and economic advancement'. Crawhall (1993, p. 21), in analysing this contribution, draws attention to the importance of a comment included in Desai and Trew's document:

Language rights need to deal both with what Chinua Achebe has called the unassailable position of English, and with the fact that African languages are the primary linguistic resource of most South Africans.

This signalled a shift from an entirely rights based position within the ANC to a stronger, more vigorous approach to rights which acknowledges the view of language as a resource. However, the position of the more powerful forces within the ANC lay with the ambivalent position captured by the ANC's 'Language Policy Considerations'.

During 1992 the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), undertook a large scale study of education and policy alternatives for a transforming society on behalf of the ANC. A NEPI researcher, Kathy Luckett, after liaison with Alexander and the NLP, amongst others, formulated a bold proposal for 'national additive bilingualism' (Luckett 1992).

During 1993 a working group, under the auspices of the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) at the University of the Witwatersrand, was commissioned by the ANC's Education Desk to arrive at a new language in education model. The recommendations which emerged from this group and those from the NLP and PRAESA were entirely compatible.

### Negotiations between the ANC and the National Party

Whilst the language issue continued to be debated with vigour amongst sociolinguists in the country during 1993, the multi-party negotiations were really being conducted between the two strongest political forces, the National Party (NP) and the African National Congress (ANC). The significance of language did not hold equal weight for the two groupings. Afrikaner Nationalism was rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century European notion that language and 'national' (ethnic) identity are synonymous. The fear of losing political power was exacerbated by the fear that the identity of the Afrikaner people would be lost if the status of their language was diminished.

Thus the official status of Afrikaans could not, for the National Party and its supporters, be compromised. In contrast, the ANC did not attach a similar importance to language issues. Much greater significance was attached to removing or diluting a wide range of symbols of apartheid, of which language policy was only one. The official policy of the ANC was that all languages would be regarded as equal, but that none should be accorded official status. The unofficial conviction, however, was that English, for pragmatic reasons, would function as the official language of government. This view of English had its origins in the early history of the ANC when English had been regarded as a language of liberation and a language through which opposition to the Afrikaans-speaking government would be mediated.

Additionally, many senior members of the ANC had been exiled in English-speaking countries for many years prior to 1990 and had come to believe that English functioned as the *lingua franca* in the country. The National Party and lobbyists for the Afrikaans language began to reassess the position of Afrikaans *vis-à-vis* English. Eng-

lish remained and still is the greatest threat to the status of Afrikaans as a language of vertical use. Apartheid language policy, fuelled by a fear of the supremacy of English internationally, had failed. The privileged position of Afrikaans could certainly not continue if African languages remained weak whilst the position of English gained ground, by default and with the added impetus from African language speakers who had lost confidence in the wider functionality of their languages.

Ironically, the Afrikaans language lobbyists began to see that the future of the Afrikaans language would lie within a multilingual paradigm and a strengthening of the functional use of African languages. The idea that languages could be viewed as resources rather than as problems became increasingly attractive, and the Afrikaans language lobby shifted from the segregationist position to language as a right, in order to protect its inevitable minority situation in the future and a tentative commitment to language as a resource. The *Stigting vir Afrikaans* saw the strategic value that resources built up in the Afrikaans language, in lexicography and other areas of language development, might be shared with African language development agencies.

By early December 1993, as the multi-party constitutional negotiations were reaching closure, an eleventh hour compromise was that there would be 11 official languages. Afrikaans would not lose its official status and the equal status of 11 languages would be enshrined in the constitution. Additional protection for Afrikaans was built into the Interim Constitution with what has come to be known as the non-diminution clause:

3.(2) Rights relating to language and the status of languages existing at the commencement of this Constitution shall not be diminished, and provision shall be made by an Act of Parliament for rights relating to language and the status of languages existing only at regional level, to be extended nationally...

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1993

In essence this clause was intended to provide a psychological guarantee to the white Afrikaans speaking community and to ease the passage of accepting change. Not only was Afrikaans to keep its status at national level, but in those former 'bantustans'/homelands which had jettisoned Afrikaans as an official language, its status would be restored.

However, no such act of parliament was ever effected and the rights based principle enshrined here was not or could not be implemented. The other clauses in the constitution according official and equal status to eleven languages perhaps were never intended during the early hours of the morning on which they were drafted, to take real effect.

However, they set up a series of expectations which were bolstered by provisions for the establishment of an independent Pan South African Language Board

### Political resistance and land control

A clue as to the more fundamental reasons underlying the development of a wall decorating tradition in these study areas can probably be found in the struggle for land which has taken place in southern Africa over the past two centuries, most particularly since the 1920s. Although such competition has, in the main, involved indigenous black and immigrant white groups, the Venda-Tsonga case study indicates that the control of land is also a point of contention between indigenous communities.

Despite the claims of white propagandists, it may be shown that the arrival of European settlers in southern Africa did not bring about a *pax abalunga* over the region. On the contrary it is recorded that, since 1811, we have seen 24 major conflicts and over two score smaller localised conflagrations. This means that, on average, one major rebellion, war or uprising has taken place in this country every third year for the past 187 years (Frescura 1988a).

An analysis of these conflagrations also makes for interesting reading. Only two were the result of internal black-on-black schisms, although seven others were affairs to which only whites were invited. Their chronology also reveals that, in almost every case, they coincide with the spread of white settlement throughout the region, beginning in the Eastern Cape, fanning out onto the highveld and eventually engulfing the entire coastal belt. The reasons recorded for these conflicts are many and varied. The majority however were the result of competition for land between white and black rural groups. The single most important source of friction between the two therefore must be seen to lie in the control, or lack thereof, that each exercises over agricultural land.

The relationship between the rural activity of wall decoration and the land conflict which has taken place between indigenous black and immigrant white is not one which may be easily quantified. For one thing, it is doubtful that any one person or body took the conscious decision that walls should be painted as an act of popular protest against the process of land dispossession. For another, the nature of the subject matter renders it highly unlikely that it would be openly discussed with strangers, particularly if they were white. Also, the possibility of stumbling across the fountainhead – if indeed she may even be considered to exist! – is so remote as to make such empirical research virtually impossible. However all circumstantial evidence on the subject seems to indi-

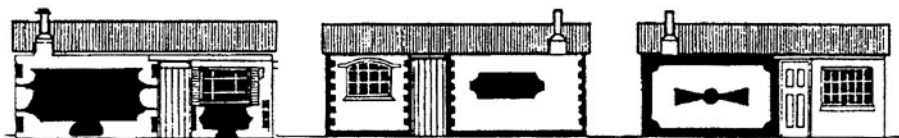


Illustration 14

Decorated dwellings, Western Native Township, Johannesburg (Beinard 1965).

What was missing, however, was the clarification of an unambiguous national language policy which could guide all government and parastatal institutions. Thus, a haphazard approach was taken in many quarters, and in most instances the previous practice of official bilingualism gave way to a new monolingual practice of using English mainly, even in the national parliament. Ideally, a national language policy should have been integrated with the development of a strategic vision for the national economic development plan. This did not happen and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994, as well as its successor, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution: A Macro-Economic Strategy (GEAR) of 1996 have neither integrated nor included language policy and planning.

### Arts, Culture, Science and Technology

The Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology commissioned a Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) during the second half of 1995. The group included a wide range of language workers and experts, largely outside of government and these consulted as widely as possible over a six-month period January to June 1996. The task was to define the outline of a language plan, but it was not tasked with explicating policy and thus delineated only the principles upon which such policy ought to be based. The spectrum of domains covered by this group was broader than any other national planning activity undertaken either here or elsewhere and credit needs to be given to Ngubane for both the insight he demonstrated and the capacity to decentralise control of this activity. This initiative provided precisely what had been called for across Africa, namely the opportunity for voices from below to inform decision-making. The final LANGTAG Report, *Towards A National Language Plan for South Africa*, was submitted to the minister on 8 August 1996. Unfortunately, within a few months and before this initiative could be taken further the minister was replaced. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology is now, two years later, recasting the LANGTAG Report into a language plan of the department.

Nevertheless, the significance of the LANGTAG Report is undoubted. Language workers, planners and implementers accepted without reservation that the direction of language policy and planning developments in South Africa would be viewed from the perspective of language as a resource and a broadly empowering view of functional multilingualism. There was agreement that the LANGTAG process was to provide 'an enabling framework rather than to put forward a prescriptive blueprint' (LANGTAG Report 1996: 8). Attention was focused on the following areas: language equity; language development; language as an economic resource; language in education; literacy; language in the public service; heritage languages, sign language and augmentative and alternative communicative systems; and equitable and widespread language services.

Of special note is the prominence given to South African Sign Language in the Report. Whilst the sociolinguistic work with Sign Language is probably most advanced in Kenya, nowhere else has the natural language of the Deaf been included in a national language planning process.

Other initiatives specific to the work of DACST in relation to extending language services, notably in the attempt to establish a trial Telephone Interpreting Service for South Africa (TISSA), signal important changes. The significance of a telephone interpreting service, particularly in order to increase access to emergency services for persons who speak languages other than English and Afrikaans, needs to be acknowledged. Once established, this would provide a pivotal service upon which DACST could build additional services and effect an equitable language plan.<sup>3</sup> DACST has also taken the initiative, through its State Language Services, now National Language Services, to focus on the role of language in the economy and has encouraged exploratory research in this area (DACST 1996b; 1996c). Particularly useful have been their explorations into the role of languages and trade for South Africa with the rest of the continent (see for example DACST 1997).

#### The establishment of PANSALB

Delays in establishing the Pan South African Language Board after the election of 1994 resulted in an intervention by the Minister of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, Roelf Meyer. Legislation for its establishment was enacted in September 1995 and the members appointed in April 1996. The terms and references of PANSALB include the language clauses of the 1993 Constitution and as mentioned above, include the notion of language as a resource. PANSALB's establishment was accompanied by many expectations from civil society as well as government. The constitutional provision for this body promised, in theory, that government would effect the promotion of multilingualism and development of African languages. The structural conditions, however, under which its legislation places it, have rendered the body instrumentally weak. The regulations under which the Board is required to operate have resulted in an organisational paralysis.

At the time of writing the Board has only just been given the licence to occupy its own offices, employ full-time operational staff, acquire standard office equipment and have control of its own funds. The Senate was replaced by the National Council of Provinces under the 1996 Constitution and this organ of government became the new custodian of the board. The funding, however, was channelled through DACST and the operationalisation was to be effected by the Department of Public Works. Each of these three parties, in turn, has refused to accept responsibility for unravelling the blockages. This has led to frustration both within the Board and without.

the most part to a single area of learning during the curriculum planning process. That the role of the home language in the learning process, across the entire spectrum of education, was overlooked, despite a 90 year history of commissions and reports on education in Africa attesting to this, is almost inconceivable. The prospects of successfully implementing a new curriculum and language in education policy which are not fundamentally integrated are slim. Furthermore, given the examples of language policy in other African countries, it is clear that unless the language in education policy is supported beyond education, particularly in a national economic development plan, a policy which promotes African languages will be undermined by the monolingual habitus and drive toward English.

### Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: implications

Shortly after the 1994 election, a new round of constitutional negotiations began within a structure known as the Constitutional Assembly. The final constitution was eventually adopted in May 1996 and amended on 11 October of that year. Again the language clauses could not be agreed on until the final days of negotiations in October. The 1996 constitution substantively altered the language clauses and scaled down many of the earlier provisions. On the one hand the expansive commitment to achieving the equal status of 11 languages was de-emphasised, while on the other hand, the language clauses were tightened to give greater guidance for the development of an explicit national language policy as well as for a division of responsibility between government and PANSALB (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, Clauses 6.(1)–(5)). These are summarised as follows:

Principles which are the responsibility of government:

- there are now 11 official languages in the country
- the state has a responsibility to elevate the status and practical usage of those official languages which did not previously enjoy official status
- national and provincial governments must use at least two official languages
- national and provincial governments must regulate and monitor their equitable use of official languages.

Principles which are the responsibility of PANSALB:

- PANSALB must promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of all official languages, the Khoi and San languages, and South African Sign Language and
- PANSALB must promote and ensure respect for all other languages used in the country.

At this point it is necessary to return to the current impasse between DACST and PANSALB. The Board's position is that government must accept its constitutional responsibility to effect the official status of the 11 languages. The proposed amendments from DACST to the PANSALB Act, however, signal a shift of this responsibility from government to the Board. In particular, under the previous government a lexicography unit had been established for Afrikaans, *Die Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal (WAT)*. This had been part of a complex array of language planning activities to elevate the status of and develop the language. Advisors to the new government have indicated that it is necessary to use the apartheid logic of establishing lexicography units for each of the official languages in order to give effect to their equal official status. Furthermore, advisors to the Minister of ACST have convinced him that all the lexicography units should be placed under PANSALB. The Board's view, however, is that it cannot be both an active participant in language development and an impartial monitor and advisor of such procedures. It also believes that this activity falls directly under government's own responsibility.

It is the view of the authors that in addition to these arguments, 11 separate lexicographic units are a logical extension of separate development, not of a process which is attempting to knit together a fractured society. Furthermore, separate lexicography units do not assist in the process of maximising interlinguistic communication. Whereas there is an excellent case, in our situation, for an inclusive and comprehensive dictionary of Nguni varieties and similarly one for Sotho varieties, 11 separate dictionary units seem neither economically viable nor helpful to communities attempting to bridge barriers in communication. Should government push ahead and insist that PANSALB take on the responsibility of 11 lexicography units, then it will become clear that the path chosen for language development is one which will not succeed in promoting multilingualism. At best it would create a veneer of an elevated status for African languages. At worst it will feed separatist and ethnic division.

### The Commission

The 1996 Constitution also makes provision for the establishment of a Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities. From a structural perspective this may present a number of difficulties. Firstly, if PANSALB is to survive, an overlap of functions between PANSALB and the Commission would have to be resolved. More problematic, however, is that the commission might undermine the work of the PANSALB precisely because its point of departure is from within a different paradigm. Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins (1988, p. 394) astutely remark that: 'Social justice is not a question of "equality of opportunity" – which is the liberal view – but of "equality of outcome", and beyond.' The *raison*

*d'être* of the commission is to support ethnic or separatist tendencies which would give ethnic groups the opportunity to set themselves up in conflictual relationships in competition for resources and privileges. Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins crystallise the purposes behind language policy choice in the following: 'An emphasis on ... mother tongues can thus be for "exclusion", "pacification" or "empowerment".'

The Commission is only able to promise pacification, although several analysts fear that in the long term the Commission will feed ethnic ferment and competition for scarce resources. Alexander (1998, p. 3) alludes to the danger of tiny splinter groups emerging, each claiming a separatist identity and claiming rights to resources. Since the interdependence of languages and their communities receives scant recognition within the rights paradigm, the potential for conflict and adversarial relationships to thrive amongst linguistic groups is considerable. Hence any developmental activity initiated by PANSALB or any other agencies, based on the promotion of multilingualism rather than languages in isolation from one another, would be undermined. The provision made in the new constitution for this commission is symptomatic, however, of an environment in which political leaders do not understand language beyond its connections to cultural identities, histories and discrimination.

## Notes

- The first half of this chapter was composed largely by Alexander, the second half by Heugh.
- 1 The success of the literacy and language learning programmes was largely limited to creating a favourable environment for other, more successful ones to flourish. All the same the NLP successes and more often its failures, contributed to the adaptation or development of other proposals for language learning programmes and language services. Probably the most successful programmes emanated from another NGO, the English Language Teachers' Information Centre (ELTIC), located in Johannesburg.
- 2 The International Conference on Democratic Approaches to Language Planning and Standardisation, held by the National Language Project, at the University of Cape Town, 12-14 September 1991.
- 3 Internal difficulties within DACST have delayed the establishment of TISSA.

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## **Culture, media and the intellectual climate: apartheid and beyond**

**Arnold Shepperson and Keyan Tomaselli**

Cultural debate in South Africa has tended to coalesce around the contradictions between two traditional lines of cultural discourse. On the one side, 'culture' has been the target of Leftist intellectuals because of its *anthropological* meanings. In other words, there has been great awareness of the way the apartheid state used 'culture' as a means to bolster arguments for racial separation. Indeed, anthropologist John Sharp noted that government had actually 'created greater scope for ideological manoeuvre' by replacing the idea of 'race' with that of 'culture'. However, the approach remains authoritative, and even after 1994 issues of 'cultural medicine' and 'law as cultural expression' still recuperate the sense that cultures are somehow bounded and partially incommensurable wholes.

The other line of debate followed the 'High/Low/Popular' Culture polemic, which can be approached from the point of view of the political economy of symbolic production. This basically involves confronting conceptions of 'taste' followed by various media producers and then seeing how big business and other large economic stakeholders benefited from policies based on these conceptions. On the basis of whatever findings we might have made from these studies, then, we can see how to encourage those excluded by existing ownership or subsidy systems to go about producing 'culture' for themselves. Generally, the early reputation of the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies is most commonly associated with its work in media (print and electronic) and performance, based on critical interventions using this second line of thought.

However, these two lines of analysis raise the question of whether there is any specifically 'cultural' issue that somehow unifies them. On the one hand, too enthusiastic an anthropological approach leaves the researcher with an overarching study of 'the whole way of life' (Brill 1995; Williams 1958). In this case, cultural studies takes on an imperialistic character, colonising not only anthropology, but also sociology, psychology, political studies and geography. On the other hand, too close a focus on the

taste paradigm drives the researcher into an ever-expanding textualization of the topic. In this case cultural studies becomes a kind of neo-positivist practice which reduces the complexity of the world into literary-linguistic 'structures'. In either case, it becomes difficult to place the issues which may be at stake. Interpretation becomes the sole methodological strategy, at the expense of accurate description, rigorous analysis and the formation and testing of situationally-relevant hypotheses.

### The Theoretical Genesis of CCMS

Early cultural studies in Natal redeveloped Raymond Williams's and Richard Hoggart's original Marxist reworkings of literary criticism, through the work of the Birmingham Centre, to elaborate a broader and less economically dogmatic form of social and political criticism. Originally, English cultural studies did this by examining different kinds of expression as if they were texts having a similar status to those in the canons of intellectual literature. Forms of expression like radio and TV soap operas, workplace practices, sport reporting and broadcasting, youth fashion and pop music, for example, were studied in relation to wider trends in education, the economy, and English class values. This provided new ways of dealing with trends in the United Kingdom and later in America and Australia.

However, research in South Africa showed that the conditions here were rooted in a much more violent history of dispossession and exploitation than existing cultural studies approaches were able to explain. In England, Australia and America, for example, people of colour are minorities who are not formally excluded from the generally accepted system of civil rights. They have long had recourse to law and the courts when they found themselves subjected to discrimination at work, in their studies, or when they are looking for a place to stay.

South Africans had to deal with a situation where a minority had almost complete power and where this power was exercised in every sphere of life. There was also, however, a long tradition of radical resistance to this situation. The Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit therefore drew its students from among activists in the labour, education and development fields. The Unit's work used the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies' critical approach to expand existing lines of resistance in trade unions, schools and community organisations, and to develop a situationally African approach.

The Unit opened up a cultural studies which synthesised the rigour of British cultural studies and meshed this with strategies developed by Latin American academic activists like Armand Mattelart and Paulo Freire, and later, Jesus Martin-Barbiero, amongst others. African philosophers like Paulin Hountondji and Abiola Irele, to name just a few, provided a fertile ground for recontextualising cultural and media

studies within the Southern African socio-political environment. However, this development did not depend on the emerging 'disciplinisation' of cultural studies in the USA, Australia and elsewhere. So far, South African cultural and media studies has avoided becoming the contested 'property' of communications studies, literary criticism or anthropology (Hardt 1992; Brill 1995; Marcus and Myers 1996).

### Historical background

The Centre for Cultural and Media Studies began life in 1985 as the Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit, within the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Natal, Durban. The name change occurred at the end of 1989. From the start, the Unit sought to provide a location for those who were confronting cultural issues from within their disciplinary trajectories. A crucial dimension of the Unit's mission was also to provide a theoretical home for anti-apartheid cultural activists. Initially, the Unit developed its theoretical position from that of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, with additions based in oppositional film theory, political economy and Peircean semiotics. The general thrust of this early phase is reflected in contributions to *Rethinking Culture*.

*Rethinking Culture* became something of a *cause célèbre*, which collated into a single volume seminar papers which had previously been individually distributed. Both reprintings of the books and the individual papers sold nearly ten thousand copies not only to academics, but also to communities of struggle, especially in the Eastern and Western Cape. Other books (Tomaselli 1988b; Tomaselli and Louw 1991; Louw 1993; Mporu, Manhandu and Tomaselli 1996) both critique and extend the First-World wisdom of cultural studies by drawing on experiences of both resistance and government.

Tomaselli and Louw's exhaustive survey of departmental communication and media studies emphases during the 1980s argues at length that the Mass Democratic Movement mobilised cultural studies in its development of communication, media and mobilisation strategies.

Work on broadcasting and cultural identity by Ruth Teer-Tomaselli and her co-authored work in political economies of the South African press and broadcasting, have informed MA and PhD theses around the world. Like the Centre's community-aligned praxis, Teer-Tomaselli brought to the SABC a pragmatic form of cultural studies which impacted on the life and thought of the nation at large at its most crucial historical moment. This was not the sort of post-LitCrit as cultural studies has largely become within literary studies.

Other vectors incorporating domestic cultural studies include the work of Ian Steadman and Belinda Bozzoli at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johan Muller at

the University of Cape Town, Lynn Dalrymple at the University of Zululand, and Les Switzer at Rhodes, among others. Aside from individual articles, books and chapters in books, there are more than enough South African cultural studies-influenced journals like *Critical Arts*, which initiated the field in South Africa in 1980 with regard to media and cultural studies, later followed by disciplinarily oriented journals like *South African Theatre Journal*, *Agenda* and *Pretexts*.

All of these post-dated the culturalist strand of cultural studies popularised by the Wits History Workshop and work by Ari Sitas and the Junction Avenue Theatre Group on African performance, not to mention the seminal social humanist historical writings of Charles van Onselen. Cultural studies has been occurring in South Africa for over 20 years; it is not in the future imperfect as some recent collections seem to have suggested (Van Staden 1996; Cooper and Steyn 1996).

The existing work reconstitutes European theories into local contexts, rigorously redefining the field in terms of local discourses, values and heritages. Indeed, some, like Sitas, pioneeringly tried to start from scratch, to start from Africans and Africa. Indeed, even the early BCCCS-derived and culturalist approaches were criticised for not sufficiently acknowledging African gnoses (Masilela 1988).

But conservative cultural theory as mobilised by Afrikaner Nationalists in South Africa actually has its origins in the 1930s. It was this Khuyperian and neo-Fichtean strand which was later contested by the Unit in its research, community struggles and teaching. Handel Wright also notes that the topics and issues which contemporary US and other cultural studies schools claim in direct lineage from British scholarship, actually engaged people over a much longer time-span and geographical spread. The problems aired in the name of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s; the work of Russian 'Culturology' in the 1930s; and Ngugi wa Thi'ongo's indigenous performance group of the 1970s, all add to a wider record that is finally gaining acknowledgement as media and cultural work deserving recognition and respect.

The experience of cultural studies at CCMS and other centres is not the record of a discipline becoming settled amongst other disciplines. All the practitioners and publications cited above follow the 'tradition', if you like, in which cultural studies is a *field* within which disciplines may plant various seeds. Thus many of the South African interventions in the field came about through dramatic theory and popular performance (Steadman 1989; Dalrymple 1987; 1997).

Further work in education has seen cultural studies eliciting responses from South African scholars who want to make interventions developed from local experience in local conditions, making recommendations which are applicable to local practitioners in a variety of contexts. Since its inception the South African sector of the field has also featured a visual anthropological orientation.

### Travelling Theory and Getting Back to Basics

CCMS's position is that cultural studies does not study some object or text or interpretive community called (a) culture. There is no such *thing* as (a) culture. Rather, there is a set of related forms of behaviour, conduct and action which constitute the *project of culture*. What this means is that the first step in any cultural studies research has to focus on how the topic relates to the practical business of culture. This is only circular if 'culture' is considered as a common noun. Following Charles Sanders Peirce, however, we take any common noun to actually contain some verb, some core reference to something which somebody *does*.

'Culture' is derived from the Latin *colo, colere*, which means among other things to 'tend, to look after, to live in a place'. The actual word, 'culture', comes from the past perfect participle of *colo* and thus might be said to refer to the accomplishment to date of some business of tending, looking after and living in a place (Shepperson 1995). Now the primary problem is that somehow cultural studies has to keep track of how this original sense, which would have been quite obvious to thinkers like Coleridge and Herder, remains sedimented in the kinds of interpretive mayhem that passes for the concept of culture today.

The concept of culture is a very European one. As a key term, it originated in the environment of specifically European problems which in turn were the result of the emerging modern age. The export of the concept followed the export of so much other baggage of the Modern Age: democracy, human rights, preventive medicine, social health and so on. Other less valued baggage includes imperialism, the division of misery characterised by global poverty, and media imperialism among others. In short, every claim to cultural independence, the democratisation of culture and similar issues, is derived from the export of a very specifically modern context of meaning.

Thus taking recourse to American and European experience does not necessarily mean seeking answers from there. Today people can draw on this work because the uneven, frequently brutal, spread of modernity makes it relevant by helping to see the concept of culture as problematic on a global scale.

To retain the original cultural studies link with the tradition of radical critical work, and since the traditional political-economic discourse of this tradition has become incoherent, one programme focuses on relating this Peircean-pragmatic phenomenology of the concept to the post-marxist radical discourse. Thus certain interventions in the fields of cultural policy, health media and communications, intercultural media, and the ethical dimension of multiculturalism draws on typical representatives of the post-Marxist tendency like Agnes Heller and Hannah Arendt. Obviously, it could be argued that this approach simply replicates the curse of cultural studies, by borrowing theories out of context. However, this accusation must take into account just what happens in an intellectual climate. Theory is a special case of language, and is proper to

the realm of specialised intellectual discourse. What theory tends to confront therefore is other theories about something. When contesting theories enter the discourse we variously begin to talk of Paradigm Incommensurabilities, Paradigm Shifts, Conceptual Aporiae, Category Mistakes and the Indeterminacy of Radical Translation.

In much contemporary cultural theory this only leads to the indefinite expansion of writing, raising the quite valid observation that meaning is never fixed into a dogma. Any question about semantic stability, then, becomes another irrelevant example of the questioner's contextually-challenged consciousness. Seeking grounds for action is to be treated with pity by postmodernists because there no longer is any 'ground'. There is supposedly only the shifting play of signifiers.

This kind of interchange actually carries within it a special kind of truth, one in which the current trendy discourse actually partakes. This is the interpretation of *modernity* as the condition applicable to an age when the human world is expanded by its own *Record*. Theories are in a double sense both a kind of meta-record, and indistinguishable from the wider record itself. What modernity came to recognise as its distinguishing characteristic is that what is written *and printed* will remain constant from one generation to the next – though interpretations will differ.

Modernity does not have a single epistemic, theological, cosmological or other kind of *tradition*. Authority resides in the Record for a good reason: if Immanuel Kant or Wilhelm Meister or WEB Du Bois or EW Blyden or Sol Plaatjie or Paulin Hountondji printed a representation of some sort, we can consult *that* representation in the form *they* recorded it. In modernity, in short, authority is preserved and transmitted by the representation of its originator. What thus distinguishes modernity is the always-present capacity for Records to present the representations of those whom we cannot consult directly. Taking someone else's word about how our predecessors represented themselves is not necessary. Records of the contexts in which they were/are working, and which shaped their theories, are always open to debate. We can retrieve the representation and judge for ourselves the relevance or otherwise of what *they* wanted to argue.

The qualities of an *intellectual climate* in the modern world are a function of the kinds of selection that people can, ought, or need to make from the record. Our experiences as cultural studies practitioners in the media field show that there are several such climates present in the South African environment. The latest strategic project to promote an 'African Renaissance' is actually a serious attempt to define the meta-climatic intellectual environment for transformation in the wider regional and continental context. When people speak of 'Renaissance' there is a broad and inevitably contradictory record of what the term represents. This is not just a sort of lexicographic relation between the term and its correlates or 'meanings', but the actual Record of the Renaissance *and the Record of representations which in fact constructs the period as a Record in its own right*.

Montaigne, Machiavelli, Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci and all the others did not invent the term 'Renaissance'. But the Record shows that subsequent representations *constituted* their representations as 'The Renaissance'. Other representations exist also: the Borgias, the Avignon Papacy, the Council of Trent, and so on, which tell us more. What we may want to think of as a kind of general spiritual movement was nothing of the sort. People were also pretty brutal, and nobody from the period represents a single 'paradigm figure' or 'founding father' (Heller 1978). It's all very well to recall the glories of the Sistine Chapel ceiling; in the same period Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake. Women demonised as witches were tortured and immolated. There *ought to be* a lesson in this when we choose our terminologies!

### Modernity and Postcoloniality

It is not a question of 'what is' modernity, as if one can by virtue of an existential identity 'locate' or 'reify' modernity. Instead, the concept covers a multiplicity of contested and contestable breaks with inherited conditions. It is 'contested' precisely because modernity is *political* in its origins with the representations of Machiavelli, Locke, Hobbes, Hooker and Grotius, among others. The notion is also 'contestable' precisely because it is *historical* in its locations and trajectories, since the work of Vico, Gibbon, Hegel, Marx and others. Together, these characteristics account for the *normativity* of the concept of Modernity.

Modernity is not 'centred' either: its origins and developments span generations and continents, and did not always occur in sync. 'The troubles' of Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia may seem to stem from the 'same' modern delinking of religion and politics. However, each situation comes from very different trajectories, in terms of religious and political struggle, attempted solutions (and related failures), and breakdowns of trust. The conditions which people in each context sought to address in order to improve their respective lots were never the same. Completely different hopes and frustrations are evident in each case. However, this does not exempt either situation from the stress of modernity. These situations indicate that modernity itself is pluralistic in character.

In the colonial and post-colonial context, every unit of oppression and resistance (dominions, crown colonies, empires, and so on) had conditions which imperialism impacted upon and from within which the units of liberation emerged. Each post-colonial position is uniquely liberated, although also generally related to other contexts of oppression and liberation. We need some way to assess the *stance towards modernity* inherited in each context of struggle and liberation. Elaborating a norm for judging a standpoint towards another normative concept is inappropriate. This is more than the fallacy of the many questions, or the potential regress to infinity of norms that we

might determine as each judgement is made. Rather, the issue comes to a practical closure when such norms enable us to confront the question 'what is to be done in the here and now?' Because the origins of the post-colonial condition are as pluralistic as the many different ways imperialism impacted on the liberation project, there is little in common between the ways people in different contexts act in response to this question.

The Record has grown since the Renaissance. *Nobody can claim to know the entire record.* Modernity, no matter how 'constructed' a term, throws up a record too vast for any individual to scan and know. Raymond Williams identified as one dimension of culture, the 'recorded culture' of a period, from which people elaborate a 'culture of the selective tradition' (Williams 1965, pp. 66–68). In this light, the real question is therefore not 'what do we need to do to kick-start the African Renaissance?' Instead, the programme based on post-Marxist political theory and pragmatic cultural analysis demands that we ask 'what is the best judgement we can make of Africa's position in, and stance towards, modernity?' Addressing the latter will perhaps clarify what we will not find when we try to answer the former.

Migrating theories are as much sweepings from the record as they are a kind of metalinguistic morphological transformation of some 'original' theories. We *choose* from the record we know. The 'migration' of theory is therefore the transfer of individuals' or collectives' familiarity with a selection of the record, from one context to the other. This is not to say that people can't say anything new. Rather, every selective record can contain validly new representations generated on the grounds of peoples' familiarity with the selection. Taking representations from a context in which the selected record is acceptable, into another context, carries the risk of marginalising that original representation. This is because the new context contains more or less radically different selections of the total record. When theories travel, they must adapt from their origins within one stance toward the record of modernity, to the conditions proper to a possibly very different stance to another selection from the same grand record of modernity.

### Media in societies in transition

It is decisive that the business of developing or raising endowments into talents is one that takes place *between generations*. In general, the upshot of the modern age has been the proliferation of historically-defined generations. This came about because in modernity the classical environment of generations, the household, has been effaced into the Social Realm (Arendt 1958, pp. 8–9). Natural generations are continually born as strangers into the realm of the intimate, and culture essentially refers to the project of raising people so that they become not-strangers in the social realms of modernity.

When a large-scale change in circumstances comes about, for whatever reason, then the cultural affect is generally different across both the natural and the social generations which are present when that transformation is affected. In general, as Raymond Williams (1963, p. 101) noted, there are at least three generations present in a situation subject to these kinds of transformations.

Thus it is possible to see the whole 'post-modern' phenomenon as a generational-cultural rather than an epistemological or ontological condition (Heller and Fehér 1988). The idea of a democratically diverse media sphere is still new enough as an institution for at least one generation of people to remember the 'good old days' when they could be educated, informed and entertained in a comfortable, if limited, national environment. At the same time there is second set of generations, whose lives could hardly be said to have been well-ordered in the recent past, for whom such media represent another introduction into a changing order of life. Finally, there is a generation which is growing up into a world in which media of this nature will conceivably be part of the overall media background, a factor which will simply *be* there as they grow. Within these three broad generational groupings, there are several possible sub-generations, based on the outcomes of apartheid's ethnic-cultural institutional divisions.

These broader generations and their relevant sub-groups live together in the same world, both formally and informally. Formally, they now inhabit a socio-political environment in which the interests and need of all are of equal concern at the level of government. Informally, though, their worlds remain both culturally and structurally differentiated from each other *as a hangover from the excesses of apartheid*. At a crude level, the cultural differences between these 'media generations' correspond to the very different ways in which people develop their endowments into the kinds of talents with which they can meet their needs.

In all three of these generations, and particularly the first and second, people view the achievement of some higher standard of education and standard of living as the ideal accomplishment for those who will grow up into the new socio-political environment. From a media point of view, then, one can anticipate that – whatever the form of media control which emerges – these constituencies will be most aware of potential educational shortcomings of media in relation to their (grand)children. In other words, no matter how media – whether print, digital or broadcast – are controlled, these constituencies will react according to what kinds of effects they perceive on their children's educational possibilities.

The point is actually quite plain once this generational clarification has been made: in a context of transformation in which *equity* is one of the driving principles of change the perceptions of those who have the most to gain and the least to lose cannot be forgotten. If politics is indeed the realm of activity in which the new (that is, *unexpected*) is possible, then continued marginalisation of those who are presently the most marginal could have some uncomfortable socio-cultural outcomes in the future.

### Media and the intellectual climate in transition

The political nature of transition must impinge on the ways different generations encounter the changes of circumstance in which the transition takes place. The point is not that ideas *determine* material conditions or vice versa. Instead, *changing ideas* must accompany the ways people in the various generations encounter their worlds in the time over which the transition occurs. Crucially, the cultural dimension of this process affects each generation differently. Each must discern and ponder the different sets of options which transition brings to their specific experiences, needs and desires.

Thus someone who is a member of the generation least familiar with democratic media may well find that the plurality of voices unleashed constitutes threat to the identity she or he desires for the growing generation. In another context, a member of the same generation may well consider the new media as a challenge which they may not be able to meet but which nonetheless offers greater opportunities for their children. In either case, the generation conscious of transition will draw on its familiar discourses and values to judge the situation and on the basis of these judgements *influence younger generations* to develop their talents accordingly.

The issue here is that in order for a new media environment to emerge, practitioners must recognise that there is a plurality of such generational relationships in place. There is very little information upon which to predict how people are going to respond to the transition: the development of growing generations' interpretations of media is a political question precisely because every response is likely to contain some unexpected elements in it.

It is thus conceivable that dividing media strategies along generational lines will reproduce previous political divisions in new guises. However, we believe that when viewed in relation to the 'post-modern' condition and its stress on cultural diversity and identity discourses, the generational analysis can help to define a new way of looking at the relation between the nation, culture and media.

Such a definition is beyond the scope of a presentation as brief as this, but there are some pointers as to how such analysis might work. These relate to the form of the state, the function of government and the changing nature of political interaction:

- 1 The State in a world of globalising economic and cultural production remains tied to the territorial reach of infrastructures, and the administration, maintenance and establishment of these (Mann 1988). In a country like South Africa, therefore, existing infrastructures will form the basis upon which new media structures will develop. This does not just mean using the broadcast, cinema, press, and telecommunications infrastructures. The point here is that not *every* person in each generation will have comparable needs for using the full range of new media. State, public service, community and

commercial media policies therefore need to include the thoroughly non-media but demographically decisive business of an efficient population census which can provide data identifying where potential audience needs may emerge. In other words, media infrastructures have to be effectively targeted to reach the audiences most likely to need them.

- 2 The Government of countries is becoming less and less identifiable with the administration of functions of the state. This has to do with the ways populations accost institutions when problems need to be addressed. In the developed world, the emergence of 'posted' generations divided along regional, educational and class lines means that in many cases the present generations don't encounter the problems government was designed to solve. Put differently, many public media institutions in the developed world reflect needs and interests of people two or more generations ago and are not constituted to deal with the issues that plague the generations present and maturing in the world now. In South Africa, a public medium like the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has the advantage of being capable of making demographically precise determinations of just who, how many and where these constituencies are. Government thus doesn't have the luxury of administering uniform institutions: it must provide means to facilitate communication between diverse government and civil society institutions in general. As a factor in public service broadcasting, for example, government must add its emerging *communications* function to the capacity available to the service provider, without itself doing the broadcasting.
- 3 Finally, politics in the era of a multiplicity of community identities would seem to revolve around networking more than any other activity. Sectors in the public realm, the non-governmental institutions, economic institutions and so on to mention just some of the fields of activity, all have different agendas on the face of it. However, the well-being of all these sectors can be understood to have a collective aspect within the geographical limits of the and in relation to the communicative networks of government. The issue therefore is whether the plurality of South Africa's generational constituencies' needs and interests can be met by these sectors. It is here that media provide the breadth of record from which people in their various generational, cultural and social surroundings can choose to break out of intellectual climates defined by narrowly sectional or sectarian interests.

### Clearing out the Greenhouse Gases

We suggest that South Africa's media sector has as its primary role a duty to contribute to the development of the wider regional networking functions of the whole range of governmental, civil and economic sectors. This is only an outline task, however. The media sector must therefore strive to *account* for the diversity of generational cultural experiences present and which define, however much by default if not actively, the 'media public' at large. These issues don't define the limits of media practice. Our analysis, obviously, doesn't provide any conclusive solution to the problem of funding, but it can serve to define the limits of the constituencies the different media providers must strive to reach. Once this is known, then the numbers make it possible to generate real production and distribution costs.

Our analysis clarifies the first strategic thread of any 'Renaissance': Africa's representations must be added to the record. However, our analysis shows that there is a broad record which already defines many voices present in the environment. Thus the objective is to nurture a readiness to explore the record as widely as people's conditions allow. Where conditions hamper this, the focus must be on the conditions and not on the people (Guambe and Shepperson 1997). The reason for this lies in a subtle difference in the ways people encounter the record. On the one hand, they encounter a limit of the record defined by that which they are *told not* to read. This states that the record consists of that which one ought to read, and that which one ought not. Conversely, people encounter the openness of the record as conditions encourage or discourage them from reading that which they *have not been told* to read.

The post-colonial world in general – this means much more than 'Africa' – must recover the globally declining talent for reading as an end in itself. One way of looking at previous development is to see these programmes as introducing a canon, a fixed and limited record that purportedly contains all the answers to whatever is needed to get from here to there. Under these conditions, reading is an institutionally instrumentalised activity that people need to do. One reads to pass an examination, upgrade one's qualifications, or to familiarise oneself with the latest technology. This reproduces the notion that education in general means demonstrating an ability to reproduce the selection from the record that constitutes a syllabus. In the context of development, this means a travelling curriculum that will reproduce a population which is a copy of some or other original context in which the curriculum worked. It does not include the library from which teachers selected the texts from the record to develop the syllabus in the first place.

However, the openness of the record demands the whole library. Indeed, development demands an entire network of libraries which spreads the record across the widest range of conditions. It is only in this way that people can become aware that there is plenty that they will not be told to read. The political imperative of the Renais-

sance, therefore, is to nurture and encourage people's curiosity to test and transgress the limits of the record they encounter. Conversely, the political risk of the Renaissance is that reading of this nature necessarily gives rise to original interpretations that contradict the limited record of the curriculum. Whatever we set up today, therefore, must accommodate the new and unexpected representations that reading as an end in itself will engender. In the light of this, what does the present media situation in South Africa hold out as a basis upon which to move forward? Or is the situation one in which somebody has to start from scratch?

### The media landscape I: print media before 1996

Throughout the late 1980s, there were two national newspapers aimed at South African black readership, the *Sowetan* and the *New Nation*. The final edition of *New Nation* appeared in 1997. Battered by falling readership, a lack of finance and the absence of experienced editorial staff after 1994, the paper barely survived the installation of the democratic dispensation it had fought to install. On the other hand, *Sowetan* steadily maintained market share and after 1994 was one of very few print media to increase circulation. *Sowetan* focused on a specific market based on race, whereas *New Nation* followed the policy of non-racialism espoused by movements like the United Democratic Front (UDF) and African National Congress (ANC). Ideologically, therefore, the *Sowetan* took a somewhat different stance from that of *New Nation*, espousing a Black Consciousness (BC) position.

These developments apparently reinforced two trends which emerged after the 1980s: first, the apparent entrenchment of a global market-driven political economy; and, secondly, a renewed (or revived) stress on ethnic, racial and cultural politics of identity. There has been a general collapse of local economic security with the end of the ideological tensions of the Cold War. Prior to 1988 people could make a clearly intelligible choice between State and Market systems of socio-political organisation. It is arguable that the state paradigm collapsed because centrally-planned systems are too slow to adapt to changes in means and forces of production. This means that workers and others placed at a disadvantage within market economies no longer need to be protected, as a means to prevent them rebelling as a class. Indeed, it is arguable that there is no working class anywhere which can even command a majority vote for a representative parliament, let alone unite into a revolutionary force (Hirst 1990, pp. 151–152).

In South Africa, apartheid created the local situation where a small minority controlled a relatively large unrepresented majority of unskilled labourers. This made it possible to deploy proletarian organisational strategies quite successfully, based on a selection of the State paradigm record. But the change of representative status among

the country's majority in 1994 introduced rural people, women previously denied residential status in urban areas, the peri-urban population, among others, into the broader 'media public'. After 1994 such people all enjoy formally equal representation and the classical working class is now a distinctly privileged minority in the broader South African context.

This impacted *New Nation's* circulation because its community of readers had shifted dramatically after 1994 in terms of ideology, aspiration and power relations. *New Nation* was part of the vibrant 'alternative media' sector under apartheid, which not only challenged conventional journalism practices, but were organically connected to community-based religious, civic, student and women's organisations and trade unions (Tomaselli and Louw 1991, pp. 8–9). The wide-range of alternative publications attempted to fill the structured absences of the state and corporate media. As such they contested the dominant ideology through developing a critical awareness of the history and context of the struggles of marginalised communities (Patel 1985, p. 14). No single publication could therefore be said to duplicate the role of another. *New Nation* fulfilled a unique role, not only when compared with other ecumenical newspapers but in relation to the progressive press as a whole. It was the only nationally circulated newspaper which provided a vehicle for the expression of the aspirations of the urban working class.

As a corporate entity, *Sowetan* responded to the growing awareness that black South Africans, no matter how economically oppressed, constituted a market worth penetrating. In 1979, a marketing counsellor for the McCann-Erikson advertising agency, for example, noted that blacks accounted for 75% of the country's soft drink consumption, 60% of beer, 54% of tobacco, 50% of detergents, 40% of clothing and footwear and 40% of expenditure on food.<sup>1</sup> *The Sowetan* was launched in February 1981. It was initially distributed mainly in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area and by 1987 had a circulation of 160 000.<sup>2</sup>

According to the 1987 All Media Products Survey, the readers of the *Sowetan* were almost all black and belonged to the two highest income groups among blacks. Some studies have suggested that the ideological role of corporate and state media in the 1970s and 1980s was to promote the emergence of a middle class of black consumers.<sup>3</sup> At that time, both English and Afrikaner capital used product advertising as an ingredient of just such an overall strategy (Holt 1988, p. 3).

On the other hand, the *Sowetan* and other comparable titles from time to time functioned as vehicles of vociferous opposition to apartheid. For example, *Drum* magazine is famous for its exposés in the 1950s and 1960s on a number of contentious issues such as the use of prison labour on farms, the brutality of prison conditions for blacks, and the repressive measures of apartheid from a black point of view. It is arguable that *New Nation* followed the kind of advocacy journalism encouraged by Michael Traber, William Biernatzki, Robert White, and others. *Sowetan*, in turn, fol-

lowed conventional commercial reporting procedures. As a bi-weekly naturally *Sowetan* would have had to operate to deadlines, and as a commercial medium would also have made good use of wire services. As a weekly, however, *New Nation's* staffers had the advantage of being in a position to interrogate issues from a wider perspective, by being able to contact and interview a broader range of commentators, for example.

The contraction of the left-alternative media, in the first instance, came about primarily because after 1994 funding agencies had to accommodate the shift from activism against the state to a policy of affirmation of the new representative state. The constitutional transformation of 1990 to 1996 removed the grounds for many organisations' *raison d'être*. The developmental problems bequeathed to the new and legitimate state by the old could be confronted. As a result, funding agencies channelled their support into government initiatives aimed at redress. *New Nation* was bought by the *Sowetan* in 1995 and survived for only another two years (see Mpofu 1996). This came about because its readership and editorial staff had failed to grasp the underlying struggle which both led to and ultimately destroyed apartheid. After looking in the next section at alternative cinema provision, we will discuss the ways that a cultural and media studies approach can overcome this lack of alternatives.

### The media landscape II: cinema before and after apartheid

In South Africa it is reasonable to suggest that many people are conscious of cinema. But they do not experience it as a need. Cinema is part of the equipment people may or may not encounter (Heidegger 1962, p. 98). Developing a new cinema culture depends equally on both giving existing generations what they want, and developing new generations' ability to identify democratically valid options within which some may elect to have their endowments raised into cinematic talents.

A variety of studies have presented a damning critique of the ways in which successive South African film policies reproduced the racial and class divides of that unhappy country (Tomaselli 1988a; Blignaut and Botha 1992). One of Tomaselli's methodological approaches was the use of political-economic analysis to demonstrate the control over production and distribution under apartheid to keep black and white separate culturally.

Between 1910 and the late 1980s South African cinema was fairly active, producing films ranging from the seminal *De Voortrekkers/Building a Nation* of 1916 to Jamie Uys's internationally popular series of *The Gods Must Be Crazy* films. From 1913 on, the industry was controlled by I.W. Schlesinger's entertainment monopoly (Gutsche 1972). Apart from theatre and for a short while in the 1930s, radio, this covered production (African Film Productions), distribution (African Consolidated Films) and exhibition (African Consolidated Theatres). Originally, American interests had con-

tracted to distribute their wares through African Consolidated Films (AFP) for showing in African Consolidated Theatres (ACT) venues (Gutsche 1972).

The industry rapidly fragmented along racial and linguistic lines as the implementation of the National Party's apartheid strategy went ahead after 1948. An example of the effect of these policies is the Avalon Theatres Group, established in 1939 and owned by Natal-based South African Indians. Avalon lost heavily after 1948 as white-owned companies edged them out of white group areas. Under normal competitive conditions its 18 screens could have grown to about 60 by 1990 (Moosa 1994). In 1969, a major shift in the political economy of SA film distribution occurred when Afrikaner capital's life assurance giant SANLAM (SA National Life Assurance Mutual) formed a shell called SATBEL (Suid-Afrikaanse Teaterbelange Beperk – SA Theatre Interests Ltd.).

SATBEL took over the operations of independent drive-in and indoor group Ster (Star) Films. As Fox's management style and capitalisation policies became unwieldy in the face of emerging trends in cinema viewing, SATBEL bought out Fox and renamed its operations Kinekor. MGM joined forces with Cinema International Corporation (CIC) to form MGM Film Trust and continued marketing in SA through the newly developed CIC-Metro theatre and distribution chain (Tomaselli 1988a, pp. 161–163). The introduction of broadcast television in 1976 saw a two year lull in cinema attendance, during which time SATBEL merged its cinema holdings into the giant Ster-Kinekor group. Eventually, no less than 43% of prime exhibition venues were directly owned by SATBEL (Tomaselli 1988a: 164–165). Television viewership stabilised around 1978 and by 1979 the cinema-going public had increased to levels greater than before 1976 (Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1987).

As various events unfolded during the 1980s, and the cultural boycott bit deeper, developments slowed down in terms of international distribution linkages with South Africa. Cinema production more or less collapsed but for the ongoing work of anti-apartheid independents like Anant Singh (*Place of Weeping, City of Blood, Tenth of a Second, Quest for Love*), and a quite astonishing number of subsidy-driven international co-productions of appalling quality (e.g. *Gold!*, *Shout at the Devil*, *King Solomon's Mines* and a series of Ninja films) (Taylor 1992).

After 1990, when the liberation movements were unbanned, and especially since the election of 1994, things began to change. The cinema of apartheid had defined cinema culture as something 'owned' by complete and autonomous ethico-political groups. Post-apartheid cinema culture, however, opened the way for a sort of socio-political division between some kind of 'high' culture and a 'low' or 'popular' or 'working class' film culture. A settled 'popular' culture commercial circuit was already in place, profitably controlled by the big groups (Shepperson and Tomaselli 1998). At the same time, an alternative 'art cinema' circuit based at film festivals and certain big city suburban cinemas had emerged after 1990.

However, several small outfits survived which managed to produce and distribute oppositional cinema forms. Many of the importers and distributors of 'alternative' commercial films (Ninja films from Hong Kong, for example) provided them to exhibitors who fell outside the major chains. Over the years people in disadvantaged communities indeed struggled to make available some minimal provision of exhibition space. In community halls, illegal drinking places, garages and other spaces, video players and 16mm projectors were obtained by whatever means to show whatever could be found from the alternative importers' catalogues. In these same spaces, documentary material produced by trade unions and civic organisations was also shown for educational purposes or to inform communities (Steenveld 1992). This activity led to the formation of alternative film producers like the Film Resource Unit (FRU), which continues to operate from Johannesburg.

In 1996, FRU established its African Feature Film collection which makes films produced in Africa by Africans available in 35mm, 16mm and video formats. Student bodies at several institutions of higher education, especially in the main urban region of Gauteng Province (Johannesburg, Pretoria and the various cities around these), created African cinema appreciation societies. These groups either hired titles from FRU, or arranged outings to attend showings arranged by FRU. The latter option was made possible through a sponsorship arrangement with the Newtown Cultural Precinct in Johannesburg's central business district, whereby FRU premiered films on a weekly basis on Friday evenings.

A lot of attention is also directed at facilitating new production. Thus the Electronic Media Network (M-Net), a South Africa based multinational pay television corporation, initiated the annual New Directions competition for directors and scriptwriters. In the first half of each calendar year, the company solicits proposals from first-time cinema directors and writers. Proposals are scrutinised by a panel of experienced professionals, and through a process of mentored refinement six proposals are selected for production. The final products emerge from a further refinement session, in the form of 30-minute dramas broadcast on selected M-Net channels. Another initiative is the M-Net All Africa Film Awards, an annual event first held in October 1995.

The net result is that the opportunity for African cinema to get exposure as demonstration of an alternative field of talent gets diffused into a group of exhibitors and distributors who are likely to reach more than just middle-class college cineastes. Even more decisive is the potential for dedicated organisations to provide the context within which to identify those who possess suitable endowments. Thereafter, it is open for other organisations to develop these endowments in ways which encourage precisely the 'wild card' characteristics that set aside the talented from the competent. Finally, the co-existence of both development and exhibition activities means that even those who do not demonstrate the endowments needed for *making* film will be growing up in an environment where they can learn to *view* film differently.

The potential for critical viewing is the ground upon which a more democratic kind of cinema culture can evolve. A government cannot tell people what to watch, or what kind of movies are or will be 'good for' them. But our research suggests that it can provide a context within which audiences can learn to watch more than just Hollywood genres. The environment now exists within which these post-apartheid generations can begin to learn for themselves how to go about deciding film quality. For a viable cinema culture to emerge, such strategies can contribute to audience development. Much as encouraging a culture of reading as an end in itself will enrich the intellectual environment, so audience development can enhance the wider aesthetic climate which adds spice to the intellectual realm.

#### Conclusion: cultural studies beyond the media.

Referring to the enormous gap between the much-too-rich and the much-too-poor in the present global dispensation, Ted Honderich (1989, p. 5) observes that these differences are sufficiently great for one to propose that 'if one knew only the average life-times of these two groups of beings, one would suppose they were two different species.' Using life-expectancy as a criterion for making this 'pedagogic' assessment reinforces how contemporary conditions assault the sensibility of people who take the radical project seriously. Yet there is potentially a quite serious tendency among extreme cultural relativists to argue that concern over living conditions in the non-metropolitan world is an example of 'cultural imperialism'.

On the basis of the kind of work we have outlined above, cultural studies *can* stand the situation back on its feet. Research and teaching which is critically supportive of policy and constructively critical when the situation demands, is beginning to show up. Thus recent projects do not simply beg the question of government policy, but seek to develop innovative approaches to the concrete business of addressing Honderich's 'two species' conditions in South Africa. In 1995, the enormous parastatal Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) initiated a series of innovative projects in Cultural Reconstruction and Development (CURED), followed by the Development, Culture and Communication Programme (DECCO). These integrate Non-Governmental Organisations, telecommunications provision, arts and performance, museums, environmental groups and development agencies into a growing Internet database aimed at facilitating the cultural dimension of development across sub-Saharan Africa and beyond (see Guambe and Shepperson 1997).

On another level, the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS) responded to the new state's early attempt to create AIDS awareness media, which had taken the form of a lavish theatrical extravaganza. Although expensive and produced by an internationally renowned playwright, the extravaganza was never going to reach the

people whose poverty placed them at the greatest risk in the AIDS pandemic. As an alternative approach, CCMS developed a government communications strategy designed to draw in the plurality of media players, social marketing bodies, primary health organisations and others confronting the AIDS phenomenon.

This 'Beyond Awareness' approach (Parker 1997), formally launched in 1998, not only aimed to increase the effectiveness of media-related activity, but also to set up a governmental network which linked the players in civil society with relevant state agencies. Social welfare departments are also drawn into the process, to assist with people affected by the death of parents, breadwinners, or others. A variety of other state sectors also tap into a cabinet-level co-ordination body that helps to bring best-practice methods to the attention of implementing agencies, though some commentators were less than sanguine about government's abilities to listen (Tomaselli 1997), or communities to learn (Kerr 1997). Finally, the strategy draws on the generational analysis to set up medium-term and long-term action frameworks which will hopefully accommodate unexpected developments.

The process takes place in a cultural-generational dynamic that is simultaneously political transformation, intellectual renaissance, and untreatable pandemic. The use of cultural-studies based generational analysis assists those managing the business of confronting the social and cultural side of the AIDS phenomenon at all levels. As a general strategic instrument, for use at the level of international, national or regional co-ordination, the approach generates methods that parallel those of Intelligence agencies: information is enriched through the broader understanding of the relations peculiar to the context in which events or processes occur. Yet at the local level, the approach can help NGO volunteers, local government health workers, and even sex-workers' organisations identify ways to meet immediate challenges that particular local constituencies might pose.

Finally, however, the application of cultural studies to the questions of AIDS policy should not be seen as another example of 'Cultural and Policy Studies'. What CCMS did in the Beyond Awareness instance was to take a specific approach to the conceptual analysis and logical discourse of the idea of culture, and apply it to the media and cultural situation specific to South Africa. Although the AIDS strategy was designed for a specific political and intellectual situation defined within the structures of (and the structural change from) apartheid, the conceptual basis as a ground for method has attracted NGO interest in neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe. The point as we saw it was that cultural studies must continue to test the conceptual relations between not only the concept and expression of 'culture', but also the social and (especially) political environment. And the political, the realm of beginnings (Arendt, 1970), is always the defining factor in laying the foundation for the selections from the record that are the intellectual climate within which the development of endowments into talents is determined.

## Notes

- 1 *Work in Progress*, August 1979, p. 57.
- 2 CCSU 1987.
- 3 *Work in Progress* 1979; Tomaselli *et al.* 1989.

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