

WHAT WERE ALL THOSE MASTERS DISSERTATIONS ABOUT?

This issue of SUBTEXT concentrates on the coursework and thesis masters dissertations submitted by the 1995 students at the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies.

Redefining segmentation in Radio Listenership: *A Case Study of SAfm.*

Maggie Stenhouse chose the controversial change from Radio South Africa to SAfm as the topic of her study in which she successfully examined the attempt by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) at re-segmenting its radio listenership in post-apartheid South Africa.

A change in the political situation impacted heavily on the SABC which redefined its public service role with new vigour.

In line with its public service mandate, the Corporation undertook to serve citizens more effectively by redefining the national English radio station, Radio South Africa, instead of targeting a 'dying' white, elite elderly audience who understood English as a first, second or even third language.

The result was the launch of SAfm in March 1995. The ensuing 'English backlash' forced the SABC Chief Executive of Radio, Govin Reddy, as well as the Station Manager, Jack Mullen,

to defend the new station.

The national English radio station had never had cause to appeal to a wider English audience in the past and there was no indication that the targeted audience would form in response to the station. The station's listenership was down to 230 000 by September 1995, prompting the SABC to discuss its value to society.

Where is she now?

Maggie has since joined the world of advertising, and is currently a Media Planner for a local agency. She has however not severed her links with CCMS, and is Production Manager for *Critical Arts*, a Cultural Studies journal that is co-edited by CCMS and Murdoch University's Centre for Research in Culture and Media.

e-mail Address :
govends@mtb.und.ac.za

NAPAC : Conflict in the Performing Arts

Belinda Harward's dissertation examined the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC), which is a state-funded organisation that was established within a segregationist social and political paradigm in order to promote and showcase professional theatre in the Natal region. The period 1990 to 1994, was one of profound change in South Africa, and this research project examines the attempts made by NAPAC in locating itself within a developing social, political and economic framework. This research has been approached from a cultural studies perspective, intending that it will assist in the extrapolation of trends in the transformation process of cultural organisations faced with similar pressures.

Centre for Cultural and
Media Studies
University of Natal
Durban 4041, South Africa
Tel: 2602505
Fax: +27(031) 260 1519/
260 2214

The Bold and the Beautiful: soap opera and the urban black viewer in Kwazulu-Natal.

In the light of the SABC's move towards a policy of increased local content programming, it is essential that it be ascertained why a completely alien American soap opera has a vast black audience. There is an obvious paradox between the SABC's emphasis on local content programming and the immense popularity of *The Bold and the Beautiful*. This study by Michelle Tager examines whether *The Bold and the Beautiful* contributes in any way to the social reality

of the viewer and whether or not it provides any kind of cultural reinforcement to the black urban viewer in Kwazulu-Natal, which is the geographic area in which the study was undertaken. Michelle chose to focus on a black urban audience firstly because blacks constitute the majority of the South African population. A second motivating factor was to ascertain why people from an afrocentric background are so taken with an American program which has an almost exclusively white cast. The objective lies therefore in establishing the ways in which an urban black South African audience identifies with this soap opera that is so alien in its cast and its content.

The topic was discussed from the per-

spectives of ethnographic audience response theory and reception analysis. Soap operas have more frequently than not been examined in the context of feminist theories for which reason Michelle chose to steer away from this rubric, and to focus on the degree to which *The Bold and the Beautiful* is consumed across the gender divide. Little work of this nature has been done in South Africa, and no doubt Michelle's dissertation will make a contribution to the existing body of work.

Michelle is currently studying towards her doctorate at CCMS. She lectures the narrative film course at CCMS, and tutors in the English Department and at Varsity College.

TV Documentary in post-apartheid South Africa: Promoting a multiplicity of voices

Kubeshni Govender, presently the co-ordinator and producer of the CCMS documentary video project, chose the genre of documentary for her dissertation, which examines the television documentary *Ordinary People* as a product of an historical moment.

Ordinary People is located within the genre of direct cinema film production. It is found that elements of direct cinema manifest in the 'text' of the documentary, and consequently provide the producers with a suitable vehicle that differentiates the format of *Ordinary People* from the more 'conventional' forms of documentary. Discussion of the ways in which viewers interpret documentary establishes 'rhetoric' as a mechanism employed by producers to enhance the acceptance value of their programmes. Theory of group media, community video and ethnographic film is used to

assess the production process of *Ordinary People* according to principles of participatory communication. It is found that the participatory nature of *Ordinary People* can be aligned with that of the ethnographer Jean Rouch, rather than with process-oriented approaches to media. An investigation of *Ordinary People* within its socio-historic context revealed the producers of the series to be 'actively' engaged in the creation of a 'new balance of forces' in society, through the text of *The Peacemakers* (1993). Semiotic analysis of *The Peacemakers* (1993) explored how initial conceptions of the producers were translated, through elements of television production, into structures of meaning. The analysis discovered that signs of peace, reconciliation and tolerance were reinforced by *The Peacemakers* (1993), which promoted a sense of 'progress' in a changing South African society.

Politics and the Press: A case study of the *Times of Swaziland* and the *Swazi Observer* 1992-1994

"The cultural institutions within the social formation including the mass media are primarily ideological in form and function, and together they help to conform or deny the power of the ruling status quo" (Gramsci, 1971). This study by Sandile Simelane is an attempt to analyse the Swazi press as a cultural institution, focussing on whether the Swazi press has facilitated in confirming or denying the power of the Swazi ruling classes. Swaziland has been under a monarchical system since independence in 1968. Arising out of a state of emergency introduced in the country in April 1973, the Swazi monarchy suspended the 1968 Independence Constitution. Such an event transformed the constitutional monarchy into an executive monarchy. In this political proc-

ess the monarch had to use some Repressive State Apparatuses to consolidate and maintain its domination over the Swazi masses. The event also resulted in the suppression of any forms of opposition.

Since the beginning of 1992, this political formation has been characterised by continuous contestations between monarchical and political constitutional forces on the other. In this contested political process, the government and the opposition have employed the press to put forward and justify their positions on their preferred political system.

The aim of this study is therefore to analyze how the Swazi press has portrayed such political processes.

A I D S in Africa today

This study by Maxwell Mthembu comprised of an assessment of the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS information campaigns on radio in Swaziland, in an attempt to explain why the number of HIV/AIDS infected

persons increases by the day despite the dissemination of information on radio.

The influence of radio

Radio has been extensively used in the process of conscientising people about the disease and persuading them to change attitudes using a medium that most people have access to in Swaziland. Semiotic and participatory approaches provided the theoretical framework for this research.

Semiotics provides an insight to how people come to make meaning out of text that has been encoded. The participatory approach explains that success in the fight against AIDS lies in the involvement of people in the planning, producing, management and evaluation of these messages.

In short, the paper attempts to discard the strategy presently employed by health professionals using the 'top-down', linear model of communication, to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS.

This study comes up with recommendations and considerations to be taken in future in the formulation of messages on HIV/AIDS.

Corporate monopoly in the South African Print Media.

For his dissertation, **Beki Mpofo** chose to analyse post-apartheid rearrangements of press ownership and control following the reform process that led to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. Located within the historical context of the South African political economy, it pays attention to the decline of the alternative or leftist press from the close of the 1980s. The incorporation of *New Nation* in 1995 into the corporate press marked the final decline of the alternative press in South Africa. This decline should be rooted in the dynamics of sociopolitical and economic reform in South African society.

Linked to this decline, and of importance to this study, is the way the powerful private enterprise newspaper sector has made attempts to change in response to political criticisms emanating from interest groups within civil society, and the African National Congress (ANC) in particular. The ANC ascended to political power in 1994, emerging as the most significant political faction in the Government of National Unity. The decline of the alternative press and the restructuring that has occurred in the newspaper industry, has had the impact of further narrowing the South African public sphere of which the press constitutes an important part.

Government Control of Zimbabwean Journalists. A Case Study of Zimpapers: 1890 - 1994.

From 1890 to 1980, Zimbabwe was under the control of an authoritarian and brutal colonial system that had no respect for the lives of black people. All the colonial institutions served the interests of the minority group by marginalising the majority along racial lines.

The role played by the print media was paramount in the maintenance of the status quo, because it was co-opted into the consensus constructed

by the successive colonial governments. The various publications produced by the South African owned Argus Groups subsidiary and the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing company, were propaganda sheets meant for the consumption of the minority whites.

The buy-out of the foreign owned Argus Groups shares and the launching of the Mass Media Trust by the state was meant to democratise the

print media in Zimbabwe by distancing it from government control. This study by **Jerome Dube** seeks to give an historical investigation of the relationship between the post-independent government and the print media. The paper highlights the challenges faced by the Zimbabwean journalists within the broad classic issues of freedom of the press, freedom from intimidation and free access to information.

Mass Media for the informal sector? *Durban's Street Vendors.*

Nhlanhla Cebekhulu's investigation relates to the principle of economic development for post-apartheid South Africa as envisaged by the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

Small business is the backbone of the South African economy. However, lack of access to relevant and understandable information and advice hinders the development of small enterprises, particularly micro-enterprises. Due to the past discrimination and lack of opportunities this problem is most severe among participating black entrepreneurs in this sector.

The central problem in the process of reaching the micro-enterprises is that the nature of communication systems and their relevance for the micro-enterprise activities seem to over-emphasise the print media. Subsequently, this over-emphasis concentrates efforts on receptive individuals and communities, ignoring the micro-enterprises that require the service, since the majority of these are comprised of disadvantaged and uneducated people.

It is essential to investigate the central role of the micro-enterprises and how they consume mass media, so that an appropriate mass medium to reach this sector could be identified.

Cebekhulu's approach is to understand the role of the mass media, which are often seen as teachers of the micro-enterprises, in the broader context of national development. The ideal is that mass media can be used to teach people skills and to influence the attitudes and behaviour of the micro-enterprises.

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING AND LANGUAGE: POLICY OPTIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA.

The holding of the first all race elections in April 1994 ushered a new democratic age to South Africa. Within this era, various public institutions of public life had to start concurring with new socio-political values and norms of public accountability.

For the SABC this meant reorganising itself from being a state to a public broadcaster, which required addressing a constitutional need to equally serve the 11 official languages. Recognising the importance of this issue, the Independent Broadcasting Authority invited various interest groups to present the language policy they wished the public broadcaster to adopt.

Munyaradzi Hwengwere's thesis examines four such submissions, from which the following themes emerged. The first concern was the need to establish regional broadcasters within the public broadcasting service portfolio. Secondly was the expressed need for the cause of marginalised languages to be facilitated by the Public Service Broadcaster (PSB).

The third issue concerned the need for PSB to reconcile "majoritarian" and minority needs. Finally, a need for language policy to move beyond the simple conceptions of home language to utilising other viewpoints was expressed.

Unlit Clay Lamps, Unsung Bhajans

Allison Lazarus chose the identity formation and experience of otherness and difference of South African Catholics of Indian Descent (SACIDs) as the topic for her thesis masters dissertation. Her study is based on a cultural studies perspective and poses two main questions, the first of which concerns the relevance of categories including: culture; ethnicity; ideology; race and religion in the construction of identity and the self understanding of members of this community. This study is concerned with discovering whether these categories are operative and relevant to the experiences of the youth in this community, and more specifically, how do the youth amongst SACID identify themselves? Secondly, this study examines the role of organic intellectuals

within this community with specific reference to what they perceive as the identity of SACIDs. It is important to examine what is being done by such intellectuals as they are in a position to influence the way SACIDs identify and construct themselves. Both foci are related to the research objective which is to understand how SACIDs feel and how they see themselves in a context of change within country and church. The study finds that SACIDs define themselves as a racial and religious minority who perceive their identity as multi-layered. It is found that race is still a dominant and determining factor in their self-understanding and construction of identity. It is the confusion regarding their cultural identity that the title *Unlit Clay Lamps, Unsung Bhajans* refers.