

Text

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"CULTURAL STUDIES IS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD. IT EXAMINES TEXTS AND SUB-TEXTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO POWER RELATIONS WITHIN CONTEXTS"

Warm welcome at Cairo connection

Dr Eric Louw was invited to attend both the biennial conference of the African Council on Communication Education (ACCE) as well as a joint ACCE/International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) seminar on "The African Charter and Communication Policy". These two events ran back-to-back in Cairo during October 1992.

Eric Louw is the first South African to be invited to attend an ACCE conference, and during the Opening Ceremony, at Cairo University, special mention was made of his participation as the South African representative. He was asked to stand up to receive a round of applause and to be "welcomed back into the fold."

The ACCE is an organization representing media academics from Anglo-, Francophone- and Arab-Africa. As a result of the decades of boycotts and sanctions, academics in the rest of the world have lost touch with developments inside South Africa. The ACCE and IAMCR specifically requested Eric's participation, as a result of his work in the media policy field, so that he could bring them up to date about contemporary South African media and telecommunication policy debates.

During the course of the proceedings, Eric was elected onto a 5-person Editorial Board for an ACCE *Media Policy for Africa* book project. He was also asked to join a steering committee to establish a *Journalism Training Project* for the African/Caribbean/Pacific (ACP) area. The project will be funded by the European Economic Committee (and administered from Holland). The aim is to network the journalism training programmes in the ACP area and to link these to sources of skills and finance in Europe. It will provide the basis for the sharing of information; the relocation of equipment from Europe to ACP countries; and the swapping of staff and students within an exchange programme. This committee has prepared a basic plan of action. The Centre for Cultural and Media Studies is, of course, now firmly entrenched as a key participant in this project.

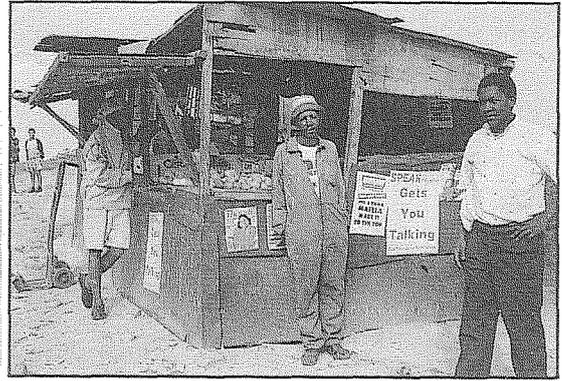
Further, while at the Conference, Louw was invited to contribute a chapter to a book being edited by Dr Peter Nwosu of California State University to be called *Communication and the Transformation of Society: A Developing Region's Perspective* (University Press of America).

Louw also discussed with the Head of the Communication Department at Cairo University, Prof Awatef Rahman, the possibility of her spending her sabbatical leave at the CCMS. There is consequently a very strong possibility that Prof Rahman will visit us in the second half of 1993.

During the course of the Cairo trip numerous valuable contacts were made with academics from Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Cameroun, Swaziland, Eritrea, Uganda, Guinea-Bissau, and Sudan. These contacts should benefit CCMS research in the years to come.

FAWO FINDS A HOME AT CCMS

The Natal branch of the Film and Allied Workers Organisation (FAWO) recently moved into an office in the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies. The move has enabled FAWO to join CCMS in developing a Film & Video resource library. Projects Co-ordinator Dumisweni Ngubane is available for further information. Please contact him on: (031) 260-1519 from 9 - 12 am.



Mthunzi Mseleko (right) outside his spaza.

Bringing Media to the Masses

Changing tyres is an integral part of post-graduate research. So says **Christina Scott**, who became a wholesaler of newspapers and magazines in selected Durban townships and shacklands in order to monitor their sales.

On Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, Scott wakes up at 4am to collect issues of the *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Tribune*, *City Press*, *Ilanga* and *UmAfrica* hot off the press.

She then drives out to the township of KwaMashu, the Inanda shacklands and Umlazi township to drop off bundles of papers at spaza-informal shops - before they open. Of course, if she bursts a tire on the dirt roads of Inanda or the pot hole of KwaMashu, delivery takes a little longer.

She then has to repeat her route in daylight to collect unsold newspapers, field complaints, collect sales and pay commissions.

The motivation behind the research was to test the market for

publications in densely-populated areas and to devise a distribution strategy which would satisfy economic needs without falling victim to violence or crime.

Natal Newspapers, *Nasionale Nuus* and *Republican Press* dislike sending their own vans into high-risk areas due to the threat of hijacking so they often sub-contract to small businessmen with a van. However, these wholesalers have no financial incentive to expand the market.

So far, Scott has been able to deliver on stayaway days and June 16 without alienating anybody. Criminals are hopefully dissuaded by the fact that her route parallels that of the bakery vans delivering bread at the same ungodly hour.

Scott is also testing sales of the following magazines: *Learn & Teach*, *Speak*, *UpBeat*, *Bona (Zulu)*, *Drum (Zulu)*, *Pace*, *Thandi*, *True Love*, *Boxing*, *Enterprise*, *Jive*, *Living & Loving*, *Work in Progress* and *Mayibuye*.

From Resistance to Policy Research

That fateful year, 1976, witnessed the Soweto uprising. Here at NU a staff/student group cohered around the event and the failure of domestic resistance to apartheid. The group identified two problems in the South African case: the lack of popular mobilisation within two sites of potential struggle: media and culture. A corresponding lack of concern by anti-apartheid universities in teaching critical media and cultural studies compounded this problem. The group became a committee and met for 8 years before the University conceded a need for such analysis. The growth of popular cultural and media mobilisation had itself begun to emerge in the early '80s.

The Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit (CCMS) was established in 1985, and took on its first batch of graduate students in 1986. The Unit was modelled on the Birmingham University Centre which had, in the space of two decades, literally revolutionised the study of media and media-society relations across the Anglo-Saxon world. Cultural studies is now a part of most humanities disciplines, even finding its way into urban geography and accounting.

In 1990, following a positive Faculty review of the Unit, we changed our name to the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies. The new title reflected the direction in which we had moved, but also our growing conceptual maturity which saw a much greater development of our concern with Southern African issues, concepts and the African gnosis.

The transition from an initially European derived approach to a reconstitution of these social and communication theories into the African context has gathered steam in the past few years. This has led to an emphasis in CCMS on questions of African philosophy, the reconstructing of Marxism to face the new challenges of a post-apartheid context, and emphasis on the global information economy.

Most important has been the dramatic shift from theories and strategies of resistance to policy research. Where policy research prior to February 1990 was seen by some academics, as negatively 'idealist' or pejoratively 'utopian', policy research has now assumed major significance as the country desparately attempts to address vital problems.

One of the questions we are asked by prospective students is "what job does cultural studies equip me to do?" This question similarly communicates a shift in current student expectations. Our answer is that cultural studies equips graduates with an analytical ability to understand and shape processes within frameworks of interdisciplinary understanding. All of our graduates since 1987 have carved niches for themselves in their professions, whether in community and educational development projects, as teachers, video makers and media workers, researchers, environmentalists or as post-graduate students who have succeeded in doing specialist MA's in South Africa and overseas.

Professor Keyan Tomaselli, Director, Centre for Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban

TRIBUTE TO THEMBA NKABINDE

Themba Nkabinde was tragically killed in a car accident on 25 October in Zimbabwe, where he was doing his field work. Themba was previously employed as a lecturer in the Department of African Languages at the University of Zimbabwe.

At Natal University, Themba was a graduate assistant in the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies. He also contributed lectures to the Department of Zulu and the Centre for Orality Studies.

In addition to these language interests, was Themba's over-riding concern with the political-economy and history of Zimbabwean resistance music, the topic of his thesis.

The work Themba did during 1992 was highly sophisticated and reflected a single-minded determination to come to grips with the field of cultural studies. As such, Themba was a significant role model for his colleagues.

I have seldom encountered someone who literally read everything and more on questions into which he was researching.

He often worked seven days a week --



always inquiring, engaging, debating.

Themba had an unassuming, self-contained personality which tended to mask his incredibly sharp mind and incisive analytical ability. Many of us in the Centre got to know him well on our seemingly endless drives to conferences

around the country and interaction within the Centre itself. He was an integral part of the Centre and its academic and social life. His loss to us and his family is also a loss to the academic community at large.

But Themba's unpublished work on Zimbabwean music will not be lost. We will organise to have his manuscripts published posthumously so that the work he completed while with us will continue to contribute to the field of Southern African cultural studies. In honour of his remarkable academic contribution to the Centre we will name the office in which Themba spent so much time studying, reading, and writing, as the Themba Nkabinde Reading Room.

Keyan Tomaselli

CENTRE IMPRESSIONS

Nhlanhla Nkosi

Struggle for the Sign and site of Power

So much experience has been compressed into the last ten months that I have spent here at the CCMS, that it seems like I have been here for ten years. I would like to summarise this experience as 'a struggle for a SIGN to articulate the present transitional moment and a search for the site of POWER in which to wedge in the struggle for transference of power to the peoples of South Africa.'

This struggle and search has taken us around the world of different disciplines, theories of culture and media, meaning and ideology, education and culture, film-video and cultural production, popular culture and performance, science as cultural expression and african philosophy.

While the Honours' students are expected to familiarise themselves with the theories of media and cultural studies, the MA students are engaged in research work in different aspects of media and cultural studies. The MA students are also expected to do graduate assistantship work for the Centre. This may include teaching parts of the courses or giving papers in conferences among other things.

The point I want to record here is that each staff member, Honours student and MA researcher is engaged in a struggle for a SIGN and in search for a PARADIGM through which to articulate and interpret the social practices of the South African society in its transition to a more democratic government. Put in another way, we are trying to answer Ntongela Masilela's question -- Why has cultural studies in SA been harnessed to European national intellectual climates rather than searching for their own vernacular voice? We in the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies are searching for that vernacular voice and for more. More in the sense that this voice has been trapped in the Euro-centric relations of power and domination, so we must search for the site of POWER and agenda-setting in terms of which the relations of domination are contested.

Nhlanhla Nkosi, is a Catholic priest and a Masters student in the Centre completing his dissertation on RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING IN THE NEW S.A.

Let`s talk about body language

Technological innovations such as the development of photography, film and video facilitated studies of communication generally, and body language particularly. Because a great deal of work has been done on body language, a problem initially encountered by researchers is that the field of enquiry covered is extremely large. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of previous work on the topic, writings can be found in such diverse areas as anthropology, dance theory, linguistics, semiotics, sociology and psychology, as well as in the popular press and magazines.

Published works are further divided between the 'popular' and the 'scientific'. Popular works are accused of being simplistic while specialised scientific works on non-verbal communication ignore the wider social context. Power relations form a part of the matrix of these social contexts.

Disciplines which have dealt with body language have been isolated from one another. There is a need to contextualize and unite such disparate threads in order to see what has actually been achieved in real terms. I believe that such an overview has to be attained before attempting to conduct any research in a South African context.

I am making two proposals: firstly, that an examination of power relations can provide a contextual thread to link body language studies and their social contexts; and, secondly that a cultural studies approach to body language is long overdue, and urgently required to provide a theoretical overview in which to conduct an examination of these power relations.

WHY BODY LANGUAGE?

As a student and lecturer of Drama and English in multi-cultural environments I became aware of body language as a sub-conscious barrier to inter-cultural communication. There is a need to develop an awareness of body language, in all sectors of South African society.

COMMUNICATION

Due to the diversity of disparate enquiries in the field there has been a proliferation of terms each providing a different perspective. In the 1960s and 1970s there was a shift in terminology from 'expressive movement' to 'non-verbal communication', from the psychoanalytic approach to aspects of movement behavior to its role in group interaction and communication.

WELCOME TO THE
SERIOUS MEDIA SQUAD! IT'S OUR JOB
TO INTERROGATE THE
TEXT - -NEXT
BODY ...



DELEGATED CULTURAL DEFINITIONS



The prime mover in this transition is the anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell, who coined the term "kinesics" (1955) for such research. While such work is attempting to contextualise body language in terms of group relations, this does not go far enough. There is a need to situate body language in the wider context of socio-economic dynamics operating in society. I intend to attain an initial understanding of such dynamics by examining aspects of power relations in SA in terms of how they influence body language.

SA CONTEXT

A simplistic examination of the SA context might leave the impression that the country was clearly divided on black/white issues and that there are only two major power bases to contend with. This is an erroneous impression. Another picture might be that of a country divided ethnically into many small cultural groupings, however what must be examined are the concepts of culture and cultural group to see if such rigid delineation is possible or desirable.

PRACTICAL STUDIES

Various theoretical studies on body language and inter-cultural communication (Morain:1978, et al.) will be related to a South African context. An examination of body language training materials currently used in SA is being made, including video material. Account will be taken of anecdotal as well as structured information retrieval when collecting data on cultural influences on body language in South Africa. People involved in communication fields in Durban and the surrounding areas have been approached to participate in a practical study, to test and evaluate correlations between theory and practice.

If you feel that you could contribute to such research please contact Adi Paxton at CCMS Tel: (031) 2602505/2601518

Traditional Dishes*

Indians

Indians love spicy food. Curry and rice is their favourite food.

Blacks

Many blacks enjoy a meal of samp and beans.

Whites

Whites prefer meals with little or no spices.

Coloureds

Coloureds enjoy fish and chips.

They also eat plenty of stew.

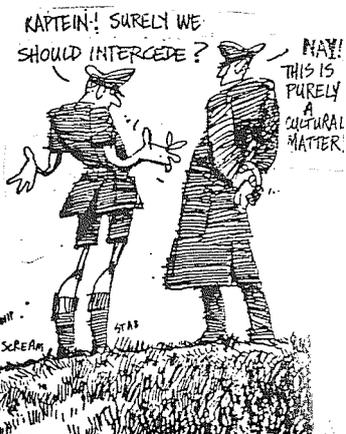
**Extract from a Cultural Studies exercise book written by a pupil in a House of Delegates School.*

Examples like this provoked an in-depth study of this Standard 3 course. While the HOD syllabus contains some 'progressive' themes, contradictions within Christian National Education, this syllabus tends to reify perceptions of the various SA cultural groups rather than encourage cultural critique.

Being mindful that ethnic groups are not an anathema, what is worrying is how 'group theory' is used by the ruling elite to reinforce ethnocentricism.

A key issue is the syllabus's uses of political and social mythologies. The current period of transition demands a study of how myth can be created or re-created, specifically in the area of curriculum construction, and the need to expose these under new circumstances.

Dhaya Sewduth, a high school teacher of English, is an MA student.



Disciplining the Disciplines

Sometimes one wonders: just what the hell *is* an academic discipline? Many voices in many fields are beginning to doubt whether people can be "produced" in the sense of a vocational educational stream visualised as a sort of educational factory.

Scientists in various fields are finding it difficult to make the non-deterministic aspect of their fields intelligible to school leavers who have been taught that Science is the administration of the Laws of Nature.

In my own case, it was easier for me, educated at the so-called 'academic' level, to become a successful electrical apprentice than most of the kids who had come to the trade from 'vocational' streams. In fact, in 1978 the in-house 'Best Apprentice' award was awarded jointly to myself and another university-stream apprentice.

On coming to Cultural and Media Studies, some 15 years after my apprenticeship commenced, it seems to me that the role of the Humanities has become the most threatened aspect of higher education at precisely the time when it can do the most potential good for the future. The protracted downturn of the global economy has put a lot of experienced people on the streets, a lot of them tradesmen like I once was, some of whom have sizeable golden handshakes given them on retrenchment. It is also a fact that the number of students over the age of thirty, registered in the University of Natal, doubled from 1989 to 1990. If these include at least some of those I have described, and they are not consulted as a valuable pool of life-skills in the university, then there is going to be a dangerous generation gap in the economy once (if) it (finally) turns around.

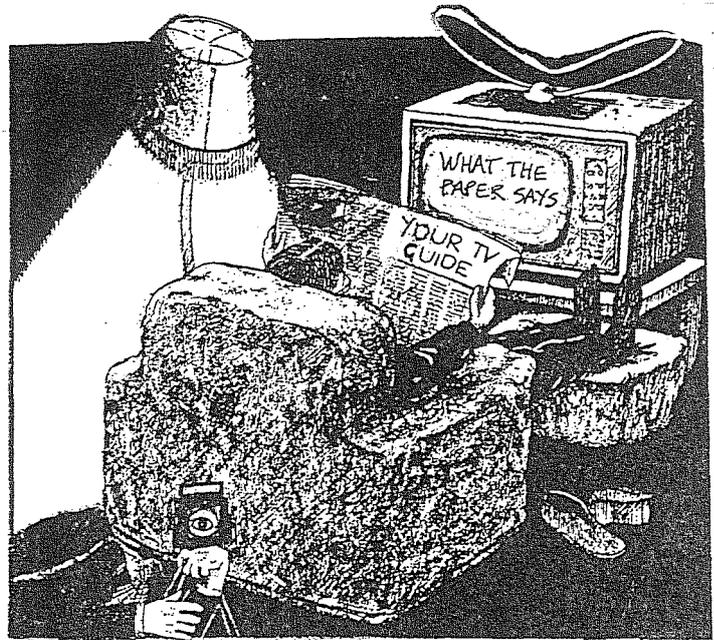
Industrial and commercial staff with tertiary qualifications will be divided between those with fresh degrees and no experience, and those who have old degrees and long experience but who are concerned more with seeing things out to retirement. There will be a depleted high-grade middle management group, most of whose peers will have packed for Perth, with the result that the day-to-day running of the economy will stagnate while newly-graduated lower and middle management staff learn from scratch how to make a living in the real world.

If there is to be a dynamic recovery in the future, then there must be a *corps* of experienced people who have added education to their experience and who have the ability to develop ways to avoid a repetition of the present economic quagmire.

The best way to achieve this is for the universities actively to tout for retrenched staff, put them to a selection process, and devise a mature level curriculum that will enable them to get back out there and put the region back on its feet in a way that avoids all the old post-colonial period fallacies of Development.

The courses should focus on interdisciplinary studies, with a view to making intelligible the community nature of the work environment. The whole point is that a unit like CCMS is geared more to mature people, in terms of work experience, than it is to new graduates who assume that Cultural Studies is a monolithic 'subject' like nuclear physics or organic chemistry. In the real world, that is to say the one where ordinary people like Joe Soap and Jane Doe are always underpaid and underemployed, there are few hard and fast divisions between jobs; the university should be sharpening the experience of those who have been there so that they can get back there in time in order not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Arnold Shepperson is a former electrician, amateur actor, and general mining administrative dogsbody who is currently preparing an MA on the foundations of intranslatability between cultures.



Reading the News?

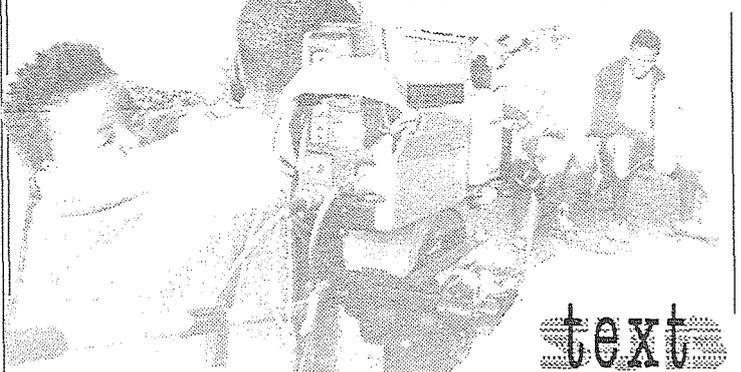
The stringent media restrictions on print and TV journalists introduced during the State of Emergency declared on 17 July 1985, were enforced up to 2 February, 1990.

A recently completed thesis by Ruth Teer Tomaselli examines the content and application of these restrictions, and Bureau for Information's role in providing a bureaucratic base for the policy of media containment. *"The Politics of Discourse and the Discourse of Politics: Images of Violence and Reform on the SA Broadcasting Corporation's TV News Bulletins, July 1985 - November 1986"* begins with an examination of the literature on television news, taking particular note of the arguments for and against the 'dominant ideology thesis'.

The empirical section examines the manner in which the processes of political violence and reform were imaged on TV news. Particular attention is paid to PW Botha's so-called 'Rubicon' speech in Durban, 17 August, 1985; as well as his opening address to Parliament in 1986; followed by an examination of the communication of reforms concerning influx control and urbanisation. In defining political violence a distinction is made between the government's use of the words 'unrest' and 'terrorism', which is contrasted with the critical concept of 'mass action' and 'insurgency'.

Teer Tomaselli demonstrates how the SABC worked in conjunction with other quasi-state media and information apparatuses to present a partial view of both violence and reform which demonised the enemies of the state and justified the measures taken against them. At the same time, the work underscores the realisation that the ideological work of the SABC was not unilinear - and that contradictory messages did seep through the cracks, often the result of professionalism and integrity of the journalists who produced the news reports.

REDEFINING REPRESENTATION



Chuck Scott has been working on a video production with livestock herders in the mountains of Lesotho. He is currently trying to put practice into theory within current Visual Anthropology, participatory and community video debates. He is an MA student in the Centre.