IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. XI/8

Preferred Citation: Mistry, Jyoti. *Conditions of Cultural Production in post-apartheid South Africa.* In: Extraordinary Times, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. 11: Vienna 2001

Conditions of Cultural Production in post-apartheid South Africa

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The issue of culture is a complex one mostly because it is a slippery term, malleable, morphing, growing and developing expansively, embracing all the facets of our existence, thus constantly denying any fix'd mark. To speak of culture only as an abstract concept, is to deny the nature of its tangibility, the trace-abilities of its inscription, from the high brow delineations of art to the daily rituals of our existence. Paintings, film, music, fashion to the work spaces we inhabit, the food we choose to buy and the places we consume it reflect on the expansive nature of this term, not just as an idea constructed but as a construction which circumscribes us. In talking of "culture" instead of attempting to define the term; a term resisting containment; I prefer rather to evoke an array of ideas informing its dissemination in society. It is my aim therefore to address the formation of culture, its function and use particularly in national identities, and to take the task further, reflecting on how cultures are produced, exchanged and reproduced. In attending to this notion of cultural reproduction I intend on addressing the worth, the significance of culture as a mainstay in the process of citizenship, which serves as an extension to the core ethos of national identities.

To set the frame of my thinking I allude to the Foucault's governmentality: his couplet of power/knowledge which captures the complex latticing of ideology and *praxis*, political concerns with social experiences and the pervasiveness of culture

and ethics. "Cultural production" in this analysis weaves togther the lateral connections of culture – identity – state, (see tabulation). In accounting for the local (South Africa), the omniscient global connection is finally mapped out; to propose South Africa's manufacture of culture in the face of mass culture and globalization.

Dislocating Culture

The diverse cultural perspectives of South African society reflects the disparate ways in which Afrikaner hegemony contrasted the lived experiences of the black majority. Therefore, the new South African government is at pains to celebrate the diversity of the nation. Constructing culture as part of a social system enables us to tie the ideas of politics (policies) to a nation's historical baggage while educing the aspirations (vision) that a society imagines itself to be. Stuart Hall's culture is generous in encompassing "lived experiences"; "practical ideologies which enable a society, group or class to experience, define, interpret and make sense of its conditions of existence." (Hall 1982:7) In expanding this definition to examine the traceabilities of culture; Raymond Williams' connections are applicable. He writes of culture as "the signifying system through which [] a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored." (Williams 1981:13) Finally, as a means to setting-up the theoretical framework for the ensuing analysis I would like to turn my attention briefly to reflect on Homi K. Bhabha's ideas from *The Location of Culture* and *Nation and Narration.* His contribution is vital to an understanding of culture(s) in a postcolonial context, providing the theoretical terrain to attend to the possibilities of cultures: cultures in diaspora, postcolonial cultures and emerging cultures.

Taking his cue from Jaques Derrida[1], Bhabha makes a case for "the liminal" of culture, its inability to be located in a fixed, tidily delineated space. For Derrida the notion of *differance* is fundamental to understanding suspended meanings. Mean-

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1 Bhabha cites Derrida directly in his article *"Dissemination"* when he writes: "the title of this chapter owes something to the wit and wisdom of Jacques Derrida" (1994:139). The wisdom, ideas of deconstruction are imported into Bhabha's work , influenced from *Of Grammatology* (1976) translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press). In their analysis both critics reflect on imperialism, not just as territorial and economic, but as a subject-constituting project. This gives them the opportunity to reflect on marginal spaces of knowledge reception and production; facilitating a fluidity of meaning(s) in the vein of deconstruction.

ing in nations and cultures are in constant change accounting for their conditions, not just of postcolonialism, but postmodernity as well. This idea of splitting *differance* to account for sameness while simultaneously creating the space for its *differend* enables a discourse on similarities and differentiation. Through this concept Bhabha can make a case for the interstitial spaces that culture occupies in the imagination of the nation. "What emerges as an effect of such 'incomplete signification' is a turning of boundaries and limits into the *in-between* spaces through which meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated." (Bhabha 1990:5) In speaking of these new delineations in a socio-political order Bhabha cautions that his definitions are not necessarily embracing of ideas of pluralism or multiculturalism. This is an important distinction because it highlights the cultural contestation in society for the center. Thus for postcolonial scholars and artists conceptions of marginality remain key to maintaining the political ethos of their analysis and representations. "The issue of cultural difference emerges at points of social crises, and the questions of identity that it raises are agonistic, identity is either claimed from the position of marginality or in an attempt at gaining the center: in both senses, ex-centric." (Bhabha 1990:177)

In the case of South Africa where you have had the relocation of marginal culture to the center and not via the more conventional forms of liberation struggles, but rather through negotiated politics, normative conceptions of center/margin must be reconfigured to account for a new "pluralism" or cultural diversification – celebrating the differences while at the same time maintaining a semblance of "homogeneity". This idea of a homogeneity is paramount for South Africa because it remembers lost accounts of identity, shaped by a common heritage of suffering. "Culture requires certain social conditions; and since these conditions may involve the state, it can have a political dimension too." (Eaglteon 2000:10)

The "political dimension" informing South African cultural production is its new constitution. This document protects, if not celebrates differences in culture as a right of the peoples of South Africa, by acknowledging and compensating for the imbalances of the past. For Bhabha the "origin in the past" and the "sign of the present" results in a rupture, a "splitting", a fractured space within which new writings are made possible. Bhabha writes: "[T]he people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past;* the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as con-

temporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process. [] It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*." (Bhabha 1994:145)

It is this very question that remains at the heart of this discussion; given the new socio-political climate, the redefinition of nation, nationalism and a search for a new, different identity; than the one instilled in an apartheid South Africa; how does this nation imagine the "writing of its nation" and how has it reconciled this point of origin with the present. In this section "writing the nation" and reflecting on the manufacture and reproduction of culture is what is at stake. The nation-state is also responsible for using its cultural policies to set-up a relation between itself and its subjects, constructing them as citizens; disseminating its ideology through its cultural policies thus augmenting its political rhetoric and agenda. As Toby Miller writes: "When we articulate culture and policy in the specific context of the state, more complex issues confront us. The state conjures up a number of attachments, depending on nationality, historicity, subjectivity and the theoretical training of the person speaking, but these can include the notion that the state serves the interests of capital, patriarchy, or whiteness, or that it stifles individuality." (Miller 1988:69) Interrogating the concept of "the individual" and the idea of "individuality" is a necessary means to yoke the significance of the citizen into the matrix constructing the nation.

Furthermore, how does this idea of producing a national culture feed into developing citizenship. "It was through the nation state that we were being constituted as citizens of the world; but it is hard to see how this form of political identity could furnish motives as deep-seated as cultural ones."(Eagleton 2000:61) The persuasion of cultural connectedness, and a sense of belonging, identification, therefore operates on a number of registers. To speak of the citizen means appealing to *one* aspect of a person's claim of belonging to a community (nation). As Eagleton points out, the agendas of different groups and individuals in a collective (points of identification) are not always contemporaneous. The smallest denominators are the daily points of contact – that is the regular lived experiences which bring us into contact with the communities we identify with schools, stores, social settings...etc. On the other hand the larger overarching ideological identity (in this case the citizen-nation relation) remains abstracted but pervasive in our daily lives.

In my investigation into the production of culture, I will attempt to reconcile and flesh out the dissonances between these registers as it is played out in contemporary South Africa.

By way of constructing the framework for this discussion, it is worthwhile to reflect on one final tenet in this equation. This distinction becomes necessary in the latter stages of this analysis, as I tease out some of the complexities emergent from the South African government's policy initiatives and its possible outcomes.

Locating Identity

Cultural identity may be foiled by the discussion of universal cultural rights, pursued by Prott (1988) and Karatshkin (1982). In this analysis the rights to individuals' choice of cultural identity and the right of groups to their own artistic, historical and cultural wealth is not always synchronous. "Cultural citizenship may well help to stem or to control cultural imperialism, but it may also implicitly articulate conflicts between local or particular rights and the right to enjoy the universalistic legacy of humanity." (Turner 2001:21) The differentiation allocated to these two registers (or conceptions) of culture is marked by "C" which suggests the larger "universalistic legacy of humanity" while culture "c" reflects the substructures within the broadest canvas of the socio-political body. Indeed the legacy of cultural studies reflects the constant concern with addressing the ideological differences between these two concentric ideas; the locations of center and marginality always at odds with one another. "The 'marginal' standpoint is simply a way of broadening the range of questions which are asked, avoiding the trap of reproducing a dominative mode of thinking"(Couldry 2000).

In this respect the South African experience as I have pointed out before has set a new precedent, by relocating its margins to the center, shifting at one sweep the ideological focus; thus producing a 'new' "dominative mode of thinking." The African National Congress (ANC) is the new hegemony in post-apartheid South Africa and its ideological aim is to find a way to represent all its people, both black and white equally, while correcting the racial inequalities of the past. Having set the stage for creating a discourse of sameness through its "building a rainbow nation" campaign, it must now find the means to generate this Culture while simultaneously providing spaces for differences in culture (not just race, but ethnicity, religion etc). "National unity which is sealed by Culture is shattered by culture."(Eagleton 2000:62) If this is the case, as indeed Bhabha has shown in *The Location of Culture* then the concern is about finding, locating an equilibrium. This

balance is not about negotiating power but rather facilitating means by which "liminality" becomes the space of cultural production. The difficulties with such models is the assumption of a hegemony with a formed identity, an agenda which does not contain room (more likely does *not* want to create room) to accommodate fissures, ruptures or splitting in the ordered structure of its Culture. Furthermore for the exponents of cultural studies in the lineage of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, the margin is the revered space of cultural production. Marginal spaces challenge the ideologies of the center, minority politics makes possible discourses of cultural assimilation and exchange and finally, a conversation about modernity can be entered into through the filters of cultural pluralism or multiculturalism (depending on the political slant of the speaker).

Let me clarify what I mean by this.

South Africa in its case of negotiated politics has lead to a government of National Unity and the new constitution is couched in rhetoric of empowering previously disenfranchised communities (who had suffered under apartheid). These communities by and large constitute the black majority in South Africa and even though divided by ethnic and language differences were all equally oppressed by the same principles of apartheid. In that respect the Afrikaner Nationalist Party did not differentiate ethnically among blacks (Africans) but segregated people within its own broad definitions of race. Recall that Indians and Coloreds were marked as such and entitled their own privileges, but still fell under the larger rubric of "black". In the case of the apartheid law therefore, even though aware of differences within large racial groupings, cultural differences are not acknowledged. Xhosa, Zulu, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Tswana... etc. where not discrete under apartheid, as in the case with Indians (North Indian, Tamil, Gujerati...etc.) nor were Coloreds differentiated by their lineage (either Portugese, Dutch, Malay...etc.). Eagleton seems timely here: "If politics is what unifies, culture is what differentiates."(2000:58) Under the new constitution the government not only accommodates all linguistic, ethnic, religious differences but must by virtue of its design create a space for each of the "minorities" of its population. For the most part the wording of these declaratives speak of representing "disadvantaged communities" and "to address historical imbalances in the infrastructure." (NFVF Act No. 73.1997) In this respect the aims of the constitution and the Act supporting the formation of the National Film and Video Foundation serves to make possible representation where previously (historically) this access and power was located in the hands of a white minority. For the process to function as a fully democratic system

(which it claims and needs to function as such) and one which celebrates difference, such spaces are not available. It is not a naive conception I wish to construct, or some utopic imagining. I am aware that marginal spaces emerge in reaction to hegemonic ideology, they are responses to a situation; socio-political, cultural, historical. Such spaces by virtue of their nature to challenge and protest erupt, are taken, usurped, seized, and not designated to be given. However, in the case of South Africa as a result of its historical conditions, it concedes by virtue of its negotiated politics (and its constitution) to address the issue of minorities (not just those historically disenfranchised)[2]. This definition of minorities is therefore not as simple as reversing the rules of race in South Africa, to reflect on Indians, Coloreds and Whites as minorities but must account for the treatment of women, sexual orientation, disabilities etc...

There is indeed space in the policy structure for a more formal response to this concern but the question is one of *praxis* and honoring the vision of Culture as protected by the South African constitution. Eagleton writes from the following two stances: Firstly that "the state can represent the unity of a culture only be repressing its internal contradictions"(2000:60) and secondly, "if culture could be harmonized with global politics by the nation state, Culture could equally reconcile the universal and the specific."(2000:62) It is within the fold of this oeuvre I wish to attend to cultural production in contemporary South Africa.

Legitimation of power through culture (ideology)

"Any particular national or ethnic culture will come into its own only through the unifying principle of the state, not under its own steam. Cultures are intrinsically incomplete, and need the supplement of the state to become truly themselves." (Eagleton 2000:59)

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2 I have made a case for the fact that historically disenfranchised makes reference to the entire black population in South Africa who suffered under apartheid. The ANC's effort to redress the racial imbalances of the past was initially called "Reconstruction and Development Program" (RDP- 1994-1997). This initiative employed the aims of creating infrastructure (schools, housing, healthcare) which would bring large parts of the black African population on par with access to urban amenities; facilitating a bridge between the rural-urban divide and attempting to bridge class differences between educated blacks and the largely unskilled population. However, this issue is no longer as simple as substituting racial categories, the new South African legislation has to embrace concerns of minorities, not just class, but ethnicities, sexual orientation, women...etc, a nation building programmatic very different from the RDP.

In this section I wish to address briefly Cultural manufacture in the new South Africa, and show how the state has gone about the business of making its Cultural presence as a democratic purveyor felt. Part of the project of the state has been to ensure that all factions of the population can identify with this new sense of liberation while simultaneously augmenting ideologies of solidarity with nation formation and nation building and developing trust in the structures of governance.

One of the functions of the TRC (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission) was to use the process of disclosure and reconciliation as catharsis, thereby uniting a very fragmented society through the experience of healing. This common heritage of suffering; mediated in a very public manner; forms the foundation for a new South Africa' s construction of its identity. Such a tenet is felt, it lives in the experiences and memories of the people and is visible to the mass population as a common referent; the point of identification. Raymond Williams provides an avenue to conceive of culture in coining the phrase 'structure of feeling'. "This bold yoking of the objective and the affective, negotiate[s] the doubleness of culture, as at once material reality and lived experience." (Eagleton 2000:36). Therefore the material conditions of suffering become tied to the vision of moving towards a fresh, original conception of nationalism. A conception steeped in a desire, a dream to make a democracy and a society which is not fraught with the prejudices of its past. Rather, in exercising its aspirations as a modern society, cultures of difference becomes the Culture. In manufacturing Culture (the rainbow nation), the mechanism: policy, facilitates the ideological thrust of differentiated cultures existing alongside the sameness of Culture. "Culture has always been about policy, in two ways. The first is artistic output, emerging from creative people and judged by aesthetic criteria. This is an artistic definition that corresponds to the interests and practices of the humanities. The second meaning, less specific, takes culture to be an all-encompassing concept about how we live our lives, the sense of place and the person that makes us human.[] Conversely, policy refers to a systematic regulatory guide to action, adopted by an organization to achieve its goals. In short, the bureaucratic rather than creative or organic." (Miller 1988:67)

The cultural policies of the post-apartheid hegemony in its short existence has already had two antithetical agendas. The first, I have privileged as far emphasizes the cultural diversity of South African society and worked through the "Rainbow Nation" campaign during the first term of the ANC office, under the helm of Nelson Mandela (1994-1998). The second (1999 - current) reflects on the vision of Thabo Mbeki, a theoretical and philosophical leader who has termed his cultural initiative

"The African Renaissance." In reflecting on Miller's observation the two phases of cultural policy shaping South African identity and, cultural production is revealing of the leadership objectives and the shifting imperatives of the economy. Let us compare these two programs to see how they have played themselves out.

"The Rainbow Nation" Campaign: Unity in Diversity

The cultural value of the TRC was to bring together a historically fragmented society to a common point of origin, in its history. By acknowledging the injustices of apartheid, the Government of National Unity used the TRC as a symbol of developing a nationalism which spoke of embracing difference. At the kernel of this project: the ANC had to exhibit that it would not rescribe racial prejudices in its governance. "The Rainbow Nation" campaign therefore celebrates the numerous cultures, ethnicities and religions of the peoples of South Africa. In its most visible form Mandela's presidential inauguration ceremony was marked by cultural representation from all sections of the population. Coloreds, Indians and Whites participated in equal and proportional relation to the various African ethnic denominations. Of course this was timely, to represent the good faith of negotiated politics in the new South Africa; abating the fears of minorities and sealing the promise of a peaceful transition to a free and democratic situation. This ideological ethos permeated the rest of Mandela's office with symbolic displays of this at sports events, arts and cultural occasions.

The publication *Arts* from the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (ACST) highlights the arts and culture programs undertaken each year by the government. Its assessment is broad and covers all initiatives: film, theater, dance, photography, music literature, tourism, food and even wild life protection programs. The publication is a really interesting depiction of how each disparate cultural group in South Africa has influenced the other, from the basics of food preparation to the merging of music, dance styles and theater practices. Undoubtedly the aim of the publication is to promote and perpetuate the "multicultural, pluricultural" aspects of South Africa. This is very telling from Brigitte Mabandla's[3] opening comments: "Our country is a broad canvas of different and contrasting pictures, expressed through the arts through a variety of forms and genres." (*Arts*

3 Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.(ACST)

1999:2) Such a celebration of diversity, in reiterating a political agenda has its eye on the economic prize as well. Clearly, even though the aim is to educate South Africans about trends and happenings in the art scene, its vision is the potential tourist trade. "We offer our own people and our increasing numbers of foreign tourists a bird's eye view of unique opportunities to explore the lesser known features of our very different provinces and their histories"(1999:1) writes Lionel Mtshali, Minister of ACST. Part of the initiative further augments the ethos to support local production "make your personal contribution to the arts by supporting artistic events and buying locally produced crafts, which are increasingly recognized as unique in the world" (Mtshali, *Arts* 1999:1) South Africa is working very hard to place its self in relation to the open and international market. Not only must it convince the world community of its competitive products, but it must win the faith of its local consumers.

The 1995 Rugby World Cup and in 1997 the South African Music Awards are seminal public events (examples) celebrating "rainbowness", cultural, racial and ethnic diversity. Advertising, the media (both radio and television) conveyed diversity, but unity in this difference.[4]Advertising too followed the national agenda with Castle Lager adverts showing South Africans of different races together enjoying their product; the tag-line of this campaign was "One Beer One Nation." The premise of this unity and equality is based on the shift to an equality based on citizenship, the rights of people to rights, a right to the choice of culture; thus shifting the rubric of a racially divided society to one of a society united by its rights to equal citizenship.

This division we will see soon in my observations of Mbeki's African Renaissance reorganizes the prism of social division and identity to highlight differences in class aspirations. It is worth noting the subtly of the constitution which recognizes individual rights rather than group rights as in the case of cultural and/or ethnic collectives. This makes the argument for a multicultural South Africa an extremely complicated one. "Rainbow Nation" does not embrace the policy of multiculturalism; this idea celebrates difference, diversity and in so doing divides the nation. "The discourse of multiculturalism seeks to promote national reconciliation through mutual respect of differences." (Baines 1998:4) Therefore, the ethos of a diverse society is undercut to presenting the vision of a unified nation; a nation imagined as

4 SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) celebrated the idea of unity by promoting its programming with the jingle "Simunye - We are One".

united, created through the discourse of suffering and healing (as in the TRC). The ANC's policy on multiculturalism remains open-ended, because it critiques the idea that in celebrating difference, diversity; by highlighting subcultures, divisions become the focus rather than the points of identification. At the heart of the nation building objectives of the earlier period was the prospect of a rainbow, even though separated by its several and distinct colors is a unified band of light!

"The post-apartheid South African state finds itself having to reconcile the tensions implicit in the pursuit of nation building and in adopting some form of multiculturlaism. The first imperative strives to construct a new identity.[] The second concerns the need to acknowledge cultural diversity and accommodate group identities such as cultural or ethnic minorities." (Baines 1998:4)

The use of "rainbowness" also served to imply the non-racialization of South African society. Of course the ANC had as early as 1994 implemented affirmative action and black empowerment. This reties itself to the larger argument surrounding group rights (minority ethnic groups) pitted against the rights of individuals as citizens. Therefore even though the agenda of a non-racial society was pervasive in the rhetoric of building a "rainbow nation", the actions of the ANC and the African favored policies creates much alarm for whites and minorities in South Africa.

To resolve some of the complexities of these paradoxes, political scientists (McAllister 1997, McLeay 1997), turned to Australian, Canadian and US models , which offer little as solutions. As Gary Baines points out "the lack of an obvious dominant ethnic and/or cultural group is precisely what makes South Africa different." (1998:7) The problem is not one of assimilation into a larger hegemonic identity (as in the case of the US) or indigenous groups as minorities (Australia). In South Africa the indigenous peoples have always been the majority, but differentiated ethnically. The concept of a "rainbow nation" though extremely optimistic in its vision fails to wholly address the concerns of cultural groups and identities. While I think that the "new patriotism" which Mbeki spoke of in 1997, marks an crucial attempt at envisioning a solidarity with the nation state, the level of identification is simply monolithic and elides any concerns of difference and pluralism.

Each leadership to bolster its constituency and mandate must also create its own identity, separate and distinct from its predecessor. Its ideological practices is at the service of maintaining power, while the slogans, campaigns and delivery on promises is what ensures its immortality (as least for history and memory). Thabo Mbeki as Deputy President of South Africa served in the shadow of Nelson Mandela (the

father of the nation). While Mandela embraced the fluidity of social identities in South Africa – championed the "rainbow nation" consistently reiterating the co-existence of collective and individual identities, different cultures but shared South Africanness; Mbeki's agenda seemed very distinct and divergent from this ethos.

The African Renaissance

"I am an African"- Thabo Mbeki (1996)

In contrast to Mandela's "Rainbow Nation" campaign, Thabo Mbeki has embarked on a cultural program dubbed the "African Renaissance". "Cultural policy is centrally concerned with the kinds of 'culture' that are deserving of public protection and the kinds of policies that are best fit to achieve these objectives."(Stevenson 2001:6)

For Mbeki, the reawakening of an African past is a necessary means of redirecting cultural policy. It is not so much an effort of celebrating a multicultural/pluricultural society as much as it is about reclaiming the lost traditions of a past African glory. Mbeki's objectives privilege African languages and African philosophy.

"The question has been posed repeatedly as to what we mean when we speak of an African Renaissance. As we all know, the word "renaissance" means rebirth, renewal, springing up anew. Therefore, when we speak of an African Renaissance, we speak of the rebirth and renewal of our continent." (Mbeki October 1999) It is clear for any reader that such a project moves the emphasis from a cultural diversity program to one privileging a black African agenda. The implications of this is not one just confined to the borders of South Africa but rather its vision is much broader – embracing the rest of the African continent.

At this point it is necessary to quote at length the described task of the African Renaissance as Mbeki has presented it.

> *"* the establishment of democratic political systems to ensure the accomplishment of the goal that "the people shall govern"*
> ** ensuring that these systems take into account African specifics so that, while being truly democratic and protecting human rights, they are nevertheless designed in ways which really ensure that political and therefore, peaceful means can be used to address the competing interests of different social groups in each country*

> ** establishing the institutions and procedures which would enable the continent collectively to deal with questions of democracy, peace and stability*
> ** achieving sustainable economic development that results in the continuous improvement of the standards of living and the quality of life of the masses of the people*
> **qualitatively changing Africa's place in the world economy so that it is free of the yoke of the international debt burden and no longer a supplier of raw materials and an importer of manufactured goods*
> ** ensuring the emancipation of women*
> ** successfully confronting the scourge of HIV/AIDS*
> ** the rediscovery of Africa's creative past to recapture the people's cultures, encourage artistic creativity and restore popular involvement in both accessing and advancing science and technology*
> ** strengthening the genuine independence of African countries and continent in their relations with major powers and enhancing their role in the determination of the global system of governance in all fields, including politics, the economy, security, information and intellectual property, the environment and science and technology."* (Mbeki October 1999)

In order to unpack some of the density of these objectives, let us consider each case in turn and reflect on what the meaning and implications of these imperatives are.

Firstly, on the level of language it is important to point out that the word "renaissance" is not inherent to African languages in South Africa. Next, not only is it non- translatable; it is a term steeped in the discourses of Western Enlightenment. To propose the term "renaissance" carries with it the historical, cultural and philosophical implications of the Western/Northern World. A call to move away from the shadow of Western/Northern power/knowledge relations simply reinscribes the reliance on the discourses which Mbeki is critiquing.[5] To thus call for an African renaissance is a linguistic tautology.

The opening of the African Renaissance Institute will be the center for intellectuals, bureaucrats, and researchers to formulate strategies to implement these objec-

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5 Such a theoretical position is common concern of many postcolonial critics, like Patricia McFadden, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Manthia Diawara - for post/neo colonial context to develop their own theories and practices stemming from the philosophy of African ancestors, myths and legends; to create and develop a theory separate, "other" from Western troupes. For them Western discourses offer a means, access enabling dialogue between how these distinct knowledge formations contrast and/or overlap one another.

tives. The establishment of an institute or a structure to formally disseminate the ideologies of such a project is a classical model. Funding from the state ensures the success of the program with minimal resistance. The regional projection is the entire African continent and the satellite institutes envisaged by Mbeki are designed to ensure political fairness through democracy. Of course, this idea assumes a paternalistic role that South Africa has fashioned for itself. Additionally, it presupposes an essentialized African identity across the vastness of a continent with numerous languages, ethnicities and further divided by religion.

I imagine it will be very difficult to convince the Egyptians, Algerians, and a large part of the West African population to identify with a fundamentally Anglo-Saxon influenced, Christian identity. Outside of this colonial heritage, the ideological assumption that Northern Africa at large will share in a common vision with Southern Africa (speaking broadly) begs the question of a precolonial heritage. This is exactly what Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* warns against. "African unity, that vague formula, yet one which the men and women of Africa were passionately and whose operative value served to bring immense pressure to bear on colonialism, African unity takes off the mask, and crumbles into regionalism inside the hollow shell of nationality itself. [] In the big towns, on the level of the administrative classes, we will observe the coming to grips of the two great revealed religions, Islam and Catholicism. (Fanon 1963:159)

The romanticization of a precolonial past; celebrating a common history without the problematics of regional cultures and territories, belies the truth about the histories of any peoples. Thus the sense of "recapturing, rediscovering and restoring" Africa's creative past seems to occlude the influences, strengths of modernity, technology and the intervention of democratic systems in Africa. Rather than looking at how Western-African cultures assimilate, are exchanged and reproduced anew, in the face of globalization and new political structures, Mbeki's cultural project runs antithetical to the foundation of sustaining democracy at large in Africa.

Democracy in South Africa, remember is only six years old! The conception of citizenship, the language of rights, the trust of citizens in these rights and governance are all new ideas, for its people. For the most part educating the population about their citizenship rights, entitlements is a complicated undertaking in South Africa itself. With eleven official languages, and overcoming the difficulties of dealing with translating the rhetoric of rights into African languages and into cultural contexts has proved to be a daunting task locally. Transfer this idea on a continen-

tal scale, the program seems paternalistic in the least, but myopic and essentializing. Democracy for different parts of Africa have gone through their own paths and processes refracted by their unique historical and colonial contexts. For now I am of the opinion that South Africa's best export to the rest of Africa is its negotiated political practice; and even this is subject to criticism – depending on ones' political leanings. We have seem that Nelson Mandela has been asked to provide his expertise in different political contexts. However such strategies are only successful when there is an expressed desire for this intervention.

The economic imperative of promoting democracy ensures open markets. In this respect South Africa as a custodian of Africa becomes an imperialist and elitist vision. It is clear that South Africa's expansion in global terms is not simply one of entering a Western (European, U.S.) market but its profitability in an African context has already proved lucrative. Especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where language is not a problem, English is the *lingua-franca,* television programs have been sold to most of the broadcast stations or networks. The successful expansion of M-Net (a private cable company in South Africa) by the mid-nineties proved the viability of the markets. The issue for M-Net was simply to find language and cultural carriers which would translate into these broader markets. Thus the points about "sustaining economic development [] and enhancing [African countries] role in the determination of the global system of governance" (Mbeki October 1999), really suggests the exploitation of potential markets in the rest of Africa. Of course this agenda is best met and served in the face of democracy, in contexts of socio-political stability.

If there are two tasks which seem to stand out, dissonant and truly righteous it would be: "ensuring the emancipation of women in Africa and confronting the scourge of AIDS/HIV". (Mbeki October 1999) The oppression of women in Africa in general is still couched in the patriarchal discourse of African culture, tradition and property rights. It is a necessary task of any African program to promote and protect the rights of women, not just as a gender issue but reiterated and tied to citizenship. With the realization that the largest work force and market potential lies in the future of women, the economic productivity of this population sector must be protected. This may be said of the AIDS crisis in Africa too; with such a large proportion of the labor force and potential working population affected (or projected to be infected), the epidemic threatens not only the socio-political stability of any African country but the its economic growth and future. It is clear that a

gaping dissonance exists between Mbeki's imagined "confronting the scourge of AIDS" and his responses to the crisis in South Africa.[6]

If there is an inability to cope with the internal cultural, medical and poverty connections of its dissemination locally, I am pessimistic that a larger mandate will be possible. However, so as not to loose faith totally in the potential for unified solutions, I would suggest that an African women's alliance would make it possible to help in the education of women's rights as citizen rights. Furthermore, given the statistics on AIDS/HIV it would be optimal to deal with the epidemic in a two-pronged approach. In educating women about citizenship, women who suffer the worst social ostracization when infected with HIV/AIDS, their rights have to be addressed. Immigration and seasonal labor has promoted the spread and escalation of the epidemic. It would be interesting to see the African Renaissance project deal in a real way with pooling resources, expertise and education programs at least in Sub-Saharan Africa – before a more ambitious African project is undertaken.

These concerns of minorities rights and protection relates to my larger concerns as regards cultural production and cultural citizenship. As we have seen from the social abuses and violence suffered by women, homosexuals and HIV positive/AIDS sufferers, it is not simply an issue of reversing racial definitions in South Africa, but thinking through the entire spectrum of what minority and group rights imply.

There is a final observation I would like to make via an anecdotal reference about the implications of African Renaissance for the rest of the continent, before I turn to some concluding remarks in this section.

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6 Thabo Mbeki's response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa has been controversial and highly criticized. "He has questioned the orthodox scientific view that HIV is the cause of AIDS and sided with dissidents who claim other factors, including poverty and malnutrition, could also play a role."(SAPA Report, Johannesburg, October 15th 2000). His views have caused much confusion in South Africa. The result of which, critics have stressed since the AIDS conference held in SA (Durban, 2000), has people rejecting conventions on preventing HIV infection. The alarming rape rate (especially among minors) is another factor contributing to the escalation; whereby traditional African healers have promised their clients cure from the virus if they have sex with virgins and young girls. Mbeki' s position on forgoing the availability of AZT to patients, especially victims of rape has also created much anger and generated protests from women activists and gay and lesbian movements. This matter still remains a highly charged and sensitive debate in South Africa, among politicians, medical professionals and the people at large.

This section, from a letter "Why we hate South Africa", by two black Zimbabweans working in South Africa appeared in the *Weekly Mail and Guardian*, a liberal, left leaning newspaper, on October 29 1999.

> *"We are two Zimbabweans, temporarily working in South Africa. We use the word "temporarily" to indicate that we shall be going back home at the end of our contracts. [] We have been at the coalface of South African ill-treatment, arrogance and ignorance about the continent. We hate South Africa for inviting us for tea and then telling us we are not wanted at the table. [] We find its ironic that while we are stopped by black South African police on the road, and while our work permits are scrutinized five times at the airport and at Beit Bridge, whites are literally waved past. What we find most painful is the treatment and attitude from black South Africans. We hate South Africa for the way in which some of its citizens speak about the rest of the continent. Yes, South Africa has a good constitution, good laws and some very good examples of democratic practice. But dare to say that the so-called democracy is on paper. On the ground, its black citizens are still poor as those in Kano, Naivasha, Mutoko or Dakar. [] We hate the way in which South Africans think that they can learn nothing from the rest of the continent, and many say so in so many words. [] The struggle for democracy was not invented in South Africa. Neither was it perfected here – as some South Africans would have us believe. We hate the way the new kid on the block is made to look as if it is the one that has come to save us all."*

The agitated sentiments, irritation with paternity, yet infused with a recognition of economic stability and possibility summarizes the "structures of feeling" towards South Africa, from the rest of the continent – well at least from its neighbor. The African Renaissance therefore while an important theoretical concept and political movement, with its initial impulses from Black Consciousness must be re-examined to validate its applicability in a democratic South Africa.

"The ANC's commitment to the principle of non-racialism annunciated in the 1995 Freedom Charter has always been tempered by a strand of Africanist thinking. [] Africanist tendencies within the ANC are strengthening." (Baines 1998:3) All doubts of this have been put to rest, unambiguously reflected by the formal African Renaissance project and its institutionalization.

Any attempts to provide a systemic conclusion negates the process of transformation, evolution, contradictions and confusion prevalent in contemporary South Af-

rica. It is country with an extremely critical, self-ironizing, questioning population. Reconciling these very contrary ideological agendas as academics presents only part of the general confusion pervasive in South Africa. How do white South Africans (still by and large) the economically privileged reconcile the African Renaissance economic aspirations with their own positions as stakeholders: is their wealth under threat? How do the large poor black majority make sense of a renaissance of African traditions and culture in the face of modernization, technological advances and the growing need for access to these advancements. What can be said of the growing black middle class in South Africa; creating new divisions in the population; expanding the abyss between the rich and poor in South Africa. In addressing the issue of South Africa's African (global) expansion – a country previously the scourge of the continent because of apartheid – must confront its own prejudices, escalating immigration, xenophobia and the newfound superiority emergent from its liberation and democracy.

Cultural production is based on the aspirations to see socio-economic growth, nation building, the development of social and moral stability as complementary, simultaneous projects. This shift in cultural policy to celebrate Africanness may be as harmless as suggesting a vision for the healing of the whole of Africa; a moral and ethical desire for a continent "forgotten" by the Western/Northern; now remembered by its healthier appendage.

But ours is not a world of ethical, moralistic nor humanity driven aspirations. It is one riddled with complicated motivations, selfish economic intent and political gluttony. And yet from this the human condition emerges resilient, its intolerance for injustices prevails, even if the words, the discourses, the names of the laws are unknown; we rely on the "structures of feeling" prevent further exploitation and iniquities.

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