

**THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TELEVISION
SINGLE PLAY IN SOUTH AFRICA:
A THREATENED GENRE, 1976 - 1991.**



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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Natal, Durban.

It has not been submitted previously for any degree or for any examination in any other university.

.....

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ABSTRACT

The thesis takes the form of an investigation into the various causes leading to the demise of the English language television single play in South Africa. It does not position the genre within any particular theoretical framework, but argues within the context of a liberal/critical discourse that the single play owes its development and significance to the contribution of its many writers, as well as to the creative input of the various producers, directors, from within and outside the SABC. Furthermore, it evaluates the genre within the bureaucracy of the SABC and the input of the various drama managers, among others, whose decisions have affected the position of the single play.

The single play is seen as a development of drama having evolved from the stage play, though moving progressively towards the production values of film.

Research will show that in the South African context, the creative practitioners of the single play and technology have intersected with style, reflecting the dominant form of naturalism, mainly evidenced during the early period when many single plays were produced in the studios of Auckland Park. Within a wider socio-political context, the single play has been evaluated as a negotiation among writers, censorship, technology, naturalism and bureaucracy.

The investigation will show that the major cause for its demise was the SABC's increasing commercialisation of TV-1, with the result that programmes on this channel were evaluated in terms of their ability to deliver large audiences to the advertisers. This placed the single play in competition for transmission space with the more popular drama series and serials. Furthermore, the business principle

of cost-effectiveness applied to the single play made it more expensive to produce than series and serials.

The author's own practical involvement in the production of video and television programmes, including drama, together with primary source information gleaned from some forty interviews with practitioners and those whose decisions impacted on the genre, have been added to the body of the research.

Chapter One identifies early attempts to place broadcasting under parliamentary scrutiny in South Africa, and the political intrusions made by senior personnel, particularly from the Broederbond, into the affairs of the SABC. It also opens the debate on the tensions between public service and commercial broadcasting, an argument that is continued within the context of the single play in Chapter Six. The chapter also positions drama as one of several competing programmes within the institution of broadcasting.

Chapter Two traces the influence of theatre in the development of the single play, from its early roots in Britain where it evolved from the stage play. Within the South African context theatrical influences, though less direct, were evident in the choice of material and the engagement of practitioners from the theatre. The chapter evaluates the shared dramatic elements and conventions that connect both the stage and the single play.

Chapter Three traces the gradual move away from studio productions to outdoor locational shooting with the emphasis on the application of film technology. This

move is evaluated both technologically and stylistically, in that practitioners used 16 mm in their attempt to achieve greater realism in their productions.

Chapter Four argues that the single play owes much of its significance and stature to the contributions made by the many writers whose works have been produced for television. Although the chapter acknowledges the adaptations of writers from other media, it concentrates on the original contributions of selected South African writers.

Chapter Five places the writer of the single play within the context of censorship. Censorship for such writers is encountered mainly on two levels; the vicarious censorship undertaken by the SABC on behalf of the Directorate of Publications, and self-censorship.

Chapter Six examines the impact of advertising and scheduling on the single play. It argues that the single play is out of place within a commercially oriented broadcasting structure which promotes programmes mainly in terms of their quantitative as opposed to qualitative audience appeal.

Chapter Seven examines the episodic dramas in terms of their structure; that many of them rely heavily upon melodrama as a means of gaining popular appeal; that they adhere to a restrictive formula in the writing in order to conform to the commercial demands of the medium; that they are more cost-effective to produce than the single play; that their favoured status among commercial broadcasters ensures that they are more likely to be considered for

costly co-productions than a single play; and, finally, they are preferred by writers and directors because they carry greater financial rewards.

Chapter Eight summaries the dominant threads of the investigation and gives some insights into the future of the single play, given a situation free from excessive bureaucratic control and a broadcasting institution that recovers some of the ideals of a public broadcasting service.

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INTRODUCTION

Part One of the thesis (Chapters One to Four), traces aspects of the evolution of the English language television single play within the institution of broadcasting in South Africa and with appropriate reference to its counterpart in Britain. The introduction of the single play to the broadcasting system was a functional additive, in that television drama was conceived as being one of many different programme types suitable for broadcasting. Consequently first generation television drama producers in Britain, for instance, looked to theatre and other forms of drama for guidance in evolving a methodology and grammar of production. Within this context, the thesis traces the influence of theatre on the evolution of the single play during the formative years of television in Britain and South Africa, showing the genre to be the latest presentation of a codified form of Western drama that has its roots in ancient Greece. Additional influences, such as radio, journalism and the 19th century English novel, are also acknowledged as contributory factors. However, the significant contribution of film technology is examined within the context of television drama production methodology evolving inexorably closer to the production values of film. Among other intersecting influences are the functions of the director and actor as significant contributors of interpretative meaning to television drama.

Although authorship in television drama is a complex matrix of various inputs ranging from script editor to video/film editor, the writer's contribution remains pivotal. Unlike many of the drama series and serials where authorship often remains unclear, the single play during the period under review was assigned normally to one writer, and the unifying vision of that writer was not subjected to the same commercial pressures as those of the multiple episode dramas.

Although most American series are largely collective writing efforts, several major South African series and serials have been written by one author only; for instance, Franz Marx's *AGTER ELKE MAN*; Willie Esterhuysen's *ORKNEY SNORK NIE* and several of John Cundill's works, and in this respect, the writer's function is significant and acknowledged. (cf. Chapters Four and Seven).

British television dramatist, Alan Prior, writing in the early seventies had forecast that by the end of that decade, "the television playwright, pure and simple, may not exist in British television, as he no longer exists in American television."¹ Prior's concern was primarily for the survival of the single play, as being the genre that was still largely author-centred. Although the single play survives in Britain today, though drastically reduced in output compared with earlier decades, in South Africa, the English language single play has been removed completely from SABC production planning. The thesis examines the genre as one which flourished in the early years of South African television, gradually declining until 1991, when the last locally produced English language single plays were transmitted.

In examining the writer in relation to the single play, cognisance is taken of the contribution made by South African writers from diverse backgrounds, with a disproportionately large number coming from the field of journalism, and their struggle to be heard within the institutionalised system of broadcast television. Notwithstanding the mediative nature of the medium and bureaucratic constraints that operate within the national broadcasting system, the single play has offered writers a significant space in which to tell their stories more or less as

1

Prior, Alan, "The Role of the Television Dramatist," *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan-Mar 1971, pp. 10-14.

intended. It will be shown, however, that where there existed a close working relationship between writer and director, as for instance, between Cundill and Hofmeyr, the integrity of the script was largely sustained.

Insofar as attracting writers to television drama it will be shown that the single play has provided the entree for more new writers and directors to the medium, than has been offered by the series and serials. This section will show that during the relatively short period that the single play existed, several commendable plays have been produced which, in their own right, have made a significant contribution to drama in South Africa.

Part Two, (Chapters Five, Six and Seven), will focus on the restrictive bureaucratic controls and the various forms of censorship under which the single play has functioned, and to what extent these controls operating within the SABC are reflective of official government thinking. However, the major reason advanced for the decline of the single play is financial, an aspect to be examined concomitantly with the increasing commercialisation of TV-1, whereby the genre, relative to serials and series, was considered uneconomic to produce for this channel.

Aspects of scheduling and advertising are examined in respect of their determining the viability of the single play in relation to other programme genres broadcast by the SABC. Furthermore, as the single play competes for space with the serials and series, an evaluation of the component elements of these episodic genres will focus on those aspects which facilitate their popularity at the expense of the single play.

Notwithstanding the current demise of the single play, the concluding chapter will argue for its revival as a sustainable and viable form of television drama. As more people in South Africa today are exposed to drama through the medium of television than live theatre, television drama has become a significant form of 'popular theatre,' and, as a major dramatic form enjoys a status similar to that of the theatres of ancient Greece and Elizabethan England. Although the single play captures only a minority of this audience, it is still impressively large when compared with the annual combined total of audiences attending live performances at the respective provincial subsidised playhouses. In the absence of a 'national theatre' in South Africa, the single play with its capacity to reach a wider audience than any stage play, should be nurtured as a major channel of drama. As leading British television dramatist, Dennis Potter says:

Television is the only medium that really counts for me. It's the one that all people watch in all sorts of situations. Television is the biggest platform and you should kick and fight and bite your way into it. Television is the true national theatre. (Potter, 1970).²

2

Gilbert, Stephen, "TV or Not TV?" *The Listener*, BBC Publication, London, 1982, p. 14.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

1.1. INTRODUCTION.

As with all other television programme material, the English language television single play is subject to the bureaucratic controls which exist within the South African Broadcasting Corporation, hereafter, referred to as the SABC. These controls are never static but vary according to the prevailing socio-political and economic climate within the country as a whole, and are reflected within the management structures of the SABC.

When regular television transmission began in 1976, the apartheid policy of the government had reached its apogee with the implementation of a myriad laws that controlled the lives of millions of the country's citizens, such as the Homelands policy; Influx Control which restricted Black urbanisation; the Separate Amenities Act which empowered municipalities to segregate their public facilities; the Group Areas Act which designated residential areas for the various race groups; racially designated public schools, and the Mixed Marriages Act which made it a criminal offence for people to marry across the colour line.

1976 was also the year that substantial Black opposition to the apartheid system erupted with widespread violence, beginning with a protest by Soweto schoolchildren against the use of Afrikaans as a language of instruction. During this period, the SABC was firmly controlled by a White hierarchy that was largely supportive of the government's apartheid policy, and its nine-man Board of Control appointed by the State President, was headed by Dr Piet Meyer, whose

connections with the secret Afrikaner Broederbond will be discussed in this chapter. (The Afrikaner Broederbond was started in 1918 in an attempt to revive the Afrikaners following their defeat by the British in the Anglo Boer War of 1899-1902, and the loss of their two independent Boer republics in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. ¹ After the 1948 elections members of the organisation occupied in increasing numbers key positions of influence in state and para-statal institutions).

In order to appreciate the bureaucratic and political milieu within which the English single play has functioned, particularly during the early years of the television service, it is important to examine the idealisation and rationalisations which have governed the SABC. As former English Drama Manager, Roy Sargeant, says one cannot understand the SABC without an understanding of the government because, "the SABC is a microcosm of the National Party." ² On the official level, the SABC throughout the period under review, as well as the years preceding the introduction of television, stressed their commitment to impartiality in the reflection of South African society and their reporting on news events.

The SABC is the interpreter and reflector of the cultural life of all its listeners, White and Bantu, and serves as an unbiased reporter of current events, internal and external. Its duty is to inform, guide, educate and entertain by means of a large selection of programmes and programme services.

1

Leach, Graham, The Afrikaners, MacMillan, London, 1989, p. 5.

2

Sargeant, Roy, Former Head English Drama Department, TV-1, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

3

Cited in "The Development of Broadcasting in South Africa," anon., unpub. SABC Archives, Johannesburg, 18/3/71, p. 5.

Yet, this chapter will illustrate significant departures from the stated aim of being "an unbiased reporter of current events, internal and external," thereby calling into question their autonomy. As Graham Leach points out:

Although its charter is modelled on that of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) - through its news and currents affairs programmes - bears little resemblance to the BBC's tradition of impartial and objective reporting.⁴

Furthermore, within the ambit of the corporation's "large selection of programmes and programme services," that during the period under review, functioned along language and ethnic lines, reveals the underlying intention to maintain the apartheid paradigm through divisions of race and culture. This chapter, however, will show that government interest and involvement in the affairs of broadcasting in South Africa did not start with the ascent of the National Party to power in 1948, but is part of a wider debate going back to the early days of radio in South Africa. Moreover, the early years also reveal competing interest groups pushing for either a public service institution or a commercially oriented station. The position of the single play in relation to similar competing interests, especially during the mid-eighties, can be placed within a wider historical perspective. (cf. Chapter Six).

Furthermore, the financing of broadcasting solely through licence fees was found to be inadequate in the early years especially with the need to expand and improve the technical quality of the service within a vast geographical area, and catering, as it was then, primarily for a small White population. Thus the

4

Leach, Graham, The Afrikaners, MacMillan, London, 1989, p. 63

argument in favour of introducing a commercial station has been coupled with a perceived need to fulfil certain technical objectives that could not otherwise be achieved through revenue from licence fees alone. Often these technical improvements were needed to fulfil socio-political criteria. For instance, although the establishment of the SABC in 1936 was motivated by the public service principle, the corporation announced in 1946 that "it was going to introduce commercial broadcasting as a way of financing the provision of equal networks for English and Afrikaans." ⁵

At that stage, the Afrikaans service to the 'platteland' (or, rural areas) by means of short-wave transmitters was inferior compared with the medium-wave transmission to listeners in the urban areas, where the majority of the White English speaking population resided. The extension of the FM grid in the sixties and early seventies was also assisted financially from the advertising revenue of Springbok Radio, together with loans from the government. Hereto the introduction of a VHF/FM system only improved the quality of reception throughout most of the country and brought fully fledged radio services in Zulu, Xhosa, South Sotho, North Sotho, Tswana, Venda and Tsonga, but there were also significant socio-political implications.

Since the introduction of the VHF/FM system would create an entirely new market for radio receivers, and since the cheapest form of receiver would be FM-only, market forces would tend to create a black audience which could listen only to FM channels. This complemented both Nationalist policies; that of 'separate development' and of isolating the black audience from foreign short-wave broadcasts. ⁶

5

Hayman, Graham, Tomaselli, Ruth, Currents of Power: State Broadcasting in South Africa, edited by Ruth Tomaselli, Keyan Tomaselli, & Johan Muller, Anthropos, Bellville, 1989, p. 37.

6

Hayman, Graham, Tomaselli, Ruth, Currents of Power: State Broadcasting in South Africa, Anthropos, Bellville, p. 65.

1.2. EARLY ATTEMPTS TO PLACE BROADCASTING UNDER PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY.

In South Africa, the transmission of wireless signals came under government jurisdiction in 1911, and in Britain, as early as 1904 with the passing of the Wireless Telegraphy Act.⁷ Although the first public demonstration of wireless broadcasting in South Africa occurred in 1920, the first radio station to broadcast regular programmes was started four years later by a scientific association, the Associated Scientific and Technical Broadcasting Company Limited in Johannesburg, which had links with the manufacturers and suppliers of wireless sets. Apart from the acquisition of a licence to transmit wireless signals, this association was relatively free of government interference. Similarly, non-statutory bodies in several European countries took the initiative in developing broadcasting, such as the Marconi Company which established experimental stations in Britain and Ireland after the First World War.⁸

In South Africa, the SABC has evolved from four separate organisations that operated independently, namely the Associated Scientific and Technical Broadcasting Company Limited, the Cape Peninsular Publicity Association, the Durban Municipality and the successor to these organisations, the African Broadcasting Company. The first experimental radio broadcast was developed by a broadcasting committee of the South African Railways and Harbours in December 1923, seven months before the launch of the station by the Associated Scientific and Technical Broadcasting Company Limited, (A.S.& T, or, commonly

7

Emery, Walter, B., National and International Systems of Broadcasting: Their History, Operation and Control, Michigan State University Press, 1969, p. 84.

⁸ Ibid. p. 82.

known as J.B, Johannesburg Broadcasting Station). A similar service was started in Cape Town two months later by the Cape and Peninsula Broadcasting Association, a quasi-public sponsored station, as a means of promoting the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra, and by October the same year, a third broadcasting station, run by the Durban Municipality, started operating from the Durban City Hall.⁹

The AS & T, which included members from mining and other industries, began broadcasting from the first floor of Stuttaford's building in Johannesburg; their daily programmes included concerts, Women's Hour and Children's Corner. Although most of the programmes were presented in English, there were attempts to provide a limited number of Afrikaans items, as for instance, the news.¹⁰ In respect of Afrikaans listeners, the situation did not improve significantly even after the takeover of the three small independent companies by the African Broadcasting Company in 1927, and by 1936 Afrikaans broadcasts represented only 6% of total programme content.¹¹

Notwithstanding the small number of listeners who represented less than 1% of the White population by 1926, the government of the day set in motion measures to control the new medium through the passing of the Radio Act, No. 20 of 1926. These regulations were framed by the Postmaster-General, Colonel Sturman, with the concurrence of the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Sir Thomas Watt,

9

Ibid.

10

Rhodes, T.A.F., "Broadcasting Before the SABC (1924 - 1936)," unpub., SABC Archives, Johannesburg, 21/9/56, pp. 5 - 10.

11

SABC Docuemntary, "The History of Broadcasting in South Africa," commentary by Dewar McCormack, 1985.

and approved by the Governor-General, His Royal Highness Prince Arthur of Connaught, whereby a broadcaster who had been granted a licence by the Postmaster-General, was required to carry out a regular service consisting of "music, entertainment, instruction, public announcements, or other matter, which had been approved by the Postmaster-General." ¹² Unlike the situation in Britain, where radio drama had been a staple of broadcasting since the 20's, drama was not included in the Postmaster-General's list of prerequisites. For instance, a Saturday evening programme by the Cape and Peninsula Broadcasting Association for August 13, 1927, included a market report, weather report, a popular concert by the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra, and the news, in English and Afrikaans. ¹³

During the period 1924 - 1927, the three broadcasters continued to function within their respective regions, but financial problems were soon encountered by all of them. As their major source of income was derived from licence fees, the widespread 'wireless pirating' was placing the viability of these stations in jeopardy. Responding to the financial crisis, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs included in the provisions of the Radio Act of 1926 stiff penalties for licence fee defaulters. However, the Act and subsequent measures, including a grant-in-aid from the Johannesburg City Council to J.B., failed to save the company, and it closed on January 31, 1927. The functions of J.B. and those of

12

Rhodes, T.A.F., "Broadcasting Before the SABC (1924 - 1936), unpub., SABC Archives, Johannesburg, 21/9/56, pp. 5 - 10.

13

Joyce, Peter, ed., South Africa's Yesterdays, Readers' Digest Association, Cape Town, 1981, p. 141.

the other two independent companies were taken over by the African Broadcasting Company.¹⁴

However, before the licence was issued to the African Broadcasting Company, (or, ABC), the government of the day was divided in its attitude towards public broadcasting. While the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs was anxious to introduce a measure of government control over its activities, and certainly to keep it out of the hands of private enterprise, many of his colleagues were not supportive of broadcasting being subsidised by public funds. The Minister's position, however, was weakened by the relatively small number of listeners in 1927, a mere 15,500; unlike the situation in Britain, where the corresponding number of listeners in 1926 had reached 2,263,894.¹⁵ In that year, the British government, by means of a Royal Charter, established a non-profit, non-political organisation under a Board of Control, known as the British Broadcasting Corporation, which took over the functions of the independent commercial British Broadcasting Company, owned by the major manufacturers and suppliers of wireless sets. The issue of management, control and financing of broadcasting in Britain was the subject of the Crawford Committee, appointed by the Postmaster-General in 1925, which recommended that a public corporation should replace the commercial company, and that this corporation should serve as a "trustee for the national interest in broadcasting."¹⁶

14

Ibid.

15

Briggs, Asa, Sound and Vision: The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol IV, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 4.

16

Emery, Walter B. National and International Systems of Broadcasting: Their History, Operation and Control, Michigan State University Press, 1969, p. 85.

After the collapse of the three independent radio stations, South Africa experienced a brief nine year period when broadcasting was run by an entrepreneur, Isadore Schlesinger who had a substantial stake in the local film industry. Light entertainment and popular dramas assumed an importance during this period of commercial broadcasting, and the ABC Dramatic Company produced its first radio play in 1928, Alfred Sutro's, **THE MARRIAGE WILL NOT TAKE PLACE**.¹⁷

Notwithstanding a financial setback in 1929, the ABC was showing a healthy profit when it ceased operating in July 1936, and thereby removed the concern expressed by government members that the State would be required to subsidise the institution. However, before Schlesinger took control of broadcasting in 1927, the government, through its Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Mr Madeley, indicated that it would in time exercise a measure of control over the affairs of broadcasting. Consequently, the broadcaster's licence issued to Schlesinger was for a five year period only. State interest in broadcasting in 1927 was tempered only by the small number of White listeners, (namely, 15,509), and the fact that the government would have had to subsidise the system, the cost of which would have far out-weighed any political advantage of controlling it at that early stage.

Between 1927 and 1933 a succession of ministers of Posts and Telegraphs, and the Postmaster-General, Mr Lenton, had come to the following conclusions:-

- a) That wireless was of infinite value as a means of instruction and entertainment:

17

Rosenthal, Eric, You Have Been Listening. A History of the Early Days of Radio Transmission in South Africa, Purnell, Cape Town, 1974, pp. 34 - 44.

b) that the potentiality of wireless was so great that it should NOT be operated by private enterprise.¹⁸

Although the ABC had its licence renewed in 1932 for a further five years, government interest in broadcasting was growing. This burgeoning interest was no doubt in direct proportion to the increasing number of listeners, which in 1934 had climbed to nearly one hundred thousand (98,562), and because the company had overcome its earlier financial difficulties. In the belief that the time was now ripe for the government to be involved, the Postmaster-General, Mr Lenton, was sent to London in 1934 to study the question of broadcasting, and shortly after his return, the Prime Minister, General Hertzog, invited Sir John Reith, the Director-General of the BBC to "look over the situation in this country respecting broadcasting, and have conversations with my government as to the policy for its future development."¹⁹

Reith's report highlighted the important position of broadcasting in society, and that it should be taken over and developed by a public corporation established by Statute. He proposed that responsibility and authority should be vested in a Board appointed by the governor-general. However, Reith stressed that the Board should be free from political motive, and that it should command the confidence of the general public. Reith was obviously aware of the potential power of broadcasting and believed that nothing in the entire history of

18

Rhodes, T.A.F., "Broadcasting Before the SABC, (1923 - 1936)," SABC Archives, (unpub.), Johannesburg, 21/9/56, p. 21.

19

Rosenthal, Eric, You Have Been Listening. A History of the Early Days of Radio Transmission in South Africa, Purnell, Cape Town, 1974, pp. 34 - 44.

civilisation could compare with the effectiveness of broadcasting as a means of channelling information.

The microphone can achieve what the printed word and the philosophic formation of doctrine have failed to bring about. We can familiarize the public with the central organisation which conducts its collective business and regulates its inner and outer affairs. It establishes a quiet and secure linkage of the stoep and fireside audience; for it is not the printable scheme of government but the living and doing which interlocks governors and governed in a real ensemble.²⁰

In 1935, the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Senator Clarkson, announced that the government would not renew ABC's licence once it expired in 1937. He proposed that in its place would be "an independent autonomous organisation controlled by a board or committee of a certain number of prominent people not connected with the government, but acting in trust for the public."²¹ Clarkson, however, stressed that broadcasting would not function as a government department nor would it 'be liable to the whim of any political party that happens to be in power.'²² The policy of the Board, nominated by the governor-general, would be determined by the Board itself, assisted by the various provincial advisory committees, and a full time executive headed by a director-general.

The powers of the Board, as defined by the parliamentary Act 22 of 1936, gave the Corporation considerable independence, though, as a Public Utility Trust, it was answerable to parliament in respect of certain provisions, inter alia, "to frame and carry out its broadcasting programmes with due regard to the interests of

20

Ibid.

21

Marshall, Lee, "The Story of the SABC," The Star, 9/11/70, p. 18.

22

Marshall, Lee, The Star, Johannesburg, 26/11/70, p. 7.

both English and Afrikaans culture." ²³ Arising out of these, and other, recommendations, the South African Broadcasting Corporation was formally established on August 1, 1936, (ABC having relinquished their licence a year before expiry) and the eight member board of governors were representative of the White community from the major regions of the country.

The first chairman was the Secretary for Education, Mr M.C. Botha from Pretoria; the vice-chairman a Johannesburg solicitor, Mr.H.R. Solomon. The other members were; Mr A.J. de Kock, who was chairman of the Boere Saamwerk Beperk in Port Elizabeth; Mr L.W. Deane, a chartered accountant from Bloemfontein; Colonel G.M. Molyneux from Durban; Sir John Carruthers Beattie, the principal of the University of Cape Town; Professor C. M. van den Heever from the University of the Witwatersrand, and a housewife from Bloemfontein, Mrs C. Edeling. ²⁴

There was no mention during these formative years of providing any broadcasting service for the Black majority; such consideration was given only in 1960 with the introduction of Radio Bantu, broadcasting six hours a day. Prior to 1960, a rediffusion service, using telephone lines, was introduced to various White residential areas in 1940, with programmes in Zulu, Xhosa and Northern Sotho. (Direct broadcasts in these languages began in 1942 and rediffusion by telephone lines was discontinued in 1945). ²⁵ The first broadcasts to a Black

23

Information obtained from SABC Archives, Johannesburg, August 1987.

24

"The Development of Broadcasting in South Africa," anon., SABC Archives, unpub., Johannesburg, 18/3/71, p. 37.

25

Report of the Task Group on Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa, Cape and Transvaal Printers, August 1991, Chapter 1, pp. 1 - 2.

area began in 1952, when a full rediffusion service to the Orlando district of the Western Native Areas, as it was then known, was provided. (Orlando is now part of Soweto).²⁶

The requirements of this service prevented a strict division into national and regional news, as for the general news service. Thus the Bantu bulletins include national items which concern the Bantu, and a good deal of news with local and regional interest.²⁷

1.3. THE "LITTLE BIOSCOPE" FEATURING BIG MONEY AND POLITICAL LUNACY.

Instead of being one of the last countries in the world to have a television service, South Africa could have been among the first. However, financial, technical and political considerations were the main obstacles preventing the introduction of a service before 1976.²⁸ (Test transmissions began on May 5, 1975, and a regular service on January 5, 1976). Increasing public pressure, and the departure from the Cabinet of a vigorous opponent of the medium, namely, Albert Hertzog, (whose fear of the medium will be amplified later in this section), eventually lead in 1969 to a government appointed commission, headed by Dr Piet Meyer, then chairman of the Board of the SABC, to investigate the feasibility of a television service. A year later the commission published its report, which was accepted by the government, and the SABC was commissioned to establish the new medium.

26

"The SABC News Service," SABC Publication, undated, circa 1960, p. 4.

27

Ibid. p. 5.

28

Prior to the expansion of the FM system in the late 1960's, a national television service would not have been technically feasible.

Having grown out of an existing radio broadcasting system denies television an independence, and a sense of its own uniqueness, as it was regarded as merely part of a wider broadcasting service. In this respect, television in South Africa and Britain had similar roots. The first post-war Director-General of the BBC, Sir William Haley, called television 'the natural extension of sound,' and this remained for some years the orthodox way of looking at its role.²⁹ Not only would television programming reflect a similar menu to that offered by radio, but the new service would be administered by those who controlled sound broadcasting.

Because Sir William Haley believed that the television service would encourage passivity and present a surfeit of entertainment programmes, he felt it needed strict control in order to balance the entertainment factor with programmes that were also informative and educational.³⁰ Reference to television as 'radio with pictures,' is demeaning and reduces its capacity to be taken seriously, particularly if one associates radio with the medium of ideas, and television as merely 'a surfeit of entertainment programmes.'

In South Africa, the original Afrikaans word for television, was 'beeldradio,' which reinforced the association that many people had of television being merely 'picture radio'. The term 'beeldradio' was still in common usage in December 1969, when the commission of enquiry into television was established. The fact that the new medium was to fall under the governing structures which controlled

29

Briggs, Asa, Sound and Vision, The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol IV, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 4.

30

Ibid.

radio, merely confirmed a popular notion that television was simply a technological outgrowth of radio. Although in the area of broadcast transmission, microphone technology and technique there is a direct developmental bridge between the two media, the technology of the television image presented its pioneers with a set of technical challenges unlike those faced by the early developers of wireless telegraphy.

The first opportunity South Africa had of considering a television service was in August 1929 when John Logie Baird's pioneering equipment was demonstrated to an assembled group of interested people in Cape Town. The experience of seeing the first television images in the country was described in these terms:-

In the Cape Town demonstrations, the face and voice of a man sitting in the one room, were carried through the wall to the next room. The subject sat before a dark curtain. Through an aperture in this, a bright light shone. It was a "spotlight" -- a thin pencil ray swung rapidly to and fro by its passage through the perforations of a rotating disc. The contours of the face were picked out by this bright light, and so transmitted in light waves to a battery of photo-electric cells arrayed in front of the sitter.³¹

Although the interest was mainly of a scientific nature, the potential of the medium was evident to those who witnessed the demonstration given by Lord Angus Kennedy, who came out to South Africa, on behalf of Baird. From Cape Town, Kennedy went on to show the equipment to selected groups in Johannesburg and Pretoria. Among the many interested South Africans who were present at these demonstrations was Isidore Schlesinger, then head of the African Broadcasting Company. In 1929, the ABC was in serious financial difficulty and, consequently, Schlesinger was in no position to invest in a new

31

Rosenthal, Eric, You Have Been Listening, The Early History of Radio in South Africa, Purcell, Cape Town, 1974, p. 138.

broadcasting venture, particularly one that was still in its early developmental stage. Nevertheless, he was reported to have expressed interest in the new medium, and might have considered its introduction had he not lost control of his company to the SABC in 1936.³²

The press in Johannesburg and Cape Town, however, were stimulating public interest by speculating on the possibilities of television as an entertainment medium. A year before Kennedy's visit, the Rand Daily Mail announced that the Baird Television Company was to send a group of engineers to South Africa to start a TV service. Among the range of possible programmes listed by the newspaper article was drama; "scenes of plays, together with words, so that the listeners can turn on a switch and see the actors on a little screen in front of them."³³ Seeing actors, 'together with words,' was certainly a novelty to audiences of screen drama in 1928, as the film industry was just emerging from its silent era with the introduction of synchronised sound.

The Baird system was again demonstrated at the 1936 Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg. The equipment shown on this occasion was similar to that which launched the BBC television service in London that same year. However, it was also the year in which the South African Broadcasting Corporation was formed, and the board of governors, with their sights set on launching their newly acquired radio network, were unlikely to recommend additional financial burdens on the young organisation. Besides, the Hertzog government had expressed no interest in television, and now that broadcasting was accountable to

32

Ibid, pp. 150 -159.

33

Ibid, p. 138.

parliament, any future decision regarding its introduction would have to be approved by parliament.

Having just won the battle to give the Afrikaans language equal status with that of English on radio, a television service would have posed further problems for the language in its relation to English, which had a far wider net from which to draw its programme material. This challenge was deferred for some forty years. Although limited Afrikaans radio broadcasts were given during the ABC period, the SABC, in terms of its government Statute, was obliged to give Afrikaans its due regard.³⁴

The intervention of the Second World War put paid to further serious deliberation on the introduction of a television service. In Britain, the medium was a victim of the war as well, where it was closed down because its transmitters would have been useful beacons for enemy aircraft. However, three years after the war, the National Party gained control of South Africa, and the whole question of broadcasting, including television, became a highly politicised issue. A major government opponent of television was the minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Dr Albert Hertzog, who controlled the ministry for most of the 60's. Among his concerns was the negative effect the medium allegedly had on children.

The ill effects of television on children was a very important factor. Children sat and stared at television screens for so long that they gradually attained an ill adjusted outlook on life. South Africa would not allow this to happen. It was

34

Ibid, pp. 15- -159.

essential that the Whites remained the leaders in South Africa and their children were the leaders of the future.³⁵

Dr Hertzog also believed that the Communists would use all means of communication, particularly television, in order to infiltrate their propaganda into the country. According to him, "television portrays Blacks as angels, and Whites as scoundrels."³⁶ Besides the great cost involved, Hertzog was also concerned about the imbalance that would arise between a large available supply of English material and limited Afrikaans resources, and that imported films depicting crime and sex would dominate the programmes. Ironically, both the Afrikaners and many Third World African countries shared a similar concern about the adverse impact that American 'media imperialism' would cause to their respective cultures and values.

However, Hertzog's battle was lost when he left the National Party in 1968, disagreeing with the moderate reformist measures on sport introduced by prime minister, John Vorster. Hertzog led a small breakaway movement known as the 'Herstigste Nasionale Party,' leaving the political way open for the government to consider the introduction of television. Although the Meyer commission report stressed the dangers of television falling 'into the wrong hands,' it countered Hertzog's fear of the medium undermining the Afrikaans language and culture by saying:-

In a world rapidly approaching a stage where direct reception of television transmissions from overseas via satellites will become a reality, South Africa must have its own television service in order to nurture and strengthen its

35

Crocott's Daily Mail, Grahamstown, 24/5/63, p. 2.

36

Watling, Cyril, "TV - Perhaps it Won't be so Good After All," Cape Times, 3/6/63, p. 3.

own spiritual roots, to foster respect and love for its own spiritual heritage and to protect and project the South African way of life as it has developed here in its historical context.³⁷

The SABC began with test transmissions of two hours per day on May 5, 1975, followed by a regular service of 37 hours per week on January 5, 1976. The one channel service was shared on a roughly 50/50 basis by English and Afrikaans broadcasts.

1.4. AUTONOMY WITHIN THE BROTHERHOOD.

As an introductory chapter the aim is not to provide an exhaustive investigation into the management structure of the SABC, but merely to identify significant trends within the corporation and to highlight salient incidents or events where the severe stresses and strains within the ruling party have been reflected in attitudes and decisions taken by the management of the SABC. In respect of television drama, and the single play in particular, the reaction of the SABC to prevailing political circumstances was evident in the shelving of Athol Fugard's *A LESSON FROM ALOES*, which came in the wake of reduced government support in the General Elections of May 6, 1987, when the Conservative Party made significant inroads into former National Party Afrikaner strongholds in the Transvaal.

According to the Organiser, English Drama TV-1, the cancellation of the scheduled viewing of *A LESSON FROM ALOES*, on two separate occasions in July and August 1987, was clearly the result of political pressure. At a Drama

37

Meyer, P.J., "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Matters relating to Television," Government Printers, Pretoria, 1971, para. 144.

Committee meeting during that period, attended by members of both the English and Afrikaans drama departments, a recommendation was made that plays of a 'patriotic nature' should be actively encouraged.³⁸ Given the close ties between the SABC and the National Party, the motive behind such an appeal was clearly an attempt to legitimise existing hegemonic interests, and would, in all probability, be viewed by leading South African English dramatists with a large measure of cynicism and suspicion.

In view of this sympathetic relationship between the National Party and the SABC it is important to gain a brief perspective on this political body and its policies, insofar as they have been reflected by positions and decisions taken by the corporation. The National Party, up until the end of the period under review in mid-June 1991, has shown a decline since the 1977 elections, when it was supported by 65% of the White electorate. Ten years later, that percentage had dropped to just over 50%, and their number of parliamentary seats had declined from 135 to 123. The National Party saw further decline in its power in the election of 1989, but instead of reacting to the perceived right-wing threat, the government took bold initiatives in introducing far reaching reform measures, such as the scrapping of the Separate Amenities Act in 1990, followed in 1991, by the abolition of the Group Areas Act, the Land Act and the Population Registration Act.

Together with the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the South African

38

Rodel, Clive, Organiser English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

Communist Party (SACP), as well as other smaller liberation organisations in February 1990, a new 'open door' policy was initiated by the government. Similarly, this new approach has been reflected in the SABC, which has opened its doors to people who were formerly regarded as enemies of so-called White South Africa, and in the process, has introduced a brief 'Golden Age' of broadcasting in South Africa, according to TV presenter, John Bishop, in his interview with ANC Umkonto We Sizwe member, Marion Sparg.³⁹ If Bishop perceives the current period to be a 'Golden Age,' it is not a perception shared by the ANC who maintain that the SABC, through its presenters, is able to steer public debates on AGENDA to reflect favourably on the government. "It is just that much more subtle than in the past."⁴⁰

By contrast, the period leading up to the introduction of television was characterised by a prescriptive attitude on the part of the SABC, reflected strongly in its News Service. For instance, during the mid to late sixties when Albert Hertzog was the minister responsible for broadcasting the News Service could not, in any way, be regarded as an unbiased reporter of current events. The content of the news during that period was often politically prescribed by official directives in the form of a 'Dagopdragboek' or, Daily Instruction File, in which, among other information, was listed the names of people who were considered persona non grata. For instance, a news bulletin was to avoid carrying stories that would in any way promote the activities and views of people such as Alan

39

Bishop, John, "Bishop's Beat," GMSA, (Good Morning South Africa) TV-1, 1/5/91.

40

Mbeki, Moeletsi, Convener -- Education Committee Association of Democratic Journalists, Seminar on "An Overview of the South African Film and Broadcasting Industry," BAFTA Centre, (British Academy for Film and Television Arts), London, September 1992.

Paton and Edgar Brookes. The Instruction File also discouraged any reportage of the American Field Scholarships, an exchange system enabling South African students to spend a year at an American high school or college.⁴¹ Such a system, in the eyes of the compiler of the Daily Instruction File, would no doubt neutralise the young person's indoctrinated view of the South African way of life.

Although the SABC is an autonomous body, it is accountable to parliament, under Section 24 of the Broadcasting Act 1936 (Act No. 22 of 1936 repealed by Act 73 of 1976) in terms of which the Corporation is required to submit an annual statement of revenue and expenditure, and to furnish particulars in respect of administration expenses, including salaries, and the purchase and sale of land, buildings and equipment. Throughout the period under review, the SABC was headed by a Board of Control consisting of fifteen members (initially, between five and nine), who were appointed by the State President. As head of government, it would have been inconceivable for him to have selected a majority of members who were hostile to the National Party. The Board was assisted by an Advisory Board for Programmes in the various Black languages, and a Television Advisory Board, also appointed by the State President. Among the aims of the Corporation during the period under review were:-

- a) to carry on a broadcasting service in the Republic
- b) at the request of the Minister, and subject to such conditions as he may determine, to broadcast programmes for reception in a country or territory outside the Republic.
- c) to transmit programmes by means of cables or wires for reception by members of the public in general or for any

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The author was sub-editor in the SABC News Department, Durban, 1965 - 1970, and recalls the existence of the 'Dagopdragboek,' or Daily Instruction File.

category of persons in a particular area or at a particular place.⁴²

Throughout most of its history, from 1936 to 1970, the SABC has been the responsibility of the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, (later styled, Posts and Telecommunications), as the Post Office played a significant role in the collection of licence fees and the allocation of broadcast and amateur frequencies, or wavelengths, as they were commonly called in the early days. Between 1970 and 1986, the responsibility fell to the departments of National Education, Posts and Telecommunications and Foreign Affairs.

From 1986, the SABC was accountable to the minister in the State President's office entrusted with Administration and Broadcasting Services. Following the 1987 General Election, the portfolio was in the hands of the Minister for Information, Broadcasting and the Film Industry; at present, the portfolio falls under the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Gene Louw. According to the Viljoen Task Group the lack of ministerial continuity since 1970 has made it difficult to sustain a measure of broadcasting expertise in the civil service.⁴³ (The Viljoen Task Group was constituted in 1990 by minister Louw to survey and report on broadcasting policy, strategy, a controlling structure, future needs and other relevant aspects of broadcasting in South and southern Africa). Notwithstanding the breaks in continuity, the SABC's commitment to the expression of government policy throughout this period was unaffected by these changes. (cf. Appendix 8 for a full list of ministries responsible for broadcasting since 1936).

42

Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa, 1980/81, Chris van Rensburg Publications, Johannesburg, 1980, p. 761.

43

Report of the Task Group on Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa, Cape and Transvaal Printers, August 1991, p. 4.

During the late sixties and early seventies, Afrikaner hegemony within the SABC grew to monolithic proportions through their diverse programme portfolios, including drama. Afrikaner dominance within the Corporation, which had cultural, social, and political ramifications, meant that competing viewpoints were either ignored or given relevance only when unfavourably compared with the dominant socio-political ideology. Since the National Party government came to power in 1948, they have ensured that positions of power within the SABC have been occupied by people sympathetic to their policies.

The Corporation was one of the organisations seized by the Afrikaner Broederbond after the Nationalists' election victory in 1948, and slowly infiltrated its members into top positions. The National Party is thus given free rein to set the agenda for public debate on the nation's airwaves.⁴⁴

The first such appointment was that of Gideon Roos as director-general; though a political appointee, Roos was a non-Broederbonder, a Cape Nationalist and less doctrinaire. He was primarily a broadcaster "dedicated to the principles of the Charter," and was known for his impartiality in the functioning of the Corporation.⁴⁵ However, in the political climate of the early 60's, with Verwoerd's power base firmly in the Transvaal, the situation became untenable for Roos who resigned when Piet Meyer was appointed as full-time chairman of the Board. Although Roos believed that the SABC should reflect the activities of the government-of-the-day, he was opposed to the SABC being used as a defender of the apartheid policy of the government.

44

Leach, Graham, The Afrikaners, MacMillan, London, 1989, p. 64.

45

Marshall, Lee, The Star, 26/11/70, Johannesburg, p. 7.

Roos upheld Reith's ideal that broadcasting should aspire to serve the national interest, a notion distorted by Nationalist politicians, if not directly, then certainly through their appointed agents on the governing board of control. These agents influenced and directed the SABC towards their own narrow ideological goals. This inherent danger is recognised in countries where broadcasting has been established by government decree. In Britain, for instance, a White Paper on broadcasting in the seventies, emphasised the need "to remove from the party in power the temptation to use the state control of broadcasting for its own political ends."⁴⁶ Or, as Sir Denis Forman, the Deputy Chairman of the Granada Group in Britain, points out:-

A minister will often confuse government policy with the national interest and come to believe passionately that his plans and policies are so important, so essential to national survival, that anyone who opposes them is wrong, biased, even unpatriotic.⁴⁷

In terms of the SABC's charter, the organisation is particularly anxious 'to project the positive and constructive elements within South African society, in order to promote a pride and loyalty to the country.'⁴⁸ While these may be noble sentiments in a democratic, non-racial society, the implementation of the charter has distorted South Africa's social reality, particularly when it is interpreted by one sector of that society alone. For instance, in the wake of the 1976 Soweto uprising, in which an estimated 700 people were killed, the SABC annual report

46

Heller, Caroline, Broadcasting and Accountability, Television Monograph, British Film Institute, London, 1978, p. 68.

47

Forman, Dennis, "The Richard Dimpleby Lecture," *The Listener*, London, 16/7/87, p. 12.

48

SAUK Mandaat, (tr.) 1987, p. 1.

for the year claims, "every effort was made to place the disturbance in the black townships in the proper perspective, and to control passions."⁴⁹

Notwithstanding its high level of technical expertise, and the many talented individuals on its production staff, the SABC in 1975/76 was greatly influenced by the ideology of the Afrikaner Broederbond. Among the 49 members of this secret organisation who were in the employ of the SABC at the time, were, Dr Piet Meyer, a former chairman of the Broederbond; Mr Steve de Villiers, director of Afrikaans and English radio services; and Dr Jan Schutte, deputy director general of programmes. It was during Dr Piet Meyer's tenure, as chairman of the Board of Control, that the SABC became a bastion of the Broederbond. Meyer sanctioned blatantly pro-government propaganda projects, such as the daily Current Affairs programme, supposedly the editorial opinion of the SABC, but regarded by a discerning public as merely a mouthpiece of the ruling National Party.⁵⁰ The content of these programmes reflected to a large extent the dogma and philosophy of conservative, isolationist Afrikanerdom.

A commitment to government policy was clearly stated in 1969 by the Director General of the SABC, Douglas Fuchs, who said the corporation's programme policy was 'linked to national policy, based on recognition of the diversity of language groups.' Furthermore, he said that in the aftermath of Sharpeville, when overseas pressure built up against South Africa 'to dangerous proportions,' the SABC had a duty 'to take an unequivocal stand.'⁵¹

49

Serfontein, J.H.P., Brotherhood of Power, An Expose of the Secret Afrikaner Broederbond, Collins, London, 1979, pp. 234 - 235.

50

Ibid.

51

Fuchs, Douglas, "Die Radio en die Gesproke Woord," Tydskrif vir

The government, increasingly attacked from overseas and from within its own borders for its apartheid policies, looked to the SABC as an apologist, particularly as these attacks again intensified after the 1976 Soweto uprising. The radio editorial programme CURRENT AFFAIRS, together with the regular news bulletins on radio and television, ensured the articulation of the government's perspective. As William Hachen observed in 1979, SABC "television is used as a propaganda instrument to espouse the political goals and aspiration of Afrikanerism."⁵²

The retirement of Dr Piet Meyer in 1979 brought a measure of enlightenment into the management of the SABC. On Dr Meyer's departure, the Cape Argus reported the event as "parting without tears."

It is nonsense for Dr Piet Meyer, retiring chairman of the SABC Board of Control, to try to create the impression that the Corporation has been a vigorous bastion of independence and impartiality while he has ruled it, and to warn of 'threats' to its autonomy from opposition politicians, free enterprise and a 'significant section of the South African press.'

The fact is, that Dr Meyer has obliged the SABC to serve the National Party with such subservience that it has embarrassed even Afrikaans Nationalist newspapers. On certain issues, it has simply lost all credibility.⁵³

The Broederbond of the late 70's firmly believed that the survival of the White community in South Africa as well as the development and well-being of the so-

Geesteswetenskappe, Vol. 9, 1969, p. 241.

52

Hachen, William, "Journal of Communication," Vol. 28, No. 3, Summer, 1979, pp. 62 -72.

53

The Argus, Cape Town, 29/11/79. p. 24.

called non-Whites, depended upon the survival of the Afrikaner nation with its own language, culture, character and lifestyle, developing out of a Christian national ethos. A further concern of the Broederbond was that an acceptance of an English 'world view,' as an integral part of Western liberalism, would be the consequence of the Afrikaner being completely Anglicised, leading to social and political integration. While the Broederbond recognised the inevitable cultural integration of Afrikaans and English speakers, and that their control over this process would be limited, it felt compelled to influence the direction of the process because, left to itself, it would lead to the Anglicisation of the Afrikaner, and that in turn, would mean the end of his own distinctive cultural life.⁵⁴

For the Broederbond, the choice was to work towards the deliberate Afrikanerisation of the English speaker, or simply to allow the "silent acceptance of the unconscious, but certainly growing Anglicisation of the Afrikaner."⁵⁵ The communal language of this culturally integrated White community in South Africa would be finally either English or bastardised English/Afrikaans. The successful political nationalisation of the English speaker was emphasised, combined with Afrikaans control of the country's economy, including the mass media and entertainment industry. However, this would not of its own ensure the growing Afrikanerisation of the English group until the independent survival of the Afrikaans nation was assured. The most important prerequisite for the Afrikaners' survival was the embodiment of their own Christian national ideal,

54

Hatchen, William, *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Summer 1979, pp. 62 - 72.

55

Serfontein, J.H.P., Brotherhood of Power, An Expose of the Secret Afrikaner Broederbond, Collins, London, 1979, pp. 234 - 235.

the pure maintenance of their mother tongue, and the honouring of their own history and tradition.⁵⁶

The Afrikaners' world-view is a conscious acceptance of his own and separate Godly Christianising mission in Africa and in the world, for its welfare of their fellow man, and to the honour of God.⁵⁷

Details of the alliance between the Broederbond and the National Party controlled management structure of the SABC were submitted to the Steyn Commission of Enquiry into the Media in the early 80's. Evidence given by a former SABC-TV documentary producer, Kevin Harris, claimed that the "broadcasting priorities determined by the Broederbond-Nat controlled management were purely political and ignored the interests of good quality and responsible TV programming. The alliance ruled through key management posts and used the SABC to promote and protect Afrikaner cultural values and the discriminatory politics of the group."⁵⁸ Harris alleged that the organiser of English Documentaries, Don Briscoe, had influenced the resignations of three personal secretaries, twelve production assistants and sixteen producers because he had been manipulated by management.

The changing character of the Broederbond occurred with the replacement of Professor Carel Boshoff by the rector of the Rand Afrikaans University, Professor J.P. de Lange, who promoted the power-sharing concept with coloureds and Indians, formalised in the establishment of the tri-cameral parliament in

56

Ibid.

57

Ibid.

58

The Natal Mercury, Durban, 16/4/81, p. 2.

1983. The period between 1983 and the 1987 general election was characterised in the production of single plays, such as *THE OUTCAST* and *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*, which both had mixed casts and whose contents were critical of stereotypical attitudes towards coloured people. (These plays are discussed more fully in Chapter four).

According to the present chairman of the Broederbond, Professor de Lange, the struggle in Afrikanerdom today, is between those who seek overwhelming protection of the Afrikaans group against possible threat and inroads from outside groups, and those Afrikaners who see themselves as part of the modern world, and believe that the Afrikaans culture is firmly established, and must therefore compete with other groups on an equal footing.⁵⁹ Between 1987 and 1990, the National Party attempted to appease both sides, in that while it provided protection through legislation such as the Group Areas Act, it was also projecting the Afrikaner as one of several competing cultural groups within a wider South African context.

In respect of the role of the Broederbond in the political life of the Afrikaner as a whole, BBC television producer, David Dimbleby, in his documentary programme, *THE WHITE TRIBE OF AFRICA*, treats the formation of this secret organisation with understanding, depicting it as a natural development spurred by the instinct of self-preservation. For instance, he allows the Afrikaner to recall how his children were subjected to the tyranny of language during the Milner-era, and made to wear a poster inscribed with the word 'Donkey' if they

59

De Lange, Pieter, Chairman of the Broederbond, Interview with Barbara Fölscher, SABC-TV Network, 18/10/87.

were caught using Afrikaans on the school playground." ⁶⁰ While this does not justify Broederbond interference in the running of an autonomous body, it helps explain why the Afrikaner found it necessary to organise himself in ways similar to other secret organisations, such as the Freemasons and the Sons of England.

The Broederbond, through its manipulation of the powerful medium of broadcasting, has achieved several of its declared aims. Among the most significant being the political nationalisation of the English speaker, the majority of whom supported the National Party in the 1987, and again in the 1989 general elections. Although the power of the television medium played a significant role in galvanising White support for the governing party, the goal of absolute ethnic separation was becoming increasingly unattainable, even with the help of radio and television, because of powerful demographic, economic and liberation forces at work.

Ironically, the television medium, and particularly the American drama serial and sitcoms, through their presentation of mixed casts and the depicting of Blacks in positions of authority and respect, have espoused a world-view which, in the period before the establishment of the tricameral parliament, conflicted with National Party ideology which discouraged social mixing among the races. These conflicting social determinants have contributed in some measure towards more tolerant racial attitudes among many White people, while among others, it has merely heightened their sense of insecurity and prejudice.

60

Extract from David Dimbleby's documentary, "The White Tribe," BBC documentary programme.

The tension between those who supported the view of absolute ethnic separation and the increasingly pragmatic approach of the so-called 'verligtes' (or, enlightened members) in the ruling party, finally ended in the breakaway in 1982 of Dr Andries Treurnicht, and the formation of the Conservative Party. These political reverberations echoed throughout the Broederbond resulting in a fierce power struggle between the 'verligte' and 'verkrampste' factions, with the former maintaining executive control under the chairmanship of Dr Gerrit Viljoen, who among other things, recommended several reformist measures, such as the abolition of the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Act. Willem de Klerk, brother of President F.W. de Klerk, and former editor of the Afrikaans newspaper RAPPOR, who first applied the terms 'verligtes' (enlightened ones), and 'verkrampstes' (narrow-minded ones), now refers to the majority of National Party supporters as 'conservative reformers,' with a minority of 'liberal reformers,' comprising about a quarter of the party's parliamentary members. ⁶¹

From 1984 to 1987, this period was characterised by further reform measures of the Botha government, and included for the first time non-White members in the cabinet, and non-White members of the SABC Board. Among significant programme developments within the SABC during this time was the introduction of NETWORK, modelled on the American ABC network programme NIGHTLINE, that opened up the political debate in South Africa.

Exploitation of the SABC as a propaganda organ has not been the sole prerogative of the ruling National Party, but was also evidenced under the Smuts government during the Second World War, when Rene Caprara was director-

61

Leach, Graham, The Afrikaners, MacMillan, London, 1989, pp. 53-54.

general. Caprara mobilised the resources of the Corporation to promote the war effort, to the exclusion of views held by a large section of the Afrikaner community who vigorously opposed South Africa's entry into the war. Caprara accepted rank as a Major in the Union Defence Force, and identified himself completely with the war effort. While it may be argued that a country at war would expect its broadcasting system to be a supportive element, South Africa's entry into the war was highly controversial. It split the Hertzog government of the day, and gave rise to anti-war movements, such as the Ossewabrandwag. (This organisation opposed, often through acts of violence, South Africa's entry into the second world war on the side of Britain). On the staff of the SABC at the time were many employees who were bitterly opposed to South Africa fighting on the side of Great Britain, and Caprara's actions were regarded as insensitive to their feelings. The resentment of those staff members found public expression through Dr Verwoerd, then editor of *Die Transvaler*, who criticised the SABC for its bias and partiality.⁶²

Vigorous public discourse on upholding the principle of autonomy in public broadcasting was focussed in Britain during the 1982 Falklands war, when the BBC was accused by members of the ruling Conservative Party government of being unpatriotic in their coverage of the war against the Argentine. However, the autonomy of the BBC, or any other similar public broadcasting system, is based on the principles of impartiality and truth, particularly in its news and current affairs programmes. These principles, which extend to matters concerning the country's armed forces, were again highlighted during the Gulf War, when the BBC affirmed that it would not report on matters which may place

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Christie, Roy, *The Star*, Johannesburg, 25/1/79, p. 2.

the allied forces in any mortal danger, but within these constraints, would nevertheless strive to present accurate and balanced information on the progress of the war. ⁶³

In 1977, when the world media were reporting on the involvement of South African armed forces in Angola, the SABC remained obediently silent on the issue, until the situation had become so ludicrous that the public would be openly discussing events that were going unreported on the SABC news bulletins. However, the secrecy added a sense of intrigue and exaggeration, causing greater public alarm and concern than if the situation had been reported in an open and balanced way.

Autonomy and accountability are inter-related in that the self-governing of the SABC cannot exist within a vacuum, but must take cognisance of the social context within which it exists. From the public's point of view, accountability is based on "the right to know and the power to change."⁶⁴ For instance, the 'right to know' could be challenged when the release of certain information may endanger the lives and property of individuals or the security of the country as a whole, but there can be no justification in withholding information that is considered embarrassing or harmful to the political fortunes of the government or its agents. For instance, the SABC gave scant reportage to Mr Justice Mostert's disclosures on the Department of Information scandal in 1978 when, among other findings, it was revealed that public money was appropriated for the

63

BBC spokesman, Debate on the Gulf War, BBC Breakfast TV, 18/1/91.

64

Heller, Caroline, Broadcasting and Accountability, Television Monograph, British Film Institute, London, 1978, p. 69.

launching of the government supporting newspaper, *The Citizen*. (The Mostert Commission was set up by prime minister, John Vorster, to investigate, among other things, the misappropriation of public money for the funding of pro-government activities).

The independence of the controlling board, and its detachment from any political party or dominant ideology, is fundamental to the Reithian principles upon which the SABC was formed. In its public statements, however, the SABC is not insensitive to these principles, which it strives to uphold in word, but the gap between ideological promise and institutional performance often elicits a cynical response. For instance, the statement by Jan Swanepoel, a former director-general of the SABC, that the Corporation is not influenced by the government, is a fervent attempt to present an image of independence.

The government have never interfered with us; they've never asked us to make a particular programme, nor NOT to make one; never asked us to retract an item or to alter one. No, I don't think that's because our policy coincides exactly with the policy of the government. We could transmit an item critical of the police handling of a particular incident, or concerned with the living conditions of the blacks in urban areas.

Certainly, we would be prepared to employ reformist and radical producers. We have people on our staff of all political parties. Why not, I believe that makes for good television.⁶⁵

While Mr Swanepoel may have been caught up in the prevailing euphoria of the new television service, when he made this statement to the influential *BBC Listener* magazine in 1976, history has proved him wrong on several counts. Perhaps the incident which characterised the government's blatant disregard for the Corporation's autonomy was the State President, Mr P.W Botha's, telephone

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Philpott, Trevor, *The Listener*, BBC, London, 22/7/76, p. 69.

call to the director-general, Mr Riaan Eksteen in August 1987 during the broadcast of the eight o'clock television news and network programme, insisting that the full text of a letter he had sent to the chairman of the minister's council in the House of Representatives, the Reverend Allan Hendrickse, be read by the news presenter before the end of the programme. This request, dutifully carried out, led to vigorous public discourse on the Corporation's supposed autonomy and Mr Eksteen's future within the organisation. "Having incurred Botha's wrath, Eksteen was on a slippery slope which eventually led to his 'retirement' from the director-generalship with a substantial golden handshake.^{66, 67.}

A propensity to be challenging and stimulating is normally a characteristic to be encouraged in a documentary director, but in the case of Kevin Harris, whose programme on the Black Soweto hospital, Baragwanath, proved to be medicine too strong for his superiors, and resulted in his dismissal following the broadcast of the programme. Harris was not prepared to compromise the truth of his documentary, accepting instead the consequences of the action that followed. The entire documentary department was later disbanded, and its functions taken over by the Manager of Magazine Programmes. Prophetically, the head of English documentaries, Don Briscoe, said during an interview in the early days of the service:-

It may be that my head will be chopped at some time, but I think that good documentary producers have to live a little dangerously. I agree that South Africans may be reluctant to answer our questions, but it is important that viewers should begin to understand what television is all about. It is important it's South Africans who are asking those

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The Daily News, "Botha Under Fire over SABC," 2/6/88, p. 4.

67

Leach, Graham, The Afrikaners, MacMillan, London, 1989, p. 66.

questions, and that the men in authority are giving us the answers.⁶⁸

On the whole, however, the difference in response from employees of the SABC and those of the BBC on the question of government and bureaucratic intervention, indicates a developed culture of independence and protest among the latter. In 1986, the British Home Secretary, Mr Leon Brittain, wrote to the chairman of the BBC, following press reports, that a documentary programme, *AT THE EDGE OF THE UNION*, gave publicity to the Irish Republican Army, requesting that it should not be shown. There was a very strong reaction from the editorial staff who staged a one-day strike to protest the Board's decision to accede to the government's request. The British government's intervention also provoked serious anxieties among those who valued the BBC's editorial independence, and in a statement released after a meeting between the Home Secretary and the director-general, a "categorical assurance was given that it was not the government's wish then nor would be at any time in the future, to censor or apply improper pressure on the BBC."⁶⁹

Political divisions in White politics during the 80's were manifested in the pressures to which the SABC hierarchy were subjected. Since the breakaway of Dr Treurnicht from the National Party in 1982, the Verwoerdian isolationist ideology of the Conservative Party has attempted to persuade the SABC to return to an all White service on TV-1, while the liberal left of the Progressive Federal Party (succeeded by the Democratic Party in 1989), has appealed for

68

Briscoe, Don, Interview, Sunday Times Supplement, 1976, p. 17.

69

Forman, Dennis, "The Richard Dimbleby Lecture," *The Listener*, London, 16/7/87, p. 12.

programmes that are more representative of the total population spectrum. However, the National Party dominated SABC - custodians of the most powerful propaganda medium in the country - have largely withstood these pressures, realising that whoever controls the broadcasting medium can influence the national corporate consciousness.

The medium of radio was once described by Dr Piet Meyer, as making "the spoken word more powerful than the hydrogen bomb."⁷⁰ Certainly its 'nuclear devastation' has been felt by opposition political parties, particularly during the run up period to a general election, as well as by various extra parliamentary organisations prior to their unbanning in February 1990. Donald Wood, former editor of the East London Despatch said that, in the months leading up to the 1977 General Election, almost every telecast featured a Nationalist spokesman, usually in the guise of a cabinet minister, explaining some or other aspect of state policy, or answering questions on which the minister was briefed beforehand, or had actually drafted them. Opposition viewpoints, however, were given only token projection, and Black viewpoints virtually none at all.⁷¹

During the 1987 General Election, a survey undertaken by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, showed that SABC-TV failed to comply with the conditions of its broadcasting licence, which among other conditions, stipulates the need to report on newsworthy current events impartially and without distortion. The most notable finding in the survey was

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Allighan, Gary, *Sunday Times, Johannesburg*, 1/4/66, p. 9.

71

Woods, Donald, *Biko*, Paddington, New York, 1978, p. 276.

that none of the political organisations opposed to the election, (such as the United Democratic Front) was given any broadcast time at all.⁷²

A detailed analysis of the election related footage on TV-1 screened during the seven week period from 16 March to 3 May, showed that the National Party was given 23.5% of the election-related coverage, with 26.9% of the 'live time.' However, when government security forces (national security was a key factor in the election campaign), and other pro-government categories were included, the total rose to 53.7%. On the other hand, the Conservative Party and the H.N.P. (Herstigte Nasionale Party), received a combined total of 13.3% of election-related time, and only 15% of the total 'live time;' the P.F.P. (Progressive Federal Party)/ N.R.P. (New Republic Party) alliance received a mere 12% of election related time and 14.5% of 'live time.' The Independents received 3.2% and 3.7% respectively.⁷³

Another aspect of the Charter which the SABC overlooks consistently is the undertaking to furnish parliament with the name of every member of a political party by whom any political speech was broadcast. On the basis of exposure given to the ruling National Party, such an undertaking would further erode the Corporation's claim to be impartial. During the parliamentary debate on broadcasting in 1987, a government spokesman's attempt to reassure the Assembly that "although the SABC and the National Party are both anti-revolutionary, the Corporation does not favour the ruling party," failed to

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The Star, Johannesburg, 26/8/87, p. 4.

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Ibid.

convince the opposition parties, who both branded the SABC as "the propaganda organ of the National Party." ⁷⁴

As long as broadcasting in South Africa remains accountable to a government minister its autonomy will remain under threat, despite claims to the contrary by the SABC. (cf. Chapter Eight). There is at the very least a tacit understanding between state and corporation of the need for mutual support; the government, through its appointed agents and supporters in top management, have used the powerful medium to promote National Party policies, while the SABC, in return, has benefited financially by operating the External Radio services on behalf of the government, thereby claiming some 5,7% of its total budget to cover the costs. In addition to services in English, French, Portuguese, German, Dutch and Afrikaans, the External Service also broadcast in Swahili, Chichewa and Lozi. Among the propaganda programmes beamed to African countries at the time that television was launched, were items on the Homelands development, the constitutional discussions on South West Africa (Namibia), which were all part of the government's detente policy with its neighbours to the north. ⁷⁵

The year 1990, however, was a watershed year for the SABC, when it was announced that a Task Group had been appointed by the government to investigate all aspects of broadcasting in South Africa. The Task Group, however, was not representative of South Africans as a whole, and yet one of its aims was to find ways of democratising broadcasting in South Africa, and how to

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The Daily News, Durban, 27/8/87, p. 2.

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SABC Annual Report 1975, p. 15.

ensure greater access to the media. (Aspects of this report insofar as it relates to television drama will be examined in chapters Five, Six and Eight).

1.5. CIVIL SERVICE DRAMA.

The SABC - through its 22 internal radio stations (broadcasting in 11 languages), an external service, (broadcasting in 7 languages), as well as TV-1/2/3 and 4 (also broadcasting in 7 languages) - has become the major producer and transmitter of drama in South Africa. ⁷⁶ Although the metropolitan radio stations, such as Radio Port Natal, Radio Highveld and Radio Good Hope, do not produce drama, the drama audiences reached through the English and Afrikaans services, as well as the various Black language services on radio and television, far exceed the audiences of the performing arts councils, or any other drama company in South Africa. For instance, the total attendance figures for the four performing arts councils in the 1985/86 year was 1,281,202, whereas a single episode of the Afrikaans drama serial, BALLADE VIR 'N ENKELING, during that same period reached an audience of some three million people. ⁷⁷

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Since the beginning of 1992, TV 2/3 and 4 were replaced by CCV-TV. From 1 October 1992, the so-called spare channel, TSS, was expanded and its technical reception in certain metropolitan areas improved.

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Statistics taken from the Annual Reports of the respective performing arts councils and information supplied by the Afrikaans Drama Department of the SABC. The attendance figures for NAPAC and PACOFS increased substantially with the opening of their respective new theatre complexes. For instance in 1986/87, NAPAC's attendance figure increased to 221,000. Notwithstanding these increases, the total audience figures for the performing arts councils come nowhere near those achieved on television. (cf. Chapter Six for additional television audience figures).

On TV-1 about one third of total programme output is devoted to drama productions. Within the English component of TV-1, about 85% of that output, however, consists of imported, mainly American, situation comedies and serials. In the Afrikaans half of the service, about 20% of the drama output is locally written and produced. ⁷⁸ In terms of output, the English Radio Service alone produces at least one 60 minute drama a week for "Theatre 60" every Saturday night, with a repeat transmission every Thursday afternoon. (The average audience size for Theatre 60 is 50,000). ⁷⁹ Notwithstanding the output of drama on the various radio and television services, the SABC bureaucracy which functioned during the period of this survey (1976 - 1991), exercised formidable restraints on the choice of material, an aspect that will be examined within the context of censorship and the English language television single play in Chapter Five.

1.6. CONCLUSION.

Within this brief historical overview the English television single play is seen as occupying a minute area of concern within a large, politically motivated, bureaucratic institution. Public broadcasting in South Africa was not created for the purpose of presenting drama. On the contrary, drama as a whole was not considered a major factor in the early independent radio stations of the 20's. It was only given limited prominence by the African Broadcasting Company, but then, mainly as an entertainment vehicle.

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SABC Annual Report 1985, p. 17.

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Information supplied by Don Ridgway, Senior Announcer/Producer, English Radio Service, Durban, June 1991.

Since the establishment of the SABC, however, the position of drama, in relation to other programmes, has improved significantly. For instance, as a percentage of total programme content, television drama represents some 25% (In 1988, the figure was 25,9%, falling to 22,6% in 1989).⁸⁰ The repertoire of drama, in television and radio, has included a wide selection of classical and indigenous writing. However, the choice of plays, especially indigenous works, has been heavily prescribed by ideological constraints during the period under review.

Consequently, plays that were considered 'safe,' such as, English drawing room dramas, and popularised by the head of English Radio Drama, Colin Fish, were carried through into television drama by Colin du Plessis, the first head of English TV Drama, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Dramas that are challenging and controversial can be awkward for an institution such as the SABC, that strives so anxiously to please the ruling National Party. with the result that English television dramas have been restricted in their range of socio-political themes, while their counterparts in theatre have engaged these and related issues head-on in plays, such as, *WOZA ALBERT* (1981) and *ASINAMALI* (1985). (cf. Chapter Five)

However, dramas that are harnessed to serve sectarian and partial points of view merely compromise their own integrity and credibility. Ideally, drama practitioners require an environment within which to operate with risk, not fear. Decisions regarding content should be left in the hands of Drama Managers and producers, without regard to a bureaucratic chain of command that has a political

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SABC Annual Report, 1989, p. 14.

agenda to satisfy. According to a consultant on the Readers' Panel of the English Drama Department, Professor Ian Ferguson, there are known instances where scripts, approved by the English Drama Department, have been rejected on purely ideological grounds by "the bureaucrats on the eleventh floor of Television Centre."⁸¹ When politically controversial themes are involved, the chain of bureaucratic command extends all the way to Pretoria where, for instance, the decision to postpone the screening of the serialised drama, *PEOPLE LIKE US*, set within the context of the Group Areas Act, was discussed at Cabinet level, and the Minister responsible for broadcasting was involved in the final decision to shelve the production until the political climate was more accommodating.⁸²

The television single play, together with other programme genres, has been affected by the changing emphasis in the financing of broadcasting, a factor that has engaged broadcasters and government since the early years of radio in South Africa. The SABC's financial policy since the mid-eighties, when advertising revenue began to assume an increasingly dominant role in the corporation's annual budget, has impacted negatively on the single play. The consequences of this financial policy will be discussed in Chapter Six.

In accordance with the fluctuating socio-economic and political changes that occurred during the period under review, this investigation will attempt to show

81

Ferguson, Ian, Prof., Consultant on the Readers' Panel, English Television Drama, SABC, Johannesburg, Informal discussion with author, Durban, July 1992.

82

Hugo, Henk, Former Production Head, TV Drama, Interview with author, May 1992.

in the following chapters how significant changes in these areas were often reflected in the choice of television dramas for broadcast. [For instance, the mixed cast productions of THE OUTCAST (1983), and TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE (1985) came in the wake of the post-Meyer phase when the board was under the chairmanship of Professor W.L. Mouton and the government's movement towards a power-sharing arrangement with the so-called Coloured and Indian segments of the population, culminating in the tricameral parliament in 1984.] The board in 1985 included for the first time people of colour; the four non-White members on the board, which had increased from nine to fifteen, were, Dr Richard Gugushe of Vista University; Professor Badra Ranchod of the University of Durban-Westville; Dr Frank Quint, an educationist from the Western Cape; and Mr W.M. Ross of the Port Elizabeth Technikon. Among the remaining eleven Board members, three were English speaking, and the rest Afrikaans. However, the 1985 eight-man management committee, which deals with the implementaton of policy, and the day-to-day running of the organisation, was entirely Afrikaans speaking and White.⁸³ It was to this committee that the English Drama Department was ultimately accountable in terms of policy and finance, notwithstanding its own immediate hierarchy of drama manager and head of production, TV drama.

In the current phase of negotiation politics the SABC has displayed greater tolerance towards competing political ideologies, and Afrikaner hegemony is becoming increasingly diluted with the appointment of non-Afrikaners and Blacks to senior positions within the Corporation; for instance, the appointment in 1990 of Mr M. Mphehlele, the first Black man to head TV 2/3 and 4, (now

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SABC Annual Report 1985, p. 12.

known as CCV-TV). However, for anyone to refer to this period of broadcasting as a brief 'Golden Age,' is to lose sight of the government's current strategy, which is to use the media to project itself as a re-born political entity that is now willing to accept a non-racial democracy. Although there has been a discernible shift away from blatant discrimination and exclusion, the present approach towards inclusion and negotiation in giving air time to government opposition voices is a function strictly controlled by the SABC. Not only are its AGENDA programmes chaired by their own personnel, who are able to balance and shape the discussion, but the SABC reserves the right to invite whom it pleases. Thus echoes of a 'Golden Age,' are more redolent in Coleridge's CLERISY, than in Bishop's wishful thinking.

the objects and final intention of the whole order being these - to preserve the stores and to guard the treasures of past civilisations, and thus to bind the present with the past; to perfect and add to the same and thus to connect the present with the future; but especially to diffuse through the whole community and to every native entitled to its laws and rights, that quantity and quality of knowledge which was indispensable, both for the understanding of these rights, and for the performance of the duties correspondent. ⁸⁴

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Bakewell, J., Garnham, N., The Priesthood, British Television Today, Penguin Press, London, 1970, p. 5.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THEATRE TO THE EVOLUTION OF THE TELEVISION SINGLE PLAY, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO ASPECTS OF BRITISH AND SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TELEVISION DRAMA.

2.1. INTRODUCTION:

The relationship to theatre is part of what gives 'serious drama' its prestige within television. And at a basic level, the studio technology of the formative period in the 1950's and 1960's, with its continuous performance and its jealously rationed editing, encouraged theatre acting.¹

The term theatre used in this research will embrace the canon of scripted, improvised and mimed material that is usually presented in a playhouse, or any area where an audience can assemble to watch a live dramatic performance. The theatrical tradition of these performances will, in the main, have their roots in Western theatre, dating back to the religious festivals of ancient Egypt and Greece. However, in respect of indigenous plays, there are those which have been influenced by Western traditions of drama, and others which are an amalgam of both Western and African traditions, as in Mbongeni Ngema's *WOZA ALBERT*. In respect of South African English language television dramas presented between 1976 and 1991, research will reveal that the bulk of locally written material has been influenced significantly by European and North American drama.

At the turn of the twentieth century in the West, the theatre playhouse was the major platform for the presentation of drama, with limited competition from an evolving film industry, which in its early silent days, was not considered a serious threat to theatre. Urbanised people in the West in the early 1900's, as well as

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Screen Education, No: 35, Summer, 1980, London, p. 16.

the majority of urbanised Whites in South Africa, were exposed to some form of live entertainment, much of it of a dramatic nature, ranging from serious plays to melodrama. However, the cinema, as a popular entertainment form, grew rapidly after the inclusion of sound to the moving picture in 1928, and dramatic features, including adapted stage plays, were part of the cinema's repertoire by the 1930's.

Likewise radio, despite its crude and unsophisticated attempts to transmit clear sound signals in the mid-twenties, also developed in popularity and provided a vehicle for dramatic presentations. However, in South Africa both radio and the cinema were to be eclipsed in popularity, among mainly White audiences, by the advent of television which became a major entertainment form soon after its introduction in January 1976. (cf. Chapter Six) Today, people in most urbanised and, to an ever increasing extent, rural people in the developed countries of the world, have come to receive their major if not their only exposure to drama through the medium of television. However, the situation differs in a developing country, such as South Africa, where television reception is excluded from most rural communities who are without electricity; consequently battery operated radios remain for these people their major source of information and entertainment. (cf. Appendix 6) Certainly within a First World context, however, television drama, according to Shaun Sutton is:

of a scope and size unequalled in drama history, with a fluidity denied to the theatre, an accessibility which outreaches the cinema. How amazed Shakespeare would be to learn that just one performance of his *ROMEO AND JULIET* had been watched simultaneously by an audience equal to the entire population of England of his day. ²

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Sutton, Shaun, The Largest Theatre in the World, BBC, London, 1982, p. 8.

In respect of the English language television single drama in South Africa, this investigation will identify two of its major influences, namely, theatre and cinema. Such selection will not ignore the contribution of other inputs, including that of radio, journalism, the 19th century English novel and the music hall, but detailed research into each of these is beyond the scope of this investigation. However, research will also reveal that the television single play, which stands closest to the stage play among all television drama genres, has been marginalised by the impact and influence of the imported American series, serials and situation comedies. It has suffered further relegation to the off-peak viewing periods by the impact of commercial advertising, and the move towards cost-effective productions. (cf. Chapters Six and Seven)

Television drama in its generic sense comprises a number of well established genres, such as the single play, (also referred to as the one-off), the series, serial, sitcom (situation comedy) and the drama documentary. (The use of the term genre applies to the 'category,' or 'kind' or 'style' that distinguishes one form of drama from another). In the early years of television drama in Britain, the single play was the sole dramatic genre, with the series, serials and sitcoms taking root in the fifties and sixties. (For instance, the popular British serial, CORONATION STREET, began in 1960). Between 1976 and 1986 in South Africa, the single play was strongly represented in the repertoire of English language television drama produced by the SABC, though after 1986 numbers declined until 1990, when only one English single play was produced, namely HAPGOOD by Tom Stoppard, and transmitted in 1991.

A distinction, however, must be made between plays produced and those screened in any one year, as several English language single plays were screened in 1990, though all of them had been produced before that time. Although this chapter will focus on the single play, the term TV drama will be used to embrace all the respective genres, insofar as they share common elements of dramatic structure, such as plot, conflict, climax, character and dialogue.

At the outset it is important to clarify the distinction between plays adapted for the medium and those which have been specially written for it. Dramatic works produced for the television medium come under the general term of television drama, but this does not adequately differentiate between plays which originate on stage and are subsequently adapted for television, and those which are written specifically for the medium. Stage adaptations, such as Shakespeare's *HAMLET*, produced by the SABC in 1983, present their own problems of definition in terms of television drama. Former BBC Drama Producer, Shaun Sutton, however, attempts to blur the distinction between adapted stage plays and those written especially for the medium when he says that "television drama is no more than the newest presentation of an ancient art."³

This investigation will argue that, in the strictest sense of the term, a television drama is one which has been written especially for the medium, with the specific potentialities and limitations of the medium in mind. For instance, stage adaptations often undergo a structural re-shaping whereby the play is shortened in length to fit into the allocated scheduled transmission time. This was the case in the SABC's production of *HAMLET*, where the director, Ken Leach, decided

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Ibid.

to cut many of the long speeches and scenes of the play in order to reduce the running time to two hours and twenty three minutes.⁴ Leach's own theatrical background was evident in that he did not radically alter the structure of the work. A strong sense of the original stage ethos was retained by not allowing the visual dimension to undermine or overshadow the dialogue. Notwithstanding these alterations, the play is recognisably Shakespeare's, although in this truncated version there is less substance and meaning than in the unabridged original.

Similarly, it can be argued that a stage presentation of HAMLET, can suffer an equal devaluation of substance and meaning, in proportion to the amount of dialogue cut from the original version. However, the major difference between the two media can often be found in a greater emphasis of visual treatment given to a television script, whereas the primacy of the word is a characteristic of a classical stage production. However, visual treatment does not necessarily mean that pictures must replace the words, though this does occur. A synthesis can be achieved where the visual aspect reinforces the word within a more realistic context than a stage presentation would allow.

Further differences between a television and a stage treatment are expressed in the three dimensionality of a theatrical presentation as opposed to the flat two dimensions of a television screen; the flexibility of theatrical architectural forms, ranging from the formal proscenium arch to an array of experimental modes of performance, such as an open space platform, compared with the fixed frame of the television screen and its aspect ratio of 3 : 4. (The proposed HDTV, or High

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Information supplied by the English Television Drama Department, SABC, August 1987.

Defintion Television screen will change that ratio to one resembling a mini cinemascope screen perspective of 9 : 16). Furthermore, the television camera dictates the viewer's focus on the selected images, whereas, the theatregoer retains an independence in his/her choice of focus.

Although it is not the intention of this investigation to create rigid categories of television genres it is nevertheless important to make the distinction between dramas written for the television medium and those which have been adapted from the stage, so as not to obscure their respective origins. Thus the term 'televised play' or, 'adapted stage play,' will be used to describe the latter. There will be instances, however, when quoting outside sources that this distinction may not be observed, particularly with reference to the early years of British television history when only a small percentage of the total annual drama output on television was written especially for the medium and all plays transmitted came under the heading 'television drama.' Similarly, the term 'televised play' may also be ignored when referring to dramatic presentations on television in a broader generic sense.

In the late thirties when regular television transmissions began in Britain and the United States, television drama resembled in structure the well-made stage play.

The single play, (though not called that until the advent of competing genres) consisted, in the main, of stage plays presented without any significant adaptation to the television medium. And yet, when a camera was focussed on a dramatic scene, the performance assumed a reality of its own within a flat two dimensional screen which defined the physical parameters of the action, and this image was transmitted live to an audience, the majority of whom would be assembled in

their own living rooms watching the miniaturised actors perform in a cabinet box that was essentially part of their lounge furniture.

A unifying characteristic of the television single play is its self-containment. It stands outside the continuum that characterises the drama series and serials, and many other kinds of television programmes. In this respect, it is an atypical television programme and runs counter to the scheduling system of television programming which aims at continuity in order to retain the viewer's expectation of familiarity. There is usually nothing familiar in a season of single plays other than their given regular time slot. But it is this unfamiliarity that gives the single play its unique strength. Moreover, the single play does not correspond to the notion of the series where future episodes reinforce the familiarity of characters, who merely play out different situations. (There was an attempt in 1987 to link a season of single plays thematically, but this context was destroyed by separating out the better productions and leaving the weaker ones to go out on Sunday nights at a later date).

However, the time slot assigned to the single play varies according to the scheduled length, whether it be a 30 minute, 60 minute or 90 minute production. Yet even these times are not rigidly fixed in relation to the single play and have been applied by the SABC with a measure of flexibility in order to accommodate either the natural length of a play, or the length to which it has been cut and edited.] For instance, of the nine single plays transmitted in 1976, three of them ran for approximately 34 minutes, a further three were between 50 and 54 minutes, and only one production ran for more than 60 minutes. Among the longer productions were TWELFTH NIGHT (1981), at nearly 121 minutes and A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (1982) at 112 minutes. (cf. Appendix 1)

In terms of plot construction there is no standard approach. Some single plays resemble in structure the well-made stage play, with a beginning, a middle, and an ending, where, for instance, the 'beginning,' or Act One, introduces the protagonist and establishes his/her objectives. Within the context of these objectives, the protagonist faces a problem that develops into a situation of conflict with an opposing force. The conflict intensifies and by the end of this section the protagonist's problem remains unresolved. During the course of the 'middle,' or Act Two, unexpected complications arise which cause the conflict to worsen, and the protagonist's decisions become more difficult and the consequences more threatening. By the end of this section a serious crisis is seen to be developing unless the conflict can be resolved. During the 'ending,' or Act Three, the protagonist takes drastic steps in order to alleviate the problem. As the conflict becomes increasingly insoluble, the protagonist makes one final choice to resolve the crisis which leads to the climax of the play, followed by a denouement. On the other hand, single plays, such as Patricia Johnstone's *THE LEARNER* (1987) are structured narratives that are more inclined towards other forms, such as, the short story; while other single plays have strong similarities with the feature film, particularly in their application of film technique, where, for instance, the climax is identified at the beginning of the play and the narrative works backwards through extensive use of flashbacks. (cf. Chapter Three) Consequently, there is no unifying definition of plot construction in respect of the single play.

However, by focussing on the inheritance of dramatic elements and conventions which evolved in the development of theatre in the West, and which were subsequently transferred to the electronic medium through the contributions of

practitioners from the theatre who entered the television medium, areas of commonality will be revealed. For instance, the early years of British television drama provide illuminating examples of how theatrical influences were conveyed to the new visual medium through theatre practitioners. In South Africa, as will be shown, this same influence was more oblique.

Notwithstanding a commonality of elements shared with the stage play, the chapter will also reveal to what extent these elements and conventions have been adapted or rejected by the medium of television. (An evaluation of the element of melodrama in respect of many television drama series and serials is discussed in Chapter Seven). Although the development of the medium, and its evolving technology, has imposed its own ideological meaning on drama; (cf. Chapter Three) a viewer watching a television drama recognises elements such as plot, character and dialogue, in essence, the tools of dramatic construction used by playwrights of the theatre throughout the ages.⁷ Even the first two original scripts written especially for the new medium in Britain in 1937, namely, *THE UNDERGROUND MURDER MYSTERY*, by J. Bissel Thomas (10 minute duration); and S.E. Reynold's *TURN ROUND* (30 minutes) relied heavily upon these elements and were largely influenced by the form of the well-made stage play.⁵ The well-made play was "the theatre of the 19th century" and its legacy dominated the repertory and commercial theatre of Britain in the thirties, during the formative years of television drama.⁶

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Shubik, Irene, Play for Today, The Evolution of Television Drama, Davis-Poynter, London, 1975, p. 33.

6

Bentley, Eric, The Life of the Drama, Methuen, London, 1966, p. 22.

Theatre's influence on television drama was extensive during the formative years of the medium in Britain, where many stage directors and actors crossed over to the new medium during the thirties, forties and fifties; among them was Eric Crozier, a director from the Old Vic, who made a significant contribution to early television drama. Further theatrical influence was derived from the selection of works by numerous playwrights whose works were adapted to the new medium, for instance, Ibsen, Wilder, Coward, Wilde and Shakespeare.⁷

Failure to take cognisance of the British influence in shaping the early policies and structure of the SABC, ignores a relevant area of the Corporation's history. Although aspects of this influence have been documented in Chapter One, a significant factor is that the South African Broadcasting Corporation in 1936 modelled its own charter on that of the BBC, and the public service ethos inspired by Lord Reith, though distorted and manipulated by successive apartheid apologists, prevailed until the early eighties, when commercial interests began gradually to dominate the functioning of the SABC. (cf. Chapter Six) Furthermore, to avoid examining South African English television drama within a purely parochial context, it is expedient to make comparative references to overseas models.

The inclusion of aspects of British television drama into this investigation is justified in that much of the early training given to the first generation of South African English TV directors (or producers, as they were called) was within a British context. In the early seventies, the SABC engaged a number of British television production personnel to conduct a television training course for trainee

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Shubik, Irene, Play for Today, The Evolution of Television Drama, Davis-Poynter, London, 1975, p. 33.

directors and technical crew at Auckland Park. The man appointed to head the production training programme, Mike Leeston-Smith, came from a drama background in the BBC, a former producer of *Z CARS*, the popular TV drama series which set new trends of social realism in its treatment of police work, challenging conventional notions of the 'good bobby,' unlike an earlier series, *DIXON OF DOCK GREEN* (1954), which presented a very reassuring image of the British police force.⁸

Z CARS brought together a host of talented writers and directors, among them the socially committed Marxists, Troy Kennedy-Martin and Tony Garnett, who held that television drama should concern itself with relevant social issues that show how people, particularly the working class, are trying to make sense of their material world. TV drama, in their view, should not be bothered with idealistic notions of aspiring toward an art form.⁹ After completing his training contract with the SABC, Leeston-Smith stayed on to produce several single plays for the English Drama Department in the late seventies, including Michael McCabe's *DREAM IN A WOOD OF GHOSTS* (1977).

In addition to Mike Leeston-Smith's extensive BBC background and expertise which added to the British influence in South African broadcasting, more than fifty per cent of the newly appointed producers in the English Drama Department, such as Gray Hofmeyr, Alan Nathanson, Bill Faure and Bill Pullen

8

Brandt, George W., (ed.), British Television Drama, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, p. 14.

9

Garnett, Tony, *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No 6, April - June 1972, London, p. 22.

had received their initial training in the television and/or film media in Britain, as well as having received additional training from Leeston-Smith.

Both Nathanson and Hofmeyr had also worked briefly for the BBC after completing their respective courses, Nathanson at the London International Film School and Hofmeyr at the Thomson Foundation Television College in Glasgow. Bill Faure joined SABC TV as a film editor on his return from the London International Film School, but "after fighting like crazy, I was made a TV producer."¹⁰ Vicarious British influence resulted from the first Manager of English TV Drama, Colin du Plessis's visit to the United Kingdom to study the latest trends in British television drama before assuming his new post.

2.2. DRAMATIC ELEMENTS: RECOGNISING A SHARED EXPERIENCE.

[The most significant contribution of theatre to television drama is the legacy of drama itself; more specifically, the dramatic elements and conventions that characterise all drama.] As Martin Esslin says, "it is precisely from a recognition of the fundamental unity of drama as drama that a true appreciation of the differences between the distinct dramatic media must take its starting point."¹¹

[While theatre may perceive itself as seminal to dramatic art, it too must recognise the debt that it owes to other art forms and influences.] For instance, there is the legacy of the early religious rituals of Egypt and Greece from which its earliest Western roots took shape. Drama is a hybrid of many contributory influences, *inter alia*, literature, music, fine art, architecture and the technologies

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Stainer, Cynthia, *Rand Daily Mail*, 27/8/76, p. 17.

11

Esslin, Martin, *An Anatomy of Drama*, Methuen, London, p. 78.

of sound and lighting. These aspects can be counted important to plays presented on stage as well as to those on the television screen. Television does not merely employ these visual and aural codes which are derivative of other influences, but assimilates them within the aesthetic context of a drama; thereby giving form to the content of a drama, mainly through the process of camera and editing. (cf. Chapter Three).

In respect of literature, however, both television and stage drama differ fundamentally from the novel in that the shared experience of the drama is visually presented to an audience within a given period of time. Both stage and television drama reach their most poignant level of response when their presentations relate to the lives of the assembled audience.

On stage anything that happens must be seen in relation to what necessarily goes with it in real life: it cannot easily escape from its natural consequences - physical, emotional, mental and sexual.¹²

As in life, drama as an organic entity is neither static nor rigid; consequently, any attempt at definition must invariably be inconclusive.¹³ Martin Esslin maintains that definitions of concepts like 'drama' should never be treated as normative, but should merely outline the somewhat fluid boundaries of a given field, as narrow definitions tend to have a cramping effect.¹³ Although the aesthetics and techniques of drama often relate to theatre, the fact that drama functions under a multitude of presentational forms, from the highly stylised dance form of

12

Brown, John Russell, Drama, Heinemann, London, 1968, p. 6.

13

Esslin, Martin, The Field of Drama, Methuen, London, 1987, p. 23.

ballet to the informality of street theatre, is indicative of its flexibility and complexity.

Definitive parameters are stretched even further when street theatre and mass funerals are regarded as drama. In South Africa potent dramatic elements are inherent and exploited in mass political funerals and mass street demonstrations, providing, in some instances, apt subject matter for realistic drama documentaries, as well as articulating and promoting, in a powerful way, the liberation struggle of the Black oppressed. As Malcolm Purkey points out, in his report on the CASA (Culture in Another South Africa) Festival held in Amsterdam in December 1987, that a political funeral attended by some one hundred thousand people, where the simulated firing of an AK-47 rifle in rapid succession is picked up as the dominant rhythm among the crowd, is pure theatre of the street. ¹⁴

While the codified drama of the playhouse and the improvised drama of the funeral may differ widely in structure, there are elements common to both; these elements link not only the codified forms of drama with the unstructured and spontaneous, but span time and place in linking the great formal presentations of Greek tragedy with the flexibility and brilliance of the Commedia dell' Arte, and all the other dramatic forms which find space on stage, screen, radio and street.

14

Purkey, Malcolm, Report Back - University of Natal, Durban, March 1988 - on the CASA Conference (Culture in Another South Africa), held in Amsterdam, December 1987.

A fundamental element that binds all dramatic performance and production is the element of action. Drama as an imitation of 'action,' though not of people, is a salient aspect articulated by Aristotle in his view on tragedy. According to him tragedy is:-

An imitation of an action that is serious, has magnitude, and is complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the various parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. ¹⁵

Although Aristotle does not explain what he means by 'action,' Eric Bentley suggests that for a dramatist, "to imitate an 'action' is to find objective equivalents of a subjective experience." ¹⁶ As a primary component of drama, action often arises out of a conflict between two strong and mutually incompatible forces, for instance Antigone and Creon. While many conflicts abound in drama, they can in a simplified form be categorised under three major headings, according to Peter Mayeux:-

- 1) Individual versus Individual. (There can be variations within this category, as for instance, the individual versus a group and group versus group).
- 2) Individual versus Self and,
- 3) Individual versus Fate. ¹⁷

In evaluating the concept of 'action' in relation to television drama, where often the word is supplanted by visual action, cognisance must also be taken of moves

15

Stolnitz, Jerome, Aesthetics: Aristotle/Poetics, Collier/ MacMillan, London, 1965, p. 25.

16

Bentley, Eric, The Life of the Drama, Methuen, London, 1966, p. 15.

17

Mayeux, Peter, E., Writing for the Broadcast Media, Allyn and Bacon Inc., Newton, Massachusetts, 1985, pp. 292 - 293.

within areas of the modern theatre to discover and experiment with non-verbal alternatives to communication. For instance, the absurdists distrusted the word because its coinage had become debased through overuse, and consequently experimented with non-linguistic and non-verbal images in order to make appropriate and effective impact. The effective device of silence in the plays of Pinter and Beckett are often moments of profound insight or catalysts for action.

In their distrust of the word, however, the absurdists wrote plays that were often purposefully vague and full of a whole range of meanings. Because the word can be an invaluable building block in communication, many non-absurdist modern playwrights, including Fugard, have struggled to discover ways of using words meaningfully by working collaboratively with actors in order to find an idiom that is relevant to contemporary time and place. Fugard's language is expressed as verbal dialogue between two or more characters (as in *PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE*); advancing the plot in a logical or illogical linear way. However, the idea of the text as primarily a work of literature is not one that holds value in the modern theatre, where the text is regarded as an architectural blueprint on which to build a living performance.

In addition to action, other important dramatic elements such as character, dialogue, plot and climax, are also shared by theatre and television. However, to give undue emphasis to one or other element is to limit the great scope of drama. Thus a definition that emphasises the element of dialogue as a prerequisite for drama immediately excludes all areas of non-verbal dramatic presentations such as mime; or one which includes actors, excludes puppet theatre.

Likewise, definitions taken from an earlier age do not suffice simply because drama is not static but an evolving entity, reflecting the changing social fabric of contemporary society. For this reason, a modern audience does not share the same appreciation and understanding of the concept of the tragic hero as one would expect from a Greek classical audience watching a play by Sophocles or Aeschylus. The social and spiritual values of 5th century BC Athens are given a different emphasis in today's largely secularised society. In a classical sense, however, the concept of the tragic hero expressed a coherent value system that involved man in his relationship to his god, whereas much of the focus during the 20th century has shifted to humanitarian and social concerns, with the emphasis on man in his relationship to his fellow man. Although humanism is not necessarily a denial of God, it is an attempt to find mankind's own earthly fulfilment.

Throughout the ages many theorists have found common ground in the notion that drama is an imitation, or mimesis, of life. However, the idea of drama holding a mirror up to nature or life may reflect a desire for a realistic and honest dramatic interpretation, but leaves the definition so wide and diffuse as to beg the philosophical question, what is life? Theorists over successive generations have tended to stress one or other aspect of drama, depending on their own perceived notion of life and reality. For instance, Aristotle's concern that drama and art are the creation of 'order' out of chaos, as expressed in his concept of 'poetic unity' (he views poetry as an imitative art as in drama), is the antithesis of the disorder and absurdity of life as seen by modern playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, whose character, Vladimir, in *WAITING FOR GODOT* exclaims, "The air is full of our cries." ¹⁸

18

Beckett, Samuel, *Waiting for Godot*, Faber and Faber, London, 1971, Act 11, p.

While Aristotle expresses the view that "experience in real life, or history, or a chronological narrative or story, is amorphous and boundless; by contrast a work of art is shaped, limited and complete in itself,"¹⁹ British contemporary dramatist, Arnold Wesker finds that very "amorphous and boundless" aspect of life a reality worth depicting in dramatic form. For instance in his play, *THE KITCHEN*, the structure is a complete departure from the well-made play, consisting of a series of loosely connected interludes, and the somewhat disorderly activity within the kitchen resembling that of any big kitchen serving a restaurant. However, this documentary 'slice of life' narrative is a characteristic of 20th century drama, particularly of those works written after the second world war. The 'slice of life,' approach, as opposed to the well-made play, is a form of dramatised journalism in which the dilemma of the modern anti-hero is reflected within such an environment. The documentary drama genre often engages the 'slice of life' approach in order to authenticate its narrative, as in the locally produced television single play, *FEVER WARD* (1980), which focusses on two young hitch-hikers who develop symptoms of Lassa Fever, a rare and deadly African virus. (The drama is based on a factual incident involving two young Australians who were struck with this contagious virus while hitch-hiking through former Rhodesia).

The imitative aspect of tragedy, and of drama as a whole, is closely akin to a human's own development and learning process. For instance, a child imitates a

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House, Humphrey, *Aristotle's Poetics*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1961, pp. 48 - 49.

whole range of experiences, actions and people, and this process continues throughout a young person's formative years and into adulthood. The learning process is often associated with pleasure; even when the 'lesson' is tragic, thus an audience can emerge from a tragedy feeling elated and not despondent, in having witnessed the hero, though defeated on a physical plain, triumph on the spiritual.

The fact that imitation plays such an important part in the development of the human personality, links drama to the way that humans perceive and understand the world; hence the aspect of imitation or identification with a character or an event presented on television, film or the stage, makes drama a meaningful adjunct to life. (cf. Chapter Six)

2.3. APPLYING THE ELEMENTS.

According to Martin Esslin, certain identifiable elements can be found in all drama that obeys "the same basic principles of the psychology of perception and understanding from which all the techniques of dramatic communication derive."

²⁰ Although elements such as theme and climax are not exclusive to drama, but are found in other forms, such as the novel and music, they are generally regarded as integral to the structure of drama.

The central idea of a drama is contained within its theme, or main theme, as there is often more than one theme in a play. In John Cundill's single play, THE OUTCAST, the major theme is brotherhood, expressed in the relationship between Adam, the brooding White forester, and his subservient Coloured half-

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Esslin, Martin, An Anatomy of Drama, Methuen, London, p. 12.

brother Abel. This theme is further developed between Adam and Dial his stylish blood brother from the city. Theme is part of the organic whole of a drama, and through it the viewer is given understanding about these important relationships, unlike a message which merely propagates an idea. Elements such as plot, sub-plot and character are employed to reveal and express the theme or themes.

The plot in *THE OUTCAST* is a variation of the Biblical Cain and Abel story. Abel, the Coloured half-brother, has been cast out of the family circle, on account of his inferior status, and is filled with vengeance because of the favour shown by God on his half-brothers Adam and Dial. Through the plot Cundill arranges the events which make up the story into patterns that reveal relationships between the brothers and their half-brother, as well as between the various characters and the unfolding events, thereby creating expectation, interest and suspense. Through the elements of plot, and sub-plot, which are central to the drama, the viewer is informed why things happen, as opposed to the premise which tells him/her what happens. The protagonist's plan of action in attaining his/her goal is built into the structure of the plot, which in the case of Abel develops with gathering intensity and climaxes in an orgy of revenge and destruction.

An integral element of the plot is the exposition, which reveals relevant background details of the characters and events. In *THE OUTCAST*, the opening sequence provides a very powerful background to the relationship of Abel and Adam, much of it visually expressed. For example, Abel is kneeling at his mother's death bed, which contrasts with the following shot of Adam sharpening his saw. It is a low angled shot accentuating Adam's strength and

dominance. This is followed by a long shot of Abel and his children in slow procession to bury Abel's mother at the farm cemetery. The next shot is of the grave being dug with Adam standing in the distance. Adam shouts to Abel, "No, not here, over there." He then approaches the graveside group, grabs the spade from Abel and throws it into the forest. Even in death, Abel and his family are to remain outcasts, thrown into the forest, where the dark and threatening atmosphere symbolises the attitude of the half-brothers towards one another.

While the television medium can exploit an evocative visual exposition, as in *THE OUTCAST*, stage drama often relies purely on dialogue. For instance, in *THE TEMPEST*, Shakespeare uses extensive dialogue in the exposition of Prospero explaining to Miranda the circumstances surrounding their arrival and existence on the island.

MIRANDA: You have often
Begun to tell me what I am; but stopp'd
And left me to a bootless inquisition,
Concluding 'Stay; not yet.'

PROSPERO: The hour's now come;
The very minute bids thee ope thine ear.
Obey, and be attentive. Canst thou
remember
A time before we came unto this cell?
(Act 1 Sc ii) ²¹

The element of conflict between Abel and Adam, through which the action of the play is conveyed, is central to the understanding of *THE OUTCAST*. The action is given both visible and audible expression, but it could also be expressed, as in many stage and television dramas, simply through the dialogue. The importance of action, both audible and visible, as a fundamental element of drama, has been

recognised by critics and theorists throughout the ages. For instance, the Elizabethan scholar, Bulwer, in his *CHIROLOGIA* and *CHIRONOMIA*, refers to the dynamics of 'actio' and 'pronunciato' as visible and audible expressions of action.²² Significant action in drama arises frequently out of the consequence of choices made by the protagonists within the context of the dilemma in which they find themselves, often ending tragically, as with Oedipus' self-inflicted blinding, or Antigone's suicide.

2.4. THEATRICAL CONVENTIONS: ACCEPTANCE, MODIFICATION AND REJECTION.

While television drama shares many dramatic elements with stage drama, it does however, modify or eschew a number of theatrical conventions which have been developed within a theatrical tradition over many centuries. For example, the chorus from *OEDIPUS REX*, would not accommodate comfortably within the television frame because a viewer, accustomed to the flow of realism normally associated with the medium, would find a group of Theban citizens speaking in choric verse somewhat at odds with his/her notion of modern speech forms. The device used in television drama to express the views of the ordinary townsfolk would tend to be handled in an everyday kind of way; for instance, the use of a news commentator as a dramatic device to provide an information bridge and to comment on crises affecting the individual or society, would serve much the same function as a Greek chorus. As with a classical chorus, which is powerless to intervene in a crisis, similarly, the news commentator can merely alert his audience to an impending disaster or danger.

22

Sneddon, Elizabeth, Lecture - "Bulwer's *Chirologia* and *Chironomia*," University of Natal, Durban, 1963.

Whereas a modern playwright, such as T.S. Eliot, in his stage play *MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL*, can effectively use the ancient device of a chorus to add impact and relevance to his play, a TV director may feel that such a classical device would merely alienate his audience, and would probably prefer to use a single narrator, or voice-over, or some other familiar method with which a modern audience could identify. The nature of continuum in television, where drama is presented along with many other programme types, such as, the news, magazine inserts and current affairs, roots the medium to issues of the day and the real world, whereas the stage can assume many styles and conventions without such restraint.

Although many contemporary stage directors are equally aware of the need to modernise or modify ancient conventions in order to make them more relevant to a twentieth century audience, a stage director choosing to present a play, such as, *OEDIPUS REX*, in a strictly classical style would find a greater willingness on the part of his audience to suspend their disbelief than would be the case of the television viewer, simply because of the respective nature of the two media. Besides, an educated theatre audience is able to place these conventions within an appropriate historical and theatrical context.

When it comes to verse drama the problem of transposing this convention to the television medium is even more acute for a TV producer/director. Yet on one level, Shakespeare's plays have adapted with varying degrees of success to the television medium, both in South Africa and in Britain. Among the reasons for this, is the familiarity of the text to thousands of people who have passed through a secondary education, and the fact that the iambic pentameter, with its run-on lines and breaks in rhythm, is a more realistic and acceptable metre to a modern

ear, than for example, the unnatural trochaic tetrameter of the early satyric verse of classical Greek drama.

The convention of the soliloquy, which reached its zenith in the Elizabethan age, is still enjoyed by a modern theatre audience, particularly in the context of plays from that period. Modern playwrights are unlikely to use this convention, unless it were done in a humorous or satirical vein. Yet, the essence of the soliloquy as a device in allowing a character to talk "without, or regardless of the presence of hearers"²³ in expressing his/her anxieties and concerns, is used in television drama by different means, for example, in the voice-over comments of Thomas Magnum in the American series, *MAGNUM*.

Television, however, has not eschewed all dated conventions. For instance, the aside, used extensively in theatrical comedy and farce, has adapted successfully to the television situation comedy, as in the American sitcom, *ROPER*, where the main character, Stanley Roper, repeatedly uses the aside in order to share a private joke or confidence with the viewer. Although this convention is essentially theatrical it works within the context of the sitcom because it creates a direct communication link between the actor and the unseen audience, (whose presence is gleaned only from the 'canned' laughter).

This suggests that despite the continuous flow of realism which characterises the television medium, a dramatist can explore non-naturalistic styles, and successfully work them into a television drama, as evidenced in John McGrath's BBC television version of *THE CHEVIOT, THE STAG AND THE BLACK*,

23

Mayeux, Peter, E., Writing for the Broadcast Media, Allyn and Bacon Inc., Newton, Massachusetts, 1985, pp. 286 - 287.

BLACK OIL, an anti-naturalistic play which offers no stable characters for identification. Although the play employed modernist devices which are likely to alienate a popular audience, the production held its viewers because it drew on traditional entertainment forms such as "the ceilidh and the music hall - and because it had the qualities that working class audiences most admire - directness, comedy, music, emotion, variety, effects and immediacy." ²⁴

2.5. APING THE THEATRE.

When regular television transmission started in Britain in 1936 there was, for instance, a slot for news, although it was not strictly television news, but British Movietone News; there was a magazine programme called Picture Page, (which by its very title took its inspiration not from the visual medium but the printed page); and a Variety music programme that was in every respect similar to its radio counterpart, except one could see the orchestra which, appropriately, was called the BBC Television Orchestra. ²⁵ And there was drama! In the minds of many first generation British television drama producers, the medium offered an excellent means of presenting popular West End stage productions. Often, only the first half of the production was shown so as to whet the appetite of the public to see the rest of the play in its West End theatre.

Television drama, when produced in the studios at Alexandra Palace, showed little originality but merely aped the conventional theatre of its day. Plays, or

24

Murdock, Graham, "Radical Drama, Radical Theatre," *Media Culture and Society*, Academic Press, London, 1980, p. 165.

25

Moss, Nicholas, "BBC TV Presents: A Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration," *Data Publications*, London, 1986, p. 36.

scenes or acts from well known plays, were rehearsed as if they were theatre pieces, and with three or four cameras mounted in front of the performance, the entire production was transmitted live to the viewer at home. As most first generation English television drama directors had come from the theatre, (cf. Eric Crozier)²⁶, they brought with them their entire theatrical background and experience; consequently, their understanding and practice of television drama was interpreted in the light of the prevailing styles and conventions of theatre. For instance, in Eric Crozier's 1938 production of *DR KNOCK*, he drew all his actors from the theatre. Crozier's approach to blocking the movements of the actors was taken straight from the theatre. "The movements gave the play more clarity than is usual in television when a legitimate theatre technique is employed."²⁷

The strong theatrical connection was felt in British television until the late 1950's, ending with Sydney Newman's appointment as Drama Supervisor for ABC Television in April 1958. Newman, who set in motion, as far as possible, an all-British programme of drama with every play specially written for the medium, resisted borrowing works from the stage.²⁸ However, referring to the strong theatrical influence prior to Newman, who became known as the 'Father of Television Drama' in Britain, former head of TV drama for the BBC, Shaun

26

Shubik, Irene, Play for Today, The Evolution of Television Drama, Davis-Poynter, London, 1975, p. 33.

27

Seton, Marie, "Television Drama," *Theatre Arts Monthly*, Vol. 22, No. 12, Dec. 1938, London, pp. 878 - 885.

28

Newman, Sydney, The Armchair Theatre, "The Producer," Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, Second Impression 1960, p. 16.

Sutton, (who worked as a Stage Manager in repertory and directed in the West End before directing for television in 1952), recalls:

Most of us came from the theatre, Most of the directors had been at one time in the theatre. That was our training ground. Once inside (television) one began to see that it wasn't just a question of photographing stage plays, there was something else. But it was a new technique. One just picked it up as one went along, a camera here a camera there. You had to learn why you were cutting. I mean, at first we just cut from one camera to another because we seemed to have been rather a long time on that camera. ²⁹

Theatrical influences were still formidable within the BBC by 1960, as television dramatist and director, Don Taylor, who was appointed TV drama director for the BBC at Shepherds Bush, recalls:-

Most of the directors who surrounded me when I went into the BBC were ex actors or theatre directors, with one or two refugees from the British film industry thrown in. As far as I was concerned, the most high-profile TV director was Michael Elliot, and his fame was principally as a theatre man.

When I was interviewed for my place on the course (director's course), I talked exclusively about new developments in the theatre and in theatre writing, and my hopes for bringing such work into television. I doubt that a single comment about the cinema crossed my lips. ³⁰

It was, however, during television drama's 'live' phase that it enjoyed its closest association with theatre. In addition to the directors and actors from theatre, who helped to shape its evolving form, particularly in respect of the single play, live television embodied the dynamics of spontaneity, immediacy and continuity of performance, aspects which characterise a theatrical performance. It was

29

Murdock, Graham, "Radical Drama, Radical Theatre," *Media Culture and Society*, London, 1980, pp. 153 - 154.

30

Taylor, Don, *Days of Vision*, Methuen, London, 1990. p. 18.

during this period that television drama was regarded as an actor's medium, unlike the position it finds itself in today, having moved progressively closer to film technique, and consequently is more aptly referred to as a director's medium. (Though some would argue that it is more a producer's medium, because of that person's financial control over production).

To date, no South African television drama has gone out 'live.' Certainly not in the same way that productions were transmitted 'live' from Alexandra Palace, or from West End theatres. But since 1987, there has been a trend to use 'live' studio audiences in situation comedies, such as *LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY* and *ORKNEY SNORK NIE*, where an immediate audience response to the humorous aspects creates a genuine spontaneity, as opposed to the artificiality of 'canned' laughter. Although television cameras have been used to shoot live theatre performances in South Africa, transmission is scheduled after the recorded video tape has undergone a post-production editing process; for instance, the joint PACT/SABC production of Shakespeare's *THE WINTER'S TALE*, which was recorded live in the Alexander theatre, Johannesburg, and transmitted on August 28, 1988, with well known stage performers, Sandra Prinsloo, Michael Richard and Jacqui Singer in the leading roles.

Stage director, Bobby Heaney, was commended by the Artes Jury for his initiative and achievement in designing a production which satisfied theatre conventions.

Yet was deliberately plotted and shaped to suit the needs of a television recording that was made during a normal performance of the play. The cameras were kept out of the way but the quality of the camera work matched the standard of a studio production. The producer also adopted the novel approach of preparing the television viewer for an

enjoyable theatrical experience by including sequences in the dressing rooms and shots of the audience.³¹

Other live stage productions video recorded by the SABC have included OH COWARD, (televised in the Johannesburg Intimate Theatre in 1982), and another Pieter Toerien production, MOVING, also recorded in 1982. MOVING, however, was produced for the Arts Programme PORTFOLIO, and not for the English Drama Department.³² Toerien's first production taped by the SABC was his musical revue TOM FOOLERY (1981), based on the writings of Tom Lehrer. In 1983, CAPAB's production of THE KING AND I was also recorded for television.³³ In 1990, the SABC English Drama Department commissioned Bobby Heaney to adapt his PACT stage production of Tom Stoppard's HAPGOOD for television, using the same cast, with one exception, in the main roles. (namely, Kurt Egelhof).

2.6. NEW PRACTITIONERS: BORROWING FROM THE THEATRE.

Apart from the isolated contractual arrangements between the SABC and various theatre managements in shooting a number of live theatrical performances, the relationship between theatre personnel and members of the English television drama department of the SABC has been less formal and tenuous throughout the period under investigation. Firstly, the new television drama practitioners wanted to establish their own independent identity as producers. According to Gray Hofmeyr they felt they had a unique training in a new medium and

31

1989 Artes Citation for *The Winter's Tale*, (Author was a member of the SABC Artes Drama Jury, 1989, 1990, 1992).

32

The Argus, Cape Town, 21/9/82, p. 1.

33

The Cape Times, Cape Town, 21/4/83, p. 8.

therefore wished to pioneer their own course without undue reliance from theatre personnel or management.³⁴ Besides, by the time television transmission started in South Africa, the medium as a whole had acquired an identity and self-confidence in other parts of the world.

According to Grey Hofmeyr, SABC TV producers did not need the established theatre of the day to show them how to produce drama.³⁵ Nevertheless these same producers drew heavily on the trained and experienced actors of the theatre for their productions, such as Bill Flynn, Sandra Prinsloo, Gordon Mulholland, Dale Cutts, Richard Haines and Sandra Duncan. Neither did these first generation television producers hesitate to use established plays of the theatre for their own repertoire, for example, Gray Hofmeyr's production of *ENEMY* by Robin Maugham (1976), Ken Leach's *POOR BITOS* by Jean Anouilh (1979) and Bill Faure's *SALOME* by Oscar Wilde (1979).

However, directors of stage adaptations were often criticised for not having coped adequately with the transposition to the television medium, particularly evident among the works of directors with a strong theatrical background. Referring to Ken Leach's production of Moliere's *THE MISER* (1984), the Rand Daily Mail critic wrote:

Staged is the operative word. Once again SABC-TV has allowed a piece of classical theatre to be filmed exactly as it would have been produced in a theatre, with apparent disregard for the exciting possibilities of Television.³⁶

34

Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, 12/8/87.

35

Ibid.

36

Michell, John, Rand Daily Mail, Johannesburg, 31/12/84.

Unlike their television counterparts in Britain, who had some forty years' experience to draw from, South African television producers had to apply their skills independently, with limited practical background and assistance from overseas, particularly as the cultural boycott made it difficult to attract leading television directors from Europe and the United States. On the technological level, however, the medium in South Africa had the advantage of more than forty years' overseas research and development, and consequently a highly sophisticated service was introduced. SABC technicians and engineers had spent several years prior to 1976 researching the various world standards before finally choosing the PAL colour system.

Role models were available in the form of overseas examples of the various programme formats, including drama, which the newly appointed SABC programme organisers and producers were expected to watch and evaluate. Furthermore, the respective television drama genres, such as the single play, serial, series, sitcom and drama documentary, had evolved in Western countries to a sophisticated level thereby diluting theatrical influences. In addition, film technology, as will be discussed in the following chapter, was already making a significant contribution to television production methodology, and several of the first generation producers such as, Bill Faure, were focussing their energies in that direction.

As in Britain, where the background of its early producers and directors shaped the development of television drama; so too, in South Africa, there is evidence to show that the background of the people appointed to the production staff of the English Drama Department has contributed to the evolution of local TV

drama. Among the first six permanent drama producers appointed to the English TV Drama Department, prior to the start of regular transmission in January 1976, two had come from radio, namely, Cecil Jubber and Douglas Bristowe, who joined the department in 1974; three had received their initial training at British film schools, namely, Bill Pullen, Alan Nathanson, and Bill Faure, whose early productions concentrated on dance spectacles, such as CARMEN and the ballet, EL AMOR BRUJO. (These new appointees were called 'producers' and not 'directors,' so as not confuse their title with the directors of administration of the SABC).

During the late 1960's, Bristowe was responsible for the production of most of the radio dramas emanating from the Durban studios of the English Service of the SABC. His limited theatrical experience was acquired in Durban during the early 1960's as an amateur actor, and progressed to the professional stage in the local production of THE SOUND OF MUSIC. He also made a number of appearances at the invitation of the Speech and Drama Department at the University of Natal, Durban, and for the Natal Performing Arts Council. Bristowe's reliance on the theatre for dramatic material is evidenced in that most of the single plays he has directed have been adapted from the stage. They include, the classic farce, CHARLEY'S AUNT; Athol Fugard's PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE; the first South African Shakespeare for television, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING; George Bernard Shaw's ARMS AND THE MAN; Noel Coward's BLITHE SPIRIT, Lorca's THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA, Anouilh's ANTIGONE; Ibsen's THE MASTER BUILDER, as well as two other plays of Shakespeare, MACBETH and TWELFTH NIGHT.

Bristowe acknowledges his limited theatrical background, and says that his approach to directing a studio drama is based largely on his understanding of stage production. (cf. Chapter Three and his studio production of *ANTIGONE*). According to him, there is no difference in the style of acting between stage and video drama; the choice of material dictates the style not the media.³⁷

Alan Nathanson, though a product of the London International Film School, is also indebted to live theatre for the experience in producing drama. After abandoning his architectural studies at the University of Cape Town, he "stayed on to get as much as he could out of the Drama School."³⁸ The only producer to have had any formal television production training was Gray Hofmeyr, who studied at the Thomson Foundation Television College at Newton Mearns, Glasgow. Although Hofmeyr had no direct links with theatre, he gained performance experience in touring the country as a teenager under the banner of Springbok Safari's *Moral Rearmament*, which used drama as a means of communicating their message.

The first Drama Organiser, Colin du Plessis, came into the medium via radio, where he was a principal announcer/producer, and therefore had no formal television training or background, other than what he received from the SABC's own training course led by former British director, Mike Leeston-Smith.³⁹ All the first generation drama producers, even those who had obtained technical

37

Television Drama Workshop, organised by the author and lead by Douglas Bristowe at the Audio Visual Centre, University of Natal, Durban, May 1982.

38

Scenaria, Interview with Alan Nathanson, Pub. and Ed. Julius Eichbaum, Johannesburg, 1983, p. 38.

39

Du Plessis, Colin, Interview with author, Henley-on-Klip, 13/8/87.

training overseas, were put through the SABC's internal production course. Notwithstanding the benefits of this additional training, as well as the overseas programme examples to draw upon, the application of television theory and production methodology was, for most of these young producers, a pioneering experience.

As Colin du Plessis says, "there were no parameters laid down for us, we had no one outside the SABC to whom we could run for help. In fact, we were left very much to ourselves."⁴⁰ Du Plessis's comments are to some extent echoed in the words of Dallas Bower, one of the pioneer British drama producers at Alexandra Palace in the late thirties, who said "as it (television) was something entirely new there were no procedures at all, so that we had to establish procedures very early on."⁴¹

Because there were no parameters, "the development of television drama has revolved around the personalities in the manager's job, and the structure of the organisation, which is ever changing," according to Drama Manager, Ken Leach.⁴² The foundation for English language TV drama was therefore laid by its first Drama Manager, Colin du Plessis, who ironically, did not seek the position in the first place.

When television started and I applied for a position, I actually wanted to run the Magazine Programme Department, but it had been assigned to someone else

40

Ibid.

41

Seton, Marie, Theatre Arts Monthly, "Television Drama," Vol 22, No: 12, December 1983, pp. 880 - 885.

42

Leach, Ken, Interview with author, Auckland Park, 11/8/87.

through Robin Knox-Grant. To my surprise, Jan Schutte, approached me one day and said he had recommended me for the position of Drama Manager, and that turned out to be a tremendously difficult task.⁴³

Colin du Plessis says although there were no formal links between his department and live theatre during his term of office from 1976 to 1982, he turned to the theatre for much of his dramatic material. "These plays were presented under the prevailing policy of doing plays with a cultural content."⁴⁴ He says one of the reasons for producing these so-called 'cultural plays' was that they afforded him greater artistic freedom than indigenous plays. "The moment I did an indigenous play I had the Broederbond looking down at me thinking I was overstepping the mark."⁴⁵

Thus, during du Plessis' tenure, the English Drama Department produced a large number of plays written for the stage, including five works by Jean Anouilh, namely, COLOMBE, ANTIGONE, CRY OF THE PEACOCK, RING ROUND THE MOON and POOR BITOS; four Shakespearean productions, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, MACBETH, TWELFTH NIGHT and A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM; two plays by Oscar Wilde, SALOME, and THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ERNEST, as well as Brandon Thomas' CHARLEY'S AUNT; Bernard Shaw's ARMS AND THE MAN; Noel Coward's BLITHE SPIRIT; Federico Garcia Lorca's THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA; Ibsen's THE MASTER BUILDER, and Pirandello's RIGHT YOU ARE. (cf. Appendix 1). According to du Plessis, the choice of

43

Du Plessis, Colin, Interview with author, Henley-on-Klip, 13/8/87.

44

Ibid.

45

Ibid.

many of these plays, particularly those of Shakespeare, was based on their inclusion as school set works, and thus an attempt to bring them alive before a young audience.⁴⁶ Among the indigenous stage plays televised during his term of office, were Athol Fugard's **PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE**, and **HELLO AND GOODBYE**.

The second English TV Drama Manager, Roy Sargeant, (1983 - 1987) had both a professional and an academic theatrical background, and during an earlier period of employment with the SABC in Cape Town, had been a radio drama producer. Prior to his appointment as Head of the Department of Speech and Drama at Rhodes University, Sargeant produced numerous professional stage productions for CAPAB. During his tenure at Rhodes University, he was largely responsible for the establishment of the national University Drama Festival, which forms part of the annual Grahamstown Festival.

Roy Sargeant says that the Drama Festival grew out of a perceived need to provide a platform for young theatre directors.⁴⁷ At Auckland Park, Sargeant saw a further need for English TV drama to widen its scope of available directors, and consequently invited three well known theatre personalities, namely, Michael Atkinson, Janice Honeyman and Bobby Heaney to participate in a TV drama director's course. Among the adapted stage plays produced during his term were Shakespeare's **HAMLET**, and **THE MERCHANT OF VENICE**, (the latter, however, was screened after his departure from the

46

Ibid.

47

Sargeant, Roy, Interview with author, Brigadier Films, Johannesburg, August 1987.

SABC); Oscar Wilde's *THE CANTERVILLE GHOST*; Noel Coward's *HAYFEVER*; Moliere's *THE MISER*, and Stoppard's, *PROFESSIONAL FOUL*. (cf. Appendix 1).

As it often takes up to two years from the time that a script is accepted to the date of its screening, it means that plays screened during the tenure of a particular manager, were not necessarily those which he had motivated and approved. Therefore a play such as, *THE OUTCAST*, which went out during Sargeant's period, was in fact initiated by du Plessis in collaboration with I.F.C. (Independent Film Centre, Johannesburg). While both du Plessis and Sargeant encouraged indigenous writing, about one third of the total drama output during their combined period of office was adaptations from stage plays. (cf. Appendix 1)

The third English TV Drama Manager, Ken Leach, (1987 - 1988), had the most comprehensive theatrical background of all the television drama managers. Leach was a former assistant artistic director of PACT's Drama Department, and later became highly regarded for his work at the Arena Theatre in Johannesburg, and as director of the Baxter Company in Cape Town. Leach was anxious throughout his career in theatre and television, to create a strong tradition of South African playwriting. By turning his back on proven and popular overseas plays he hoped that, with encouragement, South African English language drama would emerge as strongly as its Afrikaans counterpart. ⁴⁸

A reason for Leach's resignation from PACT's English Company was his firm belief in South African theatre being, "more than the reproduction of popular West End and Broadway musicals."⁴⁹ Consequently at the Baxter, he signed on some of the country's most promising and talented younger actors, including Wilson Dunster, Henry Goodman, Sandra Prinsloo and Dorothy Ann Gould, and cast them in a number of indigenous dramas. Leach was critical of the subsidised performing arts councils in that they "have singularly failed to produce what the English language theatre most requires, namely, English dramatists."⁵⁰

In his new position as television Drama Manager, Leach tried to correct that imbalance by actively encouraging more indigenous English dramatic writing. He was responsible for holding a writers' workshop at the SABC in order to expose talented writers to the possibilities of writing for television. He further attempted to draw new directors into the medium, by holding a six week director's training course in 1988 to which six promising young men and women, several of whom had just completed degrees and diplomas at tertiary education institutions were invited to participate; (including, Sheena Cooper who had completed the postgraduate TV Production Diploma at the University of Natal, Durban, in 1986). Unlike Sargeant, who singled out theatre personalities, Leach accepted into the director's course people with no previous experience in theatre or film.

Although Leach took over as Manager in 1987, his links with the English TV Drama Department go back to the late seventies, (when he was active in professional theatre), and was contracted on a free-lance basis to direct a number

49

Du Plessis, Colin, Interview with author, Henley-on-Klip, 13/8/87.

50

Leach, Ken, Interview with author, Auckland Park, 11/8/87.

of plays; most of which were original stage pieces, such as, the four part series of Anouilh's POOR BITOS; Pirandello's RIGHT YOU ARE, (which was produced in three parts); Oscar Wilde's THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ERNEST; Vaclav Havel's THE MEMORANDUM; Moliere's THE MISER; Noel Coward's HAYFEVER; and Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, HAMLET, and THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. (cf. Appendix 1).

Leach's successor, Paul Kemp, (1988 -) is the first incumbent to have an academic film background and training. Before joining the SABC, he completed a Masters Degree at the American Film Institute, where he produced a 30 minute film, VIOLET, which was awarded an Oscar in 1982 for the best live action short. Kemp, the first South African recipient of an Oscar, worked in the American film industry before joining the English Drama Department in 1984.⁵¹ According to the Organiser of English TV Drama, Clive Rodel, "Kemp follows an aggressive policy of stimulating indigenous television scriptwriting, and consequently has done little to include stage plays in his repertoire."⁵²

Furthermore, Kemp is the first Manager to have no production staff in his department; the last in-house drama director, Johan van den Berg, resigned and subsequently joined Ken Leach as a partner in their own Johannesburg-based production company. According to Rodel, the current policy of the Department is to appoint outside production companies to produce the bulk of their annual drama output on a contractual basis, or to co-produce with outside organisations

51

Kramer, Pam, "Paul Kemp has an Oscar under his old Gunbelt," Sunday Express, Johannesburg, 11/11/84, p. 5.

52

Rodel, Clive, Interview with author, Auckland Park, June 1991.

or production companies, (national and international) or, in rare circumstances, to produce dramas in their own studios using free-lance directors. The Department, however, retains the right to select and approve all scripts.⁵³

2.7. CONCLUSION.

Because of the close links with the theatre in its early development in Britain, it could be argued that television drama is merely a hybrid of stage drama, and that as an act of primary creation it does not exist. This is certainly the view of TV director Tony Garnett, who claims that:

Television drama does not exist. It has never existed. And as an act of primary creation, rather than as a means of communication, it cannot exist. The profession has been pursuing a mirage.⁵⁴

If the profession has been pursuing a mirage it is simply because television was not a medium created specifically for drama, or for any other programme type. Certainly the television medium was not created in response to the creative demands of writers and directors who wanted to produce plays using electronic cameras in a television studio. As an invention and development of science and technology, the medium gave scope for a whole range of programme types to be transmitted and screened in the homes of millions of people, coming under the control of the institution of broadcasting. Thus it was left to the creative effort of the various drama organisers, producers and directors to develop a television ethos and style, often based on the models of theatre and other dramatic forms.

53

Ibid.

54

Garnett, Tony, Journal of the Society of Film and Television Arts, 23 (Spring) London, 1966, p. 9.

So if today, the evolving genres of television drama are seen to reflect many different styles and characteristics where, for instance, in the eyes of some critics, it is closer to stage drama, while to others, it seems closer to the film idiom, then surely this diversity and flexibility are positive developments to be encouraged.

Many of the characteristics of television drama are commonly shared with Western theatre, linking it with the great tradition of drama rooted in the ancient civilisation of Greece. As British TV drama director and author, Don Taylor, says:-

We are merely the current stage in a process and a tradition that leads directly and unbroken back to the Greeks. The world did not change when the film camera and the television receiver were invented. We do substantially the same thing with different materials, and we still use many of the same tools that have been handed down to us by a hundred generations of playwrights and actors. ⁵⁵

The early development of television drama was certainly enriched by the creative input of men and women from the theatre, particularly, in Britain where its dependence on stage plays and theatre practitioners was prevalent until the sixties. Notwithstanding a strong theatrical influence, original plays for television were written in Britain from the first full year of transmission in 1937, when short dramatic pieces were scripted for the medium, which marked the beginning of a creative endeavour to serve the needs of the medium for its own ends, and working within its own parameters. It is the contribution of these writers, which will be examined in a later chapter, that weakens the argument of critics such as Garnett, and makes of TV drama less of a hybrid and more an evolving entity in its own right.

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Taylor, Don, Days of Vision, Methuen, London, 1990, p. 30.

In South Africa, nearly one third of all English television single plays broadcast during the ten year period between 1976 and 1986, had their origins in the theatre.⁵⁶ The theatrical influences were mainly eurocentric and North American, with Athol Fugard's plays being the major pieces of South African origin. Because of the political controls existing within the SABC at the time, an entire generation of 'protest plays,' and evolving theatrical styles which synthesised both Western and African traditions in terms of presentation and performance, as in *WOZA ALBERT*, were ignored by the drama managers of the English Drama Department. Ironically, at the time of the major political watershed of 1990, when the SABC began to liberalise its policies and tertiary educational institutions and the performing arts councils gave thought to 'Africanising' (or, 'South Africanising,' depending on the individual interpretation), their drama programmes and syllabi, and creating outreach theatre projects, such as NAPAC's *KWASA*, the SABC had effectively stopped producing the English single drama. According to Rodel of the Drama Department, no new contracts for such drama are likely to be signed until 1994.

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Because drama in its widest sense knows no barriers, the evolving influences of South African theatre will undoubtedly be felt in the writings of dramatists in the

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Information supplied by the English Drama Department, TV-1:- Of the ten English TV dramas transmitted in 1976, only one was an adapted stage play, namely, *ENEMY* by Robert Maugham; in 1977, four out of the twelve were stage plays; in 1978, seven out of eight productions were adapted from the stage; in 1979, there were three out of thirteen; in 1980, 50% were stage plays; in 1981, three out of twelve; in 1982, four out of twelve; 1983, two out of sixteen; in 1984, two out of eight; in 1985, there were none, and in 1986, there were two out of six.

57

Rodel, Clive, Interview with author, Auckland Park, June 1991.

future, provided the SABC continues with its less prescriptive and rigid approach. Notwithstanding the fact that television drama has acquired a confidence and ethos that is peculiarly its own, and where more dramatic material transmitted is written specially for the medium than adapted from the stage, the contribution of theatre will continue to be sought in a variety of ways. Talented actors and directors will continue to be attracted to the medium, often through lucrative contracts, and the nature of the television medium, with its insatiable appetite for material, will always encourage writers with dramatic skills. When asked if the theatre was necessarily the right place from which to recruit people, a former Executive Producer of Plays for ATV (Associated Television) in Britain, Cecil Clarke, replied:-

Yes. Particularly directors. I think that probably television drama is going to go back to where we need the writer to give us things to say, rather than give us things to do. I think television drama has drifted, possibly through the influence of television films and film series, into plays of action rather than plays of words with acting possibilities. I have a feeling that it's going to go back to the stage where people will really have to act, and therefore the directors will have to know how to direct the actors much more than quite a number of them do now. The writer will write dialogue as opposed to stage directions. ⁵⁸

Therefore people, such as Bobby Heaney and Michael Atkinson, who have directed extensively for the theatre, once given additional and suitable technical training in television production methodologies, have directed worthwhile television drama productions. (cf. Appendix 1) Actors, such as Michael Richard, Sandra Prinsloo and Marius Weyers, among many others, whose initial training and early experiences were all nurtured in the theatre, have all found leading roles in television drama. In support of Cecil Clarke's contention that television

58

Bakewell, Joan, Garnham, Nicholas, The New Priesthood: British Television Today, Interview with Cecil Clarke, Penguin Press, London, 1970, p. 109.

drama will need to go back to the writer 'to give us things to say,' then surely the talented South African playwrights of the theatre, particularly those who felt excluded from the process during the period 1976 - 1991, are among those who should be encouraged to find the creative challenges of the television medium worth their while.

British dramatist, Alan Prior, claims that the television single drama has many affinities with the 'real' or 'live' theatre; in fact, more similarities than differences. For instance, it is scripted and thus the work of a writer, rather than a director; that most TV single plays in their present form stand a lot closer to theatre than the feature film.⁵⁹ (The relationship between the writer and the single play will be explored more fully in Chapter Four).

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Prior, Alan, Theatre Quarterly, Vol. 1 No: 1, Jan - Mar 1971, London, pp. 10 -11.

CHAPTER THREE

CONSTRUCTORS OF TELEVISION DRAMA: FORM AND TECHNOLOGY APPROXIMATING THE PRODUCTION VALUES OF FILM.

3.1. INTRODUCTION.

No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources, it will remain technologically inferior to film and television.¹

This chapter will examine the dominant methodologies used in the production of the single play, and how the tools of production have shaped and influenced the evolution of the genre. These methodologies will be evaluated from both a purely functional point of view, as well as arguing that a shift from a dominant studio system of drama to a locational filmic approach, has led to a corresponding shift, stylistically, from theatrical naturalism to filmic realism. There is a tendency by practitioners in the visual medium to equate dramatic work produced inside a television studio with a kind of naturalism that television inherited from the theatre, as opposed to the outside locational shooting which encourages a documentary realism. This simplistic distinction will be amplified, and the argument advanced to show that the studio can also provide an appropriate environment for imaginative non-naturalistic drama.

Although the debate concerning naturalism and realism in respect of television and film is one where there are no fixed positions, it is important to bring some aspects of the argument into focus, and to relate them to examples in single play productions. Furthermore, cognizance is taken of the inseparability of form and content, but theoretical distinctions are necessary in order to evaluate the dominant forms in television drama and to relate them to the process of

1

Grotowski, Jerzy, Towards a Poor Theatre, Methuen, London, 1981, p. 19.

production. Hegel recognises the artificial distinction between form and content when he says:

Content is nothing but the transformation of form into content, and form is nothing but the transformation of content into form.²

Form and content are thus dialectically related and this investigation will show that aspects of production methodology as well as the content of the single play have both contributed to the genre's conservatism in form. (Chapters Five and Seven will focus on inhibiting aspects that have impinged upon the content of television drama, thereby severely constraining its development).

Attention will be given in this chapter to identifying the salient technologies which have been inherited from the film industry, as well as those technologies developed in response to the needs of the television industry, such as electronic editing and the portable video camera. The appropriation of film terminology and techniques by the television medium, as well as the skills of film practitioners who have entered the television industry, also need to be evaluated within a functional and a stylistic context. On the functional level, the camera as a means of recording and interpretation, will be examined in respect of both the mechanical film camera and the electronic television camera.

Film and television cameras differ technically and determine different production approaches, particularly in studio drama, where the large and cumbersome electronic camera is umbilically tied to its vision control system, as opposed to the relative freedom of movement enjoyed by the lighter film camera. The

2

Eagleton, Terry, Marxism and Literary Criticism, Methuen, London, 1984, p. 22.

criteria applied by a producer and director in selecting one or the other type of camera for a drama production will also be evaluated. Finally, it will be shown how the director's application of these various technologies imposes meaning on the content of a television drama, with specific reference to the functions of camera and editing.

3.2. NATURALISM AND REALISM.

The terms realism and naturalism did not originally refer to conventions and technical methods in art, literature and drama, but to changed attitudes towards 'reality' itself, towards man and society and towards the character of all relationships. Thus naturalism was a conscious alternative to supernaturalism, and proposed the conscious presentation of human actions in exclusively human and secular terms, as distinct from earlier kinds of drama, fiction and art which had included, as a commanding or at least referential dimension, a superhuman or extra-human power.

As Raymond Williams points out, the terms naturalism and realism are difficult terms, and each has a long and complex history. The danger, therefore of using these terms loosely is to displace their meaning. Realism is even more complicated because it is often interchanged with naturalism and with materialism. However, when discussing form in television drama, there is a need to anchor specific ideas to these terms, because they do, at least, provide an overall distinction between dramatic form which evolved out of the plays of Chekhov and Ibsen, and those more popular forms of melodrama and spectacle which emerged from an earlier theatrical tradition.

3

1. Williams, Raymond, *Cine-Tracts, Journal of Film and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1, No: 3 Autumn, 1977 - Winter, 1977, pp. 1 - 6.

In associating the term naturalism with theatre it is not to suggest that other theatrical styles do not exist or are unimportant, but in respect of the television single play, it has been a dominant form, particularly with those plays recorded in a television studio. Likewise, the term realism in relation to dramas shot on authentic locations on 16 mm film does not imply that this is the only style relative to the film medium within this context. However, in respect of the television single play, a filmic approach is often associated with those plays expressing greater social realism. An attempt will be made to relate these forms to the relevant production methodology involved, grouping shared and dissimilar characteristics of the single play shot in a studio with those shot on location.

Pictorial realism has been a popular form of dramatic expression in Western drama since David Garrick's theatrical attempts in the late 18th century, culminating in the spectacles of Henry Irving and Sir Beerbohm Tree in the 19th century, where realism of almost photographic proportions became a strong objective in their productions. The demand for accuracy of detail in the historical dramas that were popular in Britain during the 19th century, established realism as a dominant theatrical style. However, the disparity between the realism of the settings and the declamatory delivery of the actors, with their extravagant style of movement and gesticulation, was an anomaly that contradicted the realistic settings.

Emile Zola defined a naturalistic theory of drama in the preface to his novel *THERESE RAQUIN* (1873), which suggested that the stage should be a 'scientific' forum for the analysis of the person as a product of the influences of his/her heredity and environment. Theatrical naturalism, which flourished between approximately 1880 and 1900, "was distinguished from realism by its

more detailed reproduction of contemporary environment and its more intense criticism of the social conditions that victimised those in the lower economic strata." ⁴

The harmonising of setting with speech and action in the plays by Ibsen, Chekhov and Strindberg, ignored the extravagant spectacle of the melodramas, concentrating instead on contemporary issues which were clearly identifiable with the lives of the audience who witnessed these plays. By the turn of the century, reactions to naturalism included a return to symbolic realism and romanticism, and the birth of two new styles, namely expressionism and surrealism. (Expressionism took firm root in German theatre during the early years of the twentieth century, for instance, George Kaiser's *FROM MORN TO MIDNIGHT* (1912); while in France surrealism became a popular form, inspired by the work of Alfred Jarry's *UBU ROI*). ⁵ Among the expressionist theorists in film were Sergei Eisenstein, Rudolf Arnheim, Hugo Munsterberg and Vachel Lindsay. Soon after the publication of Lindsay's book, *THE ART OF THE MOVING PICTURE* in 1932, a movement arose in France which "concentrated exclusively on the parallels between film and music and film and poetry." ⁶

In contrast, many of the early American feature films were influenced more by 19th century spectacles, melodramas and vaudeville than by the serious dramas of Ibsen and Chekhov. According to Nicholas Vardac the popularity of the

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2. Dace, Letitia; Dace, Wallace, Modern Theatre and Drama, Richard Rosen Press, New York, 1973, p. 33.

5

3. *Ibid.*

6

Fourie, Pieter, Aspects of Film and Television Communication, Juta, 1988, p. 46.

melodramatic style of theatre in the 19th century inevitably led to the development of the film industry.⁷ Before the advent of the work of the American film director, D.W. Griffiths, who was strongly influenced by Belasco and other stage directors of his time, the early American film industry was characterised by many low budget operators, whose work consisted mainly of shooting scenes of exotic places, prize fights, news items and comedy routines.⁸ D.W. Griffith was among the first Western film directors to move away from a theatrical style in movie making by introducing techniques such as dissolves, the use of close-ups and changing camera perspectives in order to break a static presentation. Although theatre has influenced both television drama and the feature film, each took their respective inspiration from two different styles, the former from the naturalism of the theatre of the 30's, 40' and 50's, while the early film industry was more inspired by the pictorial realism of 19th century spectacles.

In framing a philosophical distinction between naturalism and realism, Lukacs refers to 'apparent form' and 'inner core.' According to Lukacs, naturalism shows only the appearance of situations, people and events, whereas, realism attempts to expose the inner core or essence through which one can gain access to the real truth.⁹ Lukacs is also critical of naturalism for its 'passive capitulation' to descriptive method and empiricism. Thus, while naturalism creates for the viewer the illusion that he/she is watching 'actual life,' realism on the other hand,

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4. Vardac, A. Nicholas, Stage to Screen, Theatrical Method from Garrick to Griffith, Benjamin Blom, New York, 1968, p. 166.

8

5. Ibid.

9

Lukacs, Georg, The Historical Novel, Harmondsworth: Peregrine, 1969.

though also portraying actual life in a televisual form, adheres less rigidly to established illusionistic conventions. Its exponents aim to create a deeper, clearer vision of the nature of reality.¹⁰ In this respect, realist TV practitioners, particularly those in Britain, (for example, John McGrath and Troy Kennedy-Martin), have been influenced by Brecht, who by breaking the conventions of time and space, reveals an interaction which is not rigidly determinist between characters and their environment.

Insofar as South African English television drama practitioners are concerned, (such as, Hofmeyr and van Rensburg), the word realism has assumed meanings which approximate the position held by British TV realists in certain respects only; mainly with regard to their common choice of a recording medium, (namely, 16 mm film), and a move away from the constraints of the television studio. However, the South African practitioners of the single play differ fundamentally from the British TV realists who have attempted to recover working class values. Most of the latter have adopted a materialist, Marxist perspective. Moreover, to date, the British realists have displayed greater experimentation in their use of non-naturalistic alienating devices. (cf. John McGrath's *THE CHEVIOT, THE STAG AND THE BLACK, BLACK OIL*, discussed later in this chapter).

However, the term realism cannot be the sole preserve of the Marxist realists. Realism assumes shades of meaning depending on the emphasis or context within which it is expressed, whether it be referred to as social realism or socio-political realism. Because other practitioners in film and television have appropriated the

10

Millington, B., Nelson, R., *Boys From the Blackstuff: The Making of TV Drama*, Comedia Publishing Group, 1986, pp. 16 -17.

term realism, or social realism when attached to work of a socio-political nature, to define their own work, this section will identify some of these practitioners and their particular approach to the visual medium. While the British realists have positioned themselves within a given philosophic perspective, this chapter will reveal how several local practitioners of the single play have also aimed at giving their work a strong sense of realism, or social realism.

On a purely physical level Gray Hofmeyr says, "shooting a drama on film on location, as opposed to a production shot on video in a studio, expresses a stronger sense of surface realism."¹¹ However, minus a philosophic framework within which to express their concept of realism, South African practitioners such as Hofmeyr, rely on their experience and instinctive perceptions of what achieves a stronger reality. Thus studio drama, presented in box sets has a theatrical 'feel,' as opposed to the surface realism achieved on locational film. But this lack of a structured philosophic framework does not detract from the social realism achieved by both Hofmeyr and Cundill in single plays such as *THE OUTCAST* and *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*, or in the serialised dramas such as *1922* and *WESTGATE*, among others.) In terms of their concept of realism, it could be argued that they are seeking to express the truth of their dramatic vision by using a format, namely film, as a more accurate mode of reproducing reality than video. Furthermore, by siting their stories in either real settings (viz., the Knysna forest for *THE OUTCAST*), or in those which approximate reality, as in *1922*, they attempt to authenticate the experience. These practitioners have attempted to express significant statements about South African society, often encoded, as in the anti-apartheid single play, *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*. (cf Chapter

11

Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

Four)

In contrast, the realism of the cinema verite approach of American documentary film maker, Frederick Wiseman, aims at probing the subject with the detachment of a social scientist. Wiseman presents a great deal of unanalysed information about institutions, such as the police force and hospitals, without prescribing any remedies regarding their obvious shortcomings. Although these institutions mirror wider social issues, Wiseman avoids value judgments, allowing instead the camera to probe and examine a particular situation with the cut and thrust of a courtroom lawyer. For instance, in *WELFARE*, the camera is a relentless observer of the dehumanising effect of the screening process to which applicants of social welfare are subjected. If there are remedies, they are either self-evident to a sensitive and caring viewer, or the subject is presented for further debate.¹²

A cinema verite approach, characterised by the use of extensive direct camera technique, was applied to a BBC television documentary drama series, *THE FAMILY* (1974), where a cameraman lived with a family in Reading for six weeks, and filmed their daily activities, from the mundane routine to serious discussions about money and relationships. Although the intention was to be a truthful expose of life within an average working class British family, the camera became an intrusive guest in the house. While it may have exposed a number of household truths, the series failed to present a totally objective account of their

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The Frederick Wiseman Retrospective held at the Durban Film Festival, University of Natal, Durban, 1983. The author was chairman of a panel discussion on his work, including *WELFARE*, *HIGH SCHOOL*, *LAW AND ORDER* and *HOSPITAL*.

domestic existence, as the family members behaved as people who were being observed, and therefore never really themselves.¹³

This documentary approach differs markedly from that of practitioners such as John Grierson, who exploits realism in the film medium in order to educate and improve society. "I look at the cinema as a pulpit," says Grierson.¹⁴ Because of the imagistic powers of the film medium, he sees its potential to provide simple analysis and direct description. In his film, *TURKSIB*, he attempts to educate his audience by showing them how the many products which they take for granted in life, are actually derived from their raw material stage. Although these documentaries achieve a high degree of surface realism, their objectivity is compromised by Grierson's propagandist aims, albeit propaganda aimed at improving the social good of society, as opposed to political propaganda.

In television drama, a social propagandist approach is seen in the work of British dramatist, Jeremy Sandford, who wrote *CATHY COME HOME* (1966), and *EDNA, THE INEBRIATE WOMAN* (1971). In the first draft of *EDNA*, sent to Story Editor, Irene Shubik, Sandford had a disembodied voice quoting statistics and commenting on the events in the play, as well as having Edna herself turn to the viewer to comment on her plight as a destitute woman.¹⁵ Likewise, in

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The series was part of the compulsory viewing programme for students of the Thomson Foundation Television College, Glasgow, attended by the author in 1974.

14

6. Rhode, Eric, A History of the Cinema, from its Origins to 1970, Hill and Wang, New York, 1976, p. 288.

15

Television Drama Seminar, lead by Irene Shubik, University of Natal, Durban, 1983.

CATHY COME HOME, he uses statistics (many of them inaccurate), to support his attempt at focussing public attention on the plight of the homeless in Britain.

British dramatists and directors, who use television drama as a site of social struggle, have also turned to the 16 mm film camera as a means of creating the same sense of immediacy and surface realism achieved in documentary and current affairs programmes. Much of the dramatic work of Tony Garnett, Troy Kennedy Martin and John McGrath, who are motivated by a strong social concern for the British working class, has been shot on 16 mm film. Their work is highly critical of the establishment, and is often sited within a Marxist ideology. Garnett, for instance, explores the fortunes of socialism through the lives of three central characters in DAYS OF HOPE, and dramatist, Trevor Griffiths's BILL BRAND, explores the possibilities of extra-parliamentary socialist activities, as opposed to the limits of parliamentary involvement as witnessed through the career of a left-wing Labour MP. ¹⁶

The narrative element, however, in these social dramas often negates the intended objective by being too entertaining. This nullifies the effect of presenting a critical view of contemporary working class society. For instance, in the series, Z CARS, the working class viewer, along with many others, ended up empathising and indentifying with the police, which in the view of one of the originators, John McGrath, seriously undermined the original intention. "The police are not our heroes, the people are the heroes." ¹⁷

16

Television Drama Seminar, lead by Irene Shubik, University of Natal, Durban, 1983.

17

8. Murdock, Graham, "Radical Drama, Radical Theatre," Media Culture and Society, Academic Press, London, 1980, p. 158.

In South Africa, both Hofmeyr and van Rensburg have appropriated aspects of a 'slice of life' perspective within a fictional narrative form. Among the single plays in this category, are THE OUTCAST, with its realistic setting within the Knysna forest, using aspects of direct camera technique, and TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE, shot on the island of Mauritius. In both dramas, the use of 16 mm film was the preferred medium of recording, although the narrative fictional form of THE OUTCAST militates against its being read as a serious critique on the prevailing social order. The documentary style in which it was filmed, as well as its episodic form, (which de-emphasises the well constructed plot), all add to a strong sense of social realism. Manie van Rensburg uses a combination of documentary and fictional forms in his works, (cf. HEROES), which, together with the use of 16 mm film, give them an authenticity that would have been impossible to achieve in a studio. (cf. Chapter Seven).

While practitioners may wish to reproduce received reality, realism should not be confused with reality. Even in the ultimate documentary approach without commentary, where the visuals are allowed to speak for themselves, there are still too many mediating factors which militate against the reproduction of total reality in film or video. In the production of a television drama, every technological input, from the microphone that picks up the audio signal to the selective view of the camera, as well as the choice of shot, the effects of artificial lighting and the final editing process, all contribute towards a re-shaping of reality.

3.3. THE IDEOLOGY OF THE STUDIO.

As far as drama productions go, the studio is an anomaly. When your play is produced in the studio the chances are

that it will be only 50% as effectively realised as it would be if produced on film.¹⁸

The term ideology in this context refers to the methodology associated with the production of studio drama and its intersection with the form of naturalism. Production methodology for the single play in South Africa has ranged from entirely studio produced dramas, shot on electronic studio cameras, as in Robert Maugham's stage adaptation, *ENEMY* (1976), to all filmed dramas, such as the adaptation of Pauline Smith's short story, *THE PAIN* (1980), shot on 16 mm film on location in the Little Karoo. However, the majority of English language single plays, screened on SABC-TV between 1976 and 1980, have been largely studio based with exterior locations shot on 16 mm film. (cf. Appendix 1). Notwithstanding these selected exterior locational shots, many of them lacked authenticity, as in John Cundill's *CHICKEN RUN* (1979), where all the Mauritian scenes were shot at Umhlanga Rocks on the Natal North Coast. The emphasis on studio drama was an understandable development, as the Corporation had invested R106-million in its new service, with well equipped studios, and the cost effectiveness of producing dramas in their own studios generally outweighed those shot on location.

The dominance of the studio system in South Africa during those early years imposed a naturalistic style of drama, characterised by plays which dealt mainly with inter-personal relationships, and characters placed within boxed settings, which could have come straight off the stage of a major playhouse. When these plays occasionally reflected critically on the fabric of South African society, as in Fugard's *PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE* (1977) and *HELLO AND*

18

Clarke, Tom, AIP & Co, August/ September 1978, Association of Independent Producers, London, p. 9.

GOODBYE (1978), it was a partial and refracted view, confined mainly to White society.

The make-believe environment of the studio was not only physically insulated and detached from the real world outside Auckland Park, but the production of dramatic work was also encapsulated within the ideological framework of apartheid, which the SABC helped to sustain through control of key areas of management by personnel sympathetic to the government and the Broederbond. (cf. Chapters One and Five). While sections of South African society in 1976, (the year that television transmission began), were being ripped apart by the riots in Soweto, Ilanga and elsewhere throughout the country, the English Drama Department appeared to be immune from what was happening outside the precincts of Auckland Park. Among the single plays produced by the English Drama Department during the late seventies were the WONDERFUL WORLD OF DR MONK (1976), YOU'RE SO GOOD TO ME JONESY (1976), and DREAM IN A WOOD OF GHOSTS (1977). No single play written by a South African and produced in their studios between 1976 and 1982, made any significant reference to the social conditions of the Black majority, or on how their lives impacted on South African society as a whole.

However, on the level of inter-personal relationships across the colour line, a notable single play was HARRY'S KID (1981), which touched on the life of a six year old Coloured girl with a fractured skull, whose plight becomes the focus of care and attention by a young Cape Town doctor. Adapted for television by Geraldine Aron from a short story by Jack Cope, the drama was "notable for the

very real Coloured people and for its lack of mawkishness." ¹⁹ HARRY'S KID, shot on 16 mm film, managed to capture authentic aspects of Cape Town life.

For me, the play contained many of the elements that make up Cape Town life. The rich, the poor, the caring and the uncaring, the scenery, and the glorious mixture of people, colours and creeds. ²⁰

By contrast, the television drama of the single play shot in the studio reflected, in essence, a protected world created for White viewers, about Whites who experienced personal, or inter-personal relational problems, and, only obliquely did these problems have any socio-political relevance to their segregated society as a whole.

In line with the imagined reality of the SABC's audience as subjects of a white South Africa the portrayal of blacks on television was initially excluded completely, the rationale being that they would have their 'own' channel at a later date. This was followed by a stage when, our respondents indicated, blacks could be shown provided they fulfilled their accepted roles in the division of labour; for example, as domestic servants, labourers or mine workers, and the occasional affluent individual. ²¹

The Auckland Park studio productions of the single play have been characterised by the drama of the enclosed room, such as, ADRIAN'S MOTHER, THE BIRTHDAY TREAT, YOU'RE SO GOOD TO ME JONSEY, WONDERFUL WORLD OF DR MONK, CHARLEY'S AUNT, RING ROUND THE MOON, and PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE, all produced during the first two years' of

19

Tansley, Geoffrey, "TV Last Night," *The Cape Times*, 7/8/81, p. 2.

20

Barnes, Maureen, "At Last TV is Showing Life as it Really is," *Sunday Times*, 9/8/81, p. 42.

21

Tomaselli, K; Tomaselli, R; Muller, J, Currents of Power, State Broadcasting in South Africa, Anthropos, 1989, p. 134.

transmission, (namely 1976/77). In taking its cue from theatre, consciously or not, these single plays, set within a boxed frame, are the ultimate realisation of theatrical naturalism. They all tell their story through dialogue; they are plays in which inter-personal relationships are conducted on a verbal level, or a refracted style of dialogue. In *PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE*, for instance, even the abstract aspects of anger, fear, hatred and love, as felt by Milly are all expressed through dialogue, or indirectly through symbols, as for example, the birthday cake.

The naturalism of Fugard's play stresses the way that Milly, Shorty, Don and Sissy are shaped and imprisoned by their situation in life. In order to accentuate an illusion of reality, everything around them, the boxed set, (of painted flats), the properties, (table, chairs and kitchen utensils), and the everyday dialogue, are created as near as possible to approximate those same aspects in real life. And with the camera viewing most of the action through a 'transparent fourth wall', the viewer is encouraged to accept that Milly's kitchen is not only real, but that those within its walls can be readily identified with.

The productions of *PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE* and *CHARLEY'S AUNT* followed a theatrical literalism in the way the camera was used as a passive object, and where verbal dialogue was favoured over visual statement in order to tell the story. Both these plays evolved from a theatre of dialogue, where in the transposition to the television screen, the director ended up merely photographing faces talking and faces reacting. It is no wonder that within these constraints, the director is forced into using the neutral two-shot and three-shot, and that his camera merely follows the action around the room. And when he uses the close up on the actor's face to act subjectively on the viewer's emotions,

it often merely results in objectifying the face and exposing it to harsh scrutiny and criticism. As Robert Greig of *The Star*, points out, "a lot of reaction shots, with mechanical cutting from face to face, kept the emotional temperature on a plateau."²²

The notion that a close up of an actor's face acts subjectively on the audience, contradicts the objectivity of the camera, with its ability to observe and scrutinise. Directors like Hofmeyr were anxious to free the camera from photographing dialogue and from the natural time syndrome which studio drama imposes, and to exploit the objectivity of the camera within a 'real life' environment. To an extent, he achieved some of these objectives in *THE OUTCAST* (1983), and *THICKER THAN WATER* (1986), where a greater visual fluency was allowed to develop in the telling of the story, with the dialogue trimmed to a minimum.

A similar development occurred in Britain in the mid-fifties, when Kenneth Tynan coined the term, the 'Loamshire play,' to describe the current state of British theatre, and the nullity of the drama's prevalent genre, whose "setting is a country house in what used to be called Loamshire but is now, as a heroic tribute to realism, sometimes called Berkshire. The inhabitants belong to a social class derived partly from romantic novels and partly from the playwright's vision of the leisured life he will lead after the play is a success -- this being the only effort of imagination he is called on to make."²³

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Greig, Robert, "Fugard More a Filmed Play than TV," *The Star*, Johannesburg, 6/5/77, p. 2.

23

Tynan, Kenneth, A View of the English Stage, 1944 - 1963, Davis-Poynter, London, 1975, pp. 147 - 148.

The naturalism of the proscenium framed Loamshire play, which television drama inherited from the theatre, with its subject matter of inter-personal conflict and internal atmosphere was one against which TV producer, Tony Garnett, rebelled:

One thing we were pissed off with was the way television drama almost exclusively used the kind of naturalism that emerged in the 1890's in the theatre. It was drama seen as a group of people who would occasionally walk in or walk out of a door, but while they were together they would sit around and have conversation. Occasionally, because you wanted a bit of action, they would pour a drink. It was just people talking to each other, away from their real world.²⁴

As a producer of single plays for the BBC's Wednesday Plays, Garnett wanted to focus on contemporary themes. He encouraged new dramatists to write without any preconceived notions of how television drama is made, and to make "the force of the idea and what you want to say dictate how it's going to be done."²⁵ According to George Brandt, British TV drama in the 1960's and 1970's owed its excellence "first and foremost to the quality of the writing."²⁶

Even before it was possible to break from the confines of an artificial studio and film on location, there was a strong desire among leading TV drama producers in Britain, for instance, Sydney Newman, to fuse the form of the play with its content, allowing the *mise-en-scene* to be more expressive of symbolic content. Similarly, in film, Andre Bazin, developed the connection between *mise-en-scene* and realism. It was this basic idea that took root among television directors in

24

Hudson, Roger, "Television in Britain: Description and Dissent," *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol 11, No. 6 April - June 1972, p. 19.

25

Ibid. pp. 19 -20.

26

Ibid. pp. 19 -20.

Britain and South Africa who were trying to break from the conservatism inherent in naturalistic forms of studio based drama.

Although drama director Douglas Bristowe experiments with a non-naturalistic setting in his studio production of Jean Anouilh's play, *ANTIGONE* (1978), with its abstract rows of neutral grey 'steel' columns, the dialogue and style of acting draws the production back toward a naturalistic form. He partially succeeds, however, in breaking the naturalism in the alienating device employed in the opening scene by inviting his audience into the studio where the chorus (Jack Mullen) addresses them from a position just off set, with television cameras, crew and artists in full view of the audience. Moving from this scene, shot in black and white, where the viewer is warned not to adjust the set, the chorus enters the stark setting to commence the action of the narrative, whereupon the scene turns to colour and the alienation is suspended. Bristowe used a literal translation of Anouilh's original French script by his assistant producer, Lesley Mannell, claiming that it was 'more economical and accurate' than that of Lewis Galantieri's.²⁷ Although Mannell's translation was more colloquial, to claim that it was more 'accurate' than that of a recognised scholar whose work has gained international recognition, was indeed a brave assertion for Bristowe to make. (The director/writer relationship is discussed in Chapter Four).

Among the factors which separate a television studio drama from one mounted in a large film studio are differences of scale, available financial resources and mode of production. Public broadcasting corporations, whose fundings are derived from the collection of licence fees and advertising revenues, cannot

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Pretoria News, "An Amazing New Play," 23/5/78, p. 3.

match the vast capital resources of the American film industry. For instance, the multi-million dollar epic spectacles, such as, *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* (1968), and the \$40-million *CLEOPATRA* (1963), were products of a vast industrial enterprise. Even during its silent movie days epics, such as D.W Griffith's *INTOLERANCE* (1916), cost \$2.5 million, and its Babylon set was built on an unprecedented scale.²⁸ By contrast, the television single play, even after the introduction of commercial television in Britain in 1955, was forced to work within relatively modest budgets.

In fact, the finances of a play must be watched as carefully as its timetable, since an Armchair Theatre production can cost anything from four to eight thousand pounds.²⁹

The same Armchair Theatre production would probably cost in excess of a hundred thousand pounds to produce today, while the average cost of an SABC single play by 1991 was approximately eight to ten thousand rand per finished minute.³⁰ By comparison, the studio single plays produced during the first six years of television cost less than one thousand rand per finished minute, as for instance, *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* cost R25-thousand; *MACBETH*, R67-thousand; and *TWELFTH NIGHT* R70-thousand. However, it is impossible to compare these figures with those relating to productions of the late 1980, because the former were calculated on above-the-line costs only, which do not take into account the studio and equipment costs, or the salaries of the

28

Rhode, Eric, A History of the Cinema: from its Origins to 1970, Hill and Wang, New York, p. 56.

29

Newman, Sydney, Armchair Theatre, "The Producer," Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959, p. 20.

30

Figures provided by SABC English Drama Department.

director and other SABC personnel involved in the production.³¹ Below-the-line costs amount to a significant proportion of the total production budget, and are now part of the costing structure of television drama, particularly where outside production companies are concerned.

Although television studio drama cannot compare, in terms of budget, with those of Hollywood, it does not necessarily exclude the production of spectacular epics in television. For instance, an epic of the scale of *SALOME* (1979), was well suited to the aesthetics of a studio setting, where lighting, sound and special effects were effectively created and controlled. In terms of stretching the resources of a television studio to their limit, the English TV Drama Department reached its apogee with Bill Faure's production of *SALOME*, with a cast of 80, and a number of wild animals, which included two lions, a tiger, crocodile, chimpanzee and several cobra snakes.

The plot is based on Oscar Wilde's personal interpretation of the Biblical account of Herod's daughter (Salome), who is prompted by her mother to ask for the head of John the Baptist, as recorded in the gospels of Mark and Matthew. Wilde's elaboration of the theme is the enigma of a woman who falls in love with the image of a man she wants, yet because she is rejected, ends up destroying the essence of what she could have loved.

It was the most lavish English-language single drama the SABC had done to date, with majestic settings and costumes which were a cascade of silver and gold, having the surface appearance of a mini Cecil B de Mille production. Special

31

Figures supplied by Douglas Bristowe at Television Drama Workshop, Audio Visual Centre, University of Natal, Durban, 1981.

effects included the control of a studio fire and the use of various chemicals for atmospheric effects. Based on above-the-line costs, SALOME's budget was a modest R60,000, which was recovered before the drama was screened in South Africa by the sale of the production to television networks in Yugoslavia and Belgium, through the SABC's marketing wing, Motion Pictures Marketing.³² These above-the-line figures, however, are misleading in that they conceal the total costs which an outside production company would have to absorb, such as, salaries of production crew, studio time, hire of equipment, as well as a range of post production costs. (cf. Chapter Seven section on Cost Effective Drama).

Notwithstanding the set designer's skillful attempt at creating Herod's palace, the artificiality of the studio revealed itself in several ways. For instance, leaves, supposedly growing on the walls, were clearly of a plastic variety, and the marble finished columns had a veneered 'stick-on' look. The properties department were also found wanting in the blood mark on the floor, which looked like stoep polish not properly rubbed in. However, SALOME succeeded in challenging the limitations of the studio system in presenting a visual spectacle on a grand scale. Significantly, it was not directed by a producer from radio or theatre, but one whose training and background in film enabled him to express a high degree of visual fluency in the epic narrative. Despite the fact that he was dealing with an adapted stage play, he exploited the visual dimension and spectacle wherever he could, notably the opening sequence, with its impressive cinematic statement:

No words. Only music and action as the studio cameras register the opulence of Herod's court. A tiger sprawling indolently (it moved its mouth so it must have been alive) in a courtier's lap. The entrance of Queen Herodias gliding like some monstrous gilded flower of evil. The dark, savage

32

Pretoria News, Salome Costs Covered, 24/4/79, p. 3.

force of John the Baptist and the strange, moonflower beauty of Salome ... such were the impression of the first moments. It looked as if it cost a million. ³³

Faure's filmic methodology completely contradicted an orthodox television multi camera studio approach in his directing of several scenes. According to his production secretary, Gillian Midgley, Faure abandoned the gallery control room during periods of the video recording, and descended onto the studio floor from where he continued to direct the production, calling shot numbers through the intercom system to his vision mixer in the gallery. ³⁴ Faure's approach was certainly not unlike that of a film director who takes his position on the studio floor and not one floor removed in the gallery.

As in Faure's *SALOME*, the artificial make-believe world of the Auckland Park studio is again revealed in Douglas Bristowe's production of *CHARLEY'S AUNT* (1977), where sections of the synthetic green lawn can be seen turned up at the edges, and the Oxford settings look as if they had come straight off the stage of the Civic Theatre. A studio box set with its freshly prepared flats rarely looks 'lived in,' and the lighting tends to be bright and general, lacking in subtle shades and overtones. Bristowe's production, however, retained a strong theatrical ethos, and as his background in radio drama required of him to direct from a remote control room, he applied a more orthodox approach to multi camera shooting in *CHARLEY'S AUNT*. In many respects the studio, as a controlled environment, is similar to the stage in that many aspects of production,

33

Ambrose-Brown, James, *The Argus*, Cape Town, 1979, p.3.

34

Midgley, Gillian, *Interview with author*, Durban, 1980.

such as lighting and sound operations, can be designed to suit the specific needs of a drama.

Although methodologies differ in respect of film and television studio productions, they are both based on the industrial production-line approach, where studio equipment and crew are geared to manufacture the end product within the shortest possible space of time. The average time spent in a television studio for a 60 minute single drama is rarely longer than three days. While the allocation of studio time is considerably longer for a major feature film, the same sense of urgency applies in getting the production completed as quickly as possible.

Although location shooting in the early days of the Hollywood film industry was not generally promoted by the studio bosses because of the added expense involved, there were attempts to break from the constraining mould of the studio, as in the MGM production of BEN HUR, which started out as a location shoot in Italy in 1924, but ended disastrously for its director who was dismissed after he sent back rushes of a quality so mediocre that they could not be used. The production was eventually completed in a Hollywood studio. Studio boss, Louis Mayer, insisted that from then onward, all productions would be kept within the studios.³⁵ During the 30's and 40's, films from Warner Brothers' attempted a more realistic style in their studio productions, as for instance, the interior settings of Mervyn Leroy's, I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG (1932). However, by the late fifties the studio system in Hollywood was already

35

Rhode, Eric, A History of the Cinema, from its Origins to 1970, Hill and Wang, New York, 1976, pp. 286 - 288.

beginning to break down, which "led to industrial rationalization and the emergence of the independent director-producer." ³⁶

In Britain during the late fifties, drama directors, such as Ted Kotcheff, were pushing the frontiers of the studio system and applied film technique wherever possible. He says he was dissatisfied with the state of British television, and the way it was conceived when he joined Armchair Theatre.

We continually wanted to approach the freedom of film, and not enslave television drama to the theatrical tradition that we found when we arrived in 1957. ³⁷

Although the studio and its electronic cameras were the dominant mode of production at Auckland Park until the early 80s, and despite the detailed and carefully constructed set designs which attempted to create an illusion of reality, the artificiality and physical constraints of the studio could never match the reality of the actual world outside.

However, to get the SABC to abandon the technology and logistic superstructure of its multi-camera studio production system, was ironically, only made possible through their own rationalisation process of the early 80's, when many highly skilled production personnel were either retrenched or resigned. Fewer technical and production personnel lead to a consequent reduction in the number of studio productions, involving all types of programmes, including drama. (cf. Chapter Two and the reduction in the number of English drama producer/directors).

36

Tomaselli, Keyan, The South African Film Industry, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1980, p. 36.

37

Kotcheff, Ted, former Drama Director for ABC Television, Interviewed on Channel Four 1987, "Armchair Theatre Retrospective."

Although several single plays, including *THE PAIN* were shot by outside companies on film prior to rationalisation, the greater number were to follow this period.

3.4. MOVING TOWARDS FILMIC VALUES.

Nearly every one hour dramatic series is shot on film. This is because they frequently require a lot of on location filming, and exterior shots look better on film than they do on tape. There is also more editing to be done on such programmes and film can be edited much more precisely. If you're unsure, you can always tell a filmed programme from one that is videotaped by looking for a lot of intercutting and a richness of depth of field which tape does not have.³⁸

The decline in usage of the SABC's Auckland Park studios for the production of dramas during the early eighties, following the period of rationalisation, gave the local film industry and outside production companies the opportunity to assume a dominant position in the making of local television dramas. As many of these companies had invested extensively in film technology, they chose 16 mm film as the preferred format in the shooting of television dramas. However, this shift of focus to the television medium led to a decline in the output of feature films.

The impending introduction of television in 1976 led to a fall in South African feature film production, and the onus of ideological and cultural legitimation shifted to SABC-TV. Local film producers soon began to copy television for the screen, producing films such as *NOMMER ASSEBLIEF* (1982), *BOSVELD HOTEL*, *DIE MOEWIE* (1983), *VERKEERDE NOMMER* (1983), and *GEEL TRUI VIR 'N WENNER* (1983).³⁹

38

Rogers, John, TV Drama Producer, Bataleur Films, Seminar at Naauwpoort, May 1990.

39

Tomaselli, Keyan, *The Cinema of Apartheid*, Radix, Sandton, 1989, p. 178.

The advent of television impacted adversely on the South African film industry. According to Ken Leach, "television came along and took the guts out of the film industry."⁴⁰ The response of the local film industry, in this respect, was similar to that of its American counterpart, which stopped fighting television and began to produce 'made-for-TV' movies and series and situation comedies, thus putting at the disposal of the new industry one of the best staffed and equipped film industries in the world. The 'made-for-TV movies' replaced the old B-Pictures, which were inexpensive movies made to fill the second half of the double-bill features. In South Africa, the film industry responded positively to the threat posed by television and among the companies which have been active in producing dramas for SABC-TV are, Visio, Brigadiers, Heyns, Jan Scholtz, Elmo de Wit, Independent Film Centre and Franz Marx Productions. I.F.C. (Independent Film Centre) pioneered some of the early all-filmed single plays, such as Edgar Bold's production of Pauline Smith's short story, *THE PAIN* in 1979. The increasing use of film as a major format in the making of television dramas for the SABC was a natural consequence of the film industry's involvement in the broadcasting medium.

According to film-maker, Manie van Rensburg, who formed his own film company, Visio, in 1969, and has directed several English TV dramas including Geraldine Aron's single play, *MICKEY KANNIS CAUGHT MY EYE* (1980), and John Cundill's five part series, *THE MANTIS PROJECT* (1987), the transition from film to TV drama was not a difficult one.

I always see the films I make as movies shown on television as opposed to television films. I suppose, technically, one

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Leach, Ken, former Drama Manager, English Drama TV-1, Interview with author, August 1987.

does make allowance in a TV drama in using more close-ups than a feature film. The long shot really becomes a long shot on television.⁴¹

In terms of structure van Rensburg does not make a distinction between his single plays and short series. He treats all his short series as long single plays, which simply need a longer time in order to tell the story.⁴² None of his series is open ended. (cf. Franz Marx, Chapter Seven).

Several local film companies in the mid-seventies scaled down their feature film programme in order to invest in the new television medium. One such company, Kavalier Films, decided to cut back on the production of Afrikaans features and to invest nearly R1,5 million on "a highly sophisticated television videotape studio, which will be suitable for commercials and every type of programme for television."⁴³ Kavalier's investment was initially geared to serve the television commercial market which commenced in January 1978, having plotted their business scenario on the basis that the SABC would give over some 5% of its broadcast time to commercials.

As a survival tactic, as well as making good business sense, it was necessary for the South African film industry to gain a foothold in the new medium, particularly in the production of drama and documentaries. For instance, Dirk de Villiers, who was Cape Town's only feature film-maker in 1978, felt that it

41

Van Rensburg, Manie, TV drama director, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

42

Ibid.

43

Christie, Roy, "Moviemakers Swing to TV," *The Star*, Johannesburg, 6/8/76, p. 4.

might be necessary for him to re-locate to Johannesburg, "where the honey pot, television, has drawn most of the talent and professionals." 44

Almost without exception South African film producers have entered the highly competitive field of producing TV programmes on film for SATV. 45

[From the early eighties a significant shift in production methodology occurred with an increasing number of single plays being shot on film, distancing the genre even further from its theatrical roots, and in the words of Ken Leach, "created more of a South African character." 46 Among the significant single plays which moved in this direction, namely, THE HONEYBIRD, THICKER THAN WATER and THE OUTCAST, were shot entirely on 16 mm film.]

In several instances, the writer, through detailing selected locales, has determined whether a production is shot on film or video, a situation evidenced in the evolution of television drama in both Britain and South Africa. Commenting on the British experience in the mid-sixties, Tony Garnett said:

The whole logic of the scripts we were getting was forcing us to use film and to shoot outside the studios on location. We were interested in social forces and the fabric of people's lives and the kind of conflicts that go on particularly at places of work, where people spend quite a lot of their lives. It seemed to be driving us towards actually going there ourselves. 47

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Andrew, Donald, "City's Film Industry may Quit," Weekend Argus, Cape Town, 15/7/78, p. 9.

45

Weekend Post, Port Elizabeth, "S A Film Producers Tackle Challenge of TV," 78/2/76, p. 1.

46

Leach, Ken, former English Drama Manager TV-1, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

47

Banham, Martin, cited in Essay on Jeremy Sandford, British TV Drama, ed. George Brandt, Methuen, London, p. 202.

Cundill's drama, *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE* (1985), demanded convincing exterior locational footage, and in view of the political nature of the text with the crossing of the apartheid barrier, it was expedient to shoot the production away from Auckland Park on location in Mauritius. The plot concerns two couples, a White and a Coloured, who win a supposedly all-expenses paid holiday to Mauritius. However, their dream holiday turns into a nightmare when they realise that they have to share the same chalet. Although the play's humour and pathos softened the political implications, the undercurrent of racial division and mistrust was depicted with frankness as the two families try to make the most of their disastrous holiday.⁴⁸

With the impetus coming from the writer for increasing use of film instead of video in television drama, it brought the genre closer to the production values of the documentary film maker with the emphasis on social realism. In Britain, for instance, Jeremy Sandford's dramas, *CATHY COME HOME*, (BBC-1 Wednesday Play, 1966), and *EDNA THE INEBRIATE WOMAN*, (BBC-1 Play for Today, 1971), both necessitated extensive use of 16 mm film as opposed to studio video cameras. Both dramas dealt with topical social issues, which the writer believed would be captured with a greater sense of realism on film, and by exploiting the form of the drama documentary.

The sense of authenticity that is conveyed in both pieces by the reportage style of writing and by the deliberate

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According to Hofmeyr, this drama was a victim of international politics in that sanctions imposed on South Africa resulted in the unavailability of the correct and desired film stock. Consequently several of the scenes came out particularly grainy and washed. (Interview with author, BAFTA Centre, British Academy for Film and Television Arts, London, September 1992).

application of filming techniques patterned on newsreel immediacy caused considerable controversy when they were first televised.⁴⁹

In *CATHY COME HOME*, the entire drama was shot on film, except for an eight minute sequence which had to be shot on an electronic camera "in order to satisfy an existing agreement with Equity, the actor's union, that a certain proportion (originally ten per cent) of any drama programme must be made in an electronic studio."⁵⁰ To a limited extent, British TV drama in the thirties and forties was able to include short inserts of locational footage but these were generally kept to an absolute necessity. Besides the additional production cost involved, the shooting of film by a television crew often brought the television broadcast industry into conflict with the film unions.

In South Africa, the 15% of outside filming that was originally fixed at the start of the television service, was soon found to be impractical, and again, the demands of writers, such as Cundill, had a great deal to do with changing that percentage. Cundill's second series of *THE VILLAGERS*, included extensive outdoor filming which far exceeded 15% of the total production. Furthermore, 16 mm film becomes an imperative for television dramas set in specific and exotic locations. Thus in the adapted short stories of Pauline Smith's *THE PAIN* (1979), - set in the Little Karoo - and Stuart Cloete's *THE HONEYBIRD* (1981), - set in the Namib desert - the entire productions were shot on film, further supporting the

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Banham, Martin, Essay on Jeremy Sandford, British Television Drama, Ed. George Brandt, Methuen, London, p. 196.

50

Shubik, Irene, Play for Today, The Evolution of Television Drama, Davis-Poynter, London, 1975, p. 77.

notion that a writer's setting has a strong determining factor with regard to the preferred format.

Hofmeyr, who directed the second series of *THE VILLAGERS*, was drawn further into the use of film by 1982, when he was loaned by the SABC to I.F.C. (Independent Film Centre) for a year, during which period he directed five single plays, all on 16 mm film. Among the notable single plays Hofmeyr produced during this period were, *THE OUTCAST*, *THE EARTHMOVER*, *THE MUSIC MAKER*, *THE HIDING OF BLACK BILL* and *A JURY OF HER PEERS*. The following year Hofmeyr resigned from the SABC to form his own company, *DAPPLE FILMS*, for which he wrote and directed *THICKER THAN WATER* (1983), also shot entirely on 16 mm film. In 1986, Hofmeyr directed his first major feature film, *JOCK OF THE BUSHVELD*, for the national and international market.

Similarly, Bill Faure, another first generation drama producer responded to the attraction of the film industry and resigned from the SABC in 1979, to direct his first feature, *PIKKIE IN DIE SON* (1979).⁵¹ Faure later started his own production company, and made a number of documentaries for the SABC, including one on Emily Hobhouse. However, his most ambitious drama production for the corporation, and the most expensive to date, was the 13-part series, *SHAKA ZULU* (1986). *SHAKA ZULU* has subsequently been released as a feature film on the international market.⁵² As a TV series, it has been

51

Van der Sandt, Vivien, *The Friend*, Bloemfontein, 7/6/79, p. 4.

52

Greyvenstein, Zanne, *The Citizen*, Johannesburg, 7/9/83, p. 19.

shown in the United States, Australia, and in January 1991, it went out on London Weekend Television.

3.5. BORROWED TECHNOLOGY.

When television was introduced in South Africa in the mid-seventies it had already acquired a fully developed technical vocabulary and grammar, surpassing the largely mechanically based film industry in its impressive array of electronic computerised editing, camera equipment, and video special effects. Yet, in the thirties, when the medium was without a codified production methodology, it looked to the film industry for a whole range of technical conventions. It appropriated almost the entire vocabulary of the established film industry to describe and categorise the shot, such as, the long shot, the medium shot and close up. In addition, it borrowed the terms, cut, dissolve, fade-in, fade-out and wipe to describe a particular transition from one shot to another. (In respect of the term 'dissolve,' many television studios prefer 'mix' to describe the process of 'mixing' or 'dissolving' one frame through to another).

Among the camera control directions acquired from the film industry are the pan (left or right), tilt (up or down), track (in or out), crane (up or down), dolly and crab (left or right). Apropos special effects, it has borrowed the terms split screen, slow motion, time-lapse and superimposition. Although the term superimposition is common to both film and television, the actual creation of the superimposition differs in respect of each medium. For instance, in film the superimposition can either be achieved in the camera by exposing each frame twice, or be done on the optical printer in a film processing laboratory. In

television, however, the same effect is achieved electronically by fading up two pictures simultaneously through the vision mixer.

However, with the technological development of the television medium, and the fact that it is an electronic medium as opposed to the largely mechanical process of film, it has acquired terminology that is distinctly its own. For instance, a chroma key effect is the construction of a shot which foregrounds information from one video source and overlays it on the background of an image taken from a different video source. As a purely electronic function it can be created during the shooting of a studio production, whereas a similar effect on film has to be done in a film laboratory during the post-production phase.

In both film and television media, the frame is the basic unit of the constituted image. The physical components of the frame in film, however, are the result of a chemical process whereby the image is imprinted on an emulsion coated strip of celluloid, whereas, in television the process is electronically read or scanned by a pick-up tube or CCD (Couple Charged Device) chip. In South Africa and Britain, each frame is composed of 625 lines of information, compared with the United States where the frame is made up of 525 lines. In essence, both the video image and the celluloid print are a series of 'photographic' stills, and it is only through the phenomenon of persistence of vision that the illusion of movement is created. In film, the frame passes through the shutter at 24 frames per second, while in the television PAL system, there are 25 frames of video information per second.

In terms of drama, the frame is the medium's proscenium arch, or performance space, within which the dramatic action occurs; a flat two-dimensional plane

where the challenge to create an illusion of a third dimension is provided by the inputs of the lighting and set designers, as well as the director who synthesises both technical and aesthetic aspects of the production. The 4:3 aspect ratio of the television frame is a construct through which the medium defines its own reality and generates meaning. It is through the framed image that the drama's codes of content are perceived, both visually and aurally, including acting, (through dialogue and action), music, lighting and mise en scene. Although the framed image is a selective view of reality, in that it isolates the frame from a wider reality, the Gestalt theory suggests that "the mind tends, in perception, to complete the configuration of the various elements in a given form or structure."⁵³ Therefore the ordering of material within a frame does not exclude the imagination from constructing the surroundings against which the shot is framed. For instance, if the frame is a close-up reaction of a person being attacked, the viewer's imagination remodels the surroundings in order to place the attacker in context.

The framed image is essentially a cycloptic vision of the world as seen through the lens of a camera, which determines the angle of view that will be shown. However, the camera's perspective of a subject differs from that seen by a pair of human eyes. The average wide angled view of a lens is some 45 degrees, whereas a pair of eyes have an arch of vision encompassing some 180 degrees. (Although the eye, in point of fact, can detect detail only over about one and a half degrees, it is through an unconscious scanning action and the continual adjustment of the eye's focus and position that creates the illusion of having a very wide angled perspective.)

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Eberwein, Robert, A Viewer's Guide to Film Theory and Criticism, Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.J., USA, 1979, p. 11.

In a drama production, the camera's restricted angle of vision within a framed aspect ratio of (4:3), imposes its own limitations on visualisation and composition. Many drama directors use small viewfinders, with variable angles, to determine the optimum framing and composition of the shot, tacitly admitting that the world they are presenting is of their own defining. However, within the world of the two-dimensional frame, television drama exploits the illusions of time, space and action, further legacies of the cinema; further removing the genre from its theatrical roots.

When television drama went out 'live,' the performance was limited, as in theatre, in terms of real time and space, but the use of film and with the advent of the video tape recorder, real time could be condensed from hours to seconds, and filmic space compressed the distance travelled by characters from point A to point B, to a number of visually punctuated highlights of that journey. Furthermore, the illusion of action has provided the realistic creation of scenes, as opposed to an illusion of that reality created on stage.

But while the stage director can stimulate the audience's imagination to visualise action outside the defined performance space, the studio director needs to place the action within constant view of the audience. For instance, the battle of Agincourt in Shakespeare's HENRY V would require far more visual detail in a studio production than on stage. Moreover, studio productions of this scale are usually constrained by tight budgets, and although a viewer may marvel at the degree of realism achieved, the awareness remains that the action is taking place

within a studio setting, with several cameras positioned to take different angled perspectives.

From a director's perspective, these cameras, particularly in the studio productions of the 30's, 40's and 50's, were mounted on unwieldy pedestals, and hardly ever moved. Because of the cumbersome nature of the studio camera it was difficult to explore a subject creatively or interpretatively; the camera was merely a device to record images; an instrument of no inherent artistic value. Lack of camera movement in the early years of film was a considerable limitation and so the camera was used largely to achieve a "pedantic pictorial reproduction of nature." 54

However, once camera movement was introduced, the settings took on a less flat and two-dimensional appearance. The movement between scenic planes, or parallaxic movement, and the subjective effects of that moving plane on the viewer, made for a deeper involvement, as the pace of the production was quickened and a sense of being able to explore the surroundings with greater detail occurred.

Notwithstanding the ability to transcend time, space and action, and no matter how, or what shots have been selected, both the film and video camera have an innate ability to interpret everything they see, whether or not intended by the director.

I knew instinctively that in a TV play the cameras had to be inside the story, not merely watching it. The cameras were

54

Vardac, A. Nicholas, Stage to Screen, Theatrical Method from Garrick to Griffith, Pub. Benjamin Blom, New York, 1968, p. 166.

the story, they were the expressive instrument, as words were for the poet, they were the way the expressive material would be conveyed, and nothing at all could be conveyed that was not conveyed through them.⁵⁵

As an active participant in the narrative, the camera imparts form to the drama through movement. One of the earliest examples of a moving camera on a film set was in Pastrone's *CABIRIA* (1914), where huge pyramids, palaces and statues had been constructed. Filmed from the front by a static camera, these images were distinctly flat and unimpressive. It was only after Pastrone had the idea of mounting the camera on a cart and wheeling it about the set while filming, that the images came alive with startling realism.⁵⁶ Sydney Newman, the Canadian producer, who took over as Drama Supervisor for ABC Television in Britain in 1958, believed strongly in moving the camera, "not just for its own sake (although many a dull play has been so saved), but because it is the television director's trump card over his opposite in the proscenium theatre."⁵⁷

Although the modern television studio camera remains relatively large compared with a 16 mm Arriflex film camera, its gas-controlled hydraulic pedestal system gives the cameraman finger-tip control over movements such as craning up and down, and the advanced manoeuvrability of the pedestal enables the camera virtually to glide across the studio floor. Major studio dramas can include up to six or more of these cameras, each one capable of moving rapidly from one marked position to another on the studio floor. Although the tendency with the

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Taylor, Don, Days of Vision, Methuen, London, 1990, p. 22.

56

Stephenson, Ralph; Debrix, J.R., The Cinema as Art, Penguin, Middlesex, 1978, p. 63.

57

Taylor, John Russel, The Anatomy of a Television Play, Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962, p. 13.

rehearse/record technique is to use fewer cameras, (cf. WAX FRUIT and A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM), situation comedies, such as ORKNEY SNORK NIE, recorded before a live audience, still employ multi-camera techniques.

3.6. TECHNOLOGY AND THE COMMUNICATOR.

The position of the actor within the medium of television drama has changed along with the move from a theatrically based studio system towards increasing film technology and technologies that approximate film values. Many of these changes were brought about through the technological advances made in video cameras and editing, which evolved the television drama director's functions in ways similar to his/her counterpart in film. For instance, the introduction of the video tape recorder has led to a significant change in the director's approach to shooting a television drama, both inside and outside the studio. This facility has enabled the video director to intervene throughout the production process, exercising control over all technical and aesthetic aspects. Furthermore, this intervention extends into the post-production editing phase, where the director can determine the chronological ordering of the drama. Early editing procedures on video tape, however, were primitive and necessitated the actual cutting of the tape, which escalated the cost of production.

Plays, therefore, had to be fairly well made; they had to be recorded strictly in sequence, strictly within a very limited recording time, and often 'filler' scenes had to be written to enable actors to get from one set to another to change clothes. ⁵⁸

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Murdock, Graham, "Radical Drama, Radical Theatre," *Media Culture and Society*, Academic Press, London, 1980, p. 158.

By 1967, however, with the development of electronic editing equipment it became no longer necessary to cut the tape, as the new process meant that selected shots could be transferred electronically from source tape to master tape. Electronic video editing impacted greatly on studio production methodology where a play could be shot out of chronological sequence. By the late seventies, the BBC was using a production methodology called rehearse/record, which meant that once a play reached the studio it could be rehearsed in short segments, and immediately thereafter video taped. The shooting order would be determined by scenes whose settings are grouped on a relational basis. For instance, in the BBC (Scotland) four-part serial, *CLOUD HOWE* (1981), all the studio interior kitchen scenes were shot sequentially, as were all the bedroom scenes. Although *CLOUD HOWE* was a multi-camera studio production, the numerous recording breaks enabled short scenes, consisting of four or five shots, to be recorded at a time.

In many scenes, only one or two of the available cameras would be used at any given time. This fragmented procedure enabled the lighting designer to maximise creative effects to the optimum, instead of having to provide fairly general lighting to meet the demands of conventional studio multi-camera recordings, especially in 'live' productions. Several scenes in *CLOUD HOWE* were shot using only one studio camera.⁵⁹ (cf. Appendix 5).

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Author was an observer during the recording of *CLOUD HOWE*, dramatised by Bill Craig, produced by Roderick Graham and directed by Tom Cotter, BBC Scotland, 27/28/29 April 1981.

A similar rehearse/record approach was adopted in the BBC production of Shakespeare's *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* (1981), directed by Australian theatre director, Elijah Moshinsky, who was able to cope with the demands of a complex studio system through this simplified filmic approach of rehearsing and recording short segments at a time, and using fewer cameras. ⁶⁰ (cf. Appendix 4). This technique evolved at about the same time as the SABC launched its television service, and although the term rehearse/record is not used within the corporation, local drama directors adopt a similar methodology in their studio productions. ⁶¹

Evolving technological developments have led to changes in the status of the actor vis-a-vis the director. For instance, 'live' television drama imposed a theatrical methodology on the production process, which enhanced the actor's status and paralleled the actor/director relationship in the theatre. This is evident in the blocking and rehearsal procedures which closely resemble those in the theatre, though with a great array of equipment to control, a television drama director's technical 'stagger-through' usually takes longer than a stage technical rehearsal. However, once the 'run-through' phase has been reached, the cameramen, vision mixer and other studio personnel are expected to be fully integrated into the total production process.

Barring technical breakdowns, the director is rendered powerless to intervene during a 'live' transmission, a position similar to his/her counterpart in theatre,

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Author was present for part of the studio recording of this production, Television Centre, London, May 1981.

61

Information provided by Douglas Bristowe, Television Drama Production Workshop, Audio Visual Centre, University of Natal, Durban, 1981.

who stands back from the performance once the curtain goes up. However, aside from emergency regulations designed to cope with technical problems and with actors 'drying' during performance, there have been the occasional unplanned moments requiring a director's intervention. Such a moment happened to British director Ted Kotcheff, when one of his actors, Gareth Jones, died during a 'live' transmission of an Armchair Theatre production. Jones, the antagonist, died before the end of Act Two, and Kotcheff had to instantly re-shape areas of the play during a short break and steer the 'live' production as best he could to the end. ⁶²

Production methodology was developed around the actor during this period of 'live' television, because it was largely through the actor's spoken word and action that the play's non-technical meaning was conveyed. Such an approach reduced the camera to a spectator and inhibited the development of visual fluency, which further enhanced a style of theatrical naturalism. Most of the actors, who had come from theatre in those early years of television drama, were often left to develop their own style of acting to camera, because directors, new to the medium, were too involved in learning the technicalities of the medium. A similar trend occurred in the early years of the American film industry as actress Lillian Gish recalls. She was told by D.W. Griffiths to develop a style that would be appropriate to the new medium as he, the director, had to concern himself with the many technical aspects of film making. ⁶³

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Kotcheff, Ted, former TV Drama Director for ABC Television, Interviewed on Channel Four 1987, "Armchair Theatre Retrospective."

63

Rhode, Eric, A History of the Cinema, from its Origins to 1970. Hill and Wang, New York, p. 16.

The actor of the English language single play during the early years of the genre's development in South Africa was not always adequately assisted into the new medium by their respective directors, as most of them had limited experience in directing live performers. Notable exceptions were Douglas Bristowe and Cecil Jubber who had both acquired extensive experience in directing performers for the radio medium. Bristowe had also directed an amateur dramatic production of Shakespeare's *TWELFTH NIGHT* for the Durban Catholic Players' Guild. Referring to her performance in the title role of *Antigone*, Dorothy Gould says:

I never found the proximity of the microphone boom or camera lens a pressure, although these are some of the main factors that unnerve actors. The producer, Douglas Bristowe helped in overcoming this by following us around very closely in rehearsal so we got used to someone watching a foot away and from different positions. This also helps to prevent actors 'playing to the front' where the audience in a theatre is seated.⁶⁴

Unlike Bristowe and Jubber, the remainder of the first generation directors had come into the medium with various technical qualifications in either film or television, but without professional directing experience; (cf. Chapter Two, Faure, Nathanson and Hofmeyr). Notwithstanding Bristowe's limited experience in directing amateur stage productions, his television version of *TWELFTH NIGHT* in 1981 was panned by John van Zyl of the University of the Witwatersrand:

I shall not comment on the actual performances of the players, as they were sunk from the start - in terms of appropriate casting, costume and movement and delivery - by the producer.⁶⁵

64

Gould, Dorothy Ann, Interview with author, Durban, January 1982.

65

Van Zyl, John, "On the Box," *The Star*, 29/10/81, p. 9.

Hofmeyr admitted that he was extremely apprehensive about directing actors in his early productions, but was fortunate in casting professional people, mainly from theatre, who were able to sustain their performance with minimum input from his limited experience as a director.⁶⁶ According to Allen Auld, Executive Producer of ARTS ON ONE, who spent a short period in the English Drama Department during the late seventies as a researcher, most of these directors were too absorbed by the technical aspects of the medium and gave scant attention to the performance. Hence, the studio productions of that era were generally "slow in pace, stagey in performance and lacked spontaneity."⁶⁷ (Auld recalled studio productions where actors were on standby for more than twenty hours before their scenes were shot. In *SALOME*, for instance, leading actor, David Horner, eventually gave his performance to camera at about 4 am, after having been in the studio for almost the entire previous day and night).

However, the actor's status changed with the advent of the video tape recorder in 1956 (though not in general use in Britain until 1958), which gave the director much greater control over the production process. As 'live' television drama encouraged stage acting, with its stress on continuity, allowing character development within the time span and sequence of the play, recorded TV drama, destroyed continuity acting, as the drama was constructed in short sequences that were related more to the convenience of locational settings and budget considerations, than to the logical development of an actor's performance.

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Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

67

Auld, Allen, Former Researcher for the English Drama Department, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

Notwithstanding other contributory inputs, both artistic and technical, the director functions as chief communicator, or 'auteur,' and is closely associated with the stylistic and technical choices that characterise a production. Although the term 'auteur' is not normally used in the context of television drama, the director as a major determinant of a drama's meaning is often in conflict with the writer's original interpretation. Such a conflict is evidenced in the work of Manie van Rensburg, who as director of *THE MANTIS PROJECT*, imposed his own vision in significant areas of the drama, at the expense of author, John Cundill. (cf. Chapter Four).

3.7. RECORDERS OF DRAMA: MECHANICAL VERSUS ELECTRONIC.

The desire of man to create images of his world and to project them can be traced to the early shadow plays of India, Java and China some four thousand years ago. However, none of these early attempts used lenses to magnify the projected images. The ancient Greeks discovered the electrical properties of amber, (the Greek word for amber was *elektron*), and they used a type of crude lens made of burning glasses to project images.⁶⁸ Further developments of projecting images were conducted by Leonardo da Vinci with his 'camera obscura' during the Renaissance.

The modern cinema, however, is greatly indebted to the pioneering work of Thomas Edison in the late 19th century which led to the development of the Kinetoscope, the optical equivalent to his phonograph. It was Edison who decided to use the celluloid roll film produced by Eastman, and the result was the

68

Museum of the Moving Image, London, Information obtained during personal visit by the author, January 1991.

first motion picture camera which Edison called the Kinetograph. The films produced on this camera were viewed on the Kinetoscope, a peep-show device which used a continuous 50-foot loop of film. ⁶⁹

In contrast, the development of the television camera marked a departure from the essentially mechanical nature of the film camera to the new age of electronic circuitry. However, the first television system in Britain was in fact a mechanical one developed by the Scottish inventor, John Logie Baird, who had been conducting experiments in television transmission since the early twenties. But he chose to base his development on a mechanical scanning method, using the Nipkow discs, developed by the German scientist Paul Nipkow. In one significant respect, however, Baird's development involved "dividing the picture into a series of little sections of light and darkness and transmitting these in very rapid succession." ⁷⁰ This principle of scanning is still in general use today.

Both Baird's 240-line mechanical method and the Marconi-EMI 405-line electronic system were tried by the BBC during the opening months of their regular transmissions from Alexandra Palace, London, beginning in November 1936. ⁷¹ Each system was run on alternate weeks until March the following year when the BBC finally chose the Marconi-EMI system, because it was found to be technically superior and had experienced fewer breakdowns.

69

Ibid.

70

Museum of the Moving Image, London, Information obtained during personal visit by author, January 1991.

71

Baird, John Logie, Sermons Soap and Television, Royal Television Society, London, 1988, p.54.

The choice of system had a significant bearing on how television drama was produced. During the first week of transmission in London, the first televised play, *MARIGOLD*, which was transposed from the Royalty Theatre with the entire West End cast, was shot on a Baird camera in the studio at Alexandra Palace. Under the Baird system, which used only one camera in a fixed position, with mostly wide angled shots and few close-ups, the actors were able to give their full attention to their performance without having to worry about different camera positions and audience perspectives.⁷²

Unlike the Marconi-EMI system, which allowed for three cameras in different positions, placed an added burden on the inexperienced television actor in having to be aware of an ever changing viewer perspective, as well as marked positions on the studio floor. These challenging innovations were faced by the actors in the production of the single play, *THE TIGERS*, transmitted by the BBC a fortnight after *MARIGOLD*.

The actors needed to be aware of which camera was taking the picture, for instance, which might be taking the close-up, and to be in exactly the right prearranged position to deliver a particular line as well as delivering it in a natural but, for them as stage performers, wholly unnatural way.⁷³

Fifty five years later, actors in multi camera television studio dramas are still faced with these challenges, but unlike their predecessors who were pioneering the medium, the contemporary performer has a wealth of information and examples from which to draw. The major difference for the performer today is

72

Norman, Bruce, Here's Looking at You: The Story of British Television, 1908 - 1939, Pub. BBC, London, 1984, p. 156.

73

Ibid.

that the production is not recorded or filmed sequentially, though according to British actress Vivien Heilbron, who played Christine Colquhoun in *CLOUD HOWE*, she develops a clear sense of the whole during rehearsal.

Personally, I like the rehearse-record approach. During outside rehearsals we ran the whole piece several times, so one has a sense of the whole, and can bear in mind the varying tensions of the different scenes. Also, in *CLOUD HOWE*, so much was on film outside, that a straight 'run-through' of the whole story was not possible in any case. You just have to bear in mind the 'before' and 'after' on approaching each scene.⁷⁴

It could be argued that if the mechanical Baird system had been adopted by the BBC in 1937, there might have been a much closer relationship between film and television as mechanically based media. Owing to its mechanical nature, the Baird system was less sensitive and could cope better with the direct illumination given by a film projector, which meant that the television transmission of film inserts were more efficient than those fed through the highly sensitive electronic Marconi-EMI system.⁷⁵ (cf. Appendix 9) This limitation of the early electronic system, however, did not prevent drama producers from using a telecine machine to generate film inserts. (The first time that studio and film were used together in a British TV programme was in a variety show in April 1937). Film clippage was also used as part of the action in the single play *THE TIGER*, which went out a fortnight after the opening of the BBC service in 1937.⁷⁶ The electronic Marconi-EMI system had to wait until the late 1940's before technical

74

Heilbron Vivien, Letter addressed to author, 5/8/81.

75

Armes, Roy, On Video, Routledge, London, 1989, p. 56.

76

Norman, Bruce, Here's Looking at You: The Story of British Television, 1908 - 1939, Pub. BBC, London, 1984, p. 167.

improvements to its telecine system could improve the quality of the transmitted filmed image.

Film makers, however, treated the new visual medium with some disdain and suspicion, ironically, in much the same way that the established theatre treated the film industry during its own period of infancy. Consequently, film makers did not enter the British television service in any significant numbers during the early years. According to Dallas Bower there were no people at the BBC from the cinema, and everything at 'Ally Palace' was done entirely in terms of a curtained stage -- a theatrical device as distinct from a filmic approach.⁷⁷

In recent years, many of the technical advantages of the 16 mm film camera, in its ability to reproduce more faithfully perceived reality in terms of colour, lighting contrasts and depth of field, have been largely eliminated by the development of highly sensitive and flexible electronic portable video cameras, which, unlike their studio counterparts, are not umbilically tied to a vision mixer. However, the debate apropos the respective advantages and disadvantages of using film and video cameras in a drama production, needs to be positioned and evaluated within the context of style and the vested interests which film and video represent.

The debate between the film and video camera is a tacit acknowledgement that the quality standards have been set by the film camera, and the development in video technology, particularly in respect of the single camera, has been to attain and improve on those standards. The film camera has been known to achieve

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Ibid. p. 166.

better picture quality in high contrast lighting situations, and that its colour shading is generally more subtle than video. Consequently, a so-called 'film look' is equated with a more accurate reproduction of reality, making the convention indistinguishable from a perceived concept of reality.

However, the clear advantage that the film camera once enjoyed over video has been largely neutralised by the development of the portable broadcast video 'camcorder' in the early 80's, particularly the Sony Betacam Corder, which has reduced the reliance on the film camera in location shooting of TV dramas, as well as replacing film cameras in other areas of television production, such as in news reporting, documentaries and magazine inserts. The camcorder revolutionised the concept of the portable video camera, making it no longer necessary to use the cumbersome split unit, consisting of a separate camera and video tape/cassette recorder; the entire recording function could now be performed by a relatively small video recorder piggy-backed onto the camera, and weighing about eight kilograms. (cf. Appendix 9 for details of video portable cameras, ENG and EFP).

The Betacam Corder, which is the most widely used broadcast portable video camera in South Africa, has led to new ways of thinking about production methodology in respect of the single play. The format has won converts from film, and in certain categories of television production outside of drama, such as news and magazine programmes, it has replaced the 16 mm camera. Consequently, this format has also sharpened the debate about the relative advantages and disadvantages of film versus video.

Historically, video systems have had a hard time competing with film systems for drama and documentaries where single camera shooting and flexible, artistic editing are a way of life. The film editing table is inexpensive and, although

slow, allows the editor unlimited versatility; anything is possible within the imagination of the film editor and producer. In contrast, video editing systems in actual use are very expensive and their lack of flexibility imposes severe constraints on the intellectual and artistic content of programmes.⁷⁸

This debate was brought sharply into focus at a seminar organised by the SABC for drama producers and directors at Naauwpoort in May, 1990. Among those who attended were Carl Fischer of I.F.C. (Independent Film Centre, Johannesburg), John Rogers of Bateleur Films, and Dirk de Villiers of Cape Town. Carl Fischer, who outlined "The Producer's Choice," said there were three main criteria which influenced his choice of format, namely:

- 1) CLIENT NEED -
- 2) BUDGET RESTRAINTS -
- 3) KEY PERSONNEL PREFERENCES.

He related these criteria to two major drama series which he had produced, PEOPLE LIKE US (1990) and BARNEY BARNATO (1990). In respect of the former, the client needs were for a quick shooting rate, averaging 32 minutes per week, which favoured video. The comedy genre, accommodated within relatively few interior box sets and shot in a studio also favoured the use of video, as did the very tight budget they were expected to work within. Insofar as key personnel were concerned both Carl Fischer and Gray Hofmeyr, (who directed the series) had worked extensively on multi-camera video productions in the past, and were therefore competent in handling the medium.

With regard to the client's need in BARNEY BARNATO, there was a certain flexibility which left both options of film and video open. However, the factor

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which weighed heaviest in favour of using film, was the historical context in which the series was set. Although shooting on film could not be as rapid as in *PEOPLE LIKE US*, the medium could accommodate all the technical demands of the production and, above all, be within the projected budget. Although key personnel involved in *BARNEY BARNATO* were also more comfortable in the film medium this, according to Fischer, was not the primary determining factor.

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John Rogers, who spoke on "The Director's Preferences" said that in his production of *ZIKHETHELE*, which was set in a drama school for aspiring black dancers and actors, he had chosen to shoot on video because he perceived the piece to be bright, glossy and colourful. To have created the same effect on film, would have needed many more lights and/or faster lenses.⁸⁰

ZIKHETHELE was a one camera video shoot and therefore approximated a film shoot in many respects. Rogers said that he had used the Betacam Corder in much the same way as a film camera. "The only difference I found was that the video camera was more cumbersome, and more difficult to move around, so I began creating shots where I wouldn't have to move it too much."⁸¹ According to Rogers he rehearsed the actors until they could handle the intricacies of the movements, which usually lead to only one or two cutaways. He found, however,

 79

Fischer, Carl, Paper delivered at Naauwpoort Seminar, SABC, 17/18 May 1990. (Also interviewed by author on the subject).

80

Rogers, John, Paper given at Naauwpoort Seminar, SABC, 17/18 May 1990.

81

Ibid.

that on video he was shooting more master shots than he would have done on a film camera; on film, he preferred to cut with the camera. ⁸²

Advocates of video based their argument on the premise that the standards of video were continually improving and had now equalled, or surpassed those of 16 mm film. For instance, Faan van Tonder, the managing director of a video facilities house in Johannesburg, said that the so-called 'film look,' was now achieved through the advanced three-chip CCD Betacam SP (Superior Performance) camera. He admitted, however, that the first generation of tube Betacam Corders was no match for the 16 mm camera in achieving this desired effect. According to van Tonder lighting contrasts achieved with the newly developed Betacam SP were superior to 16 mm film, and that the end product was "technically better than 16 mm, ranging somewhere between 16 mm and 35 mm film." ⁸³

Van Tonder's argument has been supported by SABC video editor, Japie de Bruyn, who refers to the greatly improved properties of the Betacam SP metal tapes, which eliminates 'drop out' (magnetic tape surface defect or damage causing momentary disturbance of reproduced video image); has four audio input channels and can undergo several generation losses with minimum degradation of quality. ⁸⁴

82

Ibid.

83

Van Tonder, Faan, Paper given at Naauwpoort Seminar, SABC, 17/18 May 1990.

84

De Bruyn, Japie, Naauwpoort Seminar 17/18 May 1990.

The Betacam SP Corder has challenged the film camera not only in drama, but also in advertising where the technical standards are normally set at a high level. As van Tonder points out, there are a number of significant advantages that a TV drama producer/director enjoys in using video as opposed to film: Among these are:-

- 1) Video equipment, including video tape and post-production facilities are normally available from so called 'one-stop' shops, compared with film users who generally have to negotiate with several hiring outlets.
- 2) Because of the strong competition in the video industry, drama producers have a choice with regard to price and quality of service.
- 3) One of the greatest advantages that video enjoys over film is the measure of control over the production through the immediate playback facility. Thus a director can check on significant aspects of production, for instance, the actors' performance or the effects of lighting and make-up, and be in a position to take corrective action immediately if necessary. In contrast, his film counterpart must wait for the rushes to be returned from the film laboratory before he can effect any additional changes.
- 4) The production process is also made easier and more manipulative than film. For instance, the same shot can be used more than once without additional cost, and video material can be added electronically to create certain effects, as well as the full range of special effects.
- 5) The completed production, with effects and titles, can be delivered to the client a lot quicker. Consequently this improves the cash flow situation, as well as raising productivity levels.
- 6) Dialogue is recorded directly onto the video tape, and additional sound effects can be recorded separately on light and compact equipment.
- 7) The four audio channels of a Betacam SP provide greater possibilities than the two channels of a Nagra tape recorder. (often used in a film production)
- 8) Video camera teams can be smaller in size as there are fewer technical aspects to consider.⁸⁵

However, among the negative aspects of the Betacam Corder in a drama production are that the video cameraman and the sound engineer are linked by a cable, making it difficult for the latter to monitor the sound levels. However, the use of lightweight portable sound mixers linked by audio cable, gives the sound technician greater control over the incoming sound signals. According to Carl Fischer, a video drama production is more cost-effective than film only if the shooting and editing rate can be reduced. For instance, two hours of on-line video editing costs more than one week of hiring a film editor with assistant, together with editing table.⁸⁶ Video's major advantage over film, however, is the quick turnaround from conception to broadcast.

In the final analysis, however, the point scoring debate between the respective merits of film and video is more a revelation of the vested interests involved, than on technical standards and style. A production house that has made a multi-million rand investment in video equipment is unlikely to concede that film is a preferred medium; likewise, the representative from Irene Film Laboratories is equally unlikely to extol the virtues of video at the expense of his own medium. Therefore, such debates do not stimulate creative and critical thinking about the production of television drama, other than to draw attention to the interests of capital involved.

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Fischer, Carl, Paper given at Naauwpoort Seminar, SABC, 17/18 May 1990. (According to a cost analysis carried out by Fischer, overall film costs are cheaper than video mainly due to the high costs of on-lining).

3.8. MOVING TOWARDS NON-LINEAR EDITING.

The function of putting a succession of shots together in the editing phase, is what both distinguishes and unites television and film production methodologies. While the camera is able to impart form to a drama through its various functions, such as, tracking, zooming, panning, editing imparts additional meaning through the process of selection and ordering of material. For the first thirty years of television history, however, the medium lacked an adequate editing system. While the film industry had developed a highly skilled form of non-linear editing, the television director was initially compromised by a system that placed severe limitations on his/her artistic contribution to the finished drama.

This procedure is known by different names, for instance, in Britain and the United States, the preferred description is cutting or editing, while in Europe the usual term is montage. However, this process, which allows for shots that have a relational aspect, or are thematically or visually relevant to warrant their juxtaposition, is a powerful tool in the hands of a creative editor/director. There are also different styles of editing, among which, is the popular classic style of Hollywood editing of the 30's and 40's. This style aimed at achieving fluidity and smoothness, giving the film a seamless appearance, in what the French call *decoupage classique*.⁸⁷ This contrasts with the process of synthesis as characterised by the Russian film maker and critic, Sergei Eisenstein, who regards montage as pivotal to a film; an organic process of combining form and content.

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Rhode, Eric, A History of the Cinema, from its Origins to 1970, Hill and Wang, New York, 1976, p. 288.

Early technological attempts at television editing were based on the well established film technique of splicing and joining the video tape segments. The film director's position was particularly enviable, in that he/she could intervene and shape the evolving content during the three major stages of editing a feature. The first stage, carried out by the editor, is simply to splice together all the shots approved by the director during the shoot, normally as a straight forward assembly. The second stage, the 'rough cut,' is reached when the director and editor have compiled a scene from the selection of shots from the various takes. (In a 90 minute feature, the 'rough cut' is often between 30 and 45 minutes longer than the completed movie). The last stage involves the 'fine cut,' when every shot is in the exact order required by the director, and the feature cut to its final running time.

Current developments in non-linear digitised editing are expected to overcome the limitations of conventional video editing. Based on principles similar to the computer word processor, the digitised signal will enable the editor to manipulate the process with greater speed and with no degradation of picture or audio quality. In this respect, it will emulate the non-linear film editing process, whereby a sequence can be 'cut' at any point and 'joined up' in any order, as many times as required without loss of quality, taking video technology a step closer towards the production values of film.

Most of the single plays produced during the period under review have been edited according to the Hollywood decoupage classique style of continuity editing, which aims at a smooth transition and flow without discontinuous jumps

in time or place.⁸⁸ However, aspects of dynamic editing, which aims at creating an arresting visual impact by selecting shots that intensify and/or exaggerate the action, rather than shots which merely seek to reproduce the action, have also been included. For instance, in *THE OUTCAST*, Dial's circus knife throwing act is cut with emphasis on juxtaposing shots between the present and past, manipulating time through quick flashbacks and superimposing a staccato rhythm on the scene.

ADAM: So that's what you've been doing...

DIAL: Big attraction. Made a lot of money.

ADAM SIPS HIS COFFEE WITHOUT COMMENT.

DIAL: Well, tell them Lorrie. Tell them all about it.

LORRIE: Haven't you got a cigarette?

ADAM LOOKS SHOCKED.

DIAL STANDS UP.

DIAL: Like this. Bam! Bam! Bam!

BRIEF FLASHBACK SHOT OF LORRIE IN A SCARLET MINI AND FISHNET STOCKINGS WITH KNIVES THUDDING AROUND HER. BLARE OF FAIRGROUND MUSIC.

DIAL: I threw them so tight around her she was stuck there till I pulled them out again!

FLASHBACK. AUDIENCE APPLAUDING.

DIAL: We got write-ups in the papers. Pictures, too.

DIAL PRODUCES CIGARETTES AND HANDS ONE TO LORRIE.

DIAL: But that was nothing ...

DIAL LIGHTS UP FOR LORRIE.

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Monaco, James, *How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology Language, History and Theory of Film and Media*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1977, p. 183.

ADAM CAN'T TAKE HIS EYES OFF LORRIE. HE HAS NEVER SEEN A WOMAN SMOKING.

DIAL: She also did handsprings. That's when I threw the axes.

FLASHBACK: LORRIE DOING HANDSPRINGS -- AXES THUDDING INTO THE BOARD -- DIAL THROWING.

LORRIE INHALES THE SMOKE.

DIAL: Four axes. Bam! Bam! Bam!

FLASHBACK CROWD APPLAUDING WILDLY.

HANNAH: (to LORRIE) You did that? ⁸⁹

Pace and rhythm, essential ingredients of drama, are influenced in television and film by the cutting rate. For instance, in Hofmeyr's *THE BIG TIME* (1991), he purposely chose a quick cutting rate to accentuate the excitement, high energy and volatility of a South African Greek family. Hofmeyr allows his camera to move freely and purposefully through the various scenes. Notwithstanding the adoption of a dominant orthodox grammar as, for instance, in the use of establishing shots to give a sense of geography and identification before selecting the intrusive closer shots, the pattern of Hofmeyr's shots are expressive of both smooth continuity and dynamic editing.

In focussing exclusively on the choreography of the action, Hofmeyr has followed Pudovkin's methodology of 'construction montage,' as opposed to Eisenstein's 'attraction montage,' which allows the camera to focus on shots which are extraneous to the action. However, he differs widely from Pudovkin whose approach is based on a respect for the script which, for him, is a form of 'a priori'

editing. Hofmeyr, on the other hand, is closer to someone like Fellini whose films only come together during the post production stage, and in this respect, he adopts an 'auteur' position, often at the expense of the creative input of the writer. (cf. Cundill's single play, WAITING, Chapter Four).

Naturally with drama, the editor is concerned with matching the cutting rhythm with that of the dialogue and movement, and usually finds natural breaks or motivational moments in the speech and/or movement, to make the transition. Thus, in making a transition from a close-up to a wide, the editor would normally cut at the start of the action, in order to retain a seamless join. However, directors of fantasy or expressionistic dramas, may find their production better suited to a dynamic style of editing, which relies more upon the impact of visual logic than a straightforward literal narrative to convey meaning.

According to Michael Rabiger of the Film and Video Department at Columbia College, Chicago, film editing is like making a chain which can be broken into and links added or subtracted, whereas video editing is like a spinning operation, producing a continuous filament whose middle cannot be retrospectively altered.⁹⁰ Rabiger, however, does not adequately focus on off-line video editing, where a copy of the original source material, with burnt-in time code, enables the editor to achieve a full range of possible inclusions and exclusions of shots within a drama, even single frames, provided the off-line machine is frame accurate. Furthermore, off-line editing is less expensive than on-line, consequently more time can be spent in shaping the drama according to the director's intention.

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Rabiger, Michael, Directing. Film Techniques and Aesthetics, Focal Press, London, 1989, p. 78.

Thereafter, the drama is on-lined using the original source material, with the entire editing process automated to a high degree as the computerised equipment reads off the selected time-coded information to effect a quick and efficient final edit.

So, while Rabiger's analogy of video editing resembling a spinning operation may seem on the surface to be appropriate, it is incorrect to say that the middle, or any other portion for that matter, of an edited drama 'cannot be retrospectively altered.' Even after the on-line edit has been completed, there is still an opportunity to adjust the finished drama. Naturally, at this point there are additional costs of time and money involved, as the editor would either have to re-edit every picture from where the change occurs to the end, or alternatively, lose a generation and 'dump down' onto another tape. One generation down on one-inch video tape or Betacam SP metal tape is generally not a discernible loss in picture quality, as would be the case on a sub-broadcast format tape such, as U-matic or VHS. According to Allen Auld, Executive Producer of ARTS ON ONE, video editors at the SABC frequently 'dump down' in order to change completed programme material.⁹¹

3.9. CONCLUSION.

The evolution of television drama in Britain over the past fifty five years has shown a marked progression from a largely studio based production methodology to one where the use of mainly 16 mm film and film technology have moved the genre closer to the production values of film. In South Africa, where the history

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Auld, Allen, Interview with author, Durban, October 1992.

of the medium is a mere 16 years, a very similar pattern has emerged, where the studio based dramas of Auckland Park have given way to an increasing usage of 16 mm film in locational shooting. In terms of the single play, this has moved the genre from mainly studio produced dramas shot on video tape, such as Esther Flowers' *DELUSIONS* (1977) to all-filmed productions such as Stuart Cloete's *THE HONEYBIRD* (1981).

Although South Africans have been deprived of British television drama because of the Equity ban, much of the local studio production methodology has been based on the British approach, as the first generation of instructors had come mainly from that country during the early seventies to train SABC personnel.⁹² Therefore, the so-called rehearse-record technique, extensively used by the BBC since the late seventies, became a natural adoption for many SABC drama directors in their studio production methodology.

British influence in production methodology has been transferred, among others, by those first generation English television drama directors who had received their initial training at British institutions. (cf. Chapter Two). This influence was further emphasised by the engagement of British television producer/director, Bob Hird, who joined the English Drama Department in 1983 for a five-month contract to give specialist training to five of the Department's "younger drama directors, and a beginners course in television directing for four very experienced

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Note: Although the British union Equity first imposed a ban on British artists performing in segregated theatres in 1966, this was later expanded to include appearances on South African television as it was also regarded as a segregated service.

and talented theatre directors - people who have not directed multi-camera television." 93

The progression towards greater film technique, put pressure on the electronic industry to provide equipment that could match the aesthetic standards achieved by film, leading to greatly improved editing machines and portable cameras. In editing, the highly sophisticated electronic transfer system, where source material is selected and recorded onto a separate master tape, (using SP metal tape), has largely eliminated the gap between video and film editing. With the development of digital editing equipment, video dramas will achieve an even higher degree of technical quality and clarity. As South Africa has relatively few drama video editors, compared to their numbers in film, much of the existing prejudice towards video editing will only be eliminated once more skilled practitioners enter this field.

The development of portable video cameras, culminating in the Betacam SP format, which now dominates the South African broadcast video industry, has created opportunities for the use of this format in drama production. With further technological advances in this format, such as digitised circuitry and the elimination of the present awkward approach to sound recording, the portable video camera is likely to become a highly viable option for television drama, particularly those productions which are not destined for the overseas market and need to be transferred onto other standards, such as NTSC.

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Jackman, Tony, Pretoria News, 23/2/83, p. 3.

However, there will remain a significant place for the 16 mm camera in television drama productions for several reasons. Aside from any subjective aesthetic considerations, the continued involvement of the film industry in the medium, and their enormous financial investment in camera and editing equipment, will guarantee the use of this medium for many years. There is also the whole question of overseas distribution of locally produced dramas, such as SHAKA. It is certainly easier to distribute a 16 mm film than a video to countries outside the PAL system, such as the United States and France, where the film can be copied onto either the NTSC or SECAM systems for television screening in those countries. And, with the possible introduction of HDTV (High Definition Television) in South Africa during the early part of the next decade, film would transfer adequately to the new big screen (1250 lines MAC system), whereas the existing video PAL system equipment would be rendered largely obsolete.

Furthermore, this chapter has shown how the camera (film and video), as a recorder of drama, determines meaning through its selected perspective and mediation of reality. Reality is further mediated by the director's framing of the scene and the additional selections and juxtapositions made by the editor; continued throughout the post production phase with the addition of other emotive stimuli, such as music and sound effects. The camera, an essentially non-sensual instrument, scrutinises and interprets what it sees within its cycloptic vision, and places the image within the context of reported reality. Thus an actor's performance which is larger than life and extends beyond the realms of the frame's defined reality is likely to be rejected as insincere and false.

Technologies and conventions borrowed from the film industry are additional constructs which can both enhance as well as impose their own interpretative

meaning. For instance, the simplest panning movement of a camera can signify atmosphere, class of people and their economic standing, as in Douglas Bristowe's production of Fugard's *PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE*, where a slow sweeping pan from left to right in the opening scene informs the viewer of the inhabitants of Molly's kitchen. There is also a purely physical reason for the pan, in that the limited wide angled vision of a camera can only absorb about one third of what the human eye can see in one glance.

The evolution from a mainly studio based production methodology to an increasing use of locational filming, can be seen as an attempt to place the characters and action within a physical and social environment which are more accurately drawn. Within this context, there has been a discernible shift towards greater realism, particularly in the single plays produced on 16 mm since the early 1980's. In many of these plays, setting and action have shaped the content, and to some extent, have merged with it in a more organic and fundamental way. However, the advances made in video technology will increasingly blur the aesthetic differences between 16 mm film and metal video tape.

Although drama practitioners, from both the South African film industry, and from inside the SABC, have helped to break the static mould of studio produced dramas and, in so doing, have moved the single play away from a style of theatrical naturalism, there is a need for critical debate on form, if new and challenging frontiers in this field are to emerge. While theatre has experimented with various forms from Ibsen to Brecht, South African English television drama, on the other hand, has remained relatively conservative. The dominant form which the film industry has imposed on local television drama reveals

characteristics of the 1940's Hollywood classic style, where, for instance, the technique remains hidden and not overtly displayed.

The European 'art movies,' and the avant-garde theatre have shown that experimentation is essential if form is not to remain predictably naturalistic and conservative. Therefore, in encouraging greater experimentation in television drama - by using alienation devices within a Brechtian context - by revealing technique, if necessary - by using the camera, film or portable camcorder, more interpretatively - by freeing the genre from the constraints of natural time and place - by less emphasis on 'photographing' mainly dialogue, new forms may begin to emerge. However, in hoping that these experimental innovations will come from the film industry or the SABC, it is possible that one is looking to the wrong source. But if 'form is produced by content,' as stated by Ralph Fox in *THE NOVEL AND THE PEOPLE* (1937),⁹⁴, then such experimentation could come from the primary creator of scripted drama, the dramatist, in providing the catalyst for new forms, and new ways of thinking about the television single play.

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Eagleton, Terry, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, Methuen, London, 1984, p. 23.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WRITER AND THE SINGLE PLAY.

4.1. INTRODUCTION.

It's a conventional and, I believe, a good thing to say that the single play is the most important thing connected with drama on television; and it must not be allowed to die. It is the fountain-head of originality and the source of original works of art above all others.¹

The English language single play as a genre owes much of its development and stature to the many writers whose plays were transmitted during the period under review. These have included the works of such playwrights as William Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, Henrik Ibsen, Federico Garcia Lorca, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Moliere, Jean Anouilh, Luigi Pirandello, Noel Coward, Brandon Thomas, Athol Fugard, Geraldine Aron, James Ambrose Brown, Pieter Dirk Uys, Tom Stoppard, Vaclav Havel and Paul Slabolepszy. Although most of the productions were adapted from stage plays and chosen for broadcast by the Drama Manager or recommended by a producer or director, several of these playwrights, such as James Ambrose Brown, Paul Slabolepszy and Geraldine Aron (sometimes known by her nom de plume, Mary Hick), wrote works especially for the television medium.

1

Cellan-Jones, James, *Head of Plays at the BBC, Television*, Vol: 16, No. 11, Sept - Oct 1977, p. 16.

Novelists and short story writers whose works have been adapted for television include, Pauline Smith, Herman Charles Bosman, Stuart Cloete and Jack Cope. In this category, the writer's entree to the medium was achieved mainly through recommendations made to the English Drama Department from outside producers, or through recommendations made from personnel within the department, or from adapters who submitted works to the department, or were commissioned adaptations. An example of a submitted proposal was Edgar Bold's production of Pauline Smith's *THE PAIN* (1980), adapted by Richard Beynon.

Writers who wrote dramas specifically with television in mind include, John Cundill, Gray Hofmeyr, Luanshya Greer, Christopher Hope, Patrick Lee, Lee Marcus, John Hunt, Zebbi Hitt, John Burch, Bertie Foyle and Sheena Cooper. It could be argued that this category of established and novice writers, who wrote plays especially for television, have made a unique contribution to the development of the English language single play in South Africa. In conceiving a play for the medium, and not merely using it as a transmitter of drama, these writers have attempted to exploit the potential of the television medium, thereby giving the single play an existence in its own right. Furthermore, the South African outlook expressed in the dramatic narratives of local television writers may also have given drama, in its capacity to stimulate the imagination and challenge sensibilities, a greater sense of relevance to viewers who have had no previous experience of theatre. However, what is uniquely South African has come not only from the works of those who have written especially for television, but also from adapters of short stories and novels, as well as from playwrights who have expanded from theatre into television.

The point about this relevance in drama needs some amplification. A common perception is that in order for local drama to be relevant it must touch on the racial and/or colour issue. While this is certainly a central issue in the socio-political life of the country, and one which the SABC has been more circumspect than the non-commercial theatres, relevant issues should not exclude stories of people in their relationship to the environment, or plays that probe inter-personal relationships which may only obliquely reflect on the social landscape. Relevance in a local context is relative to the characters and their dilemmas with which South African viewers can either identify or empathise.]

An additional point that needs clarification is the term writer, commonly used to describe the primary creator of drama for television, as opposed to the term TV or television dramatist, which is often used in the context of British television. The English Drama Department also uses the term author, and catalogues a list of all those who have written television dramas under that generic title. (cf. Appendix 1) However, such a general term as writer does not fully define the functions of a person who shapes, in terms of dramatic elements and conventions, a plot with living characters and dialogue. The British preference for TV/television dramatist is far more accurate in defining the craft of writing a television drama. However, this chapter will observe the term writer in the South African context, as it is commonly used by the major practitioners interviewed and the term most commonly used by personnel within the English Drama Department.

Among the aims of this chapter is to identify measures taken by the English Drama Department to facilitate the access of writers to the medium, and, in particular, efforts made to foster new writing. The chapter will also examine the writer in relation to the director, particularly where close working relationships have existed, and, in this respect, to what extent the director has contributed to the writer's vision within the context of selected dramas? Furthermore, the chapter will examine the fees paid to writers of television drama, and afford an indication of whether the financial rewards for writing have provided sufficient incentive for the novice or the established writer?

As it is beyond the scope of this investigation to evaluate the contributions of every writer of single plays between 1976 and 1991, the chapter will focus on writers such as John Cundill, whose television dramas have spanned almost the entire period under review. However, it will also touch on the work of Athol Fugard as a playwright whose work has been transposed to the television medium, as well as explore the writer/director relationship between John Cundill and Gray Hofmeyr. Moreover, cognizance is taken of directors, such as Gray Hofmeyr and Manie van Rensburg, who have also established themselves as writers.

In most instances the relationship between the writer and the institution of broadcasting begins and ends with the Script Editor (before that post was abolished in the late eighties). His functions today have been taken over by the Organiser of English Drama. Although the single play is regarded as author-centred, and in most cases expresses the primary creation of only one writer, there are examples of co-authorship, for instance, SONG AND DANCE MAN

(1983) by Cedric Sundstrom and Norman Coombes; **PLAYING WITH FIRE** (1986) by Alan Nathanson and Hillary Prendini; the pilot episode of **SENIOR SMITH** (1985), transmitted as a single play, by Bill Flynn and Paul Slabolepszy; **THE MOUNTAIN** (1984) by Luanshya Greer and Cedric Sundstrom; and **RICHARD GUSH OF SALEM** (1984) by Guy Butler and Joe Stewardson. In three of these productions, the director was also co-author, namely, Nathanson and Sundstrom. Owing to their familiarity with the medium, several directors feel that they are capable of writing television dramas, as for instance, Edgar Bold, who has written many documentaries for film and television, was also the writer/director in 1980 of the television drama, **HOW'S YOUR MIND GIRL**.

The significance of the single play in the early years of television drama in South Africa, was that it gave novice writers an entree to the television medium. In terms of television drama, the single play gave more writers the opportunity to enter the medium than was offered by the series and serials. (cf. Appendices 1 & 2) Although the single play has become a victim of economics as the cost per minute to produce is higher than a series, (cf. Chapter Seven), it is a less costly investment for the SABC in respect of the author's fee than a series or serial. Overall, there is less money at risk in the production of a single play, especially if produced in the SABC studios. A further consideration which favoured the single play in the early years was the non-commercial nature of SABC-TV until 1978. Thus during the first two years of the television service when no advertising was allowed, a play could occupy a time slot without having to weigh the cost of such time against the loss of potential advertising revenue. (The effects of the commercialisation of the SABC on the single play are discussed in Chapter Six).

As there was no tradition of television scriptwriting in South Africa in the mid-seventies, the notion of writing a series, serial or sitcom, though attractive from a financial point of view, was generally avoided by novice writers, with notable exceptions, as for instance, John Cundill and Noel Harford, who co-authored the first 26 episodes of *THE VILLAGERS*. Although the single play may appear to a novice writer to be less challenging, it nevertheless requires a high degree of skill and discipline to contain the subject matter and characterisation within a taut dramatic structure of possibly 45, 60 or 90 minutes, as opposed to the formula writing of the serial and sitcom, which is often open-ended and gives the writer more time in which to develop character and narrative. Another facet which advanced the single play in the early years was that the Drama Department could produce more of them in a year than if it had to devote itself entirely to series or serials. Many of the early single plays were produced in the studios of Auckland Park, where multi camera treatment and the streamlining of the studio production methodology enabled a play to be video taped over a three day period.

A novice writer coming into the South African broadcast medium is not only faced with a new writing challenge, but his/her work is circumscribed by a maze of bureaucratic and technological constraints. For instance, practitioners of the medium often confound and alienate the writer with a welter of technical jargon and complexities, and within such a seemingly complex process it is difficult to locate the author, particularly in drama serials, series and sitcoms, where often more than one writer is involved. (cf. Chapter Seven) The democratising process in which a TV dramatist's work has to filter through many people, including script editor, drama committee, producer, director, production crew and editor, before

the production is completed, is a perplexing experience for many writers. As former BBC Drama producer, Irene Shubik, says:-

It is the nature of the beast that the writer's ideas will have to filter through far more levels of interpretation than on the stage.²

This democratising process is one which writers such as Michael McCabe does not enjoy. "I don't like anything that goes out of my hands."³ That is why McCabe prefers writing and directing radio dramas, a medium that is less technologically demanding than television. A television writer, who is not in a position to direct his/her own work, and that would apply to the majority, is left with no choice but to surrender the work to practitioners of the medium who will determine how the play is to be shaped in production. A writer's lack of knowledge of production methodology can often be used "as an excuse by the director to maim the work of a writer."⁴ Thus the unifying vision of the writer survives only insofar as the play is understood and appreciated by the mediators who are appointed to guide it through the various production stages.

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Shubik, Irene, Play for Today, The Evolution of Television Drama, Davis-Poynter, London, London, 1975, p. 105.

3

Raphaely, Rosemarie, "McCabe - Angry Man of the Theatre," The Star, Johannesburg, 26/4/79, p. 10.

4

Nortje, Cor, Production Director, Entertainment Programmes, Safritel, (SABC Production Company), Interview with author, May 1992.

I still have to meet the director who doesn't think he's a good writer, but I still have to meet the director who is in fact a good writer.⁵

4.2. LOCATING THE VOICE OF THE WRITER: A STRUGGLE TO BE HEARD WITHIN THE SYSTEM.

While contemporary criticism justifiably questions the concept of the individual voice in a television drama, this chapter will posit the argument that notwithstanding the mediative nature of the medium, the single play is the only drama genre in television where that voice has a chance of being located and heard, even if it has been modified in the process. Although the genre is author-centred, and, in that respect, is similar to the stage play, the author's intention in a single play, or stage play, for that matter, is not regarded as immutably fixed, as the meaning of a drama is finally negotiated by the viewer. However, the author as the primary creator of a drama does project 'a point of view,' and as Janet Wolff says the author retains a central relevance, "in relation to the meaning of the text (the author being the first person to fix meaning, which will of course subsequently be subject to redefinition and fixing by all future readers)."⁶

Notwithstanding, the dramatist's intentions should nevertheless be recognised as pivotal sign-posting to be followed by the director in transposing the text to tape or film, and not be marginalised or arbitrarily subordinated to the director's own vision or treatment. An example of such arbitrary treatment has been cited by

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Ibid.

6

Wolff, Janet, The Social Production of Art, MacMillan, London, 1981, p. 136.

Gray Hofmeyr, who directed *DELUSIONS* by Esther Flowers, the first single play produced by the SABC. Hofmeyr recalls how his colleague Alan Nathanson had attempted to change the script because he felt that "he could do better."⁷

He sat the secretary down and proceeded to dictate an entire new play, pacing up and down sprouting dialogue. He rewrote the entire play from beginning to end; there was hardly a vestige of the original left, which I looked at and Colin looked at, and both decided it was worse than the original.⁸

The position of the television dramatist improved significantly during the brief period that Lee Marcus was employed full-time by the English Drama Department as Script Supervisor (1983 - 1986), and since 1986, she has continued to serve part-time as a consultant on the Readers' Panel, a body she introduced to expedite the response to writers, and to assist those with a promising script. (Marcus was also partly responsible for the introduction of the three-phase payment to writers, detailed later in this chapter). "When I arrived in the Department there was a pile of more than a thousand drama scripts, waiting to be read and evaluated."⁹ A panel of readers was given the task of responding to this enormous backlog of submissions, some of which dated back nearly five years. For instance, a year before the appointment of the Panel, co-authors Kathy Harden and Ray Porter, submitted a script, *UP THE MEIER*, to the

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Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

8

Ibid.

9

Marcus, Lee, Interview with author, Johannesburg, May 1992.

SABC on 19 July 1982, but by June the following year, the authors were still awaiting a reply. ¹⁰

Among the members who have served on the Readers' Panel, which is drawn from a wide cross section of academics, writers and critics, are Margaret Heale, actress, writer and lecturer in the School of Drama at the University of the Witwatersrand; Professor Ian Ferguson, head of the Department of English at the University of South Africa; Lucille Gillwald, twice resident director of the Market Theatre; John Hunt, dramatist and director of an advertising company; Robert Laing, TV presenter, script reader and script editor; Barry Ronge, TV presenter, critic and writer; Gareth McLiam, Johannesburg theatre critic and Sandra Duncan, actress. Each member of the panel is expected to read a number of scripts and submit a written report which is followed up with discussion on a fortnightly basis. ¹¹

Marcus, an author of several television scripts (cf. Appendix 1), and executive member of the South African Scriptwriters' Association, set about encouraging writers to submit scripts for television. She sees the demise of the single play as a major setback for the development of television drama in South Africa, and would like the position of the writer to return to what it was during her period of office.

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Ibid.

11

Information Supplied by Senior Script Editor, John Hind, April, 1989.

We didn't shut the door on writers. We talked to them and if there was a possibility of involving them in a future production, I'd write to them, talk to them on the telephone, or go and see them. I flew to Durban to see Jayaprada Reddy, for instance. I got the first Indian drama production accepted -- THE WEB OF PERSUASION. They (the SABC) told me they didn't want to know about it. But this was a wonderful South African fantasy. I fought for its acceptance. You can't keep shutting people out. ¹²

Although a novice writer has no option but to entrust the interpretation of the script to the practitioners of the medium, an established writer, such as Athol Fugard, has more chance of his script being treated with some respect, although he too is powerless against a bureaucracy that determines the final shape of the play for transmission. For example, in the SABC's production of HELLO AND GOODBYE (1978), Fugard is positive about the treatment his work received from the director and production team, despite the fact that the running time was cut by 40 minutes:-

I really feel they treated my play with respect. They did a workmanlike job on the play. I have no beefs at all. Obviously, they did not try to censor it into a more palatable shape because they let some fairly rough dialogue through. They didn't try to tame the play or water it down. ¹³

However, several critics did not share Fugard's generous attitude towards the SABC's treatment. "In editing it to this length, the guts of the play has been

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Marcus, Lee, Former Script Supervisor, TV-1, English Drama, Interview with author, Johannesburg, May 1992.

13

Jarvis, Ralph, "Fugard Accepts TV Version," Evening Post, Port Elizabeth, 16/6/78, p.1.

removed and it bears little resemblance to the original." ¹⁴ The time constraints imposed by the medium meant that HELLO AND GOODBYE (1978), which had been shot in two acts - one of 60 minutes and the second 55 minutes - had been cut after final editing by some 40 minutes to a final running time of 75 minutes. While director Gray Hofmeyr wanted the play cut by only 20 minutes, Drama Manager, Colin du Plessis, insisted on cutting it a further 20 minutes. A spokesman for the SABC said at the time that the cut was essential to make the play "more marketable overseas." ¹⁵ Although market forces do have a bearing on the single play, they are not applied to the same extent as those which prevail upon the drama series and serials. (cf. chapters six and seven)

Shortly after the SABC production of HELLO AND GOODBYE was completed, the leading players, Yvonne Bryceland and Bill Flynn were cast in a BBC production of the same play which was broadcast in its entirety. In an interview with Ralph Jarvis of the Evening Post, Fugard admitted that the play "would have flowed better had the cutting been done to the text and not to the production after it had been recorded." ¹⁶ The inconsistency of the SABC was exposed in that while it saw fit to cut Fugard's play to 75 minutes, it had allowed Jean Anouilh's ANTIGONE, screened the previous week, to run for 85 minutes.

14

Gray, Ian, Pretoria News, 15/6/78, p. 1.

15

Gray, Ian, The Star, Johannesburg, 5/6/78, p. 1.

16

Jarvis, Ralph, Evening Post, Port Elizabeth, 16/6/78. p. 1.

Once the SABC has bought the rights to a play, the dramatist is powerless to prevent changes made to the dialogue, the body of the script or to the completed production. Furthermore, the bureaucratic, technological and economic pressures to which a play can be subjected, are factors which can circumscribe the intentions of the writer, thereby reducing his/her status to that of a craftsman, who merely provides a saleable blueprint for a shooting script. In this context the script is not the expression of an individual writer's sensibilities, but a collective effort that undergoes a manufacturing process, in which market forces, such as finance and scheduling, prevail. (Aspects of scheduling and advertising, in relation to television drama, will be discussed in Chapter Six). However, such invasion of a script's integrity is more likely to occur with the work of a novice than a Fugard. (cf. Esther Flowers' DELUSIONS) The undermining of the television dramatist in this respect is not unique, as his/her counterpart in theatre is likewise not immune to the final dictates of the stage director, though the ideological and economic frameworks differ.

4.3. THE MYTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL VOICE.

In a society such as South Africa, where the rights of the individual and the Rule of Law, particularly during the period under review, have been overshadowed by the emphasis given to the safety of the State and the protection of group rights, the voice of the individual dramatist can be regarded as a significant social factor. Moreover, for the individual voice of conscience to be heard within a corporate

body such as the SABC is to be encouraged, particularly as the pressures to circumscribe or even silence the unconforming viewpoint, have been formidable. (cf. Chapter Five on Censorship)

Throughout most of the period under review, the SABC has pursued a policy of stimulating 'cultural enrichment' through drama - provided it is perceived to be in the best interests of South Africa's 'micro and macro cultures' - as defined by the Corporation. In the mid-eighties, the corporation articulated its attitude to drama in the following mission statement:

To produce dramas, drama series and co-productions of outstanding quality for local as well as for the international market, which reflects the cultural identity of the 'micro' and 'macro' population spectrum, and enriches the spiritual and cultural experiences of its viewers and their vision of the future. ¹⁷

However, by arrogating to itself the responsibility of producing dramas which enrich the cultural life of the viewer, the Corporation is not only positioning itself as arbiter in relation to what is culturally enriching, but from a dramatist's point of view, it is also circumscribing the choice of subject matter. In practice, the corporation's mission statement has been aimed at middle class enlightenment within the parameters of separate development.

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Supplied to author by Henk Hugo, former Production Head, TV Drama, August 1987.

The SABC's social code for drama, designed for a plural society such as South Africa, presents the television dramatist with a formidable dilemma, particularly if the writer's world-view and value system are in conflict with the dominant socio-political ideology. Although many dramatists have positioned their work within a clearly defined socio-political context, this has come about not as a result of a prescriptive drama code, but through their own understanding, experience or 'vision of life.' (The Drama Code is discussed within the context of censorship in Chapter Five).

In a wider context, drama as 'a site of ideological struggle' has been an intense socio-political factor in South Africa throughout the 1980's. Prior to its unbanning in 1990, the African National Congress, through its Cultural Desk, or at organised anti-apartheid festivals, has articulated the role that drama should play within the liberation struggle. For instance, at the 1987 CASA Festival (Culture in Another South Africa) held in Amsterdam, it was stated that no drama production from South Africa wishing to tour overseas would be given approval unless it had been recommended by the Mass Democratic Movement. Failure to gain such approval would open the production to protest by the various overseas anti-apartheid movements.¹⁸ Addressing the CASA Festival, Robert Kavanagh, said:-

Theatre for national liberation involves, like the four pillars
of our struggle, a programme of revolutionary cultural

action among the masses, in the working class movement, among the armed fighters and in countries all over the world to mobilize, conscientize and win support for our struggle. We should put the two stage theory into practice in our theatre work so that while writing and acting material relevant to the struggle for national liberation, we should be reflecting a socialist consciousness and more and more demonstrating that only economic liberation in the form of socialism can make the struggle for national liberation truly meaningful for the broad majority of our people. ¹⁹

At the other end of the political spectrum, the White right-wing parties, of which the Conservative Party has the strongest following, regard drama as being ethnically determined where, for instance, Zulu plays would be of interest to Zulus only, who in turn, would not be encouraged to sit in White playhouses to see the dramas of White authors. Within the framework of their policy of partition (a euphemism for apartheid) there would be no need for mixed audiences or casts, because each race group would be confined to its own geographic area and left to promote its own cultural life. The practicalities of such a policy are not spelt out with any precision, mainly because they are so unrealistic and would require the uprooting of millions of people, but the vote catching slogans of 'partition' and 'self determination' capture the imagination of a significant segment of the White electorate who wish to resist integration or 'power sharing' at all cost.

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Kavanagh, Robert, "Theatre and the Struggle for National Liberation," based on a paper prepared by Kavanagh as reconstructed after discussions and submissions by members and institutions represented on the Theatre Committee, CASA Festival, Amsterdam, December 1987.

The ideology of the Conservative Party was formerly evolved by the architects of apartheid in the ruling National Party, but when found to be impractical, they modified their pristine position on ethnicity and racial separation. Aspects of this modification in relation to drama have been evident since the early eighties when the government, through the various performing arts councils, began to reflect the tri-cameral political dispensation it had reached with those Coloured and Indian leaders who were co-opted into the system. Consequently by the mid-eighties, the performing arts councils had moved from being an 'own affair' to a 'general affair' and people of colour were invited to serve on the various controlling boards. For instance, the 16-member Board of NAPAC in 1987, included for the first time three non-White members, namely, Dr E.P. Ntaba, Mr B.G. Persad, and Mr T.B. Wood.

It was during this period of cosmetic reconstruction of the performing arts councils that the SABC Drama Code was formulated. However, the promotion of sectarian 'cultural plays' expressed within the context of such a code can be a divisive factor in a multi-cultural society such as South Africa, especially if each major cultural constituency seeks to promote its own particular agenda, often at the expense of competing agents. Consequently the dramatist whose ideas conflict with the dominant socio-political ideology will remain problematic for statutory bodies as, happened to Athol Fugard's *LESSON FROM ALOES*, a play that flows against the mainstream consensus, and promised to have been one of the most searching socio-political dramas ever screened by the SABC, had it not been removed from the schedules in 1987.

Originally included in the SCREEN ONE season of single plays, the drama deals with the bitter dilemma of a White/Coloured friendship during the 60's. Set in Port Elizabeth, a politically involved White bus driver, Piet, befriends Steve a Coloured man who is put under house arrest and later jailed for violating his restrictions. A search of Piet and his wife Gladys' house follows with the confiscation of several items including Gladys' diaries, which leads to her emotional breakdown. The natural friendship between the two men and the devastation of their lives through the violent intrusion of agents of the state are images that would distress a sympathetic viewer, and place the State and its brutalising ideology in a very negative light.

Nearly four years after its original scheduling, and in the wake of the socio-political changes which occurred after 2 February 1990, the SABC finally screened A LESSON FROM ALOES in June 1991. Although Fugard's play is not overtly anti-government, it does, however, highlight the dilemma of ordinary people caught up in its ideological snares. Fugard often deals with political themes, as in, THE ISLAND, and STATEMENTS AFTER AN ARREST UNDER THE IMMORALITY ACT, but they are always in the context of the individual within a particular social or political environment. As Fugard says, "if you tell the human story the propaganda will take care of itself." ²⁰

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Fugard, Athol, Interview with E. Lester, New York Times, 1/12/74.

In another interview, this time with the Sunday Express, Fugard says, "I have a set of political convictions, but my primary interest is writing about people in South Africa, and how they survive."²¹ What makes Fugard's plays more readily acceptable to statutory bodies, such as the SABC, under the present dispensation, is that with a firm commitment by the ruling party to abandon its apartheid policy, there is no longer a need to uphold a debased ideological framework which enshrined racial discrimination, and therefore plays formerly regarded as challenging the dominant consensus, are now regarded as no more threatening than a feeling of White guilt for the sins of the past.

Minus Fugard's play, the remaining productions grouped under the umbrella of SCREEN ONE, that went out on schedule in 1987, ranged from Shakespeare's, THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, to bland contemporary pieces, such as FABLE FOR VIDEO, JOLLERS, SAMANTHA'S MEN, and DEADLY CONSEQUENCES, as well as a period piece, THE LEARNER, set in the 1920's. Four of the seven plays originally scheduled for transmission (including A LESSON FROM ALOES), were specially written for the medium. JOLLERS, in spite of its indigenous title, was based on a British stage play called SKYVER, by Barry Rekord. In terms of its adapted social milieu the play reflects on the twilight world of juvenile delinquency in Johannesburg. The main character, 15 year old Henry Petersen, a confused, awkward, decent, but not too bright young

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Sunday Express, Johannesburg, 3/2/74, p. 4.

boy, is determined to break out of his limited world with the aid of a pair of boxing gloves.

Patrick Lee's *FABLE FOR VIDEO*, was an imaginative though lighthearted drama concerning the differences between fantasy and reality, while *THE LEARNER*, a romantic piece by Patricia Johnstone, was set in the Karoo of the 1920's and tells the story of a young immigrant, Tomonth Colver, who comes to live with Alistair Brent and his sister Margot on their sheep farm. *DEADLY CONSEQUENCES*, by John Burch and Esther Flowers, is a suspense thriller about a pathologist who becomes embroiled in a series of murders which led to his becoming a prime suspect.

Of the six single plays that were transmitted, the only one that may have stirred any 'controversy' was an adaptation for television of Shakespeare's *A MERCHANT OF VENICE*, on account of its alleged anti-Semitism. In this production, however, actor Richard Haines' Shylock brought into focus the tragic dimensions of a maligned social outcast in a sensitive portrayal, avoiding the stereotype villain of melodrama with money-clutching fingers and rolling eyes. The potential controversy of this play did not excite any strong response from the ruling National Party or its agents on the SABC Board.

Plays set outside a contemporary social context are not necessarily irrelevant to a South African audience, as for instance, in Shakespeare's *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* the themes of friendship, loyalty, betrayal and hatred reflect upon patterns of social intercourse as a whole. Likewise, *KING LEAR*, which is set

outside any known historical context, comments profoundly on inter-personal relationships that express values of wider social ramifications.

4.4. VOICES WITHIN VOICES.

The single plays of South Africa's most prolific English language television dramatist, John Cundill, cannot be seen as an expression of an individual voice, as much of his work has stemmed from the ideas of other people, with Cundill fleshing out the ideas and characters with dialogue and dramatic structure. This does not, however, diminish his contribution to English language television drama or infer plagiarism, as many dramatists, including Shakespeare, have taken ideas from other people or sources for their own plays. What is suggested, on one level, is that Cundill, as a pragmatic practitioner of a restrictive broadcasting industry, considers his main objective to entertain the viewer, avoid having 'a message,' and to make a comfortable living from the proceeds of his writing. Cundill's drama background was formed at the University of Cape Town where he obtained a B.A. with three years of Drama, specialising in Radio Broadcasting. In 1965, he wrote a radio play broadcast by the SABC, entitled, *TO THE END OF THE ROAD*. Cundill claims to have made history in the Drama Department under Rosalie van der Gucht, in that he wrote, directed and acted in his own one act play.²²

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Cundill, John, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

Cundill's pragmatism has not blunted his social conscience which is projected through many of his characters that go beyond the stereotype and situations that are resonant with relevance within a South African socio-political context. Although his social conscience is evidenced in the play, *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*, and the series, *PEOPLE LIKE US*, he concedes that during the early years of his writing he was too fearful to suggest themes which challenged the dominant consensus. However, he became more forthcoming in projecting his social conscience and liberal views as his reputation grew. In his acceptance speech of the English Television Drama Prize, awarded by Die Akademie vir Westenskap en Kuns in 1987, Cundill called on the SABC to screen contemporary drama reflecting the social situation in South Africa. He said the *COSBY SHOW* must be having a profound effect on race relations, and that "now is the time to proceed even more boldly along this path. After all, we're talking about drama and what could be more dramatic than the events unfolding around us."²³ As a product of the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, and a private school education, Cundill concedes that his experience and knowledge of lower income Whites and working class Blacks are very limited.

In the series, *NEULANDS* (1991) - transmitted under the title *PEOPLE LIKE US* - which focuses on neighbourhood life in a so-called grey area, is as close as Cundill ever got to writing about the White working class; likewise as close as he ever got to 'non-White folk' within a socio/political context as circumstances, he

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Ibid.

admits, have kept him apart.²⁴ *NEULANDS*, although controversial was not confrontational, and the conflict between the White and non-White neighbours is frequently leavened with humour.

Cundill says, "I believe in the healing power of laughter, and in this series the laughter is right across the political spectrum."²⁵ Working class White bigot, Barney Britz and his overseas television White counterparts, namely, Britain's Alf Garnett, (*IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH*), and America's Archie Bunker, all react to life's challenges with a certain measure of aggression. Barney's aggression, however, is more a result of his dislike and fear of his non-White neighbours, than a sign of courage or intelligence.

[*THE OUTCAST* (1983), developed as a collaborative effort between Cundill and Gray Hofmeyr, is another example of a drama that gathers much of its tension by setting the characters within a racial/colour context. Hofmeyr's original idea was "a story about two brothers who kill themselves because of their jealousy over the older brother's wife."²⁶ Cundill introduced a third brother, a Coloured, which gave rise to the title, *THE OUTCAST*. He was also responsible for most of the dialogue and dramatic structure. Although Cundill and Hofmeyr had worked

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Ibid.

25

Ibid.

26

The Star, Johannesburg, "Writers Vie for the Best in Local Scripts," 14/2/84, p. 4.

closely on previous productions as writer and director, this marked the first occasion that they had co-written a drama, and consequently shared the fee for the script.²⁷

A further collaborative single play, *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE* (1985), was based on an idea that Gray Hofmeyr and Edgar Bold arrived at together during a chat in a Johannesburg pub. The close relationship that existed among Cundill, Hofmeyr and Bold allowed for a great deal of cross fertilisation of ideas. Cundill and Hofmeyr had a particularly close working relationship and, mainly through Hofmeyr's wider experience with working class people across the colour line, they managed to push the frontiers of subject matter towards broader social issues that impinged on the lives of South Africans other than middle class Whites. *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE* was a stinging indictment of the apartheid system, where fellow South Africans of different colour could only find one another outside the borders of the country; in this case, on the Indian ocean island of Mauritius.

The precursor to *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE* was another single play, *CHICKEN RUN*, also written by Cundill, but dealt with the inter-cultural relations of three middle income White couples. In *CHICKEN RUN* (1979), directed by Alan Nathanson, the couples come from different cultural backgrounds, namely, Jewish, Afrikaans and English speaking, who discover

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Ibid.

friendship on the island of Mauritius, but on their return to Johannesburg they realise how their suburban lives and pursuit of wealth and success, have brought a totally different perspective to their relationships.

The concept of *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE* was discussed with Ronnie Wilson, who was in charge of the English Drama Department during the interim period between Colin du Plessis's retirement and Roy Sargeant's appointment. According to Cundill, Wilson was 'encouraging but cautious.'²⁸ Cundill's credentials as a writer, who could be 'trusted,' had been confirmed by the recent award he had received from Die Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns for his co-scripting of *THE OUTCAST*.

My shares were very high there. They came to trust me as somebody who could handle these delicate subjects in a way which wasn't going to upset anybody too much.²⁹

It was on the strength of *THE OUTCAST* that permission was granted for *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*, with the admonition from Ronnie Wilson that 'you will handle this responsibly,' as a poignant reminder that in the South African context a relationship between a White and a Coloured couple could be 'handled irresponsibly,' particularly if their friendship should reflect negatively on the apartheid system.³⁰ By making the piece a comedy, however, Cundill diverts

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Jackman, Tony, *The Argus*, Cape Town, 22/7/87, p. 3.

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Cundill, John, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

30

Ibid.

attention away from the serious social implications of the White/Coloured relationship, and also avoids the pitfalls of political melodrama.

Cundill's most original work, 1922, was not a single play but a serialised drama. However it was totally his own idea, taken partly from his mining background, having worked on a diamond mine in Namibia, and partly from his childhood background in various mining towns where his father served as mine manager. His parents had lived through the 1922 miner's strike, or Red Revolt, in which his father was involved as a 'scab' and was attacked by a group of thugs. As a result, "I was emotionally involved in the subject."³¹ There are marked similarities between his own father and the character Quinton, both fought in the 1st World War; both are 'scabs' in the strike and suffer similar violent consequences, and both play tennis at the Wanderers. His own mother and the family mother in 1922 (played by Pamela Perry) are also paralleled in certain respects, particularly in their musical interests.

The 1922 miners' strike was also the setting for a single play by Patrick Owen Wilson, entitled, *THE POTATO EATER* (1981), which was runner-up in an SABC playwriting competition. However, the strike was merely a peg on which to hang the tortured conscience of a young artist, who because he had not followed his father's vocation and become a miner, consequently suffered a terrible guilt complex after his father's death.

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Ibid.

The social conscience of the writer is more audible in the work of Manie van Rensburg than in Cundill. While both writers believe that television drama should entertain, van Rensburg clearly prefers doing work which is 'socially and politically relevant.' This stance was strongly evident after his visit in 1987 to African National Congress exiles in Dakar, when he claimed that he would no longer produce television dramas which lacked 'social relevance.'³² However, Dakar was no sudden conversion for van Rensburg, who four years previously, said in an interview with Diana Wemyss of the Pretoria News:-

It probably sounds a little pretentious, but I need to make films with some social relevance, even if it is only an allegory of what things are about today.³³

Much of van Rensburg's work springs from his own ideas, which are "rooted in the earth and in the psyche of a person or nation."³⁴ Van Rensburg wants to show 'universal truths' about the human condition through the portrayal of peoples' everyday lives. He is committed to giving his work a South African quality and one of his major concerns is to examine the position of the Afrikaner in the world, by placing him in major conflict situations. Hence, the subject matter of HEROES (1986), a mini series co-scripted by van Rensburg and Johan van Jaarsveld, shows the Afrikaner divided on an issue that had global

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Van Rensburg, Manie, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

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Wemyss, Diana, "A Quest for Refinement," Pretoria News, 6/5/83, p. 8.

34

The Sunday Star, Johannesburg, 24/5/87, p. 14.

implications, namely whether or not to support the Allied cause during the Second World War, or to join the underground Nazi-inspired movement, the Ossewabrandwag? (cf. Chapter Seven) In *HEROES* two young South African men risk their friendship and their lives in the face of such choices. Van Rensburg went on to explore this theme further in a feature film, *THE FOURTH REICH*, which was later serialised on TV-1 in August 1992. The fact that van Rensburg is not only a writer but a director as well, puts him in a uniquely powerful position in the industry.

There is scarcely a writer's work that van Rensburg, as director, has not changed.
 35 In *THE MANTIS PROJECT*, which brought van Rensburg and Cundill together for the first and only time, (as director/ writer), the latter was unhappy with the changes made to his script by both the director and members of the cast. Cundill based the script on film producer Edgar Bold's idea, who, in turn, was influenced by the experimental television documentary mini series, *THE VOLUNTEERS*. Both *THE MANTIS PROJECT* and *THE VOLUNTEERS* concern the survival of groups of people placed outside their customary environment. In *THE VOLUNTEERS* where a group of people is placed in 1820 Settler conditions for some six months, reveals how they react to one another and their situation when isolated from the rest of society; and how they react to the camera, which becomes one of the 'main characters,' or the observing and critical gaze of the viewer. As an experimental television documentary,

filmed by Tommy McClelland, it focuses less on what life was like a century ago, than on the human behavioural patterns and inter-personal relationships of the different characters.

In *THE MANTIS PROJECT*, a group of ten volunteers, (an eleventh is picked up along the way), is taken to the abandoned Mantis mine in the Kalahari desert, and left to cope on their own with only a camera crew to observe their actions. Orchestrating their isolated existence is a scientist with apparently evil intentions, whose motives become clearer once he informs several of the members individually that they are regarded as the leader of the expedition. This information is given in confidence and they are not allowed to share it with anyone else, which gives rise to the major source of conflict and tension in the drama.

With Cundill overseas at the time, there was no opportunity for writer and director to meet and discuss the author's intentions. Consequently, van Rensburg, together with actor, Richard Haines, who played the scientist, set about making significant changes to the script which, according to Cundill, distorted his concept of the characters and plot.³⁶ In an effort to protect the interests of the writer in this regard, the English Drama Department has tried to "get some kind of communication going between the writer and director, so that when the final script is ready to go into production, both the director and the

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Cundill, John, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

writer have seen and agreed to the changes."³⁷ Prior to this arrangement, when a script was purchased by the Department, it would take up to a year or more before a director was appointed, by which time there was great pressure to produce the material as quickly as possible. Consequently, the script went through many changes which the writer never saw, and "what came up on the screen was often quite horrifying to him."³⁸

Unlike the situation in Australia where a writer's contract with the Australian Broadcasting Commission stipulates that he/she be present for the first rehearsal, the writer's obligation in South Africa ends with the final approval and purchase of the script by the SABC. Once the play has been commissioned and purchased by the SABC it becomes the property of the Corporation, and the writer loses all rights in terms of making changes. According to former Senior Script Editor, John Hind, "if the SABC buys a published work we generally don't need to make many changes, unless they are for the purpose of transposing the text from theatre to television, or cutting down the dialogue, or changing a setting from indoor to outdoor."³⁹

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Hind, John, Senior Script Editor, English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

38

Ibid.

39

Ibid.

While both Cundill and van Rensburg share a common concern for the future of the single play, it is tempered by economic considerations, as this genre does not generate the income earnings of a series or serial. Van Rensburg, for instance, considers the single play a valuable vehicle for the writer to project a unifying vision of a chosen subject, and considers his mini series as merely extended single plays. According to him, the five part series *HEROES*, is "really just a long single play, which I regard as a completed work, as opposed to the open ended approach where serials and series can continue indefinitely." ⁴⁰ Cundill's sentiments regarding the single play are echoed by Gray Hofmeyr, who as an independent producer, says that the transient nature of the single play and the limited financial return, will always make the series/serial a more attractive financial alternative. ⁴¹ (cf. Chapter Seven).

Many directors feel defensive in the presence of the writer and clearly do not wish to have him/her present during the shooting of the script. According to Cundill, if a writer gets involved in the production process in any way, it is regarded as a 'privilege.' ⁴² However, in practice, where a mutual relationship, based on understanding and respect, exists between writer and director, as for instance between Cundill and Hofmeyr, there is frequently consultation to iron out any problems and possible misunderstandings regarding the intentions of the

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Van Rensburg, Manie, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

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Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

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Ibid.

writer before shooting begins. Once that understanding has been reached "the writer can feel comfortable in withdrawing from the script completely."⁴³ For a writer to come onto the set during the shooting could cause unnecessary tension with the director, and in Cundill's experience, he says, "I feel like a spare part, as there's nothing for me to contribute to the actual production process."⁴⁴

According to Cundill, differences of opinion between writer and director can often be ascribed to 'an ego problem.'⁴⁵ A useful analogy is that between architect and builder, where the blueprint provided by the former is interpreted by the latter, who also has to deal with the practicalities of construction. However, the 'ego problem' that Cundill refers to, arises when the builder also wants to be the architect. Thus, while it is only natural for the writer to want the work to remain his own creation, the fact that once a director takes control and sets about 'constructing the production,' the personal style and interpretation of the director can either enhance or distort the meaning of the script.

The enhancement of a writer's original vision is welcomed by dramatists such as Cundill, whose single play, *WAITING* (1977), was given added visual dimension by director Gray Hofmeyr. *WAITING* was presented along with another Cundill

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Hind, John, Senior Script Editor, English Drama, TV-1, Auckland Park, Interview with author, August 1987.

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Cundill, John, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

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Ibid.

one-off, REDUNDANT (1977) as a duet. Cundill adapted these plays which he had written originally for the stage and, in terms of his understanding of television studio productions in those early days he was told "to keep it tight and keep it cheap."⁴⁶ REDUNDANT, set in an office and intended for the studio, was an example of a writer's script that was lifted off the page virtually word for word by the director, whereas, WAITING was to a large degree a director's piece, in that Hofmeyr took it out of its proposed studio setting and located it in a small Karoo town with a railway siding, where steam engines still traversed the track. Hofmeyr was able to develop Cundill's original script, adding visual texture without undermining the artistic integrity of the writer whose original intention was to reflect on a communication breakdown between two people.

A young widow, played by Jana Cilliers, and an elderly English historian, (Hugh Rouse), are waiting for a train to Kimberley at a small siding somewhere near Douglas in the northern Karoo. The encounter between these two totally incompatible characters, evoked pathos with its sensitively drawn characters from different worlds. Each believes they have found in the other a sympathetic listener, even though it is doubtful whether either comes away enriched by the experience. However, there is no real development of plot, and the young woman is only too happy to talk with anyone prepared to listen to her sad memories about her late husband who died of asthma. The English historian, who has a penchant for reading Kipling's verse and an interest in the battles of

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Ibid.

the Anglo Boer war, appears to be only too pleased to have company to while away the time waiting for the train to Kimberley. Notwithstanding Hofmeyr's visual treatment of these plays, they both remain essentially wordy theatrical pieces. (REDUNDANT and WAITING were first tried out as stage productions at Sandton's Theatre House prior to their adaptation to the television medium).

In THE OUTCAST, consisting of 138 scenes, there are further examples where Hofmeyr translates Cundill's dialogue into visual narrative. For instance, the dialogue between Dial and Lorrie, as they travel along a dirt road to Adam's smallholding in the Knysna forest, is replaced by a series of visual inter-cuts between the action on the farm and the approaching vehicle, developing a strong sense of expectation and suspense. Consequently, the viewer's introduction to the occupants of the car is delayed to the moment when they alight from the vehicle. Furthermore, Hofmeyr adds a scene in the beginning, not included in Cundill's script, on the death and burial of Abel's mother. Notwithstanding these and other changes to the script, the close collaborative relationship between Hofmeyr and Cundill on this project, ensured that the integrity of the major themes was not undermined.

4.5. ATTRACTING NEW VOICES AND PUTTING PICTURES TO OLD VOICES:

The writers in the early years were trying desperately to adapt from radio, so that we had a lot of those radio scripts which were really just like shallow diluted transplants. They weren't generated with television in mind. ⁴⁷

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Leach, Ken, Former Head English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

Many established radio dramatists attempted the cross-over to television, including Michael McCabe, James Ambrose Brown, Cameron McClure and Jonathan Berwick. The radio link was often reinforced by former radio drama producers in their new television posts who would turn to radio scriptwriters for material instead of encouraging new writers to the television medium. For instance, Douglas Bristowe, a first generation TV drama director, commissioned Jonathan Berwick to write *CIRCLE IN THE SUN* (1978), which Bristowe also directed. (As an Announcer/Producer for the English Service in Durban, Bristowe had directed several of Berwick's works for radio).

CIRCLE IN THE SUN is a wordy drama that centres around a relationship between a brother and sister. The brother, a young South African actor who goes overseas to make 'the big time' in British theatre, ends up in a down-at-heel seaside repertory company. On his return home to his sister, who initially regards him as a 'big star,' the disillusionment of his failure eventually sinks home. Their understanding of one another is strengthened, however, by the re-establishment of a relationship based on truth and reality.

Berwick and other radio dramatists failed in their early attempts to exploit the visual dimension of television, and relied too heavily on a text oriented approach, with dialogue dominating picture, resulting in what is commonly known as 'the talking head syndrome.' When Ken Leach first joined the English Drama

Department in 1977, he attempted to break the 'uneasy alliance between radio and television,' and relied more upon his extensive theatrical background in the choice of suitable subject matter for the single play. "At least the plays of theatre were a tried and tested product, and that with some slight adjustment for television, it was a better element to back than the radio script with its strictly ear orientation." ⁴⁸ The adapted stage plays directed by Leach include, Jean Anouilh's POOR BITOS, presented in four parts, (1979); Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (1982); Noel Coward's HAYFEVER (1984); Moliere's THE MISER (1984); Luigi Pirandello's RIGHT YOU ARE, presented in three parts, (1980), and Oscar Wilde's THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ERNEST (1981).

A radio dramatist who has written for television as an adapter and original writer is Michael McCabe. During the early years he wrote the single play, A DREAM IN A WOOD OF GHOSTS (1977), followed by an adaptation of Stuart Cloete's short story THE HONEYBIRD. THE HONEYBIRD (1981) expresses through analogy a sharp yet subtle indictment of the government's policy of forced removals, a subtlety which no doubt eluded the bureaucratic controllers of drama.

The story is based on an ancient legend about the honeybird which leads hungry travellers to a bee's nest. However, if the individual is greedy and takes all the

honey, the honeybird avenges the deed. Consequently, on the following occasion that the traveller passes by, the honeybird leads the victim to a fatal encounter with a poisonous snake. In the context of the narrative, Johannesburg miner, Piet du Bois, who travels to South West Africa, (Namibia), to buy a farm, looks for a suitable piece of land which has water; he follows an old Bushman couple across the desert until they reach their traditional waterhole. After purchasing the land, Du Bois chases the couple away, not caring when the old woman dies of thirst. It is at this point, the honeybird enters the conflict and avenges the old woman's death.

THE HONEYBIRD, with its oblique reference to relevant socio-political issues, suggests that if the single play were allowed to develop themes with less bureaucratic restriction, the genre may have made an impact comparable to that achieved by its British counterpart. For instance, when Sydney Newman took over Armchair Theatre in Britain in 1958, he diluted the dominance of theatrical adaptations and charged writers, many of them new to the medium of television, to focus on social and domestic issues that were challenging, controversial and relevant to British society. In this way, the British viewer came to recognise the single play as a genre connoting expectations of contemporary and indigenous relevance.

Among the most successful English language television dramatists have been those whose background was neither radio nor theatre, but journalism; a phenomenon recognised not only in South Africa, but in Britain as well.

The bulk of television writing is inevitably dramatized journalism. By this, I mean that the characters and situations are portrayed in a readily recognizable 'every-day'

way and the level of observation of them and their lives is that of good journalism.⁴⁹

Journalists are not only in touch with society, but are required to report on and interpret aspects of that society on a daily basis. Journalists communicate in a style of language which is readily understood, and the drama of incident is linked to the reality of life. Among the journalists who have written single plays for the English Drama Department are:-

John Cundill -- DUET, (REDUNDANT and WAITING) (1977), THE CHICKEN RUN (1977), THE EARTHMOVER (1983), THE HIDING OF BLACK BILL (1983), which was adapted from a short story by O'Henry, THE OUTCAST (1983), based on an idea by Gray Hofmeyr, and TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE (1985);

Richard Beynon -- THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS (1982), and his adaptation of Pauline Smith's THE PAIN (1980);

Willem Steenkamp -- KOSIE (1983);

Peter Wilhelm -- THE BAY WINDOW (1984);

JOHN MITCHELL -- an arts critic on the The Star, who provided the idea for the single play, THE MOUNTAIN (1984), which was co-scripted by Luanshya Greer and Cedric Sundstrom,

Franklin Head -- THE CRITICAL FACTOR (1985);

Hillary Prendini -- PLAYING WITH FIRE (1986);

Patrick Lee -- FABLE FOR VIDEO (1987), and

Douglas Gordon -- ODD MAN IN (1989).

Among those writers whose work is closely allied to journalism are, John Hunt, of Hunt Lascaris, a major advertising agency in Johannesburg, who wrote *SABRINA* (1985), which won a Bronze award at the New York Film and Television Festival in 1986, and former Sunday Times theatre critic, James Ambrose Brown, a writer who has written extensively for television, radio and theatre. His television single plays include, *CONVERSATION IN A MIRROR*, (1979); *THE STAIRWAY*, (1979); and *MIRROR IMAGE*, (1985). Ambrose Brown's journalistic background features in a play he wrote for PACT called *THE TRUTH GAME*, which exposes the moral flaws and ethics of a newspaper editor.

Among those from theatre was John Burch, former actor and impresario, who came to the public's attention with Pieter Fourie's *FAAN SE TREIN*. Burch wrote *THE SENTIMENTALIST* (1986), *SETH* (1985) and co-authored with Esther Flowers, *DEADLY CONSEQUENCES* (1987). He was also the recipient of an Artes Award for Scriptwriting, awarded for the first time in 1991, for his series, *BARNEY BARNATO*.

Surprisingly few writers came into English television drama from film. Although South African film makers were among the first in the world to make documentaries and features, no tradition of writing screenplays had developed in this country, whereas English theatre and radio had provided a platform for many local dramatists, including Pieter Dirk Uys and Athol Fugard, whose work has

received international acclaim. The problem according to Ken Leach lies with the film industry, which has not invested in the development of the screenwriter to any great extent. He adds that the film industry has had a 'mushroom existence,' where it flourishes for brief periods with writer/producers such as Emil Nofal and Jamie Uys, but then goes into periods of decline, such as, in 1991 with the curtailment of the subsidy system, and in 1976, when the introduction of "television took the guts out of the film industry."⁵⁰ Before the advent of television, the South African film industry was producing an average of twelve major features a year, with several as, for instance, *THE WINNERS*, reaching audiences beyond South Africa's borders.

Among the few screenwriters who have contributed to the English single play are Edgar Bold, David Shreeve and Peter Davis. Bold, though better known for his work as a director, wrote *THE VISIT* (1980), and Shreeve, who had written more than 400 documentary and tourist film scripts in South Africa and Zimbabwe, had two single plays produced by the SABC, namely *RESIDENTIAL* (1976) and *BABY AT LARGE* (1976). Notwithstanding Shreeve's background in the visual medium of film, his *RESIDENTIAL* was likened to a radio drama. Television critic, David Albino, said "viewers could be forgiven for having a sneaking suspicion during last night's television drama, *RESIDENTIAL*, that SATV had

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Leach, Ken, Former Head English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

raided the Springbok radio play stockpile and set the result to pictures." ⁵¹ Local film producer, Peter Davis, was more successful in exploring the visual medium in his first single play, *A HUSBAND FOR NANCY* (1976), where, apart from the interior settings which were shot in the studios at Auckland Park, his outdoor scenes were shot on location on 16 mm film at Pilgrims Rest and the Sabi River in the Eastern Transvaal.

During the early years of English television drama in South Africa, a haphazard pattern emerged in the selection of subject matter and choice of material, a factor which goes against the nature of continuum in television programming, in that the viewer is likely to develop a loyalty to characters who re-appear week after week, as in a series/serial or sitcom. (cf. Chapter Seven) Because of the disparate backgrounds of the producers who came from different media, "we were left to choose our own material, and provided the subject matter didn't displease anyone too much, we had considerable independence in the choice of plays," according to Leach. ⁵²

Recognising the need to develop the single play as a regular feature, the Drama Department introduced in the mid-eighties the annual *PLAY OF THE WEEK* season and later the *ANTHOLOGY SERIES* of plays under the umbrella of a

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Albino, David, "A Steam Radio Soap Opera," *The Argus*, Cape Town, 31/3/76, p. 3.

52

Hugo, Henk, Former Head, Television Drama Productions, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1997.

given theme, akin to the system in Britain where the single play has enjoyed regular time slots; for instance, from the early days of ABC's ARMCHAIR THEATRE on a Sunday night, to the BBC's WEDNESDAY PLAY which later changed to PLAY FOR TODAY, when transmission night was changed to Thursday.⁵³ During the mid-eighties, in the time of Roy Sargeant, the English Drama Department ran two seasons of single plays, from late March to June, and from September to December. According to Sargeant:-

Plays are the real base of drama broadcasting. The one-off has been something of a neglected area on our service. I would love to have 52 weeks of them. Financial considerations would first have to be overcome however.⁵⁴

In terms of the ANTHOLOGY SERIES, the Department was able to go out and commission new writers, as well as established writers, requesting them to write a single play within a specified theme. However, the ANTHOLOGY SERIES was largely destroyed by the advent of M-Net, which presented a new crisis for the SABC as a whole, and its Drama Department in particular. As the Corporation felt obliged to match the 'gloss and glitter' programmes that M-Net were putting out, it took the best available programmes, including the 'best single plays,' which were taken out of their original contexts, and put into the competitive fray against M-Net. Consequently, when the remainder of the ANTHOLOGY SERIES went

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Shubik, Irene, Play for Today, The Evolution of Television Drama, Davis-Poynter, London, 1975, p. 59.

54

Jackman, Tony, "TV Play of the Week Season to be Increased," The Argus, Cape Town, 7/3/84, p. 1.

out without a theme but given a new name of 'Screen One,' productions which included plays of mainly first time writers and directors, viewers were exposed to a succession of poor to mediocre material. This did the single play considerable damage in the eyes of the viewer and the critics alike. Tony Jackman of The Argus said:-

With every television preview that passes I become more convinced that for South African drama, 1987, is the Year of the Dud.

Referring to one of the productions, DEADLY CONSEQUENCES, he said:

DEADLY CONSEQUENCES is a whodunnit which succeeds to a point but is spoilt by clumsy plot construction - too many clues to the killer's identity, superfluous dialogue - and a tendency to strew red herrings around with such obvious intent that one easily identifies them as such.⁵⁵

The anonymous Pretoria News critic reviewing JOLLERS, wrote:-

It's not third time lucky for this series of 'Screen One' productions on TV-1 on Sundays - the third of the not-totally-successful offerings will be screened on Sunday night at 9.30 pm and it's probably the worst to date.

So far the 'Screen One' offerings have gone downhill from THE MERCHANT OF VENICE and FABLE FOR VIDEO.⁵⁶

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Jackman, Tony, "For Local TV Drama it's the Year of the Dud," The Argus, Cape Town, 11/6/87, p. 3.

56

Pretoria News, "JOLLERS Dated and too Overdone," 8/5/87, p. 2.

If 1987 was regarded as a 'dud,' the single play reached its nadir in 1988, when only one locally produced single play of any note was screened, compared with seven the previous year, nine in 1986, fourteen in 1985, eight in 1984 and sixteen in 1983, when the highest number of single plays was screened in any one year, between the years 1976 and 1988. The notable single play in 1988 was not an original local work but Shakespeare's *THE WINTER'S TALE*, a PACT drama production, directed by Bobby Heaney and recorded on video in the Alexander Theatre in Johannesburg. (cf. Appendix 1)

Together with a perceived need by the Drama Department to 'spend its money more evenly,' and the disintegration of the ANTHOLOGY SERIES, the single play has now come to be regarded by the SABC as "an expensive luxury."⁵⁷ By 1987, it was in serious danger of being removed altogether from the schedules, as the commercialisation of the SABC developed apace, and its need to compete with M-Net and, to a lesser extent, with Bop-TV, became overriding considerations. By 1991, the single play had been completely removed from the production budget of the English Drama Department.

Since the mid-eighties there has been a discernible shift away from the single play to the series and serials, including the mini-series of between four and six episodes, which have proved to be very popular with the viewer. During periods in the eighties when the Department's budget had been severely constrained, it

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HUGO, Henk, Former Head, Television Drama Productions, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

turned its attention to what John Hind calls "the television drama speciality," which is a single play of interiors made of constructed sets, shot in a studio and having a cast not exceeding six characters.⁵⁸ However, such a compromising attitude did nothing to foster the single play as a genre in the eyes of potentially talented writers, or established writers from theatre and its fringe.

4.6. PAYING A PITTANCE.

A major factor militating against the growth of the single play in South Africa, is that the writer is among the lowest paid member of the team involved in the production of a play. The South African Scriptwriters' Association in 1978 criticised the SABC for paying writers "the lowest rates in the English speaking world."⁵⁹ According to the chairman of the Association, Dale Cutts, local television and radio writers are paid roughly half what their colleagues in Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia earn.⁶⁰

The general rule of thumb overseas was to pay scriptwriters five percent of the total film budget and, in many cases, a percentage of the profits.

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Hind, John, Former Senior Script Editor, Interview with author, Auckland Park, February 1989.

59

Raphaely, Rosemarie, "Scriptwriters say SABC underpays," The Star, Johannesburg, 24/10/78, p. 15.

60

Ibid.

SABC paid about two and a half percent of its budget to writers, and generally reserved the rights." 61

Because of the relatively low fees paid for television drama, few writers can afford to devote themselves entirely to the job of scriptwriting, and either take on other work to supplement their income, or, as in most cases, have full time employment and writing for television is a free-lance activity. Leading South African novelist, Geoffrey Jenkins, says he would write for television if the SABC paid more realistic fees. He points out that when television started in South Africa writers were offered about R60 for a 15 minute script, whereas, in Britain, he had received up to R900 for short dramas, and in the United States, the minimum fee for a 15 minute script was R850. 62 (Notwithstanding the low fees paid by the SABC, Jenkins has had two of his novels adapted for broadcasting, namely A TWIST OF SAND for Springbok Radio, and RIVER OF DIAMONDS for television). 63

In 1990, the SABC was paying new writers an average of R6000 for a 60 minute single play, which is still roughly half of what the BBC would pay. 64 Although fees to writers in South Africa were negotiable upward of R60 per minute during

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Weekend Post, 22/10/77, p. 1.

62

Ibid.

63

The Citizen, Johannesburg, 25/2/81, p. 18.

64

Rodel, Clive, Organiser TV-1, English Drama, Interview with author, Auckland Park, February 1992.

the mid-eighties, this amount rose to a minimum level of R80 per minute towards the end of the decade. Established writers would command up to R250 per minute.⁶⁵ Cor Nortje, Production Director, Entertainment Programmes, Safritel, believes that the system of paying writers on a per minute basis is "evil" because it removes any incentive in attracting the country's leading writers. According to Nortje, a playwright such as Chris Barnard would earn the top rate of R250 per minute, giving him R15 000 for a 60 minute single play, but he would probably earn a lot more if he wrote for the stage, where the audience is small compared with television.⁶⁶

Speculative writing has its own financial hazards as the likelihood of an unsolicited script being accepted is highly remote, accounting for less than five percent of the total submissions.⁶⁷ Before the Script Development Fund was established during Roy Sargeant's term of office, the principle was that if the play was considered worthwhile the Department would offer to buy it, provided the dramatist was prepared to do all the re-writes, and take the risk that the text could still be rejected if the final re-write did not meet with the Department's approval.

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Van Schalkwyk, Angela, *The Citizen*, 17/1/79, p. 4.

66

Nortje, Cor, Production Director, Entertainment Programmes, Safritel, Interview with author, Auckland Park, May 1992.

67

Hind, John, Former Senior Script Editor, English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, February 1989.

The Script Development Fund, however, has given the writer a measure of financial security, in that it makes provision for a three phase pay-out to an author. In terms of the contract, the Fund will pay out on Treatment; a further sum on submission of the Draft Script; and a third payment on acceptance of the Final Script. If a particular script is not working the author can be paid off prior to the Final Script stage, without the Department having incurred a great loss. In monetary terms, the writer is paid 30% on concept and treatment, a further 30% on delivery and approval of the draft script, and the final outstanding 40% on the approval of the final script.

At the time the Fund was launched, the scale of payment was between R50 and R100 per minute for original work, adaptations ranged from R40 to R70 per minute, and adaptations of existing stage and radio dramas was between R20 and R40 per minute. According to Clive Rodel, Organiser TV-1, English Drama, few writers were paid as little as R50 per minute for an approved script.⁶⁸ A sliding scale, however, allows the Corporation to pay a reduced fee for a script which is finally rejected. In terms of fostering new writing talent, the Fund allows the Drama Manager to pay a promising writer an upfront fee for a good idea, and the opportunity to develop it to final script stage.

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Rodel, Clive, Organiser English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, February 1992.

Between the late seventies and late eighties, the Drama Department pursued a policy of encouraging new writers by holding symposia, workshops and playwriting competitions; though from the mid-eighties the main focus has shifted to encouraging and assisting writers of series, serials and sitcoms. In 1979, the Department received nearly 500 scripts for its first playwriting competition, which offered the winning scriptwriter a cash prize of R2000, plus the normal purchase price of the script, and "the opportunity to watch the play being produced."⁶⁹ The workshops and symposia are held in order to identify those who can write a 'good drama' and can then be taught the technical skills of writing for television. A major seminar on comedy was held in February 1989 at the SABC's farm at Naauwpoort, which focussed on the contributions of the writer, director and actor to the comedy genre. Among the writers who delivered papers were P.G. du Plessis and Lee Marcus.⁷⁰

Between 1976 and 1987, the English Drama Department averaged ten single play productions per year. In one month, August 1987, some 20 unsolicited drama scripts were received, (mainly single plays, but also a number of proposals for series/serials and sitcoms). Although the Department receives an average of 200 scripts per annum, only a few will ever be produced. In respect of unsolicited

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Ibid.

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Marcus, Lee, Former Script Supervisor, English TV Drama, Interview with author, Johannesburg, May 1992.

single plays submitted in 1990, not one was accepted by the English Drama Department.⁷¹

Writers are further discouraged when information from the Department leaks to the South African Scriptwriters' Association, as happened in 1983, claiming that the SABC intended cutting back on the number of local productions with a view to producing fewer but better television scripts. However well intended such a claim may have been, the Department cannot hope to attain the desired high standard of production if it actively discourages the potential source of scripts, wittingly or unwittingly, suggesting that writers should aim their market elsewhere.

Throughout the history of artistic endeavour, output has been directly proportional to demand, in much the same way that the economic law of supply and demand operates. Thus a large demand for television drama inevitably stimulates a large demand for writing talent, and consequently, a wider selection to choose from. High achievements in art have often sprung from situations where many artists and craftsmen have been engaged in satisfying a large public demand.⁷² For instance, the output of Renaissance artists was stimulated by a widespread demand for paintings and sculptures to adorn cathedrals, palaces as

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Rodel, Clive, Organiser English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, May 1992.

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Esslin, Martin, Mediations: Essays on Brecht, Beckett and the Media, Abacus, London, 1980, p. 188.

well as the homes of the rich. The output of Charles Dickens was directly related to a public demand for more of his stories and novels. In South Africa, the demand for entertaining drama has led to a large supply of dramatic material, but sadly, it is mostly imported American series, serials and situation comedies. (cf. Chapter Seven).

Unlike the Afrikaans Drama Department which had a resident staff writer in Kobus Louw, the English Drama Department has never favoured the idea, believing that the presence of staff writers would reduce the potential contribution from outside writers. However the BBC between the years 1957 and 1962, engaged a number of writers, many of whom went on to establish a reputation in theatre, radio and television. Among them were, Peter Shaffer, John Mortimer, David Mercer, Giles Cooper, David Turner, John Hopkins and John Osborne. The closest the SABC English Drama Department ever came to employing a staff writer was in 1986, when Lee Marcus was engaged as a Script Supervisor and was commissioned to do a number of adaptations. However, she found the strain of supervising scripts and writing adaptations too demanding and resigned.⁷³

As resident writer for the Afrikaans Drama Department, Kobus Louw wrote an impressive number of series, namely, WILLEM, SEEPSTEENBATALJON, DOKTER DOKTER and DRAMA DRAMA. He also adapted four Karl

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Marcus, Lee, Former Script Supervisor, English TV Drama, Interview with author, Johannesburg, May 1992.

Kielblock stories for the medium, namely, DIE SKAAM MAN, ONDER DIE STIL WATERS, MOORD OP EENDEKUIL and DIE RAAISEL IN DIE SPIEËL. Since the mid-eighties, TV-2 and 3 drama departments have engaged a number of scenario writers, whose function is to flesh out in dramatic form the ideas that are received from various quarters. The rationale for employing scenario writers in these departments is because of the relatively few submissions received, most of which lack dramatic form.

There has been a steady decline in the number of unsolicited scripts received by the English Drama Department since the introduction of TV-4 and M-Net, a phenomenon that former Script Editor, John Hind ascribes to a possible sense of discouragement by writers who see such a wealth of overseas material on those channels, and so little that is locally written.⁷⁴

4.7. CONCLUSION:

Although creating a single play 'ex nihilo' may be regarded as a romanticised view of looking at the individual artist, who god-like creates order out of chaos, it certainly stands in stark contrast to the mechanical approach of the serial writer slavishly obeying the rules of formula construction with its predictable cliffhangers in which the hero never succumbs. (cf. Chapter Seven). Although

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Hind, John, Former Senior Script Editor, English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

words, such as 'creative' used to describe the activity of the writer have been debased by their wider commercial coinage, as in 'creative writing,' the quintessential meaning of the word attaches itself aptly to the creative and imaginative input of the writer who originates a work of drama. The act of creativity in dramatic writing also attaches itself to the notion that it is the effort of an individual who writes not according to a preconceived formula, but in response to his/her own insights and understanding of life. The relative isolation of the writer of the single play in relation to the production process is underscored by John Ravage who says:-

Underrated by audiences, taken for granted by actors, loved but not understood by producers, drained of their creativity by the banality of the medium in which they work, writers are often solitary workers in the production cycle. ⁷⁵

The number of South African writers who have expanded from theatre into television is relatively small, although the English Drama Department has managed to attract some of the country's leading playwrights, including Geraldine Aron, Athol Fugard, Pieter Dirk Uys, James Ambrose Brown and the co-authorship of Paul Slabolepszy and Bill Flynn in *HIGHRISE COWBOY* (1983) and *SENIOR SMITH* (1985). However, judging by the small input these writers have made to the overall number of single plays, it would appear that much more needs to be done to establish productive working relationships with writers from the theatre, and especially with those who are sceptical of the

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Ravage, John, Television: The Director's Viewpoint, Westview Press, Inc., 1978, p. 16.

medium of television. With a less restrictive and bureaucratic approach to drama, as well as paying a more encouraging fee, this situation could improve.

Notwithstanding a progressive move towards greater film technique in the production of television drama, the writer/director relationship in respect of the single play has remained closer to that of the stage than of film. (cf. Chapter Three) The bias is deflected towards the writer when he/she is better known than the director, as in the case of Athol Fugard's television productions of *PEOPLE ARE LIVING THERE, HELLO AND GOODBYE*, and *A LESSON FROM ALOES*. Similarly, in film where the prestige of Tennessee Williams eased his passage into the industry; "Williams's name was more prominent in the film advertisements than the director's, and sometimes equal to the stars." ⁷⁶

Historically, plays for theatre and radio are text based, and this fundamental and important function of the writer is given status in these media. However, in the visual media of television and film the writer's contribution is often overshadowed by the input of the director and other technical mediators; for instance, television as an industrialised medium, alienates the individual creator from the many people involved in the production process. However, the integrity of the single play as a significant platform for the individual voice of the dramatist is not compromised when the director is faithful to the writer's intention.

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Yacowar, Maurice, Tennessee Williams and Film, Ungar Film Library, New York, 1977, p. 138.

The SABC's Drama Code which attempted to impose ideological guidelines on locally produced television dramas during the mid to late eighties, merely underlined the corporation's compartmentalised notion of South Africa and its people. When asked to define 'macro' culture in terms of their drama policy, the Head of Television Drama Productions, Henk Hugo, said "the people themselves will define its meaning."⁷⁷ Perhaps within a restructured, broadly based democratic representative SABC, the 'people' may indeed define the macro!

While accepting that television drama expresses cultural values, these cannot be determined or narrowly interpreted by a prescriptive drama code. Such attempts by the SABC merely enlarge the contradiction between the corporation's ideological promise and its institutional performance; functioning as a body that is strongly supportive of the ruling party, yet declaring through its drama code and mission statement that it aims to articulate the country's diverse cultures. In respect of the drama code, 'the people' to date have not been the ones who have determined the 'macro culture;' that decision has been left to one or other bureaucrat, who for instance, decided that *A LESSON FROM ALOES* was an inappropriate drama to broadcast in 1987. Restrictions inhibiting creative expression within a broadcasting institution, particularly within the SABC during the period under review, are the subject of the following chapter on censorship.

77

Hugo, Henk, Head Television Drama Productions, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

The SABC's response to the demise of the single play could lead to a situation where nothing further is done to revive the genre, or practitioners and controllers of a new political dispensation could re-assess its future in the light of a less restrictive bureaucratic environment. (cf. Chapter Eight and the scenario for the single play under a restructured SABC). As an interim measure, however, the English Drama Department could set about redressing the present racial and gender bias towards White males in the writing, directing and production of the single play. It is ironic that women who represent half the population have produced only five local television dramatists, compared with the thirty six White South African males who have written English single plays between the years 1976 and 1987. The local female writers are, Luanshya Greer, Esther Flowers, Patricia Johnstone, Kathy Viedge and Geraldine Aron, who has four single plays to her credit, namely, *THE TOUCH OF PINK*, (1982), *ALONG CAME A SPIDER* (1982), *THE GIRL WHO HATED JIMMICKS* (1985) and *IN BROAD DAYLIGHT* (1985), which she wrote under her nom de plume Mary Hick. Within the new political dispensation Black writers, male and female, should be encouraged to enter the medium and write for a wider anglophonic audience, tackling themes that touch on issues relevant to an audience beyond a predominantly White middle class suburbia.

CHAPTER FIVE

CENSORSHIP AND THE SINGLE PLAY.

5.1. INTRODUCTION.

The SABC does not subscribe to any set of regulations insofar as censorship is concerned.¹

The single play as an expression of the individual voice, has been constrained by the imposition of various levels of censorship, that prevailed during the period 1976 to 1991. (There has been an easing of media curbs and other censorship regulations since February 2, 1990, and these aspects will be discussed within appropriate contexts). While there may have been an absence of 'a set of regulations' regarding the censorship of television dramas within the SABC during the period under review, sophisticated mechanisms and determinants have been at work in securing normative standards and ideological prescriptions. Firstly, there is the indirect manner in which the executive of government maintains its control of radio and television broadcasting through the appointment by the State President of members to serve on the Board of the SABC.

Secondly, one of the most effective determinants has been self-censorship, applied by many writers in the belief that their work will not be accepted unless it steers clear of the potentially controversial subjects of politics, religion, sex and violence. According to writer/director, Manie van Rensburg, "self-censorship is a

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Hugo, Henk, Production Head: TV Drama, SABC, Interview with author, Auckland Park, 7/8/87.

killer!"² It is the fear of censorship which produces self-censorship, making the writer and director a tacit instrument of bureaucracy. However, it could be argued that the SABC does not need any regulations on censorship because state censorship has been so pervasive and all-embracing that no creative individual in South Africa could escape its presence. During the period, 1976 to 1991, formal structures of censorship were covered by the Publications Act of 1974, which replaced the Publications and Entertainments Act of 1963, as well as the Internal Security Act, the Riotous Assemblies Act, the Official Secrets Act and the Prisons Act. In addition, there were also two declared states of emergency, which imposed their own set of regulations and media curbs. Every dramatist and director engaged directly or indirectly in a television drama for the SABC was subject to these wide-ranging constraints.

Censorship is a political process, a cover for the politically dominant group.
It is a means of manipulating power through the control of information.³

One of the areas where explicit censorship occurs within the SABC is in the censoring of imported dramas by the Dubbing Department, which previews every imported production with a view to expunging 'undesirable' elements, ranging from scatological expletives to mild blasphemies such as, 'Oh, my God!' While an uncompromising attitude has been shown towards these aberrations, the vexed question of racially mixed casts in South African television drama, is one which

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Jackman, Tony, *The Argus*, "Interview with Manie van Rensburg," Cape Town, 8/9/83, p. 4.

3

Coggin, Theo, *Studies in South Africa's Censorship Laws*, Pub: Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1983, p. 1.

the SABC has failed to handle with any consistency during the period under review.

While mixed casts have been a regular feature of imported American dramas, they have been more the exception than the rule in locally produced English plays. Referring to mixed casts, an SABC spokesman says:

It was not necessarily the SABC that always wanted to cut scenes from programmes, but it took 'flak' from conservative viewers, and had to cut anything that would cause any offence to anybody.⁴

This was evident in the late eighties when the politically conservative right wing of the White electorate began asserting itself, and demanded stricter control over certain 'undesirable' aspects on the television screen. According to Conservative Party spokesman, Clive Derby-Lewis, his Party is against the following television dramas:-

MATLOCK: The American series about an intrepid lawyer, because it has a Black judge and a Black police officer.

WEBSTER: Because it is about a Black child adopted by a White couple.

NORTH AND SOUTH: Because of the across-the-line marriage between a White woman and a Black slave.

SPIOEN SPIOEN: (Simulcast title: **THE SCARECROW AND MRS KING**) Because the security chief is Black.

MISDAAD IN MIAMI: (Simulcast title: **MIAMI VICE**) Because all the top positions in the Police are held by Hispanic or Black people.⁵

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Natal Mercury, Durban, 28/11/87, p. 15.

5

Naidoo, Charmaine, Sunday Times, 31/1/88, p. 3.

The fact that a section of the White community - in a sense, a minority within a minority - does not enjoy watching dramas where Blacks are in positions of authority, is not the problem of the SABC, but of the bigots themselves. Although the SABC did not withdraw any of the above-mentioned dramas, it did censor certain scenes, as for instance, in *NORTH AND SOUTH* where a White woman and a Negro slave are shown in a moment of tender embrace. Even though these dramas are fictional, it is absurd to reflect a totally artificial presentation of life in order to pander to the prejudices of a racist minority. The supportive roles of most of the Black actors in the drama series was construed by Derby-Lewis as being "a distorted view of reality in the United States -- giving the impression that Negroes have control of the country." ⁶

The SABC's own obsession with race, however, is not beyond reproach. During the eighties, the Corporation required of its magazine programme producers to detail in a monthly report the number of people of colour who appeared on their respective TV-1 programmes. According to a senior SABC magazine producer, the reason for this was twofold: on one level, the information was given to members of the Coloured and Indian houses of parliament who complained that relatively few members of their race group ever appeared on SABC magazine programmes, while the SABC actively discouraged the appearance of Blacks on these programmes. One senior producer claims that he was asked not to allow more than one Black face every three months to appear on his programme. ⁷

6

Ibid.

7

Auld, Allen, Executive Producer, Collage, SABC TV-1, Interview with author, Johannesburg, 10/8/87.

In addition to the censorship carried out by the Dubbing Department, there is a bureaucratic imprimatur imposed by the SABC hierarchy - 'the 11th floor bureaucrats' - referred to by Professor Ian Ferguson, (cf. Chapter One), who, for mainly ideological reasons, censor or ban material outright. For instance, the decision to ban LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY, before completing its run, was taken after complaints from conservative members of the public about the Coloured/White relationship, the risqué dialogue and that the AWB (Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging) were portrayed in a negative light. Although Drama Manager, Ken Leach, passed the series for screening, and said that he was prepared to stand by that decision, acting director-general, Wynand Harmse, read a prepared statement on NETWORK on 23 June 1988 apologising for the series and announcing its immediate suspension. Harmse claimed that the series was totally unsuitable for 'family viewing.' The remaining eight episodes eventually went out in a late night time slot. ⁸

The advent of the tricameral parliament in 1984, which broke the mould of the all-White parliamentary system, was paralleled with the inclusion of increasing numbers of mainly coloured actors who were cast in English single dramas. The notable examples being, THE OUTCAST (1983) and TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE (1985). Referring to the latter production, director Gray Hofmeyr said at a Star Tonight awards ceremony:-

The racial aspect of the situation proved to be highly successful and I hope we can press on in that direction,

working over colour lines especially via the media of comedy. It has proved successful with both the critics and the public. South Africa is ready for more of this kind of thing.⁹

More mixed cast productions were to follow, such as the poignant story of the Coloured boy Willy, who befriends an escaped Italian prisoner-of-war in *MY FRIEND ANGELO* (1986). Among the few Black performers who played a significant role in a single play during this period was Nomsa Nene, as Maggie the domestic servant, in John Burch's *THE SENTIMENTALIST* (1986). The plot focuses on the relationship between artist Peter Ryneveld (played by Arnold Vosloo), and Maggie, who is the only person Ryneveld allows at his deathbed. *CHOPSTICKS* (1984), with an all-Coloured cast, and *WEB OF PERSUASION* (1985) with an Indian cast, are further examples of single plays that acknowledge the presence of people other than White in mainstream South African society during the tri-cameral period of national politics. (cf. Chapter Four). *CHOPSTICKS*, however, received a mixed reception from White viewers, a number of whom, according to Manuel Correia, complained about the racial composition of the cast:

About 60% of those who complained were English speaking. It is understood that most callers objected to the fact that TV-1 allowed coloureds on its screen.¹⁰

Single race dramas, whether they be all-Coloured or all-White still fell within the pattern of apartheid in their accommodation of separate so-called population

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The Star, Tonight Supplement, Johannesburg, 7/9/83, p. 1.

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Correia, J. Manuel, "Racist Calls Flood SABC," Sunday Times, 27/10/84.

groups. Moreover, these dramas continued to evade the central issue of racial inter-action within a South African context.

The early eighties, also marked the beginning of the period when increasing numbers of single plays were being shot away from the studios of Auckland Park, which meant that the producer could keep bureaucratic eyes away from the production until the last possible moment. Furthermore, the producer could choose the ground on which to have a confrontation, if challenged, with the funding authority. In the studio, the chances of extending moral and social frontiers are less likely to occur with the studio linked by monitors to administrative and executive personnel, who could intervene at any point during the production process.

During the period under review, overseas television companies were also shooting single plays in South Africa that not merely included people of colour in the cast, but struck at the very core of the race classification laws of the country. For instance, in 1982, the BBC filmed in Cape Town a social drama entitled, JACK AND STELLA, based on the true story of a White South African policeman (played by Bill Flynn) who lived with a Coloured woman (Jana Cilliers). The story begins in the 1950's when Jack, as a young policeman started living with Stella, who worked at a local cafe. As a result of the relationship, Jack left the police force and joined the railways. The story climaxes with Stella's re-classification as White in 1981.

5.2. AVOIDING 'UNDESIRABLE' DRAMA.

Television playwriting will flourish best in an atmosphere of freedom both in choice of subject and in matters of style.

To narrow the confines within which writers are allowed to work -- no matter whether the pressures are those of politics, commerce or organised campaigns -- cannot fail to have an adverse effect on the quality of TV drama.¹¹

The television service of the SABC became subject to the provisions of the Publications Act on 1 May 1984. However, in the light of 'the SABC's own strict code of conduct' the Directorate of Publications has exempted most SABC programmes from the Act, and at present only feature films (shown on television) are not exempted.¹² It is this 'strict code of conduct' which the local television dramatist encounters when he/she submits work to the SABC. It amounts to the Publications Act being applied internally by bureaucrats within the Corporation. A major concern of the dramatist in South Africa, however, is the subjective interpretation that is often given to the provisions and terms of the relevant censorship legislation, couched, as they are, in generalities that even lawyers and judges have difficulty in defining words such as, 'undesirable,' with any degree of certainty and unanimity.

The difficulty of interpreting aspects of the Publications Act is confirmed by the former Director of Publications, Dr Braam Coetzee, who says that the various committees under his directorate, and the Publications Appeal Board, have to examine the provisions of the Act within the context of changing social attitudes, norms and codes.¹³ While the wording of the Act has not changed during the

11

Brandt, G., (ed.) British Television Drama, Methuen, London, 1986, p. 30.

12

MacMillan, P. R., Censorship and Public Morality, Gower, 1983, p. 4.

13

The Star, Johannesburg, 10/2/86, p. 2.

past 16 years, attitudes, mores and norms are subject to constant social and ideological pressures. Consequently the dramatist in a period of rapid socio-political change, as has occurred in South Africa during the past decade, is decidedly hamstrung by legislation which has not moved with the times. Acknowledging the problem, Dr Coetzee says the censors have difficulty in dealing with these realities, especially when subjects are brought before them which may be regarded as 'undesirable.'

In respect of stage plays, South Africa does not have a system of pre-production censorship, unless of course the play is well known to the Directorate of Publications beforehand, in which case, it may impose certain restrictions on its performance. (The Publications Act provides for three autonomous bodies, namely, the Directorate of Publications, which is the administrative wing, the publications committees, which are first level decision making structures, and the Publications Appeal Board (or, PAB), which decides on those matters which have been brought on appeal against the decisions of the committees. There is no avenue of appeal to the Supreme Court, though reviews against the PAB may be heard by three judges of the Supreme Court, where should it be found that the PAB had acted mala fide the Supreme Court would then decide whether a publication or film is undesirable).¹⁴

The Directorate relies purely on public complaints which are then investigated by members of a committee. For instance, in response to complaints regarding the MILLIE JACKSON SHOW in 1983, the censors demanded the excision of

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Van Rooyen, J.C.W., Censorship in South Africa, Juta, 1987, p. 6.

twenty expletives. The current practice, however, has led to several anomalies and absurdities. For instance, the Directorate permitted Maishe Maponya's forceful double-bill, *DIRTY WORK* and *GANGSTERS*, to be staged at the Market Theatre's experimental venue, *The Laager*, in 1985, but banned a presentation in the township of the more militant of the two plays, namely, *DIRTY WORK*.

Clearly the present volatile atmosphere in the townships, which signifies a low-level revolution, is considered to be an unsafe venue for a play which shows, in dynamic theatrical action, a black poet being tortured to death by security policemen.¹⁵

According to Dr Coetzee, the task of the Directorate is to balance the interests of the scriptwriter against the needs and requirements of the community.¹⁶ However, if a court of law finds it difficult to define with any coherence terms, such as 'undesirable,' 'seditious,' 'objectionable,' and 'obscene,' how much more problematic is it for the legally untrained mind of members of the committees. The inability of courts of law to define these terms with any uniform clarity has led several Western countries to do away with pre-production censorship of plays, as in the United Kingdom, where up until 1967, the Lord Chamberlain had absolute power in deciding whether a play should be 'presented for hire.'

Decisions affecting the cultural life of the citizens of a plural society such as South Africa, will always be problematic when appointment to the committees of

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Ackerman, Antony, "Prejudicial to the Safety of the State: Censorship and the Theatre in South Africa," *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol 28, 1987, London, p. 55.

16

The Star, Johannesburg, 7/9/83, p. 1.

the Directorate of Publications are made by a racially determined minority government. Notwithstanding the representation of people from different language and cultural groups on the committees, the members are nevertheless constrained by the existing censorship legislation, which was passed not by a democratically elected government based on universal franchise, but by a White minority government.

In the immediate post 1987 General Election period, when the government attempted to 'tighten up' on certain legislation, including the Group Areas Act, which was being disregarded by people of colour moving into White areas, such as Hillbrow, there were similar attempts to apply the Publications Act more vigorously. According to Dr Coetzee, the need to 'tighten up' on the application of the Publications Act had been the result of 'persistent complaints' that the Directorate of Publications and the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Stoffel Botha had received from members of the public. While this may indicate that a section of the public is offended by what it sees on the screen and stage, it does not necessarily signify a majority opinion. Often complaints are based not on what people actually see, but on what they read about being staged or screened.

Regular theatre-goers in South Africa, albeit a minority and mainly White middle-class, can be regarded, in terms of the range of plays they support, as being fairly sophisticated, and, one would imagine, not prone to reporting 'undesirable' aspects of a play to the Directorate of Publications. However, the submission of only one written complaint by a member of a theatre audience, who, for instance, may object to the sight of a naked body, or take exception to a political stance, could result in an investigation by the Directorate, and possible banning of the production.

'Undesirable' is the catchword, and it applies to anything that offends or might offend public morals or religious feelings, or anything that brings any section of the population into ridicule or contempt; or, anything that is harmful to the relations between any sections of the population, and anything that "is prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare, or the peace and good order." ¹⁷ Minister Botha conceded that many of the complaints received by the Directorate had come from a number of churches, who had expressed concern about the 'onslaught on the country's morals,' and were particularly unhappy about swear words, blasphemy, violence and perverted sex in movies and videos.

¹⁸ According to the Minister:-

The disturbing fact that the Western world was being swamped by a steadily growing wave of permissiveness, and that this had become increasingly prevalent in South Africa as well, was causing grave concern in responsible quarters.

While there may have been good cause to take action against some or all of the videos and movies referred to by the minister, the principle behind censorship in South Africa, during the period under review, is that it has relied heavily upon ideological and subjective prescription. Although public morality is not defined in the Publications Act, the Directorate of Publications has arrogated to itself the role of enforcing a selected morality through its actions, based largely on

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Ackerman, Antony, "Prejudicial to the Safety of the State: Censorship and the Theatre in South Africa," *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol 28, 1977, London, pp. 55 - 60.

18

Ibid.

19

Ibid.

Calvinistic Christian principles. Instead of evincing public opinion through market research or scientifically conducted opinion surveys, the State relies on the subjective opinions and judgements of those members represented on the publications committees, as well as the input of a number of outside bodies, individuals and pressure groups, such as churches and womens' institutes.

At the very least, matters affecting morality, should be the subject of rigorous public debate by mature minds of divergent opinions, in order to arrive at a rational and, hopefully, a more democratic point of view, which in turn, could be the subject of further public evaluation in the light of changing socio-political circumstances. Morality should not be a facet of state legislation. When politicians, however, enter the debate on matters of morality, they must expect their motives to be questioned. Thus, when minister Botha, acting on complaints from an unquantifiable sample of the public, attempts to 'safeguard' their particular value system and ideology, (which invariably connects with that of the political fortunes of the ruling National Party government), by instructing the Directorate of Publications to consider amending the Publications Act, or, if necessary to frame an entirely new one, his motives smack of political expediency. Especially, when they follow in the wake of the 1987 General Election, which saw the governing party suffer severe setbacks in former Transvaal strongholds, and the prospect of imminent by-elections in the same province. These steps, however, were eventually considered unnecessary by Dr Coetzee, who believed that the efficacy of the present Act could be more vigorously applied.²⁰

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Coetzee, Braam, Director of Publications Control Directorate, Interviewed by Andre le Roux, NETWORK, SABC TV-1, October 1987.

The reaction of the film industry to the 'tightening up' process, was met with a certain amount of cynicism, as the director of Ster-Kinekor, Mr Robert Howey said that "the latest display of moral concern by politicians coincided with the by-election in places such as Standerton."²¹ In fact, three crucial by-elections were held in March 1988 - all three seats in the House of Assembly having been taken from the National Party by the right-wing Conservative Party in the May 6 General Election of 1987 - and the government was making an all-out effort to regain them. Mr Howey said, although the threats were just words, the direct line of communication between the Directorate of Publications and the Minister, Mr Botha, meant that he expected the words to have some effect. However, he hoped that the Publications Appeal Board, which functioned along the lines of a court, would "carry on regardless."²²

It is not uncommon for governments and states to attempt to limit the freedom of expression of playwrights and performers. The first statute in the English-speaking world directly concerned with control over the stage was passed in the reign of King James 1 of England. The aim of the Act was:-

to restrain the abuses of players and for preventing and avoiding of the great abuse of the Holy name of God in Stage Plays, Enterludes, May-Games, Shews and such like.

21

Garden, Greg, *The Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, 23/3/87, p. 7.

22

Ibid.

23

Barber, M. Elizabeth, "Dramatic Censorship," Oxford Companion to the Theatre, O.U.P., London, 1957, p. 194.

Even in those times, changing socio-political orders were reflected in the degree of censorship imposed by the ruling authority. For instance, during the Tudor period, the Master of the Kings Revels, appointed by King Henry VII to supervise the entertainments of the Courts and to ensure that they were carried out in an orderly fashion and without offence to the king, was one of the earliest attempts to suppress so-called 'undesirable' aspects in a drama. Yet, censorship during this period was relatively mild compared with the blanket ban imposed by the Puritans on theatrical productions during the 'dark ages' of British theatre.

In South Africa, during the period 1976 to 1991, there have been moderate fluctuations in the censor's attitude towards certain taboo subjects, such as sex and nudity on stage and screen. Reporting on a more tolerant attitude in these areas, the Finance Week in 1981 said that:-

Cinemagoers in South Africa seem suddenly subjected to a noticeable increase of sex on celluloid, an infiltration of language hitherto disguised by polite screen hiccups, and even an appearance of bookstore material previously judged 'not suitable.'

The change has come about because of an upsurge in appeals by film distributors against cuts, also because of a growing tolerance and sophistication among the country's movie fans.²⁴

According to the chairman of the Publications Appeal Board, Professor Kobus van Rooyen, fundamental societal norms do not seem to change that readily. "What does change, however, is individual perspective, and this has an influence

24

Finance Week, Johannesburg, 28/6/81, p. 9.

on tolerance." ²⁵ Among the reasons he cites for a broadening of outlook have been the introduction of television, the erection of large theatre complexes in major cities and a substantial increase in home video entertainment. ²⁶

The current period from February 2, 1990, has been the most relaxed era of censorship since 1948, and contrasts sharply with the one that came in the wake of the 1987 General Election, when Dr Coetzee, created a serious dilemma for the dramatist by stating that:

The important thing is to allow the scriptwriter a lot of freedom to show the essential realities of today without stepping out of line by offending the balanced, average, community viewer in his beliefs, in his norms, in his codes, or, to put it in a nutshell, not to exceed the tolerance level of the average community member. ²⁷

However, for a dramatist who has to work within such constrained parameters, namely, not to offend the beliefs, norms and codes of the average viewer, would be well advised to blinker his/her vision before writing anything that could be construed as remotely provocative or controversial. Although the Publications Act has not changed in more than a decade, the interpretation has varied according to changing norms and circumstances. With reference to the prevailing circumstances in 1983, Mr Vernon Woods, chairman of one of the Film Viewing Committees of the Directorate of Publications, concedes the subjective approach to censorship.

25

Van Rooyen, J.C.W., Censorship in South Africa, Juta, 1987, p. 17

26

Ibid.

27

Coetzee, Braam, Director of Publications Control Directorate, Interviewed by Andre le Roux, SABC TV-1, NETWORK, October, 1987.

We all have our hang-ups. Mine are bad language and excessive violence. Providing they are not prurient, nudity and non-pornographic sex don't bother me. ²⁸

He further concedes that the term 'harmful to public morals' is a generalisation which is impossible to define. A major concern of Woods is "protecting children and those unable to defend themselves." ²⁹ (cf. SABC Broadcasting Research Department survey on violence on TV later in this chapter).

Amended legislation in 1978, and the application of taking the factor of 'likely viewer' into consideration, formed the basis of many reversals of previously banned films, together with the imposition of place restrictions. For instance, *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* was passed in 1983 subject to an age restriction of 2 - 21 and limited to smaller cinemas where 'art films' were normally shown. Since 2 February 1990, a less rigid political censorship has been evidenced in that publications, such as the ANC's *MAYIBUYE*, which is strongly critical of the apartheid system and previously banned, have become freely available. Many of the restrictive media curbs imposed during the mid-eighties, were also repealed. The fluctuations in South African censorship, during the period of review, have also been reflected in the public style and image of the three men who have occupied the chairmanship of the Publications Appeal Board.

28

Draper, Ralph, "Busy Time for Censor's Beady Eyes," *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, 24/9/83, p. 9.

29

Ibid.

The first chairman, Mr Justice Snyman, whose term of office during the seventies, was broadly characterised by his uncompromising decisions to uphold the banning on a wide range of literature, which angered many writers and dramatists. (For instance, the novel, *MAGERSFONTEIN O MAGERSFONTEIN*, was banned because it might offend 'the average' reader. Its literary values, however, were recognised and it was awarded the Hertzog Prize for Literature in 1979). Snyman was followed by his vice-chairman, Professor Kobus van Rooyen in 1980, who remained in office for a decade, and whose judgements were often a more reasonable application of "a potentially draconian piece of legislation."³⁰ Although many of van Rooyen's decisions reflected an acknowledgement that subjects such as violence, sex, religion, patriotism and racism could be portrayed and questioned in works of literature and drama, he nevertheless found the American television series, *ROOTS*, to be 'undesirable.'

One of van Rooyen's most notable gestures to tolerance was made in 1988 when he and the PAB approved the Richard Attenborough film *CRY FREEDOM*, leaving the government in the embarrassing position of having to by-pass its own censorship machine, and ban it under the provisions of the prevailing Emergency Regulations. Although the third chairman, minister Louis Pienaar, who assumed office in April 1990, has shown more tolerance towards formerly hostile political literature, he has adopted a conservative attitude towards morality. For instance, in June 1990, he upheld the banning of an edition of the magazine *Scope* because

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Strode, Jane, "Censorship and the Struggle for Tolerance," *The Daily News*, Durban, 9/2/91, p. 6.

the front cover photograph of the models's bathing suit 'left a large part of her breasts and the valley between them visible.'³¹ (Pienaar lost the censorship battle with *Scope* in 1991, when it became a soft-porn magazine revealing topless models minus stars and nipple caps).

During the eighties when the National Party government, through its appointed agents on the Directorate of Publications sought to impose its ideological imprimatur on creative endeavour within South Africa, the African National Congress, showed no less determination to prescribe what plays were worthy of public support outside the borders of the country. The ANC in exile exercised formidable influence in theatre circles, both in the United States and Britain, where it could often dictate what plays with South African themes or casts could be presented in those countries without the production coming under anti-apartheid protest and picketing. (cf. Chapter Four) For instance, the ANC was opposed to the all-Black South African cast of Samuel Beckett's *WAITING FOR GODOT*, which included John Kani and Winston Ntshona, that was to have played to a New York audience, on the grounds that the production did not have anything to contribute to 'the struggle.' According to Salaelo Maredi, the ANC's consultant on theatre productions in New York, anything involving South African Blacks has to be scrutinised for 'exploitation.' Black playwright, Welcome Msomi, living in New York, whose production of *UMABATHA*, was picketed during its New York season, says, "whatever the ANC says now stands as the authoritative word."³²

31

Ibid.

32

Haysom, Cheetah, *The Star*, Johannesburg, 12/8/86, p. 6.

The dramatist alone can make a limited stand against censorship, but bureaucracies and governments are more likely to take note when the public at large voice their opposition to infringements of their freedom. For instance, the strategy of mass action by the ANC has shown itself to be a potent method of bringing major concerns to the attention of the government, and a means of eliciting concessions. However, the passivity and acquiescence of the White electorate towards the wide ranging censorship laws, means that major changes to these regulations are unlikely to occur under the present political dispensation. According to film maker Linda Vermaas:

The public is not willing to take a stand on an issue or to stick their necks out. We might be taking a hard-hitting approach and asking direct questions about a topic we know people feel strongly about, but when we confront them, we get an apathetic reaction - they are so scared to speak out.

Without public support, however, the dramatist is a lone crusader opposing the might of bureaucracy, and may as well be tilting at windmills. This is not to decry the efforts of Hofmeyr, Cundill, van Rensburg, and others, who have pushed the frontiers of political acceptance as far as they believed possible in areas of their work. In several of their plays, such as *THE OUTCAST*, *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*, *HEROES* and *PEOPLE LIKE US*, they revealed an enlightenment ahead of the bureaucrats who have funded and controlled their production output. Yet, their efforts could have been assisted by a more vociferous public

demanding that what is being shown has not been tampered with, or the truth of their vision in any way distorted.

5.3. SELF-CENSORSHIP: CONSENSUS WITHIN THE CODE.

One of the retarding problems in the local feature film and television industries is that script writers skirt the hard core issues because they know the market they're writing for, and producers have to tread a careful political path if they want to get their money back."³⁴

Censorship of television drama relies on language that is as insecure as that which applies to stage drama. In the case of television, 'good taste' and 'public sensibility' are the watchwords in the bureaucrat's arsenal that are used against 'offending' dramas. The English Drama Department, on one level, is anxious to create the semblance of artistic freedom by suggesting to dramatists that they should feel no constraint in expressing a chosen subject matter; in other words, to write freely without regard to any 'set of regulations.' However, the tension arises when the Department is required to evaluate the text on levels other than cost and artistic merit, as in terms of the institution's ideological responsibility to 'good taste,' 'public sensibility,' and 'political responsibility,' which, in effect, is a 'responsibility' to the government hierarchy that the institution supports. Therefore a writer, aware of the institution's 'responsibility,' and anxious for approval, instinctively resorts to self-censorship.

Self-censorship in this country is a national pastime. We've been raised under the umbrella of self-censorship. It's a shame because there is so much creativity suppressed by that process.³⁵

34

Bold, Edgar, The Star, Tonight Supplement, 3/9/81, p. 1.

35

Vermaas, Linda, Southern Screen and Stage, Vol. 2, No. 7, November 1989, Johannesburg, p. 5.

According to Clive Rodel, Organiser of English Drama, TV-1, the Corporation is no more or less censorial than most western broadcasting organisations, except the SABC is more sensitive to national political issues, particularly those concerning race.³⁶ Behind this ostensibly mild statement is the core debate which has engaged South Africa's political energies for many decades, and particularly since the National Party government came to power in 1948, namely, the question of race. Practically every major South African writer in English has contributed to this debate, and therefore to remove it from the populist drama medium, is to further devalue the medium. To avoid debate of this major issue through the medium of drama could also be regarded as a derogation of the aims of the SABC's charter, namely, to entertain, to educate, and to inform the viewer.

However, an evasion of this 'reponsibility' is evidenced in the SABC's authoritarian approach in respect of the many dramatised South African stories which it has refused to screen, such as *COUNTRY LOVERS* and *SIX FEET OF THE COUNTRY*, that illuminate and focus attention on inter-cultural relationships among fellow South Africans. While ignored by the SABC, these two serialised adaptations by Nadine Gordimer were screened on television in Britain, Germany, Canada, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the United States. In addition, the SABC has excluded the works of other leading South African authors whose dramatisations have been seen by millions of overseas viewers; among them, poet, Adam Small; novelist, Hilda Bernstein;

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Rodel, Clive, Organiser English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

and Athol Fugard's MASTER HAROLD AND THE BOYS and BOESMAN AND LENA.

Even after Gordimer's COUNTRY LOVERS and the seven part serial, SIX FEET OF THE COUNTRY, were unbanned by the Directorate of Publications and released to limited audiences at local film festivals, the SABC remained unmoved. According to corporation spokesman, Richard Steinman, the reason for not considering SIX FEET OF THE COUNTRY, was the inability of the Corporation to impose a 2 - 18 age restriction enforced by the Directorate.³⁷

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However, both the BBC and ITV cope sensibly and rationally with similar institutional impositions and schedule the screening of adult dramas to late evening when young children are likely to be in bed, and parental control can be exercised over the viewing of older children. While there can be no guarantee that under 18's will not be watching there is an implicit responsibility on the part of parents to determine what is suitable for their children, depending on the child's own level of maturity and intelligence.

However, most of the productions on South African themes, ignored by the SABC, but shown on overseas networks, were about people caught up in situations which put them at variance with the apartheid policies of the South African government. Only CITY LOVERS and COUNTRY LOVERS included scenes of nudity and, on that basis, were scheduled on British television after 21.00. However, the SABC through Steinman maintained, "we are also under the

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The Star, Johannesburg, 7/9/83, p. 1.

control of the Publications Board, and therefore it depends on how suitable the films would be for general viewing." ³⁸ For Steinman to hide behind the Publications Act which applied to all films shown on television after May 1, 1984, is an indictment of an organisation which fails to assert its autonomy and to examine seriously the options which overseas broadcasting institutions make under similar circumstances.

In addition to these two productions, the repertoire of the single play could have been enhanced further by the screening of Adam Small's *THE ORANGE EARTH*; Gordimer's *CHIP OF GLASS RUBY* and *PRAISE*; Bensusan's *MY COUNTRY MY HAT*, and Hilda Bernstein's *DEATH IS PART OF THE PROCESS*. Bernstein's novel was adapted by Alan Plater, one of Britain's leading television dramatists. The exclusion of these productions cannot be justified when examined against the SABC's 'Drama Code,' which aims at promoting drama "that reflects the cultural identity of the 'micro' and 'macro' population spectrum" ³⁹ However, the irony is that while overseas networks, such as ITV, the BBC and NBC, which have no obligation to promote South Africa's 'macro' or 'micro' cultural identities, have nevertheless broadcast these dramatisations.

The unbanning of *COUNTRY LOVERS* and *CITY LOVERS*, was seen as a landmark in the South African film industry, with film producer, Chris Davies, saying at the time that:

38

Ibid.

39

SABC Drama Code drawn up in 1987.

This means that South African film producers are freed at last from self-censorship, the withering process by which we had to discard many adult and worthwhile projects because we knew they would never make it onto a South African screen.⁴⁰

Davies added that he and many of his colleagues in the film industry were "greatly encouraged by this wise ruling by the Appeal Board," and he believed it marked the coming of age of the South African film industry.⁴¹ These two dramatisations, which deal with love across the colour line and indict the police in their imposition of the Immorality Act, brought together two of the country's leading directors in Barney Simon (CITY LOVERS) and Manie van Rensburg (COUNTRY LOVERS), as well as several leading performers, namely, Joe Stewardson, Brian O'Shaughnessy, Naomi Nene and Ryno Hattingh. (During the period when the Immorality Act was on the Statute books, repealed in 1983, its insidious effects on the lives of ordinary citizens received persistent and critical attention from several leading writers, notably Fugard's STATEMENTS AFTER AN ARREST UNDER THE IMMORALITY ACT).

Even during the post-repeal period, Gordimer's films are still considered to be pertinent studies of personal relationships within the context of threatening external factors. A further argument in support of them having a rightful place in the repertoire of South African English television drama, is that in terms of the Drama Code, the SABC aims:

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Ibid.

41

Ibid.

To produce dramas, drama series and co-productions of outstanding quality for local as well as the international market, which reflects the cultural identity of the 'micro' and 'macro' population spectrum, and enriches the spiritual and cultural experiences of its viewers and their vision of the future.⁴²

In applying the Drama Code to *COUNTRY LOVERS* and *SIX FEET OF THE COUNTY* it could be suggested that they have failed to meet the criterion of being dramas of 'outstanding quality' on account of the inadequate adaptation to the television medium. Gordimer's strict adherence to the structure of her original short stories, a literary environment made real in the minds of the reader, gave the television adaptations a stilted and unnatural aspect.

The films are heavy-handed and one placed. The dialogue seems stilted and unnatural. Performances remain performances; there is no sense of characters being real humans.⁴³

However, the many overseas networks that screened these adaptations did not deem such criteria sufficient reason to decline broadcast. Moreover, in the light of other mediocre dramatic material presented on the SABC, it would not be misplaced to assume that the real reason for their omission from the schedules is political. In respect of the nude scene in *SIX FEET OF THE COUNTRY*, this could have been cut without undue damage to the overall content of the production. Although the SABC Drama Code was formulated three years after

42

Drama Code supplied to author by Henk Hugo, Production Head: Television Drama, Auckland Park, 7/8/87.

43

Garden, Greg, "Gordimer: Flawed Films," *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, 23/3/83, p. 8.

the premiere of the Gordimer films, at the time of writing, no further consideration has been given by the Corporation to their possible screening.

Within the context of the Drama Code, it can be argued that *SIX FEET OF THE COUNTRY* and *COUNTRY LOVERS* not only 'enriches the spiritual and cultural experience' of the viewer, but also presents a valid 'vision of the future.' The film deals with a White married couple who move to a farm outside Johannesburg in search of peace only to find themselves enmeshed in a dilemma exacerbated by the racist laws of the country, resulting in the wife siding with a Black labourer, Petrus, against her husband, consequently destroying the marriage. The images of this drama with the White Afrikaner farmer embracing a naked Black farm girl reflects powerfully on aspects of South Africa's 'micro' and 'macro' cultural experiences.

In terms of the Publications Act, nudity as such is not unlawful or 'undesirable.' It depends on 'how' it is portrayed in a dramatic work, and this presents the writer with a major dilemma, because the 'how' is evaluated according to subjective criteria of 'good taste' and 'public sensibility.' The only certainty about nudity is that it constitutes an offence when it occurs in a public place, which is normally sufficient grounds for a finding of public indecency, in terms of the various civic by-laws, as well as parliamentary and provincial statutes. While White nudity on television poses serious problems for a drama or documentary producer, the Black female form is frequently and generously displayed in drama series such as, *SHAKA ZULU*. The double standards applied to White and Black females in this regard are generally rationalised in terms of their respective historical and cultural backgrounds.

The debate on nudity in drama in most Western countries is no longer a major issue, as it was in the late sixties and seventies. In South Africa, however, a nude scene, albeit integral to the plot, can still convey the potential to shock an audience. Yet, if drama is to retain an integrity and honesty of purpose in illuminating the human condition, it cannot be tamed because its revelations may be shocking to the viewer's sensibilities. According to British stage and television dramatist and barrister, John Mortimer:

No healthy person should expect to pass through life without being shocked and offended at least three times a day, and that shock is a perfectly legitimate and indeed necessary function of the television dramatist.⁴⁴

Unlike its British counterpart, the South African English single play has never challenged the censors on the question of nudity, whereas the BBC single plays, presented under the generic title, Play for Today, gained a reputation for tackling controversial themes, including homosexuality and lesbianism, in which the nude human form, both male and female, have been portrayed. (While both the cinema and M-Net impose either age restrictions or schedule late night viewing, with parental control, in respect of nude scenes in features, the SABC remains in a time warp insofar as liberalising its policy on this matter).

5.4. SINGULARLY NON-VIOLENT.

[Compared with many of the imported American drama series, such as THE A-TEAM, where violence is structural to the plot, the single play has shown, with

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Mortimer, John, Broadcast, No 10 1073, 1/9/80, London, pp. 10 -15.

exceptions, to be remarkably conservative in this respect. The violence in THE OUTCAST, for instance, though gruesome is not gratuitous. On hearing of Dial's adulterous relationship with his wife, Hannah, Adam comes out of the forest bearing his axe. He confronts Dial:

ADAM: Is it true? (DIAL FREEZES) ... Is it true about you and Hannah?

DIAL GAPES.

LORRIE'S FACE.

HANNAH'S FACE.

ADAM RAISES THE AXE, HIS FACE A TWISTED, TORMENTED MASK.

ADAM: Do you hear what I am asking you?

HANNAH MOVES TOWARDS ADAM.

HANNAH: Adam

ADAM REACHES OUT AS IF TO CLASP HER BY THE THROAT AND BRING DOWN THE AXE WITH THE OTHER.

DIAL: Yes, it's true.

ADAM STARES AT DIAL.

DIAL STARES AT ADAM.

ADAM'S MOUTH CONTORTS INTO AN ANIMAL SNARL.

LORRIE SCREAMS.

ADAM HURLS ONE AXE AT DIAL.

DIAL DUCKS BELOW THE OPEN BONNET. THE AXE MISSES HIM BY INCHES.

DIAL PULLS A KNIFE FROM HIS BELT.

HANNAH HURLS HERSELF BETWEEN THE TWO MEN.

HANNAH: (SCREAMS) No!

DIALS MOVES OUT FROM BEHIND THE CAR,
KNIFE HELD FOR THROWING.

DIAL: Don't be crazy, Boet, we're leaving.

ADAM RAISES HIS AXE AND STEPS TOWARDS
HANNAH.

DIAL: I'll kill you, Boet!

ADAM SHOVES HANNAH ASIDE AND FLINGS HIS
SECOND AXE.

AT THE SAME MOMENT DIAL THROWS HIS KNIFE.

IN SLOW MOTION HANNAH SCREAMS.

THE KNIFE IS EMBEDDED IN ADAM'S THROAT.
ADAM COLLAPSES.

DIAL IS LYING BY THE CAR, THE AXE EMBEDDED
IN HIS CHEST.

While not suggesting that writers of the single play should depict violence merely to create excitement and impact, the restraints imposed upon writers dealing with violence as a motivating factor within the context of a drama, should be re-evaluated within changing socio-political circumstances. For instance, the 'necklacing' of the policeman in Mbongeni's SARAFINA is a particularly horrifying scene, but is understood within the context of this method of political killing, commonly unknown to South African audiences of more than a decade ago. Furthermore, in recognising that violence in South Africa has become endemic, a viewer cannot hope to escape its presence in genres which are reflective of that society, such as drama, the documentary or daily news bulletin.

Notwithstanding the period, 1976 to 1991, being one of the most socially and politically unstable periods in the country's history, the effects of the on-going violence, particularly in the townships, have been largely shielded from the gaze

of White viewers in respect of the English single play. However, the Afrikaans television single play, *MOEDERS EN DOGTERS* (1988) came close to reflecting on this reality when it looked obliquely at how the township violence in the Cape peninsula during the late seventies, affected the lives of members of a White family and their Coloured maid.

Generally, the bulk of the violence to which most South African viewers on TV-1 are exposed is derived from the American comic book, with shoot-outs, car chases, ending in spectacular collisions, and regular bruising fisticuffs being the predictable order of the plot. Although the portrayal of violence in television is an emotive and highly vexed subject, it needs to be treated rationally. Conflict in drama is often resolved in physical combat ending in death, as for instance, in Shakespeare's *MACBETH*. Shakespeare was not squeamish in his use of violence and several of his plays have examples of scenes of intense violence, such as, the gouging out of Gloucester's eyes in *KING LEAR*; or, the man in *TITUS ANDRONICUS* whose hand is cut off on stage; even the suffocation of Desdemona by Othello is a violent murder committed in full view of the audience. Should these plays be banned, or these scenes expunged from the text because they contain scenes of violence? Surely not!

Violence in classical Greek drama, although not shown on stage, is narrated in graphic detail, as for instance, the self-inflicted blinding of Oedipus, the gruesome death of the princess in *MEDEA*, and the mutilation of Pentheus in *THE BACCHAE*. Although harrowing for an audience to experience, even aurally, these scenes are regarded as integral to the plot. Other stories of Greek Mythology include scenes of cannibalism and castration, while the Bible includes

many stories of violence, including people being put to death by stoning and crucifixion.

The argument in favour of a more rational and consistent attitude towards violence in drama, is not to be confused with granting licence to all forms of gratuitous violence as, for instance, in so-called Snuff movies, where people are put to death for the gratuitous pleasure of perverted voyeurs, or even in 'horror' movies where violence is endemic, and often perpetrated primarily to evoke a strong emotional response. It is simply to suggest that if drama is to hold 'a mirror up to nature' it must be able to reflect an image that is not distorted. Why should the television dramatist be circumscribed when the television news reporter is able to present his/her images of nature's harsh realities in bulletins that go out daily during prime time? Because violence in television drama is not a direct representation of violence in real life, greater discretion could be exercised in its usage.

Unlike real violence, its internal rules and constraints govern what it 'means' in any particular context to the observer, rather than to the combatants themselves. Its significance in a television fiction is that it externalizes people's motives and status, makes visible their unstated relationships, and personalizes impersonal social conflicts between, for example, dominant and subordinate groups, law and anarchy, youth and age. It is never a mere imitation of real behaviour.⁴⁵

However, scenes of violence portrayed on the close-up screen of television can be disturbing and hence the question of treatment is relevant, as it is on stage, where distance between audience and actor creates a sense of aesthetic detachment.

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Fiske, J., Hartley, J., Reading Television, Methuen, London, 1978, pp. 34 -35.

Scenes of violence on television, if presented in vivid close-up detail, can create more impact and a greater sense of realism than that achieved on a conventional stage, which places a responsibility on the director to ensure that scenes of violence are not treated gratuitously. Conversely, bringing a threatening reality too close to a theatre audience can destroy that aesthetic distance and be a chilling experience, particularly when the separation between actor and audience disappears, as in many experimental venues that have no clearly defined geographical acting space.

The SABC, reacting to the directive it received from former State President, P.W. Botha, who said in parliament early in 1987, that "violence on TV should be eliminated as far as possible," established a Task Group to examine the question of violence on television programmes.⁴⁶ The Task Group, comprising eleven SABC senior personnel, based many of their findings on a similar set of guidelines produced by the BBC that same year. In respect of television drama the Production Head, TV Drama, Henk Hugo, said the Group recommended ways of reducing the impact of violence on locally produced drama, and that scenes of violence in imported dramas would be more rigorously censored.⁴⁷

The Task Group's recommendations were accepted by the SABC Board in December 1987. The SABC, however, had begun acting on the State President's directives even before that date, as in August 1987, the Minister responsible for

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The Citizen, Johannesburg, 25/8/87, p. 4.

47

Hugo, Henk, Production Head: Television Drama, Interview with author, Auckland Park, 7/8/87.

Broadcasting, Mr Alwyn Schlebusch, told the House of Assembly that scenes of violence were cut from the imported drama series, MIAMI VICE and from the documentary MOUNTBATTEN "in terms of government policy to reduce violence on the screen." He added that a "substantial decrease in violence on TV was non-negotiable." 48

In respect of guidelines for the production of locally produced drama, the Task Group acknowledged the necessity for drama to reflect honestly on important problems, and that violence is part of life, and that in drama, where the conflict between good and evil occurs, the aspect of violence is often prevalent. However, during the development phase of a production, the areas where violence occurs in the script must be 'declared' by the author in discussion with the Script Editor and Drama Manager. If there is any doubt on a particular issue concerning a scene involving violence, a 'higher authority must be consulted.' Furthermore, in planning a drama, the following points are to be taken into consideration:-

- .. Who is the violent character?
- .. Is it the intention that the viewer identifies with the perpetrator?
- .. Does it appear that the perpetrator enjoyed the violence?
- .. What is the reaction of the victim?
- How long does the violence last?
- .. What are the consequences of the violence?
- .. Can the violence be implied without being shown?
- .. Is the violence incidental or integral to the plot?
- .. If not integral, is it merely there to beef up the action?
- .. Does the violence contribute towards making the world a less violent place? 49

48

The Citizen, Johannesburg, 25/8/87, p. 4.

49

Van Vuuren, D.P., "Violence on Television: Curbing a Creeping Villain," SABC Publication, Johannesburg, 1988, p. 19. (These guidelines are now published in the "Guide for Writers of Television Drama," compiled by Sandra Kotze).

However, by subjecting the dramatist's work to this kind of bureaucratic inquisition, merely discourages the author from pursuing themes of violence in dramatic works offered to the SABC. Owing to a lack of empirical data in South Africa of the effects of violence on television, the Broadcasting Research Department of the SABC was requested in 1987 by the Corporation's own Task Group to undertake research into this area. In addition to a review of available literature on the subject, the Department launched four projects, two of which were nationwide opinion polls conducted among adults of all race groups, and two were specifically aimed at children, and conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (or, HSRC) on behalf of the SABC. Commenting on the findings of the research into whether the level of aggression among children was influenced by the children's exposure to television viewing, the Head of the Broadcasting Research Department, Dr Daan van Vuuren says that in general terms:

It was found that television viewing was associated with small increases in different types of aggression. However, these increases did not make a significant difference in the average levels of aggression displayed by the total group of pupils on the various aggression scales from year to year. The influence of television on high school pupils was therefore small: a result that coincides with other findings reported in the literature. (McGuire, 1986; Roberts, MacCoby, 1985) ⁵⁰

The experiment conducted on standards four and eight pupils by the Institute for Communication Research of the HSRC (on behalf of the SABC), focussed on the more immediate reactions of children to television violence. Programmes

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Ibid.

expressing pro-social and aggressive behaviour were shown to the pupils, who subsequently took part in group discussions and completed a questionnaire.

Among the main findings of this survey were:-

- a) Scenes of riots were considered to be the most violent and realistic. The close proximity to the South African reality of unrest situations was the most upsetting to the children.
- b) Violent scenes in formats such as animation were not considered to be realistic and elicited very little negative response.
- c) The majority of respondents agreed that the violence used by characters such as McGyver and Mike Hammer, was justifiable and that violence was the only way to solve the problems.
- d) SABC television has a relatively 'tame' diet of violence.
- e) The children (of both sexes, and in both age groups) were of the opinion that the violence in programmes such as MCGYVER and THE A-TEAM does not affect them, but the violence in 'horror' films on video does.⁵¹

Although these findings do not mean that children are unaffected by violence on television, it does give some insight into how they respond to scenes of violence. Apropos television drama, the findings suggest that there is no cause for concern about the levels of violence portrayed, and although scenes of township violence were found to be upsetting, there was no evidence to suggest that such exposure was in any way detrimental.

In correlational studies undertaken for the United States Surgeon General's Report in 1972, it was found that those among a group of 1500 adolescents who

51

Ibid. p. 19.

reported a preference for a high level of violence in television programmes, were always the most aggressive. Robinson and Bachman (1972) concluded "that television violence probably served a reinforcing or a facilitating function for adolescents who were already high in aggression." ⁵² Although the Surgeon General's Report suggests that television violence reliably stimulates aggressive responses in laboratory experiments, the findings are not as convincing as those which derive from field experiments.

While laboratory experiments are well-suited to 'identifying and analysing the operation of underlying mechanisms,' field experiments are more reflective in demonstrating effects of social significance. Thus Steuer, Applefield and Smith's (1971) investigation into the effects of aggressive and neutral television programmes on the behaviour of ten preschoolers in their school environment, found that at the end of eleven sessions, the two groups (five each) had departed significantly from one another in terms of the frequency of interpersonal aggression. They concluded that the child who observed acts of violence on television had become more aggressive than his/her partner who watched neutral fare. ⁵³

In respect of the public opinion polls conducted among South African adults, the data on the White, Coloured and Indian samples were obtained by telephone

52

Liebert, Robert M., Sprafkin, Joyce, The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth, 3rd ed., Pergamon, New York, 1988.

53

Ibid. pp. 137 - 143.

interviews, and those of the Black sample by personal interviews. Among the results of that survey were:-

- a) Sixty eight percent of the White, Coloured and Indian respondents were of the opinion that there was an acceptable amount of, or few, or very few entertainment programmes on SABC TV that contained violence. (The figure for Blacks was 67%)
- b) Of the 30% of the respondents who held the view that there were far too many, or too many entertainment programmes that contained violence, fewer than 5% (except in the case of one programme, namely SHAKA ZULU) felt that these programmes that contained violence should not be broadcast. For the Blacks, SHAKA ZULU was the exception where 19% of the respondents spontaneously mentioned that the programme contained violence and 16% felt that it should not be broadcast.
- c) Zulu and Afrikaans speaking respondents were more worried about violence than other language groups.
- d) According to the perceptions of the public primarily three types of violent scenes could be identified, namely:-
 - physical aggression towards characters and people.
 - physical aggression towards objects and animals.
 - emotional violence, vulgarity and aggressive language.
- e) The majority of the respondents (all races) were of the opinion that it is essential or necessary to use some kind of warning on television that would indicate the amount of violence contained in an entertainment or news programme.
- f) In comparison with the Whites, Coloured and Asians there was a slightly stronger resistance factor among Blacks to violent incidents on SABC news programmes (20% as opposed to 14%). The incidents in the news programmes that were upsetting to the Blacks were the unrest/riots in South Africa (especially necklace murders), accidents (especially motor accidents and dead bodies).
- g) The majority of the respondents (all races) were, however, of the opinion that violent incidents have to be included in news programmes because they reflect the reality.
- h) The results show that the Black viewer has more definite views on the problems of television violence.⁵⁴

Although a small minority of respondents requested that dramas, such as SHAKA ZULU, should not be broadcast because they depict scenes of violence, such people can always exercise their own form of censorship by switching off the drama at the first sign of 'offence.' Such a reaction requires far less effort than getting up and leaving a playhouse or cinema for similar reasons. Arising out of these findings the SABC introduced in 1988 a warning system prior to the broadcast of programmes which contain incidents of violence that could be upsetting to 'sensitive viewers. The news department responded by being more sensitive to the use of scenes of local unrest, necklace murders, as well as car and mini bus accidents.

During the hours when children are likely to be watching television, pro-social programmes have been recommended, while so-called 'adult' programmes are scheduled after 9 pm. Between the years 1981 to 1987, TV-1 registered an average 5,8 violent incidents per hour on the international system of coding violent incidents. However, after the implementation of the above mentioned measures, the figure dropped to 3,3 violent incidents per hour. ⁵⁵

Although the SABC can claim that it has received fewer complaints about violence on television since these measures were introduced in 1987, it has merely cocooned itself and its viewers from the impact of the widespread violence that has raged in many areas throughout the country. While there may be a valid argument that a public utility corporation, such as, the SABC has a

moral responsibility to protect impressionable young minds from exposure to excessive violence, particularly gratuitous violence, the argument does not hold for dramas which are pitched at mature minds, and can be screened after 21.00 hours.

To censor or to discourage dramatists from reflecting critically and imaginatively on the theme of violence in society, through the issuing of official guidelines on the subject, can only lead to a distortion of the social reality that has prevailed in South Africa for several decades. As Horace Newcomb says, "it should no longer be possible to discuss 'violence on television' without recognizing the aesthetic structure within which that violence occurs."⁵⁶ Future generations will glean much of the present age and its socio-political problems from the dramatic fiction and fact that has been written, in much the same way as contemporary society has learned about the Victorian age from the novels of Charles Dickens, or about the Elizabethan age through the works of William Shakespeare.

Future historians, however, may well find perplexing the dichotomous view of South African society presented, on one hand, by the writers of protest theatre with their anger and revolutionary passion and, conversely, the well ordered and sanitized environment reflected in many television studio dramas, transmitted by the SABC during the period under review. In terms of artistic truth and integrity, it cannot be regarded as irresponsible to portray, in dramatic form, scenes of social anger and violence which occur in society on a regular basis. As dramatist, John Mortimer points out;-

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Newcomb, Horace, (ed.), Television: The Critical View, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, p. 493.

Violence is the responsibility of the time and not of television, and if television is put out of focus by censorship it will fail to reflect our age with accuracy and therefore drama will fail as an essential function. It will come, as Hamlet warned, regretfully, 'Tardy off.'⁵⁷

Networks in the United States also clamped down on the portrayal of violence affecting human beings in the late 1970's, resulting in a consequent shift towards the destruction of property, particularly motor vehicles, coupled with an injection of added excitement and action. In the American drama series, MCGYVER, the distinguishing characteristic that separates McGyver from the villain, is his superior skill and dexterity shown in the manner in which he despatches his enemies. The positive attributes of McGyver, which correlate directly with his skill and efficiency, suggest that:

violence does not mar, nor non-violence improve, the attractiveness of the hero.⁵⁸

Violence in television drama enacts social relations rather than personal ones. It takes place between personalised moralities; for instance, good versus bad; efficient versus inefficient; culturally esteemed versus culturally deviant; rather than between individuals per se.⁵⁹

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Mortimer, John, Broadcast, No. 10, 1073, London, 1/9/80, p. 14.

58

Gerbner, G., "Cultural Indicators: The Case of Violence in Television Drama," *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science*, Vol 338, 1970, pp. 69 - 81.

59

Ibid.

The SABC is not alone in its concern about the effects of violence on television; both the BBC and the IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority) in Britain, among other overseas broadcasting services, have voiced their disquiet. For instance, the BBC's point of view apropos the responsibility of the writer is given in the following statement,

No writer, however, distinguished, has the God-given right to confront his audience with a work of fiction in a form that most people will regard as unsuitable for transmission. The BBC has to retain the editorial right to control and monitor what it is broadcasting in order to make sure that the interests of the audience are borne in mind. As publisher and editor the BBC has to exercise its prerogative, which is to edit. This duty involves a balanced three-fold responsibility: to subject matter, to craft, and to the audience.

There are, however, no conclusive studies to show that violence in television drama corrupts and encourages viewers to commit crime. Although there are recorded instances where a person has modelled a crime on a violent incident portrayed on television, these tend to be isolated cases. For instance, an 11 year old American boy was arrested for housebreaking, and admitted that he learned the technique of burglary by seeing how it was done on television, or 15 year old Ronald Zamora from Miami who killed his next door neighbour during a burglary, and his defence attorney claimed that his client was 'suffering from and acted under the influence of prolonged, intense, involuntary, subliminal television intoxication.'⁶¹ In such and other cases, however, the individual is often found

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Television Today, London, 30/1/86, p. 19.

61

Liebert, Robert M, Sprafkin, Joyce, The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth, Pergamon, New York, 1988, p. 127.

to be under severe stress, anxiety, depression, or some other form of mental dysfunction.

Research evidence shows that the socially or emotionally insecure individual, particularly if adolescent, is specially vulnerable. There is also evidence that such people tend to be more dependent on television than are others.⁶²

However, violence in television drama, where it is integral to the plot, for instance, the killing of Shakespeare's MacBeth, is essentially a conservative function within the drama. In contemporary television drama, a fist fight, for instance, resolves tension and conflict, often in favour of the socially accepted morality. In this context it is a ritualised social act, where the accepted norms of behaviour have triumphed over the deviant.

According to the British IBA Code on Violence, "there is no evidence that the portrayal of violence for good or legitimate ends is likely to be less harmful to the individual, or to society than the portrayal of violence for evil ends."⁶³ This notion, however, is not supported by the research undertaken by the SABC Audience Research Department, which suggests that children watching scenes of violence, where good triumphs over evil, in drama series such as, MCGYVER and THE A-TEAM, claim not to be affected by such events, though they do find disturbing the violence perpetrated in so-called 'horror' videos and films, where the forces of evil often inflict terrible punishment on their opposition.

62

Ibid.

63

Code on Violence, Independent Broadcasting Authority, London, 1987.

The IBA code also discourages the portrayal of ingenious and unfamiliar methods of inflicting pain or injury, particularly if they are capable of easy imitation. What is significant and positive, however, is that the Code affirms that imagination, creativity and realism on television cannot be constrained to such an extent that the legitimate service of the majority is always subordinated to the tyranny of the minority. The Code does not provide universal rules, but emphasises responsibility and sensitivity as salient watchwords for the television producer. "If in doubt, cut." ⁶⁴

Furthermore, the IBA Code on Violence points out that an acceptable minimum of violence in each individual programme may add up to an intolerable level over a period. Again, this is supposition, it 'may' add up! There is no evidence to suggest that exposure to violence has a cumulative effect on the viewer, as if the victim were being exposed to small, yet increasing doses of mercury poisoning, whereupon the accumulative effect is manifest in mental dysfunction and finally death. However, in order to protect young, impressionable and formative minds, the time of screening a drama in which there may be disturbing scenes of violence or nudity, or any other controversial theme, is important. The IBA policy of 'family viewing time' until 9 pm, similar to the SABC approach, entails special concern for younger viewers.

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Finance Week, "Blinkers off the Censors," Johannesburg, May 28 - June 3, 1981, p. 405.

5.5. THOU SHALT NOT...!

The television dramatist is further discouraged from exploring themes which touch on religion and the occult. A set of guidelines on 'Dealing with programme contents that have a bearing on the occult and other related matters,' presents additional obstacles to the creative contribution of the writer. In terms of the guidelines, the following subject matter should be dealt with carefully:-

In the context of the occult, religious customs and feelings should be handled with the utmost care and good taste in programmes.

All religious symbols should be treated with great care.

Relations portrayed in programmes, especially between parents and children or between figures of authority and children have to be treated with compassion and empathy.

The guidelines are uncompromising when they declare the following subjects to be strictly prohibited:-

No programme that shows demonic possession or devil worship in a positive light may be shown.

No material may be shown that attacks other religions or beliefs.

No blasphemous scenes may be shown. ⁶⁶

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Directorate, Broadcasting Research, "Dealing with Programme Contents that have a Bearing on the Occult and other Related Matters," SABC Publication, Johannesburg, 1989, pp. 1 - 3.

66

Ibid.

Applying the rule that ‘no material may be shown that attacks other religions,’ could conceivably mean that plays such as *THE ROYAL HUNT OF THE SUN* have no place on SABC-TV, because there is an implied criticism of the Christian faith under whose banner Pizarro and his accompanying priests brutalise the ancient Inca civilisation of Atahuallpa. Certainly, the theme which lies behind the relationship between Pizarro and Atahuallpa is a search for God, but judging by the actions of the Christian soldiers and priests such a discovery does not appear possible or convincing through their religion.

The question of blasphemy is even more tenuous in the context of television drama, in that a mere exclamation of the Lord’s name, is sufficient reason to engage the censor’s scissors. Such nit-picking inhibits the creative function of the dramatist, creating unrealistic dialogue, and clearly positions the author as subservient to the self-serving interests of the Corporation with its plethora of guidelines. One of the dangers of having set guidelines and rules is that their interpretation is often made on the side of extreme caution. For instance, when a proposal was submitted in 1990 to the Head of Youth Drama, Ken Hardy, on a Hobbit type children’s fantasy written by Simon Stengel, it was turned down on the grounds that its subject matter skirted dangerously close to perceived notions of the occult. Stengel, who has no interest in the occult, is generally recognised for his highly imaginative work, and his puppet theatre is well known and enjoyed among Durban children.⁶⁷

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Stengel submitted his playscript to the Youth Drama Department in 1990.

The writer's battle against bureaucratic censorship is not unique to South Africa, although in this country it has been far more pervasive and prescriptive. In South Africa, however, the broadcasting bureaucrat is tempted to rationalise his/her stance by claiming that 'most people' (meaning, most conservative thinking White people) will regard the subject matter as unsuitable for transmission. But unless there is some reliable mechanism whereby the majority of the viewing public can express their reaction to a particular issue or theme, no credence should be given this kind of generalised reaction. (In the following chapter on the audience in television drama, some of the scientifically based methodologies in evaluating audience appreciation will be examined, which are a more reliable indicator of how viewers feel about certain programmes).

A salient point which escapes the bureaucrats in their evaluation of drama on the basis of its acceptability to 'most' people, is that drama by its very nature is not tailor-made to win the approval of the majority. Neither is it commercial product selling where majority approval is highly desirable. Drama can be disturbing, controversial, challenging and even partial; it may only present an aspect of the truth which is not scientifically verifiable, but the insights of the dramatist's personal vision may reveal truths which have profound significance.

The SABC's point of view is best summed up by the Head of Productions, TV Drama, Henk Hugo, who says that:

Television drama makes its statement in the living room, or bedroom; it penetrates right into the house; the presentation is almost encroaching on a viewer's territorial space, which 'is sacred.' If the dramatic statement is not made with sensitivity, the viewer is likely to experience it as aggression and would react accordingly. Now if you keep those things in mind, and you add to it, basic 'good taste,'

and that all the action is properly motivated, then I think you can do anything in drama.⁶⁸

If drama, however, is to be no more than a polite guest in the house, then its occupation of television space is of limited value. While agreeing that 'sensitivity' and 'motivation' are significant ingredients of drama, limitations imposed upon a creative work on account of its encroachment on a viewer's 'territorial space,' and the possibility of 'offending' him/her, could emasculate the impact of a potentially powerful and provocative work. If 'good taste' is the writer's watchword, who is to judge its worth? Who is to judge the 'good taste' of a drama that presents a critical perspective on the present social order, which exposes the structures of power and privilege and shows how these not only permeate society, but also limit opportunities for self realisation and social change? Would the government and its agents in the SABC consider such a play to be in 'good taste?' Drama in its exploration of the human condition will undoubtedly inspire some, and fill others with fear. But those viewers who do not wish to be moved by fear and pity, can always exercise their right of territorial isolation by a mere flick of the switch!

5.6. CONCLUSION.

The debate inside and outside the SABC on censorship is essentially about power. Although the National Party government has a poor track record in allowing freedom of expression, there is no indication that a future government in

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Hugo, Henk, Production Head: TV Drama, Interview with author, Auckland Park, 7/8/87.

South Africa will be any less prescriptive. No government which arrogates to itself the role of custodian of public morality and ideological determinants, is going to look favourably upon dramatic works which challenge these notions. However, it is important that dialectical discourse should define public responsibility and accountability beyond any narrowly determined constraints offered by government bureaucracies.

State supporting bureaucratic organisations, such as the SABC, which defines public morality and cultural identities in terms of codes that are reflective of the dominant socio-political ideology, are not likely to unshackle drama, unless sufficient prodding is forthcoming from the very public whose morality and culture the bureaucrats are at such pains to protect. For instance, the loosening of restrictions in film censorship did not come about through sudden enlightenment on the part of the government or the Directorate of Publications, but through the persistent efforts on the part of film distributors who appealed time and time again for certain films to be released, coupled with a growing tolerance and sophistication among South African moviegoers. As a member of the Publications Appeal Board, Mr E.G. Malan, says:-

The task of the Publications Appeal Board is to gauge what the man-in-the-street's reaction will be to the material under consideration. It attempts to decide for the man-in-the-street. Not for the prudes, nor for libertines. ⁶⁹

While there may be evidence of growing enlightenment and tolerance among moviegoers, who elect to see a particular film, it is more difficult to gauge similar

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The Citizen, Johannesburg, 25/8/87, p. 4.

patterns from the television viewer. Although the Audience Research Department conducts evaluations into audience appreciation, information on levels of viewer enlightenment and tolerance are sadly lacking. However, enlightenment and tolerance develop in proportion to the enriching experience that comes with exposure to stimulating drama, which is capable of broadening the viewer's horizons of life.

In 1987/88 in Britain, similar concerns about the alleged influence of television on the decline in morality and increased violence lead the British government to consider the introduction of a Broadcasting Standards Council, implying that the BBC Board of Governors and the Independent Broadcasting Authority were not doing enough to safeguard the public interest with regard to moral standards on television. However, a survey conducted on Channel 4 revealed that only a minority of respondents blamed television for the increased violence and decline of morality in British society. The research further revealed that:-

The public is more concerned about its right to watch programmes, and its responsibilities to ensure that children do not watch programmes intended for adults, than with the intractable questions of the effects of audiovisual images on individual actions or psyches.⁷⁰

Throughout the period under review the SABC has been seen to drag itself in the wake of public opinion, instead of initiating a dynamic attitude towards fostering greater tolerance and understanding, particularly in the field of drama. While the Corporation has taken a responsible attitude towards protecting young

70

Docherty, David; Morrison, David, "Public Attitudes to Sex and Violence on TV," The Listener, London, 11/2/88, p. 4.

children, it has been patronising and paternalistic towards the mature adult mind. An assumption that the 'average' adult television viewer requires censorship because he/she is incapable of making rational decisions about his/her viewing habits, implies that the same viewer, when described as a member of the public, is equally incapable of making a sensible decision regarding the election of a government. Or, by implication, all young White males, who are called up for National Service, should not be exposed to violence!

The fight against censorship is part of the fight for liberty. It is a struggle of vision and we have no choice but to keep at it. The slow but inexorable diminution of civil liberties seems to pass unnoticed by the general public, as does the witch hunting of radicals, the cry of: 'not in the public interest' is getting louder and more hysterical. ⁷¹

The opposing pressures of the 'creative' and the 'official' are the tensions and contradictions in which television drama, and the single play in particular, is produced; pressures that are exerted within and without the SABC. The single play is not essential to SABC-TV; in fact, the English single play is at present an extinct genre. (No single play has been produced since 1990). But the gap it has left in the repertoire of drama presented by the English Department, cannot adequately be filled by the series, serials and sitcoms. Not only does it close the door on the production of the so-called 'classics,' but the single play has shown itself to be a genre well suited to breaking many of the old rules about what is permissible in the content of television drama, as evidenced in *THE OUTCAST* and *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*. Although the single play should not necessarily aim to offend people, it should nevertheless strive to be provocative - a provocation based on a concern for the people and the society it mirrors.

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Mortimer, John, *Broadcast*, No. 10 1073, London, 1/9/80, pp. 10 -15.

Censorship in television drama not only deprives the dramatist of his/her freedom of expression, but also deprives the audience of encountering new and challenging ways of looking at life and the human condition. A mature mind is unlikely to be corrupted by looking at scenes of sex and violence, or by Black/White relationships, or by plays that question the integrity of the Police and Security Forces, but is more likely to be inspired by plays which avoid challenging social realities and areas of moral choice with which drama is particularly concerned. However, the opposing perspectives of the 'creator' and the 'official' on the question of blasphemy, violence, sex and politics, will invariably differ. While the 'creator' invokes freedom of expression, the 'official' imposes control, and it is the clash of these opposing demands, that will focus the debate for many years to come.

CHAPTER SIX

COMMERCIALISATION AND THE SINGLE PLAY.

6.1. INTRODUCTION.

During the period under review, the financial structure of the SABC changed from a dominant public service broadcaster (or PSB), where the major portion of its revenue obtained from the receipt of licence fees, to a situation where the commercial input from advertising revenue became an increasingly dominant factor. A consequence of this shift was a blurring of the corporation's role as a public service broadcaster, and made it increasingly susceptible, in terms of the choice of programme material, to the demands of its commercial advertisers. This shift is revealed in the following brief overview, indicating how a commercially oriented service has impacted adversely on the single play:-

1) 1976 - 1978:-

During this period, TV-1 was run as a non-commercial service, and the SABC retained a strong PSB image. There was a regular output of single plays, most of which were produced in the studios of the SABC by their own production personnel.

2) 1978 - 1986:-

Commercial advertising began in 1978 and although revenue from advertising exceeded licence fees only from 1979, commercial dominance grew over the following years until 1989/90, when 72% of total revenue derived from that source.

During this period there was still a regular output of single plays, but many of them were produced by independent companies following the resignation of

many of the SABC in-house directors, including Bill Faure, Alan Nathanson and Gray Hofmeyr, who left to join independent companies such as IFC.

Concurrent with the increasing commercialisation of the SABC, was the management decision of the early 80's to put the SABC on a cost-effective business footing, culminating in the retrenchment of many production personnel from both the drama and documentary departments, and the establishment of various commercial/business units within the corporation. By 1987, only one assistant drama producer, namely, Johan van den Berg, remained in the English Drama Department.

3) 1986 - 1991:-

A predominantly commercial period with few in-house productions, culminating in the demise of the single play in 1991.

Although PSB is not an absolute term, the SABC was initially based on the Reithian principles that broadcasting had great potential not only as a medium for entertainment, but also as a source of information and enlightenment or education. Reith's ideal was for broadcasting to be "a public service based on high standards and a strong sense of responsibility."¹ Such a body would not only aim to serve the public as a whole, but would also include minority interests. This point intersects with the question of funding, which in a PSB structure is derived mainly from licence fees and clearly connects the line of accountability between the broadcaster and the paying public.

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Guide to the BBC 1992, BBC Pub., London, 1992, p. 49.

However, within a commercially oriented system, accountability is skewed in favour of the commercial advertiser from whom the broadcaster derives the major portion of its funding. Moreover, a public service body is more concerned about producing programmes that express a national identity, or within a regional context, a sense of local community, than in promoting entertainment programmes from international sources. Furthermore, the emphasis on a public service body is on programming and not audience numbers, an aspect of significant importance to the single play. A PSB body normally has an obligation to transmit a minimum percentage of locally produced programmes including drama.

Among the criteria which characterise a commercial broadcasting body is that it is privately owned and, in this respect, is accountable to its shareholders; it is profit motivated, and that its funding is derived from commercial sources, such as subscription fees, advertising revenue, sponsorship, or a combination of these. As the aim is to attract the maximum number of viewers, the programmes are normally of wide popular appeal. Consequently, locally produced single plays, regarded as minority interest programmes, are not advanced by a commercial broadcaster who has fewer statutory commitments to provide such programmes. In South Africa, M-Net would be regarded as a fully fledged commercial service, while in Britain, the commercially oriented ITV network is based on a public service tradition where all broadcasting is accountable to parliament.

Although the PSB functions of British Independent Television are similar to those of the BBC, the commercial nature of the various television companies has given rise to a public perception that they are more entertainment oriented, and this aspect has a bearing on their output of drama. According to a survey conducted by the IBA in 1984/5, the independent companies scored poorly

compared with the BBC in the respondents' attitude to which channel produced 'the best drama.'

13% of the respondents claimed that ITV produced the best single plays in 1984, while 41% believed that credit should go to BBC-1. The following year, only 10% believed that ITV produced the best single plays, and 39% favoured BBC-1. For dramatic serials, the results were:- 16% and 13% respectively for ITV in 1984/5, while BBC-1 obtained 36% and 40% for the corresponding period.

(However, the survey gave greater credit to ITV than the BBC for producing better entertainment, variety, and comedy programmes).²

To conclude from these results that commercial television does not, or cannot, produce 'good drama' is spurious, however, what can be deduced is that commercial stations, by their very nature, are compelled to produce popular and entertaining programmes in order to sustain a viable level of advertising revenue, on which their very survival depends. This is supported by the respondents' perception that ITV produced better 'entertainment, variety and comedy programmes,' notwithstanding the official injunction that ITV has to satisfy the same statutory requirements of the BBC in providing balanced scheduling, local output and general availability.

However, basic economic realities of a commercially-oriented service often determine the type of programme broadcast. For instance, the British IBA's forerunner, the Independent Television Authority, succumbed to the pressure from its various independent companies to drop their statutory single play slot on a Sunday night in favour of the drama series, UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS.³

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The Stage and Television Today, 30/1/86, London, p. 18.

3

Gardner, C., Wyver, J., Screen, Vol. 24, No: 4 - 5, July - October 1983, Villiers Publications, London, p. 119.

Despite the rigorous broadcasting standards of the ITA, its willingness to comply with the economic requirements of these companies, suggests that the pressures impacting on commercial networks are incompatible with the values of a PSB service.

However, over the past decade the SABC has developed a hybrid status, having both PSB and commercial characteristics, with the latter becoming a dominant consideration in the financial management and programming of TV-1.

In 1989 the SABC Board attempted to partially redress the financial imbalance between advertising revenue and licence fee by increasing the latter, but this request was turned down by the Cabinet. The Board had hoped to ultimately achieve a level of licence fee income amounting to some 40% of the total revenue.⁴

6.2. THE COMMERCIALISATION OF THE SABC.

The SABC today is run by the accountants. Money means everything.⁵

Notwithstanding the changing emphasis within the SABC towards a commercially driven organisation, it has managed to meet its statutory obligations, laid down during its strongly based PSB period, of producing a minimum quota of locally produced programmes, which, in respect of drama, amounts to one and a half hours per week. However, the current emphasis has shifted to the production of

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SABC Annual Report 1989, Johannesburg, p. 8.

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Nortje, Cor, Production Director Entertainment Programmes, Safritel, SABC, Auckland Park, Interview with author, May 1992. (cf. Appendix 10 on Safritel).

locally produced series/serials and sitcoms rather than single plays. This is confirmed by Hein Kern, (successor to Henk Hugo as Production Head: TV Drama), who says the production of series and serials has enabled the corporation to exceed the statutory requirements for local drama.⁶

However, the SABC's dependence on advertising income for nearly three quarters of its total income, puts the emphasis on providing a stream of entertaining programmes, in order to sustain its future economic development. Indicative of the SABC's phenomenal economic growth during the period under review, is a comparison of the following figures:-

In 1976, the total annual income was R89,3-million increasing to R656,7-million by 1989.⁷

The SABC's role as a public broadcaster will continue to weaken if the current imbalance between revenue earned from advertising and licence fees is not corrected, (namely, 71,2% vis-a-vis 24,6%) The remaining 4.2% is derived from other sources. The Viljoen Task Group report on broadcasting in South Africa, recognising this imbalance as a threat to the PSB nature of the SABC, has recommended that:-

The SABC's dependence on advertising income should be reduced to a level not exceeding 50% provided that limitations on advertising could only be considered once alternative financing was guaranteed.⁸

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Kern, Hein, Production Head: TV Drama, Interview with author, Auckland Park, May 1992.

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SABC Annual Report, 1989, Johannesburg, p. 8.

8

Report of the Task Group on "Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa," Cape and Transvaal Printers, Cape Town, August 1991, p. 44.

But there is scant possibility of that level being achieved in the foreseeable future because of the Cabinet's resistance to grant substantial increases in television licence fees. Since the inception of the television service only six increases have been granted, with the result that the current fee does not keep pace with the annual rate of inflation. Had the licence fee risen in accordance with the Consumer Price Index, the 1991 fee would have been R256.⁹ But even the present fee of R120 per year (1991) is considered high for low income viewers, particularly among the Black community, and consequently there is a significant number of pirate viewers, a factor that would be exacerbated should there be further fee increases.

The ratio between income derived from advertising and that from television licence fees swung in favour of the former in 1979. The previous year, which marked the first year of commercial advertising, income from both commercial advertising and licence fees was roughly equal, at about R55-million each.¹⁰ However, since 1979, the ratio between these two sources has continued to grow in favour of advertising. By comparison, the year prior to commercial television in 1977, the advertising revenue obtained from radio amounted to less than R30-million, while total revenue from both radio and television was about R50-million. Although the collection of the R36 television licence fee, together with the radio listeners' licence fees, added substantially to the SABC's income in 1976, the total licence fee was still greater than the advertising revenue derived from its commercial radio stations.¹¹

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Ibid. p. 41.

10

"Report of the Task Group on Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa," August 1991, pp. 41 -43.

11

Promodata, 1983, p. 167.

The PSB nature of the SABC throughout its radio years of the sixties was undisputed, when licence revenue from listeners exceeded income from advertising. In 1971, however, advertising revenue exceeded licence fees for the first time, and this trend continued until 1976, when television licence fees became operative and assumed a larger percentage of total income. Nevertheless, the SABC had a clearer image of its status during pre-television days, as Springbok Radio and the various metropolitan services, such as, Radio Highveld, Radio Good Hope and Radio Port Natal operated as commercial stations, and the non-commercial Afrikaans and English services, both of which had regular drama seasons that included a range of classical and modern works, functioned as public service bodies.

The hybrid status during the late eighties created a dilemma for the SABC management when it tried to embrace a policy of 'cultural enrichment' within a system that was becoming increasingly commercialised. In 1987, Director General, Riaan Eksteen said that "cultural enrichment was the SABC's watchword and that programmes with a cultural content were given preference in the planning of Radio Suid-Afrika and Radio South Africa, because these services were cultural services carrying advertisements."¹² In the programmes of TV-1, however, 'cultural enrichment' would manifest itself in various forms, *inter alia*, programmes with a strong cultural content would be presented from 1 January 1988 before 10 pm.¹³ Such an undertaking, however, did not fully materialise because it failed to take into account the increasing reliance upon

12

Natal Mercury, "SABC Hard at Work Projecting New Image," 4/9/87, p. 5.

13

Ibid.

commercial interests, with the result that 'cultural enrichment' programmes, including the weekly arts programme and the English language single play, were being pushed into time slots after 10 pm during the weekdays.

Consequently, the economic realities have ultimately determined the 'cultural' content of TV-1 and by 1991, the arts programme, COLLAGE, was moved from Sunday afternoon to late Wednesday evening, namely, 22.15, under the new title, ARTS ON ONE. In 1993, the programme was transferred to TSS and divided into two separate programmes; the one programme reverted to an earlier title, COLLAGE, and goes out on Monday evening, and ART WORKS, (presenting a strong multi-cultural image) goes out on Friday. TSS, originally known as the spare channel, is being promoted as a channel with a strong PSB character. According to the Chief Executive of the SABC, Quentin Green, if the single play should ever return to the schedules, it will go out on this channel and not on TV-1. ¹⁴ At the time of writing, however, TSS attracts only 0,7% of the total television viewing audience, whereas TV-1 commands 21,6%. In terms of numbers, this gives TSS an average daily audience of 166,000 viewers against 4,931,000 for TV-1. As the average audience size of a single play during the late eighties was some 800,000, it means that the single play, if revived, could be further disadvantaged by such a small potential audience. While it could be argued that viewers may switch over from TV-1 to see a particular drama, it will lose a large pool of casual viewers who stay on to watch a production that captures its imagination. ¹⁵

14

Green, Quentin, Chief Executive, SABC, Interview with author, BAFTA Centre (British Academy of Film and Television Arts), London, September 1992.

15

Figures supplied by the Broadcasting Research Department of the SABC, March 1993.

By 1990, the SABC's dependence on advertising was so great that a mere ten per cent loss in advertising revenue would have required a massive 30% increase in licence fees to make good the deficit.¹⁶ Clearly the need to attract large audiences in order to satisfy the advertisers was of paramount importance. Furthermore, the present pursuit of the SABC to attract large audiences in order to attain impressive ratings further exposes a serious dilemma of whether the corporation is able to sustain a pretence of upholding the values of a public service broadcaster. In compromising these standards in order to survive economically has placed genres, such as the single play under threat.

In turning to the advertisers as their major source of funding, the SABC is required not only to pander to their needs, but the corporation is directly affected by fluctuations in the economy, which at present, is in a sharp downward spiral. Consequently, less money is available for advertising and the SABC has had to make adjustments to its budget. In 1992, the cutbacks included retrenchment packages to selected members of staff, and ceasing to contract programmes to outside production companies. So far these cutbacks have impacted more severely upon companies making magazine and documentary programmes, and less so with those producing series and serial dramas. Since 1989 there has been a gradual shift away from television advertising to so-called below-the-line advertising such as sponsorships, promotions and exhibitions; a phenomenon reflected in the SABC's share of total advertising expenditure among the media, which in 1988 was 36,08% but dropped to 35,8% in 1989.¹⁷

16

Report of the Task Group on "Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa," August 1991, p. 89.

17

SABC Annual Report 1989, p. 20.

During the period under review viewer numbers and their demographic composition, in terms of race, gender, age group and income group, became of signal importance to both the advertiser, who needed to target a product at specific groups, and to the SABC, for application in programme planning and to enable their Advertising Department to sell appropriate and sufficient advertising space in order to balance the budget. When commercial advertising began in 1978, the SABC restricted advertising time to 5% of the overall transmission time, with no advertising on Sundays. The SABC was at pains to explain at the time that:-

The introduction of commercials of 15, 20, 30, 45 and 60 seconds, has not changed the character of the SATV services which continues to provide a full range of programmes with as wide a range of appeal as possible. SATV thus carries advertising but does not provide commercial services in the commonly accepted sense." ¹⁸

Among the initial restrictions imposed by the SABC on advertisers was that they were neither allowed to sponsor programmes nor buy programme time. They merely bought individual time slots, where their adverts were placed at the discretion of the SABC. However, in order to accommodate the advertiser, the SABC has changed its previously autocratic advertising system whereby advertisers were allocated a fixed number of commercial spots per category, and were obliged to flight half of these in English and half in Afrikaans. In 1987, the SABC introduced a more flexible rate card which is market driven, and the cost of the flighting varies according to demand, with the result that advertisers have a

18

Botha, F.M. (ed.), Advertising and Press Annual of Southern Africa, 1979, Hortors, Cape Town, p. 129.

greater chance of getting the time slot they want. The SABC also agreed to accept a spot at 48 hours' notice, as against four weeks previously.¹⁹

Furthermore, the corporation has relaxed its ban on Sunday advertising, and is eager to find sponsorship for a range of its programmes, including education and magazine inserts. The initial 5% limit of overall transmission time allotted to advertising has been gradually relaxed, rising to 5.75% in 1980; to 6.5% in 1981 and to 8% in 1982/3.^{20 21 22} Moreover, in 1992, English advertisements have been placed in the Afrikaans segment of the transmission, and vice versa.

During the late eighties when the single play was fighting for its survival, its merits were devalued by programme planners and schedulers who had to balance the needs of such minority programmes against those of more popular appeal.

6.3. SCHEDULING BY NUMBERS:

I must run this thing as a business! Seventy percent of the total income of the SABC is derived from advertising, and the remainder from TV licences. What I have to do, is to look at the schedules, and I must think money. I must generate income.²³

19

Supplement to Financial Mail, "Creative Media Buying," 21/8/87, p. 57.

20

Botha, F.M. (ed.), Advertising and Press Annual of Southern Africa, 1979, Hortors, Cape Town, p. 129.

21

Promodata, Promotional Marketing and Advertising Data, (Incorporating Advertising and Press Annual of Southern Africa), 1981, Clarion, Cape Town, p. 155.

22

Promodata, 1982, p. 154.

23

Pienaar, Louis, Head of Television Scheduling, SABC, Auckland Park, Interview with author, August 1987.

Against such a powerful commercial injunction the single play has little chance of competing with programmes that are rated purely in terms of their popularity and potential audience size. Throughout most of the period under review, the English single play has been scheduled mainly in two time slots, namely, Thursday and Sunday evenings after 21.00. (During the first two years of television, Tuesday evenings were also included on a regular basis in the scheduling of single plays, but were ousted by popular series and serials, such as DALLAS, which started in 1978).

In the flighting of single plays by new or relatively unknown writers or directors, a late Sunday night slot, after 22.00, has been used; while the Thursday evening slot has varied from 21.00 to 22.00, depending on the expected audience response to the production. However, during the late seventies and early eighties, when there were regular seasons of single plays, the 21.00 time slot on a Thursday evening, was often chosen.

Taking Fugard's *A LESSON FROM ALOES* as an example of scheduling the work of an established writer, it was first planned to go out in July 1987, on a Sunday evening at 21.00, but following its first postponement in order to accommodate a tribute to Fred Astaire, who had died during the week, the play was re-scheduled for a Thursday late night viewing at 22.00 on 27 August 1987. (The play was subsequently 'cancelled' for political reasons, and went out four years later). Based on this evidence, and notwithstanding the writer's status, a single play is regarded as a minority interest, which if scheduled for a weekday night, is unlikely to go out before 22.00.

When *A LESSON FROM ALOES* eventually went out on Sunday evening 2 June 1991 at 21.00 it attained an average AR of 4. However, an AR of 20 was initially

recorded during the first fifteen minutes after 21.00, but the audience dropped off fairly rapidly until the end of the play, when an AR of 4 was recorded during the final fifteen minutes. Expressed in numbers of viewers it meant that there were an estimated 884,300 viewers at the start of the play but only 168,600 by the end. (cf. Appendix 10 for method of calculation) Although this is a large decline in audience, it is nevertheless a significant number of people who watched the entire production. For the same number (168,300) to have watched the entire performance of this play in a 500-seat playhouse would mean that the production would have had to run full-houses for 336 performances, which is more than a year, (excluding Sundays); an unlikely scenario in South African theatre.

Factors which should be taken into consideration, however, when evaluating an audience watching a drama are the length of the of the play and its finishing time. As a rule, theatres would not choose 21.00 on a Sunday evening as a starting time for a play such as *A LESSON FROM ALOES*, which in Fugard's own words is "a sombre piece," and goes on until almost 23.00.²⁴ (Although this play was produced in 1985, it marked the last locally produced English single play to be broadcast within the period of review, namely, from 1976 to 1991).

Comparing the AR of 20 with that of the same time the following week 9 June 1991, it is interesting to note that the programme *GUMLAGLAND*, which started off with an AR of 34 ended with an AR of 6. Although these figures are measureably better than those obtained for the Fugard play, (namely, 20 and 4) it does nevertheless suggest that any progamme that ends late on Sunday evening is likely to lose a significant segment of its audience.

24

Fugard, Athol, Interview with Allen Auld, ARTS ON ONE, Tekweni TV Production for SABC-TV, 10/6/92.

In justifying the removal of the single play from prime time viewing, (ie. viewing between 18.00 and 22.00), Pienaar says that the Advertising Department would have difficulty selling advertising space in respect of a drama that is likely to have a minority interest. He says that the arts programme COLLAGE has a similar problem with advertisers, who are not convinced of the potential return on their exposure in a programme that goes out after 22.00, and has a limited audience appeal. ²⁵ (COLLAGE, which failed to attract significant advertising when it went out late Monday night slot, was subsequently moved to a Sunday afternoon slot, where it still failed to attract such revenue. The programme was taken off the air at the end of 1991, and replaced by ARTS ON ONE, which goes out on Wednesday night after 22.00). According to Pienaar, "your 60% to 70% gross viewers will not take to that sort of programme." ²⁶

In terms of Pienaar's 'think money' syndrome, and bearing in mind that TV-1 is the biggest money earner for the SABC, compared with TV 2/3/4 and the various radio services, the arts and the single play are not commercially viable. While the average English language single play draws an audience of some 800,000, a popular serial/series/sitcom, going out at prime time (19.00), can command a viewing public of more than 3,000,000. ²⁷

According to Pienaar every drama has a 'commercial value' in that the popularity or prestige of its writer or director could command a better time spot. He says

25

Pienaar, Louis, Head of Television Scheduling, SABC, Auckland Park, Interview with author, August 1987.

26

Ibid.

27

Figures obtained from AMPS Diary 1991, South African Advertising Research Foundation publication.

that "it is up to the Advertising Department to convince the advertiser that the track record of Manie van Rensburg and Gray Hofmeyr is sufficiently impressive to schedule the play in a prime spot, and that they should therefore have success with their advertising campaign." ²⁸ He concedes that a drama, such as Hofmeyr's *THE OUTCAST*, would not be scheduled for 22.00 on a Sunday evening, but would more than likely take a weekday spot of 21.00. The evidence of Fugard's *A LESSON FROM ALOES*, would suggest, however, that commercial pressures would even push this television classic into the post 22.00 weekday slot.

In the late seventies when advertising revenue featured less dominantly in the budget, the single play was often scheduled during prime time, particularly in the two years prior to the start of commercial advertising in 1978. During the late eighties, however, the relatively few single plays that went out, were transmitted on Sunday evenings, often alternating with serious music. The absence of commercial advertising on a Sunday evening also complied with the Calvinistic notion of 'keeping holy the sabbath.' In any event says, Pienaar, "the single play does not present a challenge to the schedulers, because we don't have a constant flow of this type of material, whether locally produced or acquired from abroad." ²⁹

Unlike the drama series, such as *LA LAW*, where audience numbers increased with the progression and popularity of episodes, a single play has one chance only (unless it is repeated at a later date) to gather and hold its audience. When *LA*

28

Ibid.

29

SABC Viewers' Panel, Relative Popularity, TV-1, 22 - 28 June 1987.

LAW was first scheduled, audience numbers increased slowly for the first five episodes, until its popularity was secured through positive press reviews, word of mouth, and viewer loyalty towards the characters and situation. Pienaar ascribes LA LAW's novelty as the major reason for its relatively slow audience development.

Pienaar says LA LAW was 'in many respects novel,' and consequently audiences warmed slowly to it. However, once the series had acquired a large audience, the Advertising Department of the SABC could not place all the requests they had for commercial space in that time slot. By week 22 - 28 June 1987, LA LAW was the top programme of the week, gaining an appreciation index of 100.³⁰

According to Pienaar it is difficult to sell not only to the advertiser but also to the general television viewer, a one-off drama, such as Fugard's A LESSON FROM ALOES. Pienaar's reason for the single play's relatively poor audience attraction is that South African viewers are not selective in their viewing, but tend to watch television during certain times, irrespective of what is showing. According to him, "it is because we have not grown up with television: it was passed on to us."³¹ As most television sets are turned on during the early evening, particularly during the hours between 18.00 and 22.00, where scheduled programmes attract a broad spectrum of the viewing public, even a series, such as TRUCKING, which received generally poor critical reviews, was still able to attain impressive AR-ratings.

30

Pienaar, Louis, Head of Television Scheduling, SABC, Auckland Park, Interview with author, August 1987.

31

Ibid.

Despite unfavourable criticism from the press, local programme TRUCKING was the third highest advertising revenue spinner while it was being screened.³²

6.4. MAXIMISING THE AUDIENCE:

The SABC acknowledges the role of the advertiser in respect of his contribution to SABC revenue and takes into account his interests in the planning of programmes.³³ (SABC Mission Statement, 1988).

However, before discussing how advertising functions on SABC television, a brief definition of its aims and genres are given. According to Gillian Dyer the primary function of advertising goes beyond the need to introduce a range of consumer goods to the public and, in this way, support the free market economy. She says that:

Over the years it has become more and more involved in the manipulation of social values and attitudes, and less concerned with the communication of essential information about goods and services. In this respect it could be argued that advertising nowadays fulfils a function traditionally met by art or religion.³⁴

In the projection of its message advertising has borrowed from non-advertising art forms; for instance, television advertising can range from the less expensive retail commercials consisting of an announcement over accompanying moving pictures and captions, to the more costly and imaginative, concentrated, dramatic sequences or 'playlets.' Several of the latter use a dramatic as opposed to a discursive form, and include elements of the well-made play, with a beginning, a

32

Southern Screen, Vol. 4, No. 4, Prickle Ink Publishers C.C., August 1991, p. 6.

33

SABC Annual Report, Special Edition to Staffers, Johannesburg, 1988, p. 1.

34

Dyer, Gillian, Advertising as Communication, Methuen, London, 1982, p. 2.

middle and an ending. Many of these commercials project characters and conflict situations; suggesting, for instance, that fighting dirt with the correct detergent is a conflict situation for many a concerned housewife! Or, the dramatic narrative in the Charles Glass beer commercial depicting the return of a Black exile being warmly and emotionally greeted by a White colleague in a pub.

Commercials, more than any other ingredient of the television programming schedule, exemplify the special characteristics and advantages of drama as a method of communication: above all, its ability to compress into a single instant a very large number of items of information -- most of which are perceived subliminally, as a general gestalt with a strong emotional impact.³⁵

As Martin Esslin points out, the majority of commercials are directly dramatic in nature (playlets of mere seconds' duration), and even those, which at first sight appear non-dramatic, contain the basic elements of fictional drama. Commercials are the true didactic drama of our age, drama that powerfully affects the life-style of the millions of viewers indoctrinated through them.³⁶

According to British television dramatist, Denis Potter:

The advertisements which break up the programmes are neatly proficient little dramas which manage to mix nostalgia for what they themselves have helped to destroy, messages of almost evangelical comfort, and anxiety-inducing injunctions of the kind best expressed in the toe-tappingly tuneful brutality of that sweet old song 'Stay Young and Beautiful if you Want to be Loved.'³⁷

35

Esslin, Martin, The Age of Television, Stanford, California, 1981, p. 53.

36

Ibid.

37

Potter, Dennis, Waiting for the Boat: On Television, Faber and Faber, London, 1984, p. 29.

Gillian Dyer identifies genres of television commercials which are also drawn from non-advertising material. These include, popular/light entertainment sequences; the use of performers, celebrities and sports personalities endorsing products; cartoons and animated sequences either borrowed from another source or created specially for a product image, and, finally, documentary sequences of everyday life, particularly family life, travelogues and industrial sequences featuring the use of a product. ³⁸

On the whole, commercialism is inherently conservative in that it does not wish to provoke or disturb the viewer. Commercial product selling does not wish to be associated with controversial issues that could alienate the public. Hence controversial dramas that may challenge or offend the sensibilities of the viewer are anathema to advertisers, especially during peak viewing time. When such dramas do offend large sections of the viewing public, it is the drama that must bend and be changed. For instance, the mixed race love affair in *LA LAW*, between Jonathan and Zoe was ended after American Whites and Blacks had voiced their opposition.

The whites protested for all the old racist reasons we know so well, but surprisingly the blacks also protested, in greater numbers. They claimed it was tokenism, an unscrupulous exploitation of a racial situation to gain higher ratings. ³⁹

The commercial advertiser perceives transmission time as a saleable commodity, and the size of the audience that a particular programme can deliver is of overriding importance.

38

Dyer, Gillian, Advertising as Communication, Methuen, London, 1982, pp. 10 - 11.

39

Ronge, Barry, "Here Lies LA Law," Sunday Times Supplement, 9/8/92, p. 8.

6.5 THE SIZE OF THE NUMBERS.

Selling time calculated on audience size is one factor that an advertiser needs to know; another is the expected penetration into the various sectors of the viewing public, categorised in terms of gender, age and race. In addition to the production costs, which could be anything from a low budget R10,000 to R250,000 and more for a 30-second commercial shot on film or video, the advertiser also has to meet the cost of flying the advert. For instance, in the period from January to March 1987, between 18.00 and 19.00 hours on a Monday, the rate for a 30 second commercial flighted on TV-1 was R13,650; the rate increased slightly to R15,390 on Tuesday during the same time slot; on Wednesday it was down to R11,970; maintaining the same rate on Thursday, while on Friday, it increased to R13,690; on Saturday it was down to R5,700. ⁴⁰

The size of the television audience of all SABC channels, namely, TV-1/2/3/4, in 1989/90 was estimated at 7,7 million. All these channels are commercially driven, and in terms of the racial categories applied, the total comprised:-

1,3-million Coloureds;
462-thousand Asians;
3,003-million Whites, and
2,906-million Blacks. ⁴¹

On TV-1 alone, the 1990 viewer figures were:-

4,686-million Whites, Coloureds and Asians;
1,367-million Blacks; or,

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Information provided by the Advertising Department of the SABC, August 1987.

41

SABC Annual Report 1989, Johannesburg, p. 8.

23% are Black;
 49% White;
 21% Coloured and
 7% Asian.⁴²

Some twenty months after the introduction of television in August 1977, the daily average television audience recorded was 1,328,800. This information was of significance to advertisers planning their campaigns for the beginning of the following year when commercials were accepted by the SABC-TV. According to a survey carried out by the SABC in 1977, the pattern of White viewers of TV 1, in terms of their sex, language, age and income followed the population figures almost exactly, suggesting that a fair cross-section of the White public had become regular viewers. Furthermore, it indicated that the channel was not attracting viewers with special interests nor was it losing any particular section among the White population.⁴³ The fact that television enjoyed a fairly even spread across the spectrum of the White population was additional information given to the advertising fraternity.

As television advertising today captures more than 30% of the total advertising expenditure in South Africa, (generating R309,6-million in 1987), compared with 11,6% on radio, and 54% on print media, it is a highly lucrative market.⁴⁴ (The remaining 4.4% is spent on other forms of advertising). Implicit in the shift of source funding is that the SABC survives financially by having to sell advertising space on its television services mainly between 18.00 and 22.00 hours, as it is during these four hours, from Monday to Saturday, that the Corporation earns

42

SABC Annual Report 1990, Johannesburg, p. 10.

43

The Argus, Cape Town, "Whites are TV Addicts," 22/11/77, p. 1.

44

Van Vuuren, P., Van Der Walt, H., "Broadcasting Research: Change and Credibility," SABC, Johannesburg, p. 8.

the bulk of its advertising revenue, which in 1989/90, made up more than 70% of its total revenue.⁴⁵ Moreover, the target is narrowed to the four hours on TV-1 as it is this channel which earns the major portion of the advertising revenue.

Consequently programmes scheduled for peak viewing are aimed at popular appeal with a high entertainment value, which, in respect of drama, has given rise to a plethora of sitcoms, serials and series, and a neglect of the single play. According to the Head of Programme Scheduling at the SABC, Louis Pienaar, viewers find series/serials and sitcoms more entertaining than the single play.⁴⁶ This statement naturally begs the question, what is entertainment? What is it about the episodic structured dramas which give them the competitive edge over the single play in being more entertaining? Although an evaluation is given in Chapter Seven of the episodic dramas, (focussing on aspects of their structural composition that distinguish them from the single play), empirical research into television entertainment does not embrace a fundamental reflection on the nature of entertainment as such and the viewer's experience thereof.

The reasons for an absence of a fundamental study of entertainment can be ascribed, *inter alia*, to an inability to define the concept of entertainment. However, Beckermann uses the term 'entertainment,' as "the continuing involvement of an audience while it is in contact with a presentation,"⁴⁷ which, etymologically considered, suggests that a drama can be 'entertaining' if it evokes

45

Pienaar, Louis, Head of Scheduling, SABC-TV, Auckland Park, Interview with author, 27/8/87.

46

Ibid.

47

Beckermann, Bernard, Dynamics of Drama: Theory and Method of Analysis, Alfred Knopf, 1970, p. 145.

a willing concentration on the part of an audience to follow the action. Entertainment, however, is not an intrinsic property or quality of a programme, but a value judgement which is attached by the viewer in terms of his/her background, education and circumstances.⁴⁸ However, the five rhetorical motifs, identified by Rosenfield and Mader as prerequisites for the pleasurable or gratifying experience of communication, and related to television drama, are as follows:-

1) Knowledge about identity. In a rhetorical sense a drama, for instance, could pose the question, who am I? This is particularly evident when a viewer identifies with a character and his/her dilemma. (The identification with myth figures in 'soap opera' is discussed in Chapter Seven).

2) Knowledge about ability. In this instance, the drama could demonstrate possibilities to the viewer on problem solving within a certain dramatic context, and to show the viewer that he/she has the ability to achieve certain goals, thus giving the viewer a feeling of gratification and liberation. (For instance, Nick Slaughter, private investigator in TROPICAL HEAT, achieves his goals by solving complex crimes, normally to the satisfaction of his mainly female clientele).

3) Knowledge about survival. The drama could express values of love, warmth and generosity, freeing the viewer from feelings of anxiety, destruction and death. (McGyver, the 'Houdini' of television drama series, survives the most extraordinary ordeals, usually unarmed, and as a member of the Phoenix Foundation is the epitome of the perfect citizen).

4) Knowledge about social reality. In this instance, the viewer is given the chance of viewing reality from an objective perspective. (Several single plays, such as TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE and THE OUTCAST, express aspects of social reality within a South African fictional context).

5) Finally, the collective experience of responding to a television drama in terms of identity, ability, survival and

48

Fourie, Pieter J., Aspects of Film and Television Communication, Juta, 1988, pp. 76 - 77.

reality relates directly to the enhancement of the viewer's own understanding and knowledge.⁴⁹

In this respect, television as a medium addresses its audience rhetorically and "expresses the values and norms of the society from which it springs in a rhetorical manner."⁵⁰ However, within the context of this investigation, the practitioners of the medium and the administrators within the SABC are more inclined to ask what entertains the viewer, as opposed to the abstract, what is entertainment?

6.6. RATING THE AUDIENCE.

In planning a campaign, a potential advertiser would need to know the size of the target audience, in relation to the cost of a commercial. For instance, in aiming to pitch the 'message' at a mainly White market, the following figures become relevant. During the same given period and time, (namely, January to March 1987, between 18.00 and 19.00), the total White audience on TV-1 was estimated at 1,237,000, (Monday), and 1,022,000, (Saturday).⁵¹

However, the direct value to the advertiser can also be expressed in terms of the cost of each flighting per thousand viewers. For instance, the SABC calculates that on a Monday between 18.00 and 19.00, when the advertiser is paying R13,650 for a 30 second spot, the actual cost per thousand viewers is a modest

49

Roanfield L., & Mader, T., The Functions of Human Communication in Pleasing, Allyan and Bacon, Boston, 1984, pp. 475 - 544.

50

Fourie, Pieter J., Aspects of Film and Television Communication, Juta, Cape Town, 1988, p. 80.

51

Ibid.

R11.06. On this basis, an advertiser is able to weigh up the cost of television advertising against that of other forms, for instance, the cost of producing a thousand printed leaflets. However, if the television advertiser's product is pitched mainly at the housewife, then the audience penetration is significantly lower. Thus, for the same price on a Monday between 18.00 and 19.00, the advertiser is reaching only 631,000 White housewives, making the cost R21,69 per thousand.⁵²

By comparison, the Black television services of TV-2 and 3, would cost the advertiser R2,950 to flight a 30 second spot, on a Monday between 18.00 and 21.00 hours during the same period (January to March 1987), but the total Black penetration would have been only 732,000 viewers. At a cost per thousand viewers, the rate is a mere R3,99. However, in order to reach only the Black housewife, the total penetration drops to 239,000 viewers, making it a more costly exercise at R11.92 per thousand.⁵³

Although the commercialisation of the SABC has placed it on a competitive footing with other commercial media in South Africa, it nevertheless wrestles uneasily with its hybrid status of being part-PSB and part-commercial, whereas its main broadcast competitor, the encoded service M-Net, has no such confusion. It is unashamedly commercial, and presents this image vigorously to its advertisers. For instance, with reference to its arts programme, REVUE PLUS, the following selling points are made in its favour:-

. REVUE PLUS has a consistent audience, thus adding frequency to a campaign.

52

Reach and Frequency Analysis, SABC Advertising Department, 1987.

53

Ibid.

. Its Target Audience is the affluent sector, as opposed to a "Mass Market" audience. ⁵⁴

Of direct financial benefit to M-Net is that for the 5- to 5 1/2 minutes of commercial air time sold during each 60-minute production of REVUE PLUS, at a rate of approximately R7 750 per 30-second flighting, yields some R78 500 in advertising revenue. ⁵⁵

6.7. ASPECTS OF AUDIENCE RESEARCH.

Because size of audience is a determining factor in the sale of time to the advertiser, the SABC's Broadcasting Research Department plays an important role in this regard. The Department is responsible for the following research functions:-

1. Audience Estimates
2. Qualitative Research
3. Formative Evaluation
4. Ad-hoc Research
5. Social Research
6. Panel Research
7. Consultations. ⁵⁶

The gathering of statistical information on audience size is of interest to programme planners and decision-makers within the corporation, as well as to advertisers. Prior to the introduction of television, the SABC's Listener Research

54

"Revue Plus Analysis," M-Net, 19/2/91. Source: Amps Meters (All Media Products Survey), administered by the South African Advertising Research Foundation.

55

Ibid.

56

Van Vuuren, D.P., Van der Walt, H. van R., "Using Alternative Methods in Broadcasting Research: Some Explorations and Results," Paper read at Conference, Drakensberg Sun, 23 - 26 May 1991, p. 7.

Unit conducted regular monitoring among all the 'population groups' in order to establish statistical data regarding the respective ethnic services and programmes. Therefore in 1975, the SABC was able to ascertain that on an average weekday a total of nine and a half million listeners were tuned into the various ethnic radio services, namely:-

Afrikaans Service .. (Whites)	1 121 000	(992 000	000
English Service (Whites)	412 000	(372 000	000
Springbok Radio (Whites)	2 032 000	(1 438 000	000
Regional Services .. (Whites)	1 530 000	(1 024 000	000
Radio 5	197 000	(116 000	000
Radio Bantu ...	4 526 000		

National research into evaluating audience size in broadcasting dates back to 1945, when a company called the South African Research Services (Pty) Ltd., estimated the size of audiences for the various radio services, such as the A and B services of the SABC, Lourenco Marques Radio and the BBC (World Service). The system adopted a 'yesterday recall method,' involving a sample of 3,337 respondents. In 1952, a new company known as Franklin Research (Pty) Limited was established, which not only surveyed the listener figures of adults, but also children.⁵⁸

57

SABC Annual Report, 1975.

58

Van Vuuren, D.P., Van der Walt, H., "Broadcasting Research: Change and Credibility," SABC, Directorate Broadcasting Research, Auckland Park, Johannesburg, 1989, pp. 11 - 15.

During the 50's the SABC formed its own 'validation committee' under the chairmanship of Henry Howell, and the main attention was focused on the competing commercial stations of Springbok Radio and Lourenco Marques Radio. The first listeners' panel was established by the SABC in 1961, consisting of one thousand listeners, the precursor of the television viewers' panel, which in 1990 consisted of 3000 members. ⁵⁹

During the 60's a private company, Market Research Africa, founded by Dr W. Langschmidt, undertook most of the audience estimates for the SABC. The present day South African Advertising Research Foundation, established in the seventies, grew out of a cooperative arrangement between Dr Langschmidt's company and the Association of Marketers. This new organisation brought together all the users of radio and television data, and among its objectives was to serve the interests of the advertising industry, media owners, as well as advertising agencies and marketers. ⁶⁰

During 1975, audience surveys were conducted of the television test transmissions, which marked the beginning of detailed research into the new television service, and co-operation was established by the SABC with the Human Sciences Research Council. The new research, however, continued to express audience size in terms of their racial and language categories.

59

Ibid.

60

Ibid.

Much of the methodology used in assessing television audience size and appreciation has been developed by the comprehensive and scientific audience research conducted in Britain. Continuous surveys are carried out by BARB, (the joint BBC/ITV Broadcasters' Audience Research Board), which is responsible for the commissioning of research, in much the same way that the Directorate of Broadcasting Research at the SABC commissions outside agencies, such as the HSRC. In Britain, for instance, one agency is commissioned to establish the number of viewers, while another seeks the opinions of the audience about the various programmes.

Until the mid-eighties, the IBA, Independent Broadcasting Authority in Britain conducted its own regular audience research, but it now relies entirely upon the findings of the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board. The Board's methodology includes a representative panel of viewers, who are asked to complete a questionnaire on the programmes they have viewed. (cf. Appendix 10 on SABC Viewers' Panel). Based on this information, the Audience Research Department compiles an Appreciation Index for each programme, and on a scale of 1 to 100 gives an indication of how much the programme was enjoyed. In respect of the single play, the following audience appreciation index shows how this genre compares with soap opera, serials and series:

Drama:	Single Plays	71
Drama:	Soap Opera	76
Drama:	Series and Serials	75

The overall variation across the genre is not great, except for the comparatively lower score for the single play. According to the survey, there is a wide variation

of AP's (Appreciation Index) within the single play genre, reflecting some uncertainty among the viewers of the production fulfilling expectations. For instance, in 1989, the AP's for SCREEN TWO (BBC-2 single play slot) ranged from 65 to 85, while for PLAY ON ONE, (BBC-1 single play slot), ranged from 48 to 76, whereas nearly all the series and serials averaged between 70 and 80.⁶²

The Independent Broadcasting Authority in Britain also relied upon the results of JICTAR, namely, the Joint Industry Committee for Television Audience Research, where selected homes throughout Britain had meters attached to individual television receivers calculating the number of hours per day the set was switched on. The limitation of this system, however, was that it could not ascertain whether anyone was in fact watching at any particular moment. An updated version of the JICTAR system, which includes a camera attached to the meter, and aimed at the viewers watching, is a more reliable indicator.

As part of their summative research, the SABC computes information gleaned from a viewer's panel, whose members are asked to indicate in order of preference the top five programmes during one week. For instance, in the list compiled for the week 17 to 23 March 1986, the panel, consisting of 1601 representative respondents selected nationally, and working from unaided memory, placed the following five programmes in order of preference:

PROGRAMME	VOTES
1. DALLAS	2 261
2. AGTER ELKE MAN	1 963
3. AIRWOLF	1 512
4. THE GOLDEN GIRLS	1 228
5. THE A-TEAM	1 121

62

Ibid.

However, the lack of scientific accuracy in these findings is reflected in the different results obtained by the SABC's panel survey and those of the AMPS-Peoplemeter, conducted by the South African Advertising Research Foundation, in respect of an appreciation index of the same programmes.

TV-1	SABC PANEL INDEX	PEOPLEMETER INDEX
LA LAW	100	72
WHO'S THE BOSS	83	100
MEESTER	66	70
MCGYVER	65	-
ORKNEY SNORK NIE	54	81
DALLAS	52	78

Although there is a wide discrepancy between the appreciation expressed by members of the SABC panel and the participants of the Peoplemeter survey, the advertiser has the additional information of the AR-ratings, where programmes are graded in terms of their audience size. For instance, in the following AR-ratings, which have been averaged out over the month of August 1991, the maximum exposure that an advertiser could buy, would be a time slot during the sitcom, WHO'S THE BOSS:-

TV-1	AR's
WHO'S THE BOSS	38,5

63

SABC Viewers' Panel, Relative Popularity, TV-1. (Panel members were requested to indicate in order of preference the five TV programmes they liked most during the week of 26 January - 2 February 1986).

64

Marketplace, Vol.13, No:18, Johannesburg, 7/10/1991, p. 23.

MAJOR DAD	35,4
DALLAS	28,9
LA LAW	27,6
MEESTER	25,6

(cf. Appendix 10 for the meaning of AR's and on how to express AR percentages in terms of estimated number of viewers. For instance, an AR of 38,5 for WHO'S THE BOSS gives an approximate audience figure of 1,622,775).

In the evaluation of a drama series, members of the SABC's Television Viewers' Panel would normally be asked a framework of questions, as for instance:-

- 1) How regularly do you watch WHO'S THE BOSS?
- 2) How many of these episodes would you say have you seen?
- 3) What do you think of the broadcast time of this programme? Would you say it is (too early), (just right), or (too late)?
- 4) How would you rate the acting of the following characters? (This is on a scale of 1 to 5, ranging from 'Excellent' to 'Very Poor').
- 5) Which one of the following is your favourite character in this series?
- 6) How would you rate the programme, on a scale of 1 to 5? From 'Extremely Interesting' and/or 'Enjoyable' to 'Not at all Interesting' and/or 'Enjoyable.'⁶⁶

Based on these findings an appreciation index ranging from 0 to 100 is calculated.

This information enables the schedulers and producers to evaluate a level of

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Information supplied by Dr. D.P. van Vuuren, Head of Audience Research Department, SABC. (Taken from "AMPS - MRA Trends - TV in Households"). August 1987.

66

Based on Television Viewers' Panel Questionnaire, No. 106, 1/7/91.

audience appreciation. The questionnaire is not always as comprehensive as indicated above, but can be reduced to a few salient questions. For instance, an appreciation index of 66 was given to an episode of DALLAS, transmitted on Tuesday evening February 4, 1986, and calculated on the response from 1658 members of the Panel, who were asked only two questions, namely:-

- 1) How much of this programme did you see?
- 2) Are you pleased with the return of this series? ⁶⁷

On the basis of quantitative and qualitative research, programme planners have two sets of information on which to evaluate a programme, the ratings, which for instance, estimated that 2,947 000 viewers watched that particular episode of DALLAS, and an Appreciation Index of 66, which is above the average of 60. (cf. Appendix 10 for further details of this particular questionnaire).

Although the Appreciation Index cannot be entirely reliable, as human responses are affected by many factors, such as personal well-being, sickness, tiredness, or a bad day at the office, they do provide a general indication of the audience's response. Therefore, ratings on their own can be very misleading, as most television sets are switched on between the hours of 18.00 and 20.00, but there is no way of knowing how those watching are responding to the programme. ⁶⁸

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SABC Viewers' Panel, 4/2/86.

68

Ibid.

Four out of the top ten programmes, evaluated in terms of the Appreciation Index, during the period 1987 - 1990, were dramas, namely, L.A. LAW, (76 points); McGYVER, (78 points); ORKNEY SNORK NIE (76 points), and AGTER ELKE MAN, (78 points). However, none of these was a single play, and among the English dramas, none was of local content. Among the ten programmes which scored the lowest points on the Appreciation Index during this period, was the locally-produced English series, LOUIS MOTORS, with 36 points. Locally produced dramas during this period achieved an average Appreciation Index of 68.⁶⁹

6.8. TV DRAMA TAKES FORMATIVE ACTION.

There is no crackling tension back across the footlights from unseen audiences, little sense of expectation, no unifying tradition of great work, and only the scantiest of evidence that the bulk of its 'viewers' (oh, passive noun), consider it a finer or deeper experience than any other sort of moving picture.⁷⁰

Drama cannot exist without an audience. Even a closet drama requires a reader to complete the communication chain. In the context of a theatrical presentation an audience is an assembly of people, however large or small, who have gathered to witness a dramatic performance. In radio drama, the audience is an assembly of one or more listeners gathered in various and dispersed venues throughout the

69

Van der Walt, H., "Tendensie in Waarderingsindekse, 1987 - 1990," Direktoraat Uitsaainavorsing, Johannesburg, 1991.

70

Potter, Dennis, "The Challenge of TV Drama," The Observer, 27/4/75, p. 16.

country to hear a performance. In television drama, the audience is likewise remote, but in addition to the dimension of sound, they also enjoy the added sensory stimulus of sight.

Among the aural and visual stimuli to which a television drama viewer is exposed include the audible and visible communication of the performer, which in turn are determined by several contributory factors, such as camera control, pictorial composition, lighting and image quality, editing, sound effects and music. (cf. Chapter Three) Evaluated, for instance, within a semiotic context, the respective signs and codes, in terms of their denotative and connotative signification, are negotiated by a viewer. For instance, in *THE OUTCAST*, the viewer is provided with many signifiers, such as the axe, knife, saw, among other things, and in assuming these signifiers he/she is able to appropriate the signified. Furthermore, paradigmatic connotation is derived from the director's low angled shot of Adam felling a tree with the axe, a threatening stance which is later repeated when the same instrument is used to kill Dial. The dominant linguistic and kinetic signs inherent in *THE OUTCAST*, combine into codes that are culturally determined whereby the viewer, depending on his/her education and background, is able to connote the social standing and relationships of the respective characters. Through a reading of these and other signs and codes, a viewer is able to construct an understanding of the production.

However, it can be argued that the impact of the performer's communication is inferior to that received by a theatre audience, because of the nature of the

television medium, which eliminates the presence of a live audience, with the consequent loss of an essential intellectual and emotional bridge with the performer that, to some degree, shapes his or her performance. Owing to the spatial and temporal remoteness of the television audience there is no possible way for a viewer to participate in the same kind of dialectic with the performer, who in the absence of a live audience, performs within an emotional and intellectual vacuum, a dilemma that television drama producers have tried to resolve in various ways. American producers, in an attempt to fill this vacuum, have introduced 'canned laughter' into their situation comedies in order to fake an audience response and, in turn, stimulate laughter from the viewer. However, this level of artificial response is of no material assistance to the actor, as it lacks the spontaneity of a live audience.

Recognising the problem, the English Drama Department introduced in 1987 a 'live audience' for the video recording of the sitcom series, *LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY*, produced in the studios at Auckland Park. Not only would an audience seated in the recording studio give the actors the necessary emotional feedback, in order to shape and enhance the quality of their performance, but the audience at home would be hearing laughter that was genuine and spontaneous. Outside of the sitcom genre, however, 'live audiences' have not been used in the production of any South African single play or episodic drama. In fact, a television production shot on location would find it impractical to provide an audience, who, in any event, would not be seeing the drama unfold in a

chronological sequence, but in segments which, on their own, would have little connective meaning. Therefore, this kind of audience bridge in television drama can only be accommodated in a studio, and only if the production runs in a chronological sequence.

Thus for most television dramas, the audience response remains a delayed one, provided by media critics, and the various audience research units, academic, private and public. However, the statistical data gathered can do nothing to shape a television actor's immediate performance, though in a long running daily 'soap opera' such as M-Net's EGOLI, the information could help change a particular character's interpretation or style of delivery, should the research findings reveal 'unwanted' and negative feedback.

Theatre managements may often be tempted to dispense with critics and ask the audience to express their appreciation or criticism, by means of a more direct appraisal, such as completing a questionnaire on the production. Such an approach, however, is likely to encounter apathy and cynicism. In the case of television, however, where commercial criteria have come to dominate SABC programme planning, any effort aimed at increasing an audience's enjoyment of a production before it is broadcast, can assist the Corporation in promoting the expectation of a large and appreciative audience to a potential advertiser.

In 1987, the SABC conducted, for the first time, a formative evaluation of an English television situation comedy, the findings of which have a bearing on

television drama as a whole. The investigation into the sitcom, LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY, was conducted by the Institute for Communication Research of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), in terms of a brief outlined by the SABC, which specified, for instance, that the control group should consist of equal numbers of English and Afrikaans speaking members, and the gender division should also be equal. However, in the actual test case, there were eight men and ten women, seven of whom were Afrikaans speaking (or, 38,9%), and eleven English speaking (61,1%). Of the respondents, some 94,4% fell within the age group 30 - 49, and only one was older than 49. Arising out of a questionnaire given to the eighteen respondents who viewed the pilot episode of the series, audience responses to pace, duration, acting, music and several other aspects of the production were obtained.⁷¹

The value of applying such a scientific approach to the appreciation of drama, where individual, personal and subjective responses cannot be evaluated to any fine degree, is questionable. However, from a producer's point of view, to be able to correct structural aspects of the production, such as pace, duration, background setting and choice of music, prior to recording 13 episodes, is of significant benefit. Similarly, from the advertiser's perspective, knowing that the drama series is a 'viable product' and is likely to deliver a large and appreciative audience, is also an important financial consideration.

71

Botha, M.P., Heyneke, M., De Beer, J.J., "Formatiewe Evalueringsnavorsing onder geselekteerde groepe televisiekykers oor die formaat en inhoud van die situasiekomedie, LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY," HSRC, Pretoria, 1987.

In respect of LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY, seventy seven of the respondents replied that the pace was acceptable; 17% said it was 'too slow', and only 6% claimed it was 'too quick.' Apropos duration, more than 55% found that the pilot episode of 45 minutes was too long. However, the producer had already proposed that the length per episode would be reduced to 26 minutes. On the question of music, background setting, acting and entertainment value, the respondents were asked to evaluate their response on a scale of one to five, ranging from 'poor' to 'excellent.'⁷²

On the question of background music, some 22% thought it was 'poor,' while 11% considered it to be 'excellent.' The majority, however, ranged their response between three and four. In evaluating the acting, 5,56% thought the performances were 'poor' while 22,22% considered them to be 'excellent.' 27,78% rated the acting 'good' (three out five); and a similar percentage rated it as 'very good,' (namely, four out five). The majority of respondents rated the entertainment value of the drama positively - ranging from three to five, (namely, from 'good' to 'excellent.'⁷³

An inherent danger in extrapolating such results in order to build positive features into a drama and to make it generally more 'pleasing' to an audience, is

72

Ibid.

73

Ibid.

that it could severely compromise the writer's artistic integrity in having to surrender challenging themes and even characters, in order to make the work more 'popular and entertaining.' Thus, while there may be merit in allowing the audience response to determine structural variations of 'pace' and 'duration,' the philosophic integrity of a drama should not be compromised to meet the demands of the lowest common denominator, or be subjected to the tyranny of numbers.

6.9. WHO ARE THESE NUMBERS WATCHING ENGLISH TV DRAMA?

In the early years of television broadcasting in South Africa, the English speaking drama audience was essentially regarded as the 40% component of the White population. This demographic mind-set was a legacy of radio broadcasting prior to 1976. Although cognisance was taken of the fact that many Indians were also English speaking, and that prior to 1976, limited air time was provided on the English Radio Service for this group on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, there was no serious attempt to provide a radio service that transcended racial group interests and presented a broadly-based national service for all South African English speakers.

Moreover, in terms of programme content, no consideration was given to any Black members of the public who may have been regular listeners to the English Service, because the existing policy of providing ethnically separate services to

cater for the various 'population groups,' lead to the broadcasting in eleven different languages. Ethnic categorising was transferred to the television channels of TV-1/2 and 3, though not as rigidly or as extensively owing to the prohibitive cost involved of providing separate channels for each 'population group.'

A characteristic of the English Radio Service was its dominant eurocentric ethos in programme content, especially in music and drama, fostered by the input of many of its senior personnel, such as British-born Colin Fish, who was influenced in his choice of dramatic material by "the unconscious role model provided by the BBC."⁷⁴ English radio announcers were expected to speak a Standard English that bore little resemblance to the range of accents spoken by the broad mass of English speaking South Africans. This eurocentric attitude was also transferred to the English Television Drama Department, where it was expressed through the style and content of many of the single plays, which failed to reflect an authentic South African ethos, as in *DELUSIONS* (1976) and *YOU'RE SO GOOD TO ME JONESY* (1976). (cf. Chapters Two and Four)

In respect of TV-1, the so-called non-White audience component was only given limited recognition after the introduction of the tri-cameral parliament in 1984, when plays which featured Coloureds and Indians began to appear; for instance, *CHOPSTICKS* (1984) and *WEB OF PERSUASION* (1986). *CHOPSTICKS*, written by Luanshya Greer, was the first single play with an all-Coloured cast.

74

Ridgway, Don, Interview with author, Durban, June 1991.

However, this conventional thriller with its "obvious plot and stilted dialogue could have been written for any upper-middle-class white home and bore no relation to the colourful coloured idiom." ⁷⁵

WEB OF PERSUASION enjoyed more credibility as it was written by a member of the Indian community, Jayapraga Reddy, who describes her play as "a love story, woven around the customs and traditions of the Indian people." ⁷⁶ Only since February 2, 1990, have Blacks began featuring more prominently in the news, AGENDA and in magazine programmes, such as, ANTENNA and COLLAGE.

Yet, based purely in terms of the changing audience patterns on TV-1, an earlier start to this process would have been justified. For instance, by the end of 1976, 46% of the White population had TV sets, as against 20% of the Indian; 9% of the Coloured and zero percent of the Black population. The following year, the Black figure was 0.2%; in 1978, 0.8%; and in 1979, the year that TV-2 and TV-3 commenced, the figure had risen to 2%.

An indication that significant numbers of Indian and Coloured viewers were being drawn to TV-1 is reflected in the number of households which had

75

Gray, Stan, "An Experiment that Didn't Quite Come off," Evening Post, Port Elizabeth, 26/10/84, p. 9.

76

Naidoo, Kenny, "Indian Playwright in Breakthrough on SATV," Sunday Times, 4/3/84 p. 14.

acquired television sets during the first three years of transmission, at a time when there was no alternative Black service. For instance, Indian households had more than doubled during this period, from 20% to 44%; Coloureds from 9% to 26%; and White households had increased from 46% (1976) to 73% in 1978. By 1985, some 94% of White households owned a television set, against 93% of Indians and 61% of Coloured. Black households began to show a steady and significant rise in television set ownership from 1979 onwards. By 1985, the figure had risen to 20%. Surveys conducted by the South African Advertising Research Foundation have confirmed that the majority of TV-1's audience is predominantly White, Coloured and Indian, with substantial periodic inroads by Black viewers, who occasionally find certain programmes, mainly sport and pop music, popular.⁷⁷

The multi-lingual complexity of the South African television public is a challenge to the television drama producer, and it is a misconception to assume that English language television drama is being presented to a predominantly English speaking audience. On the contrary, the majority of the audience watching English drama, are in fact Afrikaans speaking, mainly White and Coloured.⁷⁸ Therefore, a producer presenting a television drama in English on TV-1, has to contend with the heterogeneous nature of the English speaking community as a

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Ibid.

78

Hugo, Henk, Production Head: Television Drama, Interview with author, Auckland Park, February 1989.

whole, and the various sectors, regional and cultural, within it.

The wide diversity of the Anglophone community of South Africa, ranging from anglicised Greeks and Portuguese to those with an Anglo-Saxon background, makes it an elusive entity to define with any certainty. In terms of cultural differences, the English speaking community of southern Natal of Anglo-Saxon descent, differ in cultural roots from their English speaking Indian neighbours, who in turn, differ culturally from their anglicised Greek and Portuguese compatriots.

Furthermore, shades of political opinion differ widely among the English speaking community on a regional and socio-economic basis. The full political spectrum from far left to far right can be counted among English speakers. On a socio-economic level, for instance, the English speakers of Durban's Berea are generally in a higher income bracket compared with their fellow citizens living in the southern working-class suburbs. These economic and political variables are often expressed in accent and social values. In addition to the White sector of the English speaking community, about 30% of the so-called Coloured population have adopted English as their home language. Increasing numbers of Black middle class urban dwellers, who are proficient in English, are also part of the TV-1 audience.

While former English Drama Department head, Ken Leach, considered the importance of attempting to identify and define the 'English speaking South

African,' the current head, Paul Kemp, is dismissive of there being such an entity. According to Kemp, "we're are all Americanised; in our dress; in our music; in the films and videos we prefer watching, and the style of our magazines. We're American clones!" 79

Although the SABC's attempt at resisting a strong American influence has been unsuccessful, other countries throughout the world have also succumbed to the force of 'American cultural imperialism.' As Christopher Dunkley says:-

Despite tremendous efforts by the Canadian Government with both sticks and carrots, attempts to preserve a high level of Canadian content in Canadian television have largely failed. By 1982, nearly three-quarters of all English-language viewing time was spent watching American programmes transmitted either by Canadian networks or direct by the Americans themselves. Of the drama viewed in Canada - films, soap operas, detective stories and serious plays - 96 per cent was foreign, most being American though some was British. 80

Leach, concerned about the Americanisation of South African culture, tried during his tenure as Head of English Television Drama 'to create much more of a South African character' in the choice of plays, in an effort to counter this foreign influence. Because of the ethnic diversity of English speaking South Africans, Leach acknowledges the difficulty of defining the so-called average English

79

Kemp, Paul, Head of English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Johannesburg, June 1991.

80

Dunkley, Christopher, Television Today and Tomorrow, Wall-to-Wall Dallas?, Penguin, Middlesex, 1985, p. 93.

speaker:-

When you come to reflect on what you'd like to see an English speaking South African doing on the box, it's very difficult to pin him down, because there are no definitions about him. What is he? Is he a colonial? Is he a transplanted colonial? Or, is he a third world person, which I believe he is? ⁸¹

Unlike the Afrikaner, many of whom can trace their ancestral roots back more than 300 years and thus claim a strong sense of belonging to the country, the English, according to Leach, "were here for awhile and then went away leaving behind a few refugees. We've never had a moment that's pulled us together." ⁸² Leach's comment, however, ignores the periods of the first and second world wars, when the emotional and financial resources of the majority of the White English speaking community were harnessed in support of Britain's war effort. Notwithstanding, there is an attitudinal difference to history and lifestyle which marks off the English from their Afrikaner compatriots, according to former United Party member of parliament, Catherine Taylor:-

Unlike his Afrikaans contemporary, there is something traditionally abhorrent to the English in an excessively sentimental or even mental intimacy. They have a predisposition to control emotions until they become overpowering. This is less due to temperament than to the enduring effect of centuries of social education. Self restraint has not been taught to generations of Englishmen in vain. This means that they are least at ease when at grips with a forceful human problem. Hence the Englishman's

81

Leach, Ken, Head English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Auckland Park, August 1987.

82

Ibid.

tendency to shy away from ceremonies based on 'bloed en tranen' - even when they most nearly concern himself. ⁸³

The different cultural backgrounds of White Afrikaners and White English speakers, is often reflected in their respective dramas. For instance, in the six-part serial, *VERSPEELDE LENTE* (1983), where human survival and conflict are pitted against a harsh, dry landscape and an alien urban environment, the author draws on historical experiences with which Afrikaners can identify, such as the devastating drought and poverty of the late twenties and early thirties, and the consequent migration of poor Whites to the cities. Although the author chose to fictionalise the characters within a particular social context, the television medium orders the experience in ways that help to make sense of these seemingly disparate historical events, and gives the drama an intensity and social relevance not often found in English language television plays.

Comparisons between Afrikaans and English television drama often take as their starting point, each group's respective historical perceptions and myths. In respect of the English group, the emphasis is often placed on their contribution to commerce, industry and education, while the Afrikaners' struggle for survival against the challenge of new frontiers, numerous skirmishes and battles against enemies, both Black and White, are part of their whole system of story and belief. As Gray Hofmeyr says:

83

Taylor, Catherine, "My View of English-speakers, *New Nation*," Pretoria, September 1957, p. 10.

The English lack motivation for everything bar money, whereas, the Afrikaner is highly motivated, so whether he's right wing or left wing, it's his country.⁸⁴

Although contemporary right-wing Afrikaners have appropriated the folk myths of 'land en volk' for their own political agenda, the Afrikaners' struggle to retain an identity and a sense of nationhood within South Africa, are evocative elements within a dramatic context. Plays, such as, *MOEDER HANNA*, adapted from the stage for television in the mid-seventies, express a powerful appeal to the Afrikaners' sense of struggle and nationhood.

Likewise, it could be argued that one of the dominant themes of *THE OUTCAST*, namely, land and man, has given the play a particularly strong appeal to South African viewers. Cundill describes the landscape in which the drama is set, as follows:

A high panoramic shot of the spectacular landscape ... forest covered mountains stretching away to a far horizon. Pools and streams of mist lying in the valleys. Deep brooding silence.⁸⁵

It is within this evocative setting that Cundill sets the action of the drama; where the cycle of life in the forest is seen against the theme of wife and motherhood, where physical isolation and stagnation emphasise racial prejudice and alienation, and the axe, the destroyer of trees in the forest, is the instrument

84

Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

85

Cundill, John, Script of *THE OUTCAST*, p. 1.

Adam uses to kill his brother Dial.

Notwithstanding the apparent intellectual nonchalance of the majority of White English speaking viewers, whose history and survival in South Africa are free of 'folk struggle' myths, many of them have come to enjoy not only Afrikaans dramas, such as *VERSPEELDE LENTE*, but also dramatic stories which reflect on the 'the struggle' of other immigrant communities to this country. Thus the series, *THE BIG TIME* (1991), which focussed on the lives of a group of Greek-speaking Cypriot immigrants, also appealed to a wide cross-section of the English speaking viewing public, most of whom had no Greek background whatsoever.

The 'struggle' of these latter-day immigrants against an alien and unfriendly environment provides fruitful elements of conflict and action, through which a sustainable drama has been articulated. In Chapter Seven, it will be argued that the drama series such as *THE BIG TIME*, *HEROES*, *1922* and *THE VILLAGERS* have reflected more significantly on aspects of South African social conditions than the single play, albeit from a mainly White perspective.

The audience watching English television drama, though culturally diverse and mainly non-English speaking, are drawn together as South Africans sharing in the dramatic stories of other people. It is this fundamental position of the television drama audience that should be evaluated, not for commercial profit, but as a means of developing a common South Africanism. Thus a story of people who have moved to new areas of the country, not necessarily from overseas, but, for

instance, from the Transkei to Johannesburg in quest of 'The Big Time,' could produce a shared experience of significance to an even larger South African audience.

6.10. CONCLUSION.

This chapter has shown the English language single play to be a victim of encroaching commercialism, and an ever-increasing need of the SABC to placate the advertiser in order to balance their annual budget. Within the context of an SABC being run as a cost-effective business, where the principles of supply and demand are the all-pervading criteria, it is not surprising that the single play is regarded as an 'economic luxury'.⁸⁶ It also means that those who fund the major portion of the SABC's income, namely the advertisers, are indirectly determining what type of programme is produced. The investigation has shown that when the SABC functioned primarily as a public service broadcaster, the single play maintained a strong position within the repertoire of dramas produced by the English Drama Department, a situation which changed significantly when advertising revenue became an increasingly dominant factor.

Recognising the need to restructure the SABC, the Viljoen Task Group has recommended the establishment of an Independent Broadcasting Authority which, among other functions, should be impartial, depoliticised; that its

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Term referred to by Henk Hugo, Production Head: Television Drama, Auckland Park, Interview with author, August 1987.

members should have no vested interest in the broadcasting industry, and that it should be accountable only to parliament.⁸⁷ In recommending political impartiality, the report is indirectly calling for the SABC to return to its original Reithian ideal from which it had strayed over the past 40 years under National Party rule. In returning to those ideals, which not only de-politicises but also de-commercialises the functioning of the SABC to a lesser degree than exists today, are factors which can only work in favour of the single play. On the political level, the policy document on media of the African National Congress also sees a need to separate the state from direct political interference, and recommends that:

Such a public broadcasting service shall be independent of the ruling party and shall be governed by structures representative of all sectors of society.⁸⁸

The ANC have also suggested that public broadcasting in a 'new' South Africa should include a PSB component. (cf. Chapter Eight) In this respect, the organisation connects with the thinking behind the promotion of TSS in this regard. While it appears unlikely that commercial interests will ever be totally removed from consideration, even under a new political dispensation, there are examples overseas where commercial systems retain a strong PSB bias. For

87

Ibid. pp. 64 - 65.

88

Draft Media Charter, African National Congress, Resolutions Adopted at the Dip National Media Seminar, 23 - 24 November 1991. p. 3. Also see Appendix 11 on the Democratic Party's Policy Discussion Paper on Telecommunications and Broadcasting.

instance, in Britain, the role of its own IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority) is anomalous in that it appoints privately-owned commercial production companies, such as London Weekend Television, and yet its policy has all the hallmarks of a public service broadcaster. Unlike conventional commercial services, the IBA is not accountable to a group of shareholders, but to parliament and therefore to the public for all the programmes it transmits.

The Broadcasting Act requires the IBA to ensure that:-

The programmes provide a proper balance of information, education and entertainment; a high general standard in all respects; and, so far as possible, accuracy in news, due impartiality in matters of political and industrial controversy, and the avoidance of offence to good taste and decency.⁸⁹

The IBA further determines that television advertising on the franchised independent companies be limited to six minutes an hour, averaged over the day's programmes, with a maximum of seven minutes in any particular hour.⁹⁰ By comparison, the American systems of CBS and NBC, which are privately-owned commercial broadcasting networks, are accountable to their respective shareholders only. They are profit driven, their revenue derived solely from commercial sources, and they are not accountable to the American Congress.

At present, however, the South African English language single play, standing as

89

Television and Radio 1987, The IBA's Yearbook of Independent Broadcasting, London, p. 6.

90

Ibid.

it does outside the continuum of the average television scheduled programme - with its unpredictable shifts in style and content, as well as its characteristic discreteness and 'strangeness' from the repetitive programmes around it - remains a problem for TV-1 schedulers, who are undoubtedly aware that the corporation's survival and indeed, their own salary, depends upon the continued and growing support from the advertising fraternity. Therefore, as long as the scheduling of the single play is subject to the principles of commercial product selling, and the delivery of large audiences to the advertiser, the future of the genre on TV-1 remains highly questionable.

Although the single play audience is potentially 'everybody' and 'anybody,' who has a television set, and includes a wider anglophonic community, as well as significant numbers of Afrikaans speaking viewers, the genre has been categorised among the 'special interest' group of programmes, and thus carries with it the social stigma of eliticism. While this accusation may be true to the extent that many single plays in the past have been socially neutral, played to a mainly White minority and, in some instances, totally divorced from a South African reality, this does not necessarily condemn the genre as a whole. (As indicated in Chapter Four, single plays, such as TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE and THE OUTCAST have touched on relevant social and racial issues).

However, a major challenge for the producer within the present commercially-oriented SABC is not to reduce the level of the single play's stimulus to that of a commercial 'lollypop,' in order to secure good ratings and advertising revenue,

but to respect the general intelligence of an audience numbering some 800 000 in a non-patronising and sensible way. Furthermore, the anglophonic component of that audience is likely to grow, becoming increasingly Black and consequently less 'elitist' as political and economic developments continue apace.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ELECTRONIC MELODRAMAS: ECLIPSING THE SINGLE PLAY.

7.1. INTRODUCTION.

Television is, or can at least become, the great folk art of modern man. The huge quantity of material it produces, the vast number of human beings on which it has to draw do give it the character of genuine folk art - based on the demands of the mass rather than on the tastes of a few elitist figures.¹

The drama series and serials have been a major threat to the survival of the single play, as it is argued that the episodic genre is best suited to the medium of television. The basis of this argument is that the phenomenon of continuum, which characterises the television medium, favours the production of serials and series, whose episodes unfold weekly, or even daily, together with other regular scheduled features, such as the news, current affairs programmes and the various magazine features. Moreover, the total time allocated to a drama series or serial (for instance, 13 x 56 minutes), allows the writer or writers more time to develop characterisation and to explore in depth the dilemma in which the characters find themselves. On that basis, the argument goes, the drama series/serials should be encouraged, even at the expense of the single play. However, this chapter will illustrate that the extended time given for dramatic development in a series or serial does not necessarily produce a superior production. On the contrary, these episodic dramas often fall prey to stereotypical character portrayals and melodrama in order to sustain their popularity.

1

Esslin, Martin, *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 6, Apr. - Jun., 1972, London, p. 43.

Unlike the theatre, where serialised plays are not a feature, the television medium with its largely domestic-based audience, capitalises on regular patterns of viewing, which serials and series encourage. It is this familiarity that develops among viewers a loyalty to the characters in a series or serial. According to Martin Esslin, the dramatic series, in which the same set of characters reappears in self-contained episodes week-after-week, is 'perhaps the most characteristic feature of television,' and is one of 'the most formidable cultural phenomena of our time.'²

Recurring characters often are more real than most people the viewers know, simply because they know these characters better than they do most of their real acquaintances. After all, the viewers have been present at the most intimate, emotion-charged moments in these characters' lives, have partaken in their love affairs, family mix-ups, and life-and-death adventures.³

Esslin says the dramatic series are undoubtedly among the most popular features of television in the major countries of the world, and the characters become mythological figures with their own lives and personalities which far transcend the relatively modest confines of their original 'raison d'etre.' They are the sagas of the twentieth century, just as Homer's Iliad and the Odyssey were in ancient Greek times.⁴

2

Ibid.

3

Esslin, Martin, The Age of Television, Stanford, 1981, p. 42.

4

Esslin, Martin, Theatre Quarterly, Vol. 11, No. 6, Apr. - Jun., 1972, London, p. 43.

They correspond almost exactly to the stories which in primitive communities bards and ballad singers used to provide, always about nearly identical exploits of the tribal heroes. The western series in particular here provide an uncannily apt parallel.⁵

Owing to the popularity and economic advantages which the episodic genres enjoy over the single play, it is difficult to argue for the retention of the latter with accountants who occupy pivotal positions in commercially oriented television institutions such as the SABC. Insofar as independent companies producing drama productions on contract to the SABC are concerned, the single play is not economically viable, as substantial savings and, consequently, increased profits, are made by producing series and serial dramas. The most cogent economic argument against producing the single play is that it requires the infrastructure of sets, costumes and actors for the one occasion only, whereas, the same sets, costumes and actors, are used over the contracted number of episodes in a series or serial. Increased profitability also attracts writers and directors to the more lucrative production of multiple episodic drama. (These aspects will be amplified when discussing cost-effective drama later in this chapter).

Although the series and serials share similar characteristics in that they both focus on a given set of characters - many of whom appear in every episode - each episode of a series is a complete 'story' in itself, whereas the serial presents an on-going narrative. Major themes in 'soap opera' include family and love; among their stock characters, or stereotypes are, the evil woman, (Alexis in

5

Ibid.

DYNASTY) and the alcoholic woman, (Sue Ellen in DALLAS). On the other hand, series drama can range from the predictable formula plots of American private detective and adventure series, such as, MAGNUM, and P.S I LUV YOU, containing strong elements of melodrama, to works rooted in an everyday recognisable reality, such as the BBC's Z CARS and DOCTOR FINLAY'S CASEBOOK. There is also a hybrid variety, known in Britain as the series-al, where a long running series develops a continuing narrative element, for example, THE ONEDIN LINE.⁶ The first series produced for the English Drama Department, THE VILLAGERS falls into the category of the series-al, where each of the episodes is a complete story, but there is a narrative thread which places the production somewhere between a series and a serial. (However, within the context of this investigation, THE VILLAGERS will be referred to as a serial). Situation comedies come mostly in series form, as in, OH, GEORGE, and ORKNEY SNORK NIE.

A major factor which separates the single play from the episodic dramas is the emphasis of melodrama in the construction of the latter, an element which adds to their widespread popularity. Although the element of melodrama is present in many single plays, for instance, the killing of the brothers Adam and Dial in THE OUTCAST, as well as in the plays of many classical Greek playwrights and in several of Shakespeare's plays, it is a dominant characteristic of the episodic dramas, particularly 'soap operas.' Melodramatic elements are also evident in a

6

Sutton, Shaun, The Largest Theatre in the World, BBC, London, 1982, p. 34.

number of episodic dramas that express pretensions of 'serious drama,' such as *HEROES* and *1922*, which are discussed later in this chapter.

7.2. THE PHENOMENAL 'SOAPS.'

Although the structure of 'soap opera' incorporates many of the dramatic elements identified in Chapter Two, this chapter will focus on the aspect of melodrama as a dominant characteristic, particularly evident among many of the American imports, which, in turn, have provided the format pattern for many local productions. (cf. *DALLAS* clones discussed later in this chapter).

The name 'soap opera' derives from the American soap and cooking oil conglomerate, Proctor and Gamble, who sponsored many radio serials in the 1930's. The regular weekly, and sometimes daily, episodes were broad based storylines, which allowed for endless dramatic developments.⁷ Daytime 'soaps' on radio and television are aimed at the housewife, who is attracted to the escapist nature of these dramatic programmes, and provide the sponsors with a target audience for the sale of various household products, including soap powder. In South Africa, locally produced English daily radio serials started with the inception of Springbok Radio in 1950. (Among the popular works of this genre was *FROM CRYSTAL WITH LOVE*. In television, *EGOLI*, the first daily soap opera produced in South Africa, went out in April 1992 on M-Net).

True soap - whether it be weekly twice or thrice weekly -
may be profuse in plot, but it must be simple in

7

Ibid. p. 45.

presentation, capable of casual viewing by the family while it is completing its meal. The stories must progress slowly, ensuring that anyone who misses a couple of episodes can pick up the threads without difficulty.⁸

Episodic story-telling is not unique to the television medium, having enjoyed popularity in Victorian times with the serialised novels, such as *PICKWICK PAPERS* by Charles Dickens. (The *POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF THE PICKWICK CLUB* appeared first in twenty monthly instalments, beginning in April 1836, before being published in book form in 1839).⁹ The film and radio media have also capitalised on this popular form in an effort to sustain regular audiences. Serialised supporting films were popular in the cinemas of the 1940's and 1950's, and in the print medium, magazines continue to feature serialised stories.

Nineteenth century melodrama, with its impressive pictorial appeal, exploited the visual medium, giving stimulus to an emerging film industry, and emphasising further similarities with modern soap opera.

By the middle of the century, moving pictures could be created very excitingly on stage by means of elaborate and highly sophisticated machinery. Spectacular scenic effects would be advertised on the posters, and commercially minded playwrights, such as Dion Boucicault (1822 - 90), made a point of including what he called a 'sensation scene' in each play.¹⁰

8

Ibid.

9

Introduction to *Little Dorrit* by Charles Dickens, Collins, London, 1958, p. 6.

10

Hayman, Ronald, "Victorian Melodrama," British Theatre Museum, Card No. 47, London, 1991.

One of the most recurrent devices in Victorian melodrama was the arrival of the gallant hero at the climax to save the terrified and chaste damsel from some ghastly fate. This notion of the cliffhanger was carried into the early film serials, where the terrified victim, facing imminent danger or death, is saved by the hero in a feat that often defies the laws of logic and credibility. (The cliffhanger, as an essential ingredient of television serialised drama is discussed within the context of the writers' formula later in this chapter).

In series drama, which does not as a rule employ the device of the cliffhanger, the element of fantasy, also a characteristic of melodrama, is a pervasive factor, where cult heroes such as McGyver and Magnum, are constantly dodging a barrage of bullets and physical assault in their successive and predictable attempts at rescuing victims, including beautiful heroines, from evil forces.

Television 'soap opera' shares further similarities with Victorian melodrama in presenting an ultimately reassuring future which brings "semi-conscious anxieties into the limelight, invariably resolving the conflict in a happy ending that made virtue triumph."¹¹

.... the structure of melodrama enacts a fantasy of reassurance, and the happy or moralistic endings so characteristic of the form are reductive and arbitrary -- a denial of our 'real' world where events refuse to be coherent and where harm is the norm. The desperate or cunning or

11

Thorburn, David, Television Melodrama, London, p. 530.

spirited stratagems by which this escape from reality is accomplished must still retain a fundamental interest.¹²

Melodrama derives from the Greek word 'melo' (or, 'music'), and drama, (indicating 'action'); and where the spoken word is accompanied by music it also has associations with opera. Hence the symbiotic relationship between Charlie Chaplin and the piano accompanist, expressive of exaggerated action and punctuated music, are characteristic of the early 'silent' movies. (In fact, as the piano accompanist would attest, they were never really 'silent').

The term melodrama came into widespread use in England during the nineteenth century, when it was appropriated by theatrical entrepreneurs as a legal device to circumvent statutes that restricted the performances of legitimate drama to certain theatres.¹³ The association with opera could possibly excuse the exaggerated and extravagant sense of hyper-reality so prevalent in television melodrama.

Furthermore, 'soap opera' has much in common with the sentimental English novel, that originated in the eighteenth century; for instance, Samuel Richardson's *PAMELA*, which depicts a young housemaid who struggles to behave in accordance with the values of her upbringing, and succeeds in avoiding seduction. The narrative ends happily with her marriage to her employer, a man of high social standing. The plot, a recurrent theme in women's fiction, also

12

Ibid. p. 531.

13

Ibid.

occurs in television serials, such as DALLAS, where leading female character, Pamela Barnes, (Victoria Principal), daughter of luckless, Digger Barnes, marries into the powerful and successful Ewing clan. She becomes an agent of good in her battle with the evil forces around her, personified mainly in the figure of her brother-in-law, J.R. Ewing. Although DALLAS is widely regarded as 'soap opera,' and shares many characteristics of this genre, the fact that each series, (normally lasting six months), ends with a concluding plot distinguishes it from traditional 'soap operas' which have open ended narratives.

However, the 19th century novel differs significantly from 'soap opera' and other forms of television drama, in the position that the reader occupies in relation to the events portrayed. For instance, the reader may be drawn into the novel in the position of the omniscient narrator created by the author, or be recruited into the text from the perspective of the protagonist; in fact there are many devices available for disrupting the conventions which attempt to create a single or fixed point of view for the reader. Likewise, in television drama there are a variety of ways in which the viewer is addressed. For instance, in the classic realist text the camera is used to place the viewer in the position of the omniscient narrator. In the series, LA LAW, the modes of address are indirect, where the viewer is a voyeur, transported into the personal and business interactions of a top Los Angeles law firm. The viewer's perspective, as projected by the camera, is one which glides across city skyscrapers, moves through doorways, scans the faces of the jury, reveals emotionally charged close-up reactions and eavesdrops on private conversations and intimate affairs.

The viewer in *LA LAW* is often left to resolve the moral dilemmas that have been posed, and to make value judgements that extend beyond the purely moralistic, unlike the moral codes of 'soap opera,' which tend to offer sentimental moralistic solutions. In 'soap opera,' the 'good' characters, such as, Jock, Bobby and Miss Ellie in *DALLAS*; Blake and Krystle in *DYNASTY*, are used as moral anchors to counter the corrupt characters of J.R Ewing (*DALLAS*), and Alexis Colby (*DYNASTY*). In both *DALLAS* and *DYNASTY*, 'soap opera' characters interact within a complex domestic or romantic melodramatic situation, similar to the English sentimental novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In such melodrama, vice is always more entertaining than virtue, yet villainy is made to serve the interests of conventional morality, as witnessed when the 'wheeler-dealer,' conniving, corrupt J.R. Ewing is stripped of his position of power in the family business, and the fulfilment of his life-long ambition one day to hand the company onto his son John Ross Jnr.

The focus on individualism is a common characteristic of both 'soap opera' and the 19th century novel. According to Morgan and Welton, American 'soap operas,' (such as, *MCGYVER*, *MAGNUM* and *AIRWOLF*), reflect the importance which American society attaches to individualism.¹⁴ In terms of the 19th century novel, the philosophical tenet, 'the truth to individual experience,' expounded by the eighteenth century philosophers Locke and Descartes, not only became a characteristic of many Victorian novels, (for example, *THE WAY OF ALL FLESH*), but can also be traced to the development of 'soap opera,' where

14

Morgan, J., Welton, P., See What I Mean: An Introduction to Visual Communication, Edward Arnold, London, 1986, P. 101.

individuals function within their own sense of truth and reality. Locke and Descartes saw truth as that which was perceived by the individual, and was therefore independent of any preconceived laws of nature and the human condition. "The individual was seen as being in touch with his own reality only through his awareness of existing in a particular place in space and time." ¹⁵

'Soap operas' create their own sense of reality within the formulistic framework of the unfolding narrative; a framework not always rooted in the generally accepted realities of the world, but located within the fantasies of the drama's creators, (usually, a combination of the producer/director, writer and/or writers), whose consideration of rational logic is often subordinated to the primary concerns of generating high profit and securing good ratings. For instance, in *DALLAS*, the individual character's assurance of his/her place in space and time is at times challenged by a fictional 'reality' that defies rational logic; as happened when thirteen episodes of the serial were written off as a 'bad dream' in order to accommodate the return of leading character, Bobby Ewing, (Patrick Duffy), who was 'killed' in a motor accident in order to release him from the production.

However, his miraculous return to life in the opening scenes of the first episode of the following 13-part serial, when he is suddenly discovered by his wife in the shower, is pure 'soap opera' fantasy, brought about with the main aim of

15

Herrington, Sandra, "Adaptation of the 19th Century Novel," MA Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1983, Chapter One.

stemming a decline in the ratings. Pam confesses to having had an amazing dream, which not only included her marriage to Mark Graison (John Beck), but involved countless other events, mostly unrelated to herself and Bobby, but touched on the lives of an entire community in Dallas. As generators of modern myth, "soap opera denies the connection between the social relations they portray and reality." ¹⁶

Yet a clear dichotomy of intent is witnessed in the duality of fantasy and surface realism in DALLAS. On one hand, through setting and performance a convincing illusion of reality is created, particularly with exterior locations moving from the Texas ranch, to authentic street scenes of downtown Dallas, as well as to various European capitals. On the other hand, there are the plot devices, such as Bobby's miraculous return to life. Consequently, shifting tensions are created within a viewer's orientation and perception, between seeming reality and ridiculous plot devices, contradictions which are never resolved but accepted within the context of melodramatic conventions.

The motivation behind these tensions and contradictions is not aimed at illuminating an audience as much as at titillating and entertaining and, in so doing, subordinating significant elements of drama, such as character, plot and performance, to the powerful forces of commercialism, which operate to maximise entertainment for entertainment's sake. Under these circumstances, the credibility of the characterisation is severely strained, as well as any possible

16

Eagleton, T., Criticism and Ideology, Methuen, London, p. 70.

illumination of the human condition. Furthermore, the focus on individualism in 'soap opera' is generally superficial and glamorised, and does not 'dramatize the unique experience of a single human character,' as, for instance, Adam, in *THE OUTCAST*.

7.3. CLONING DALLAS FOR THE LOCALS.

The popularity of *DALLAS* has given this serialised drama the status of a cultural myth, and its success has become a yardstick by which several locally produced series and serials have been measured. When journalist, Sue Robertson, visited the set of *WINCHESTER*, a locally produced 'soap opera' shot on a sugar estate on the Natal north coast, she compared the production to "another *DALLAS* in the making."¹⁷

1) It is easy to see why it has been dubbed South Africa's *DALLAS*. Substitute the oil fields for sugar plantations and add the tried and trusted formula of intrigue, seduction and the rest - and you've got *GREEN GOLD*.¹⁸ (*GREEN GOLD* was re-named *WINCHESTER* before transmission).

2) Local talent abounds in the Natal North coast's *DALLAS* - the 'green gold' - sugar - replacing the 'black gold' - oil.¹⁹

17

Robertson, Sue, "Sex and Sin in the Sugarland," *Weekend Argus*, Cape Town, 20/11/82, p. 10.

18

Ibid.

19

Natal Mercury, "Natal's Dallas about to Hit TV Screens," 3/8/84, p. 5.

WINCHESTER, with strong ingredients of melodrama, namely, family feuds, suicides, alcoholism, seductions, statutory incest, and a melange of wheeling and dealing, is the story of the Mortimer family, headed by matriarch, Alice Mortimer. According to Tony Jackman, "Delphine Lethbridge, who co-scripted the seven-episode series with Scott Finch, obviously knows the DALLAS formula well." ²⁰

Critics and members of the public have also compared John Cundill's WESTGATE with DALLAS. For instance, D.A. Matthews writes in the Sunday Times; "we've seen much more action in this local TV series than we ever saw in DALLAS," ²¹, and Pretoria News critic, Avis Perks writes; "WESTGATE was way ahead of the average American soap opera like the unspeakably trashy KNOTS LANDING as regards script and acting, and every bit as technically slick as DALLAS." ²²

Notwithstanding these superficial accolades, DALLAS reflects very conservative and conventional production styles. The significance of the room as a dominant interior setting, is a direct borrowing from the conventional stage, as is the emphasis on developing characters, (or, character stereotyping) through dialogue, as opposed to the high action visual thrills of the Canadian series, TROPICAL

20

Jackman, Tony, "Here's a Local Soap as Good as the Imports," *The Argus*, Cape Town, 8/8/84, p. 3.

21

Matthews, D.A., "Westgate a Milestone," *Sunday Times*, 1/8/82, p. 3.

22

Perks, Avis, "In Memory of Westgate," *Pretoria News*, 29/7/82, p. 3.

HEAT. However, the unfolding narrative of DALLAS does not present a coherent and structured drama, but 'an atmosphere in which drama succumbs to style.'²³ In filmic terms, "DALLAS offers no surprises: there are hardly any unusual camera movements, no experiments with lighting and so on; there are no diversions from the normal conventions of the production rules of prime time television programmes."²⁴

DALLAS is not America, it is a right-wing fantasy of what America should be. Only the shell-shocked and mentally enfeebled can see any reality in the show.²⁵

Even though locally-produced WESTGATE I (transmitted in 1981 after it sat in incubation for two years before a suitable director could be found), was written before DALLAS and DYNASTY, it too was compared by critics with DALLAS. However, the catalyst for WESTGATE was provided in the brief sojourn Cundill had with Group Editors, a glossy public relations business. As Cundill says, "it was a company which took public relations in this country into the stratosphere, with big money, big billings and big accounts."²⁶ It gave him an insight into the world of big business, from where he was able to draw material for WESTGATE.

23

Ang, Ien, Watching Dallas, Methuen, London, 1985, p. 37.

24

Ibid. p. 9.

25

Ronge, Barry, "Why is Dallas Such a Hit?," Sunday Times Magazine, 19/7/87, p. 15.

26

Cundill, John, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

WESTGATE, in its attempt to capture an overseas market by introducing into a South African business context an international glossy style of setting and performance, created instead an unconvincing hybrid status. (For that reason, Cundill said he was not prepared to write another WESTGATE series, but would turn his attention to stories that were more authentically South African in character).²⁷ WESTGATE (I,II and III) had limited international success with sales to broadcasting stations in Italy, Spain, as well as several South American countries, and on the African continent, it was also broadcast on Zimbabwean television.

7.4. SITUATION COMEDIES.

The sitcom, which has displaced most other forms of video comedy, is supposed to 'relate' to its audience. It does so in a number of ways, first by creating characters who are supposed to resemble and to represent the audience. Second, it dramatizes events or conditions (for example the conflict of female liberation with male chauvinism) that provide motivation for a plot. Third, the sitcom suggests an attitude toward things, and toward ourselves.²⁸

Although the television situation comedy is not defined as part of the 'soap opera' genre it does, however, share many of the characteristics of soap opera, including the element of melodrama. It is light, dramatic entertainment, which can be typified as relying on a group of recurring characters, familiar locations and rather predictable story-lines. In one significant aspect, however, situation

27

Ibid.

28

Berman, Ronald, How Television Sees its Audience, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California, 1987, p. 12.

comedy is generally not an on-going narrative, but follows the series format in that each episode is a complete story in itself as it focusses on selected events or situations within a group or family. As a distinct genre, it first became popular in Britain in the early 1950's, beginning as radio entertainment and transferring naturally to television in the late 1950's.

Although the antecedents of situation comedy lie in the music hall and variety theatre, the modern development of the genre as in the Afrikaans sitcom, *ORKNEY SNORK NIE*, indicate characteristics that distinguish it from other television dramatic forms. Thus the nature of the narrative in *ORKNEY SNORK NIE* is marked by its constantly taking place in the present, and by its very limited narrative progression. For instance major events tend to occur outside the closed setting of the house and garage, where the characters are confined to play out their roles. As its name implies, the 'situation' is the crucial comic ingredient in which the stereotype characters find themselves. Among locally produced English television situation comedies are, *OH GEORGE*, (1981); *SEÑOR SMITH*, (1985), and *LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY* (1987).

Referring to the American situation comedy genre, from which the South African counterpart has taken its inspiration, Ronald Berman says that they are full of advice about "hot social issues, and that makes them very different from comedy in general."²⁹ In this respect, the sitcom is an extension of the daily news bulletin, in which topical items, such as hostage dramas and international

29

Ibid.

terrorism, often find their way into the dramatic material of this genre, mainly by way of oblique reference. In South African sitcoms, however, the really 'hot issues' that touch on national socio/political issues have been avoided during the period under review; instead reference has been made to major sporting events, as for instance, Currie Cup rugby in *ORKNEY SNORK NIE*.

A common characteristic of all serials, series and situation comedies is a formulistic approach to dramatic writing; the main difference being the extent to which the formula is applied. For instance, in a 13-part serial the formula applies over a narrative succession lasting a predetermined number of hours, whereas, in a series, the formula is normally repeated within the self-contained stories of each episode.

7.5. APPLYING THE FORMULA.

With tongue-in-cheek, Hugh Whitmore refers to a hierarchy of the various genres of television drama.

At the top are the aristocrats of the single play, then come those who work on prestige serials, followed by the manufacturers of popular series, with soap opera labourers languishing at the bottom. Somewhere in the middle - the equivalent of skilled plumbers, perhaps, or electrical engineers - are those who make dramatizations and adaptations.³⁰

30

Whitmore, Hugh, "Word into Image: Reflections on Television Dramatisation," *Ah! Mischief*, Faber and Faber, London, 1982, p. 101.

Skilled plumbers and electrical engineers are no less adept at measurement and formula than are the formula writers of serials and series who also apply a mechanical construct to their craft. To refer to television serial and series writing as formulistic is not to demean the genre, as dramatic conventions or 'formulae' have been applied to the practice of the dramatist throughout the ages. The classical unities of time and place are conventions that playwrights of 5th century BC Athens assiduously applied to their works, while the concept of genre itself implies a formula, involving certain narrative structures, themes and production styles that distinguish various dramatic forms one from the other.

What makes the television serial and series unique and suspect, however, is the strict adherence to a mathematical formula in the structuring of the drama, punctuating specific climactic moments to coincide with timed advertisements and station announcements. It is a formula that is necessarily restrictive as it conforms rigidly to the commercial demands of the medium. Working within these tightly prescribed constraints, the formula writer is more likely to construct contrivance and narrative succession with predetermined climaxes, rather than develop an organic plot that does not favour arbitrary interruption.

This view is supported by the Production Head: TV Drama, Henk Hugo, who says the single play does not, as a rule, carry any advertisements during transmission so as not to destroy the organic development of plot.³¹ Moreover, writing to formula can also lead the scriptwriter into creating stereotypes rather

31

Hugo, Henk, former Production Head, TV Drama, Interview with author, SABC, Johannesburg, 1987.

than fully developed characters, as consideration of dramatic situation and event often over-ride the requirements of character development, as for instance, in the serialised drama *TIMBER* (1992), the owner of the mill, Bill Storm, was originally made to speak such 'plastic dialogue' that no convincing characterisation could have emerged from the script had actor Frank Graham not changed many of the lines. Nevertheless, several unresolved inconsistencies in the character of Bill Storm remained unchanged; for instance, the supposed strength of the man, and yet he is rendered helpless in the hands of the young entrepreneur from the city; his projected fair-mindedness, and yet his treatment of his son was biased and prejudiced.³² According to Peter Brook:

It is woefully difficult to write a play. A playwright is required by the very nature of drama to enter into the spirit of opposing characters. He is not a judge; he is a creator - and even if his first attempt at drama concerns only two people, whatever the style he is still required to live fully with them both. The job of shifting oneself totally from one character to another - a principle on which all of Shakespeare and all of Chekhov is built - is a super-human task at any time. It takes unique talents and perhaps ones that do not even correspond with our age.³³

Scriptwriter, Mark Roper, had a particularly difficult task in developing the original script of *TIMBER* by A.D. Prinsloo, who had died in 1984. By the time the actors had arrived on set Roper was onto the fourth draft, which was still, according to Frank Graham, "a very poor script, full of cliches and melodrama,

32

Graham, Frank, Seminar: postgraduate Speech and Drama students, University of Natal, Durban, March 1992.

33

Brook, Peter, The Empty Space, Penguin, Middlesex, 1973, p. 38.

and Bill Storm's death scene was saved only from being a total farce by skilful post production editing." ³⁴

Notwithstanding its formulistic construct, the serial format proposed by dramatist Franz Marx resembles the well-made play in having a beginning, a middle, (presumably a very long middle), and an ending. ³⁵ Marx, who stresses the importance of an ending, differs in this respect from the writers of the British serial, CORONATION STREET, where after more than thirty years, the final ending is no where in sight; or, the writers of DALLAS, who arrived at a final conclusion only after fifteen years when plunging audience ratings threatened the viability of making future episodes.

In respect of AGTER ELKE MAN, Marx says the importance of a drama having an ending, is that no matter how good or complex the drama series becomes, or how many plots and sub-plots involved, somewhere in the main plot is an ending. He says that after having thought through the characters and situation, the next step is to consider where the story is going to lead, and depending on the number of episodes that a writer is contracted to produce, the last episode must be written first. ³⁶ Within such a structure, it could be argued that AGTER ELKE

34

Graham, Frank, Seminar: postgraduate Speech and Drama students, University of Natal, Durban, March 1992.

35

Report on the Television Writers' Workshop in Johannesburg. Information supplied to author by Sandra Kotze, former Head, Afrikaans Drama, TV-1, SABC, July 1987.

36

Ibid.

MAN is in essence one very long play. This may hold valid for the first 13 episodes, but when further 13-part serials are commissioned, and sequels developed, the integrity and originality of the drama is devalued. The argument of a serialised drama being one long single play is more convincingly applied to the short serials of Manie van Rensburg's work, such as HEROES. (cf. Chapter Four).

While the single play has been examined largely within the codes of traditional criticism, in that it acknowledges the pivotal position of the author in relation to the text, and the author's intention as being seminal to the meaning of the drama, the serial writer functions more within an institutional context. This argument does not ignore the position occupied by other aesthetic and technical inputs in the production of the single play, but emphasises the function of the writer as primary creator and the first to fix the meaning; whereas, the dramatic works by serial writers are frequently the result of corporate writing efforts, or the contribution of more than one writer, or even the work of non-writers such as, directors and producers. Although John Cundill was the sole scriptwriter of WESTGATE I and II, he engaged assistant writers for WESTGATE III. In the London Weekend drama production of UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS, ten writers were engaged for the thirteen part series.³⁷

According to Franz Marx, the author is only about one fifth of the ingredient that is needed for a television series/serial, but it is the most important because it is

37

Theatre Quarterly, "Upstairs Downstairs, London Weekend Drama Series," Vol. II, No. 6 Apr - Jun 1972, London, p. 31.

the departure point, and with a good script, 'you're halfway there.'³⁸ P.G. du Plessis says the television dramatist moves away from the centre of creativity, to a position where a combination of other art forms and technical skills can also make their input. According to him the institutionalised nature of writing for television means that 'the writer has to come to terms with his ego first,' as other practitioners will mediate his vision.³⁹ However, as Sandra Kotze says, the on-going narrative dramas are more susceptible than the one-offs to the intrusion of competing agents who are prone to re-shape a script in order to make it more popular and commercially viable.⁴⁰

The first English drama serial, *THE VILLAGERS*, (1976), was a collaborative writing effort involving journalists John Cundill, Noel Harford and James Clarke. The idea for the 13-part serial was conceived around the tea urn in a corridor of the newspaper office, *The Star*, in Johannesburg. The trio submitted six story lines to the SABC, and were offered thirteen. However, Clarke later withdrew from the project owing to pressure of work, leaving Cundill and Harford to write the first thirteen episodes.⁴¹

38

Marx, Franz, Writers' Workshop, SABC, Johannesburg, 1987.

39

Du Plessis, P.G., Writers' Workshop, SABC, Johannesburg, 1987.

40

Kotze, Sandra, former Head of the Afrikaans Drama Department, TV-1, Interview with author, August 1987.

41

Cundill, John, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

Noel was good at thinking up situations to affect the characters and thrust them into new reactions. I did more of the actual writing and dialogue.⁴²

Marx, however, contradicts a fundamental notion of the serial writer in that he was the sole scriptwriter of *AGTER ELKE MAN I* and *II*, (1984 and 1987), and in this respect functioned as a one-off author in that his intentions were seminal to the understanding of the work, and he was able to determine the overall structure within the constraints of the serial formula. He also directed many of the episodes, bringing in Laurence Lurie at a later stage to relieve him of the pressures of both writing and directing such an undertaking. Subsequent to this production, Marx undertook the function of main scriptwriter of a major daily soap opera for M-Net, called *EGOLI* (1992), but, in addition, engaged four assistant writers in order to meet an annual demand of 260 episodes. As *EGOLI* could continue for many years, the ending will ultimately be determined by commercial considerations, based on audience ratings. (*EGOLI* is M-Net's response to the SABC's imported daily soap opera, *SANTA BARBARA*).

In 1984, both the English and Afrikaans drama departments set out to make their own respective versions of the 'Great American Soap Opera'. While the Afrikaans Drama Department was content to give the task to one writer only, namely, Franz Marx, the English proposal, *ORPEN HOUSE*, commissioned a team of four writers, namely, Luanshya Greer, Mike McCarthy, Zebbi Hitt and Joy Stewart-Spence. *ORPEN HOUSE*, which stretched over 52 episodes, focussed on a group of young people living in a Johannesburg commune, and

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Ibid.

went out during the late afternoon slot of 16.10. ⁴³ Marx was commissioned to write twenty episodes of *AGTER ELKE MAN*, which was described by Afrikaans Drama Head, Sandra Kotze, as 'the first blockbuster Afrikaans soapie.' ⁴⁴ It too was originally set to go out at 16.10, but the SABC were so impressed with the final result that it was shifted into the early evening prime time.

In Marx's analysis of serialised writing, presented at a writers' workshop held in Johannesburg in 1987, he reveals to what extent this mechanical and mathematical formula can be applied. Although an author of a single play also needs to construct the drama within certain specified time constraints, (for example, 60 or 90 minutes), the finely calculated, mathematical design of serial writing is far more exacting. For a start, if a contract stipulates 26 episodes of 46 minutes each, the actual story will run for only 44 minutes because two minutes are lost to opening titles and closing credits. Within the context of a 60 minute time slot in which the episode is publicised, some 14 minutes are lost to programme announcements, advertisements, previews, as well as two minutes of titles, leaving 44 minutes for the story. Based on this calculation, a dramatist has 1,144 minutes in which to tell the story, namely, 26 x 44 minutes. ⁴⁵

43

Jackman, Tony, "Local Soaps on the Way," *The Argus*, 29/11/84, p. 1.

44

Ibid.

45

Report on the Writers' Workshop, Organised by the SABC, 1987.

According to Marx, soap opera always has a multi-faceted plot structure with no less than six major subplots. Therefore each subplot amounts to a total of 190 minutes, (ie 1,144 minutes divided by 6 = 190 minutes), to develop and unfold. However, when calculated over 26 episodes, the writer has only 7,3 minutes in which to develop each subplot per episode. But to introduce six major subplots per episode is likely to confuse a viewer who, unlike a constant or captive theatre audience, has to contend with the average distractions of a home environment. Therefore, according to Marx, it is preferable to have only one or two subplots per episode, and merely to imply or plant additional subplots. In this way, the writer can concentrate on the development of four main characters, giving about ten minutes to each character. The remaining four minutes can be used for establishing shots and the introduction of supplementary characters. ⁴⁶ According to the SABC Writers' Guide, "it has been verified that a story offering less than 6 main characters cannot be 'stretched' for more than 26 episodes." ⁴⁷

Moreover, within the context of the dramatic narrative, the writer must punctuate the development to allow for the commercial breaks, which occur four times per hour; one before the programme, another coming after the programme announcements, a third one about five minutes after the programme has begun; and a final one not later than five minutes before the end of the programme. (An additional commercial spot occurs after the completion of the programme).

46

Ibid.

47

"A Guide To The Writing of Drama for Television," SABC, compiled by Sandra Kotze, SABC Publication, undated, p. 15.

Broken down over a 60 minute scheduled time slot for one dramatic episode, the following eight segments evolve:-

- (1) ANNOUNCEMENT -
- (2) ADVERT -
- (3) FIVE MINUTES OF PROGRAMME -
- (4) ADVERT -
- (5) MAIN BODY OF PRODUCTION, WHICH RUNS FOR SOME 34 MINUTES -
- (6) ADVERT -
- (7) FIVE MINUTES OF PROGRAMME -
- (8) ADVERT.

Because the storyline will be interrupted at least twice, the writer needs to build in at least three cliffhangers. These cliffhangers could come at the end of the following phases:-

1. EXPOSITION: (According to Marx this should be developed quickly and completed in five minutes).
2. CONFLICT: This segment should be developed over a period of approximately 34 minutes.
3. Finally, CLIMAX/DENOUEMENT: the unravelling of the plot leads to the cliffhanger on which the following episode is poised.
(This same pattern is repeated week-after-week, and can be applied to serial dramas, such as AGTER ELKE MAN, TIMBER and TRUCKING).

Taking, as an example, the main plot in Episode One of AGTER ELKE MAN, which reveals the marriage of Andries and Marietjie Barnhoorn on the brink of collapse, the viewer is introduced to the following characters:-

- 1) Steve Anderson, who fetches Andries from the airport. (He inter-relates with Leana and Mercia Meyer, and develops into a main character who will be involved in two important subplots).
- 2) A business partner who is on the flight with Andries, and later marries Steve's girlfriend. (This forms one of the subplots, developing into a main plot as he inter-relates with Steve and Marcia).

3) The business partner's secretary, Leana, who is having an affair with Steve.

(This is a subplot in which Leana inter-relates with Steve, the business partner and Mercia).

4) The business partner's daughter, Mercia Meyer, who later marries Steve.

(Mercia will marry Steve and thus introduce Anna -- a situation which will become a further important subplot).

5) Andries' son, Wessel Barnhoorn, who is in the army. (Wessel will leave the house as a result of his parents' divorce).

(Wessel will become one of the main characters, who in turn will introduce the viewer to Auntie Stieni, Jack and Suzie; at this stage only a secondary character).

6) Andries' daughter, who will be threatened by a character, with whom Wessel gets involved after he has left the house.

(This forms a subplot which links Jack, Stieni and Suzie).

At the end of Episode One, Andries asks Marietjie for a divorce, the consequences of which affect the lives of six other characters, each of whom, in their own turn, will play a role in introducing additional characters. From the stories of each of the six additional characters a plot will develop. The emergence of new plots, or the 'planting process,' occurs roughly every third episode in both *AGTER ELKE MAN* and *DALLAS*.⁴⁸

Within the context of the divorce proceedings between Andries and Marietjie, which serves as the main theme and spine of the serial in *AGTER ELKE MAN*, Marietjie rediscovers her own values as a woman. This major conflict is seen to have both positive and negative effects on those who come into touch with their

lives. By way of contrast, the major theme of DALLAS always refers back to the fate of Ewing Oil and the brothers J.R and Bobby who have the capacity to promote or destroy the empire through their actions.

Insofar as the characters of AGTER ELKE MAN are concerned, the way in which they project their value system is through the structure of a family tree. Taking his cue from Stanislavsky in this regard, Marx allows each character to talk in his or her own unique way, as well as to react to situations within the context of their particular background and education. It is largely through an organic texture of credible dialogue in AGTER ELKE MAN and the structure of the 'family tree,' which gives the main characters more than a one dimensional veneer.

The strength of AGTER ELKE MAN is that it is rooted in an identifiable South African social context, recovering a sense of lower-middle class reality on one hand, and a dynamic business ethos on the other. Although Marx relies upon the melodramatic device of the cliffhanger in order to drive the narrative into successive episodes with a sense of heightened expectation, it is normally achieved without the extravagant plot devices that characterise DALLAS, with its large measure of fantasy and illusion.

While Marx has used the formula system as a craftsman to devise a credible serialised drama, harsh criticism of the soap formula, as a whole, comes from Ken Leach, TV Drama Manager (1987 - 1989), who says:

The soap formula quite frankly is the trashiest, most superficial level of human endeavour. However, the problem is that the viewer is hooked on that cheap taste, and it becomes compulsive viewing, where one loses all

sense of value of other things. The only way we can regain those values is to go back to the one-off. But we have a difficulty because of the economic climate and the cut-backs. Where does one draw the line? The one-offs are dropped because they are much too expensive, and also the Department came under a lot of 'flak' for producing poor quality one-offs, so a defensive stance is taken by saying 'okay, we'll drop them!' We can justify far better the series and the sitcom.⁴⁹

Leach's damning indictment of the formula approach includes drama series such as *THE HOUSE OF MANKOWITZ* (1984). Among the critics who panned this production was Hilda Grobler of the Pretoria News, who said, "that rubbish collecting is far more exciting than sitting through the episodes of this series," which, according to her was "the all-time low on TV-1."⁵⁰

Although Leach's strictures are severe, he is correct in saying that the cause of television drama is better served by the single play, where characters take a more critical view of themselves, their inter-personal relationships and the world around them. And above all, the genre is not tied to a tradition of melodrama, extravagant situation and contrivance.

7.6. IDEOLOGICALLY TAMED SERIES AND SERIALS.

Referring to British drama series and serials, which have attracted many of that country's leading television scriptwriters, such as Troy Kennedy Martin, John

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Leach, Ken, former Head English TV Drama SABC, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

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Grobler, Hilda, "Mankowitz an All-Time Low," Pretoria News, 10/1/84, p. 12.

McGrath, John Hopkins, Alan Plater and Alan Prior, among others, Shaun Sutton says:-

At their best, they were comparable with any television drama of the time; the standard was high and they pleased millions. But at their worst, drama series were, and are, dramas least spectacular child.⁵¹

Likewise, many of South Africa's leading English and Afrikaans writers have been drawn to this multiple episodic genre, including Franz Marx, Chris Barnard, P.G. du Plessis, John Cundill, James Ambrose Brown, Andre Brink, Luanshya Greer and Paul Slabolepszy. However, in the choice of politically emotive and controversial issues such as 1922 -- set during the time of the White miners' strike -- and HEROES, which touches on the activities of the Stormtroopers, (an offshoot of the Ossewabrandwag), the writers have drawn their inspiration from the mists of the past. While both the miners' strike and the right-wing Ossewabrandwag aroused strong feelings in their day, their limited relevance to contemporary South African society, as object lessons, has been largely neutralised and distorted by the respective dramatic treatment given these productions.

The serial, 1922, was supposedly 'a drama based on facts,' but depicted a strong anti strike bias. Among the general White population of the day, there was considerable sympathy for the miners who stood to lose their jobs to Black workers. Although the strike had significant political consequences and was a contributory factor leading to the fall of the Smuts government in 1924, this

51

Ibid. p. 31.

serialised drama shows the striking miners as mainly violent and unreasonable men, who are influenced in their actions by the fanatical harangues of their communist leader, Taffy Williams. A significant anti-strike subtext is expressed through the central character, Quentin Moodie, a First World war hero, who turns his back on his fellow miners and becomes a 'scab.' Only his naive, socialist-inspired brother Oliver, joins the strike with any enthusiasm, while their father, Arthur Moodie, is a reluctant participant.

On the other hand, the soldiers sent in by Smuts to crush the strike, were presented as saviours.

We were made to regard the army, who arrive in their tartan get-up to smash the strike, as heroes and saviours. Meanwhile, little was said about the state's violent reaction to the strikers, such as the aerial bombings of the white areas of Johannesburg and Benoni -- something that would be unthinkable today.⁵²

While the reasons for the miners strike are critically scrutinised, those of management are not subjected to the same fine examination. Despite showing them to be snobbish and unapproachable, as in the figure of Sir Julian Nethersole, their major argument for retrenching 2000 White miners and replacing them with Black labour was the fall of the gold price.

The drama had the effect of showing how radical trade unions, through their communist-inspired bosses, were able to exploit the feelings of the workers for

52

Cooper, Linda, "Dangers of Representing History as Popular Drama: 1922 under Analysis," *The Cape Times*, 26/7/84, p. 12.

their own political agenda. However, by presenting this argument to White viewers in the mid 1980's, when Black trade unions were perceived to be in a similar grip of communist agitation, served to reinforce the dominant ideological standpoint of the government and its agents in this regard. Such a perspective, however, distorts a history of strike action by a White working class through their organised and militant trade unions in their struggle against the mining capitalists. It was during this period in South Africa's history that many Afrikaners sided with the communists, under the slogan of, 'Workers of the world unite and fight for a White South Africa.'

Likewise, historical immediacy removed HEROES from the sharp degree of controversy which the activities of the Ossewabrandwag and its off-shoot organisation, the Stormtroopers, posed during the war years. Certainly, the serial did not threaten the dominant ideology of the ruling National Party, notwithstanding the fact that many of its members and their families had been firm supporters of the Ossewabrandwag during the Second World war, and that many similarities could be drawn between this organisation's activities and those of the latter day Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, or (AWB).

Van Rensburg admits that in HEROES he would like to have gone much further in probing the activities of the Ossewabrandwag, but the political constraints of the SABC prevented a more in-depth perspective. Interviewed shortly after his return from a visit to Dakar, where he visited the ANC in exile, he said that he had come to the end of the road with television, unless there was some relevant social point to be made. Furthermore, he believes that the medium of film

should be used to raise the social consciousness of South Africans, particularly among Whites who refuse to face prevailing socio/political realities.⁵³

Having just come back from Dakar and seen South Africa from a totally different perspective, I find it quite frightening that people would want to get away from realities that are facing us. They're doing it on all levels of film making, but it's quite disturbing, wanting to make escapist movies. For that reason, that kind of escapist feature movie is wicked, in that the film maker is simply out to make money and offer a film without any real meaning.⁵⁴

In terms of making an impact on the political consciousness of the average White South African viewer, it could be argued that the American series, serials and sitcoms, notwithstanding their predictable, formulaic nature, have helped to shift the stereotype view of Black people as labourers and servants. Prior to the introduction of television in 1976, the political imagination of the average White viewer was unaccustomed to seeing Black authority figures portrayed as senior police officers, as in *MIAMI VICE*, or, as affectionate and awesome characters, as Mr T in *THE A-TEAM*, or as members of upper middle class suburbia, as Dr Huxtable in *THE COSBY SHOW*. Although such an evaluation is outside the scope of this investigation, the presence of these Black characters have contradicted the stereotype view of Blacks entrenched within a South African apartheid mould.

53

Van Rensburg, Manie, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

54

Ibid.

On the other hand, locally produced drama serials and series have helped, in large measure, to confirm apartheid stereotypes. For instance, the first Black performer to appear in an English television drama, Cecilia Mostsei, was cast as the kitchen maid in the series, *THE DINGLEYS*. In her first appearance she had no dialogue, but lines were added to her part as the series progressed. However, Cecilia's presence in the White canteen of the SABC studios during the shooting of *THE DINGLEYS* raised objections from certain White bigots in the establishment. She was then dropped from the series, as an SABC spokesman claimed that "the role was not really necessary and did not contribute to the series."⁵⁵ Shortly afterwards, however, Mostsei was reinstated in her part, which, according to producer Bill Faure, he never intended to remove in the first place.⁵⁶

The irony of setting a drama on a South African gold mine as in, *THE VILLAGERS*, without reflecting the demographic reality of its environment could only be excused within the blinkered apartheid world in which South Africa existed during the period under review. This long-running serial reflected mainly White middle class values and inter-personal relationships on a Reef gold mine, that was almost totally without any Black faces. Before *THE VILLAGERS II* went into production, arts critic Ian Gray wrote:-

And perhaps this time we'll see a few Black faces on and around the mine. I'm sure that bossman Macrae has done

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Daily Despatch, "Breakthrough on TV for Black Talent," 6/1/77, p. 6.

56

Weekend Post, "Cecilia Back in Show," 12/2/77.

enough for the shareholders to warrant a domestic servant to help his wife with all that entertaining.⁵⁷

In *VILLAGERS II*, several Black actors were used, albeit in the background. Cundill and Harford had initially hoped to find a working class equivalent to the British serial, *CORONATION STREET*, but had to settle on middle class White miners and management.

Our original idea was to set the series somewhere in the southern suburbs of Johannesburg to make it a story about working class people.⁵⁸

However, unlike the largely homogenous community that gathered regularly at the Rovers Return pub in Manchester, the nucleus of their social activities, Cundill and Harford could not find a comparable situation to link the people of the southern suburbs. The pub, as a focus of social life, does not function in the same way in South Africa, hence Cundill came up with the idea of setting the story on a Reef gold mine, "firstly, because I grew up on a mine, and secondly because it is a situation where people all live and work and fit into a social hierarchy."⁵⁹

57

Gray, Ian, "New Faces on the Village Reef," *The Citizen*, Johannesburg, 25/1/77, p. 12.

58

Wilson, Elizabeth, "The Villagers' at Last," Interview with John Cundill, *Pretoria News*, 31/3/76, p. 4.

59

Ibid.

Note: Cundill lived on the Vlakfontein Gold Mine as a child.

Although *THE VILLAGERS* was billed as "intrinsically South African involving authentic South African characters," there are inconsistencies which remove the drama from a typical South African gold mining community.

It looks too posh, and while some of the accents are upper-crusty English, others -- notably those of the minor characters in group scenes are over-emphatically, ponderously thick Seerth Effrican. The feel and tone are off-key. There is too much gloss and too little grit. ⁶⁰

In *THE VILLAGERS II*, directed by Gray Hofmeyr, the bar scenes were more authentic in style and accent, and a few Black faces were evident. (cf. Chapter Four). However, an episode of this soap opera which stands out as a piece of stark social realism, is the one dealing with the visit to the mine by a fictitious homeland leader, who is told how wages and living conditions have improved. This view, however, is contradicted by a survey conducted by a group of Black students that reveals harsh living conditions and draws attention to the rough treatment Black miners receive from their superiors, both Black and White on the mines.

THE VILLAGERS which has achieved a high level of credibility among the South African mining community, in this episode communicated their attitudes to a larger audience and with much greater impact than any factual report could have done. The SABC in turn took refuge in accepted practice and toned down its portrayal of black miners, as is evidenced in subsequent episodes of *THE VILLAGERS* as well as in their later production, *VIMBA THE MINER*. ⁶¹

60

Verdal, Garth, "Villagers too Posh at First Glance," *The Argus*, 1/4/76, p. 3.

61

Tomaselli, R., Tomaselli, K., Muller, J., *Currents of Power, State Broadcasting in South Africa*, Athropos, 1989, p. 132.

The ideological vision of apartheid South Africa, projected through its locally produced dramas, was particularly sensitive to relationships across the colour line; convincingly illustrated in the adaptation of Joy Packer's novel, *VALLEY OF THE VINES* (1982), showing the first inter-racial sexual encounter in an English television drama. The affair involves the Coloured maid, Saartjie, (Prudence Solomons) who, in the novel, seduces farm manager, Thinus, (Nic van Rensburg), and later tries to blackmail him into buying her silence about the affair. The television narrative, however, emasculates the scene, and all that the viewer sees is Saartjie unbuttoning the shirt of a drunken Thinus; the rest being left to the viewer's imagination. A further development of the seduction scene that was shot but cut prior to screening, revealed a bare-chested Thinus lying on a bed, with Saartjie kneeling beside the bed with her face almost touching his.⁶²

Keyan Tomaselli refers to the political subtext in the serialised drama, *SHAKA ZULU*, depicting graphic scenes of black on black violence, Shaka's brutality towards his own people, and of black hostility to whites.

This endorses apartheid discourse which holds that blacks are 'different' and should develop in their 'own areas,' safely out of the way of white civilisation.⁶³

62

Chetty, Ticks; de Klerk, Paul, "SABC Crosses Colour Line in Seduction Scene on TV," *Sunday Times*, 14/2/82, p. 3.

63

Tomaselli, Keyan, "Camera, Colour and Racism: *SHAKA ZULU*," (*Die Kamera, Kleur en Rassisme, Die Suid-Afrikaan*, May 1987, p. 12).

The viewer is not given any of the salient prevailing historical conditions which may have led to Zulu ascendancy, such as "the drought, the disruption of Zanzibar trading routes by the Portuguese," but were presented instead with a myth figure that reinforces the apartheid rationale.⁶⁴

7.7. COST EFFECTIVE DRAMA.

Insofar as the funding of television drama is concerned, the single play has been adversely treated compared with series and serial dramas, as evidenced during the period 1983 - 1987. For instance, in 1983, from an approved budget of R6 049 900, the single play received only R1 444 000, or some 25% of the total allocation. In 1984, out of a total budget of R6 361 900 for English drama, the single play received R1 892 000, or 25%⁶⁵

In 1985, there was a considerable and unexpected improvement in the single play allocation, which received R3 007 573, out of an approved budget of R8 719 000, representing 40%. However, the following year, the single play allocation dropped to only 10% of the budget, namely R422 811, out of a total of R8 885 000. In 1987, the single play slumped even further to a mere 8%, or R265 570, out of a total of R7 300 000.

64

Ibid.

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Figures supplied by letter from H.C. Hugo, former Production Head, TV Drama, 20/10/87.

The demise of the single play is confirmed in the provision of funding for the 1991/92 financial year, where the total drama budget grew to a record figure of R40,5 million, (including English, Afrikaans, and the various Black language dramas), and yet no money was allocated to the English single play.⁶⁶ During the same period, 1991/92, the entire English drama budget of some R11-million went on serialised drama including the purchase of overseas dramas, mostly American serials and series. Justifying the purchase of overseas material at the expense of the local industry, the Chief Executive of the SABC, Wynand Harmse says:-

One 50 minute drama production per day (which, with advertisements and other inserts, covers an hour) would cost R7 million per annum, if it were bought overseas, R18 million if it were then dubbed into another language, and a staggering R130 million if it were produced locally.⁶⁷

A drama series purchased overseas costs on average less than R400 per minute; if it is dubbed into Afrikaans or one of the Black languages, the amount rises to about R900 per minute. An episode of DALLAS, which costs between \$700 000 and \$1 000 000 to make, can be bought for about R24000 per episode. Conversely, a locally produced single drama could cost on average between R8- and R10-thousand per finished minute, whereas a serial or series from R5- to R8-thousand per finished minute, making the latter a better financial proposition.⁶⁸

66

Ibid.

67

Harmse, Wynand, AV Specialist, Vol. 4, Jan/Feb 1992, Doddington Direct CC, Johannesburg, p. 19.

68

Figures on the cost of series/serials and the single play supplied by Clive Rodel, SABC English Drama Department, Johannesburg, 1990.

However, the Afrikaans serialised drama, KONINGS (1992), cost some R9200 per finished minute to complete, although only R8600 per minute was allocated by the Afrikaans Drama Department for the production.⁶⁹

Outside production companies, such as I.F.C. and Dapple Films, which made notable single plays such as, THE OUTCAST and THICKER THAN WATER in the early 1980's, had become less enthusiastic towards this genre by the end of the decade as they were being paid less per finished minute by the SABC for their work. For instance in 1983, (the year in which Gray Hofmeyr alone produced five one-offs), the average fee that outside companies under contract to produce dramas for the SABC were being paid was R3806 per finished minute, whereas in 1987, the amount had dropped to some R3242 per minute, notwithstanding an annual inflation rate averaging 18% in the 1986/87 period.⁷⁰

As former English Drama Manager, Ken Leach says, the outside companies ended up subsidising the SABC. Besides earning less income for the same amount of work, they were allowed to claim only 7% for their overheads, which meant that the SABC was forcing them to keep their operations small.⁷¹

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Botha, Frik, Managing Director: Leisureco, Interview with author, BAFTA Centre, London, September 1992. (Botha maintains that he effected savings in other areas of the production in order to make good the additional cost per minute).

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Figures supplied on request to Henk Hugo, Production Head TV Drama, and by Sandra Kotze, Head of Afrikaans TV Drama, 1987.

71

Leach, Ken, Head of English TV Drama, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

Understandably, under these circumstances, outside companies preferred to produce serials and series drama as a means of remaining profitable.

The managing director of the Independent Film Centre, (I.F.C.), Edgar Bold, says the collapse of the single play can be ascribed purely to financial reasons.

According to him:-

Sandra Kotze and Ken Leach both want the one-offs to survive, because creatively they are much more challenging, and in this respect producers and directors also find them more satisfying than series.⁷²

This view is reinforced by former Afrikaans Drama Manager, Sandra Kotze, who says that outside drama producers are not interested in the single play.

They know that it costs them twice as much to produce the single play, so they prefer to go for a series, as it is then that the overheads begin to even out, and they start going into a profit margin. With a single play the outside producer does not go into a profit margin, and is lucky to even get ten per cent return.⁷³

Calculated on an average ten per cent return, a producer would obviously prefer to shoot a series with a budget of one million rand than a single play with a budget of R200 000. Consequently, experienced television producers and dramatists avoid the single play and focus their creative energies on the more lucrative series/serials and sitcoms. Kotze says because the independent

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Bold, Edgar, Head of I.F.C. (Independent Film Centre) Johannesburg, Interview with author, August 1987.

73

Kotze, Sandra, Head of Afrikaans TV Drama, SABC, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

producers are not requesting the single play, it shifts responsibility to the SABC to continue to produce this genre.⁷⁴

The turning point for the single play came during the 1987 financial year when the Corporation's deficit necessitated severe pruning of the drama budget, and both the English and the Afrikaans drama departments chose instead to concentrate on producing series and serials in order to meet their target of local content drama. Although the Afrikaans Drama Department produced five one-offs in 1987, those same one-offs, according to Kotze, could have given them 26 episodes for the same price.⁷⁵ A further justification in favouring the series/serials is that it stimulates the local film/video industry, as relatively fewer people are employed in a single play, with fewer characters and limited demands made on the various production inputs such as, set construction, costuming, equipment and technical crew.

The cost-effectiveness of the serial/series drama was evident from the early years of the television service. For instance, the second 13-part serialised drama, *THE VILLAGERS* was produced for a total cost of R68-thousand, which amounts to some R5,230 per episode. (As mentioned in Chapter Two these are above-the-line costs only, as the Drama Department was not required to include personnel, studio and equipment costs in those early years). The first 13 episodes of *THE VILLAGERS*, however, cost substantially more at R110-thousand, but this was

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Ibid.

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Ibid.

partly due to establishing the infrastructure, as well as extensive re-shoots and other production problems.⁷⁶

Gray Hofmeyr, who has made a significant contribution to the development of the single play, lists, among other factors, the limited financial rewards, as reasons for his preference of series and serials. In an interview in 1987, he said:

The single play is so transient, that I prefer to do a series, because at least I feel I can make a bigger impression, because they're there all the time, and I'd rather do my one-off work for cinema, which is more rewarding from every point of view.⁷⁷

Besides the greater freedom of expression the cinema feature can provide, Hofmeyr believes the SABC does not appear to have the money for one-offs. However, he says he would support strongly the production of one-offs for young directors, as this would be a worthwhile investment for the industry as a whole. If, for instance, his own company Dapple Films were given a one-off he would accept it along with a lot of other work, and would treat it as "a charitable undertaking" because his company would make very little profit out of it.⁷⁸ Carl Fischer, producer of *THE OUTCAST* for I.F.C., estimates that it would cost

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Information provided by Douglas Bristowe, Television Drama Workshop, Audio Visual Centre, University of Natal, Durban, 1981.

77

Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

78

Ibid.

between R16 and 17-thousand per finished minute to make the same production today.⁷⁹

Although a series is incredibly hard work, says Hofmeyr, the rewards are positive on three fronts; firstly, if the production is successful, 'it is enormously satisfying;' secondly, the financial turnover from a project such as NEWLANDS, which cost more than R1,5 million, generates 'a healthy profit;' and thirdly, 'NEWLANDS is politically important, which increases motivation.'⁸⁰ Notwithstanding Hofmeyr's positive response to episodic dramas, he expressed grave reservations about working for the SABC, unless it is on a project of social relevance.

Generally speaking, I am disillusioned with the SABC, quite honestly, I think they're rabidly incompetent, with the exception of one or two people, and I think they reflect the political 'fuck-up'(sic) of the country. So I see no reason to work for television, unless it's something like NEWLANDS.⁸¹

(NEWLANDS was transmitted under the title, PEOPLE LIKE US).

However, Hofmeyr found the opportunity to work for the SABC a year later when he wrote and directed the serial drama, THE BIG TIME, transmitted in 1991, which reflected on the lives of members of an immigrant Greek Cypriot

79

Fischer, Carl, Interview with author, BAFTA Centre, London, September 1992.

80

Ibid.

81

Ibid.

community, who prospered under severe and challenging circumstances in their newly adopted homeland. (Hofmeyr received an Artes and a Tonight award for this production in 1992, and at the time of writing was working on a sequel to THE BIG TIME).

Not only is the English single play adversely affected by the allocation of funding, but there is also a budgetary bias in favour of Afrikaans drama. However, the gap between the respective allocations to the two drama departments has narrowed significantly since 1986.

English Drama Afrikaans Drama

1984:	R6 361 900	R8 593 000
1985:	R8 719 000	R9 052 000
1986:	R8 885 000	R8 891 051
1987:	R7 300 000	R7 907 245

82

The appointment of Quentin Green in the mid-eighties as Deputy-director General:Finance, later becoming Chief Executive of the SABC, has been one of the major factors in steering TV-1 further away from its former public service broadcasting programme policy. As a chartered accountant, Green introduced a strictly business approach to the various programme departments, including drama, which were mandated to become financially self-supporting, setting the pattern for the production of popular dramas. However, the initial idea to take the SABC along this route was mooted in 1979, when the minister in charge of broadcasting, Mr Hennie Smit, said that his aim was "to build big business

expertise into the board of control." ⁸³ It is doubtful though that Smit foresaw the full consequences of that idea, with the current domination of American popular series and serials, and their local clonings, at the expense of the indigenous single play.

7.8. CO-PRODUCTIONS.

Apart from a feature film which the SABC made in cooperation with a Canadian company, Visual Productions of Toronto, (a spy thriller that went out on TV-4), the single play is excluded from the international co-production debate for purely economic reasons as the projected sales that could be made from a co-produced one-off are not very attractive. ⁸⁴ The SABC entered the potentially lucrative international co-production field in the mid-1980's, and from then until 1990, several serialised dramas were co-produced with companies from Israel, Germany, France and the United States.

Among the most ambitious co-productions were SHAKA ZULU and REAP THE WHIRLWIND, (initially entitled, THE FAMILY ROSSOUW when production was planned in 1986, then called, HERITAGE when shooting started in 1987). Both these productions became a litany of subterfuge and disguise because of the involvement of the SABC with international companies during the

83

Marshall, Leon, "Big Business Expertise Needed in Broadcasting says new Minister." The Star, Johannesburg, 17/10/79, p. 7.

84

HUGO, Henk, Production Head, TV Drama, Interview with author, Johannesburg, February 1989.

period of the cultural boycott. Owing to the country's pariah status during this period, the SABC was vulnerable to exploitation on the part of these companies which negotiated deals that were generally disadvantageous to the SABC. In the case of SHAKA, the SABC negotiated with the American company Harmony Gold to handle the distribution of the production on a 60:40 basis in favour of the American company. Although it was not strictly speaking a co-production, but an unequal co-financing venture with the SABC providing some 95% of the total cost, it was expedient for the corporation to have an overseas company handle the worldwide distribution, and for it to be involved in an international project. However, in order to sell an essentially South African made production to the Germans and the Italians, the SABC's connection was hidden, and overseas networks (such as the German company ZDF), were given credit for co-producing the series.⁸⁵

REAP THE WHIRLWIND cost some R4-million, with the SABC contributing 60% of the total cost, and the remainder coming from the French company Telecip Television, TFI. (According to Henk Hugo, the SABC's investment was largely recovered from overseas sales). This 13-part period romance, co-authored by Luanshya Greer and Pierre Lary, about a French Huguenot family in the Cape, and spread over a time span of fifty years, includes the themes of family tradition, racial animosity, love and honour. All the exteriors and several

85

Mersham, Gary Malcolm, "Political Discourse and Historical Television Drama: A Case Study of Shaka Zulu," Ph.D Thesis, University of Zululand, 1991, pp. 230 - 236.

interiors were shot in Stellenbosch, and the remaining interiors were completed in the Johannesburg studios of the SABC.

Although the SABC had contributed the major share of the cost, the use of French directors and actors was justified by the SABC's Publicity Head for TV-1, Murray Steyn, who said this gave more weight to selling the serial overseas.⁸⁶ REAP THE WHIRLWIND remained on the shelf for some five years before it was screened locally in 1992, succumbing to the same bureaucratic pressures as the series NEWLANDS and A LESSON FROM ALOES, as it was considered politically inexpedient to broadcast in the wake of the 1987/89 general elections. The miscegenous marriage between a White wine farmer and his Coloured maid servant, and the dominant role played by their off-spring, Jean-Jacques, who fathers an illegitimate child in a relationship with his White neighbour's daughter, were 'politically sensitive' aspects of REAP THE WHIRLWIND that could have driven more of the White electorate into the Conservative fold.

Although the SABC, in terms of the contract signed between its agent Elmo de Wit Films and the French company, had the right to censor up to four minutes in each 52-minute episode, it would have had difficulty in suppressing much of the racial content as the love scenes between the Whites and Coloureds form an integral part of the drama. French producer, Jacques Dercourt, claims that "all the present-day problems of South Africa are covered, including the roots of racial separation and the power struggle between the British and the Afrikaners."

86

Thamm, Marianne, "French Touch in Local Historical 'Soapie,'" The Cape Times, 28/3/87.

87 However, the inter-personal relationships of the various characters overshadow the larger socio/political issues, and Dercourt's attempt at aspiring to the production values of the classic feature *GONE WITH THE WIND*, fall far short in his overall sentimental and melodramatic treatment.

Independent production companies have encouraged co-productions with the SABC since the early 1980's; for example, Karat Films was the first company under contract to the SABC English Drama Department to co-produce a drama with an overseas company. This four-part serial, based on Graham Greene's novel, *THE HEART OF THE MATTER* (1983), brought together Karat Films, Channel Four and the German company Tele-Munchen, with Italian director, Marco Leto, and a cast that included several French actors, as well as local actress, Erica Rogers, and British actor, Jack Hedley.⁸⁸ Owing to the pariah status of South Africa at the time, this serial destined for the international market, avoided all visible identification with the Republic, and was consequently set in a West African country during the Second World War.

In view of South Africa's negative status in the world during the period under review, co-productions involving other countries were a risky business, as any one of the countries involved could object to the Republic's participation. Furthermore, after 1986 there was no possibility of engaging any American

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Gray, Ian, "Controversy Surrounds TV Series on Apartheid," *Daily News*, Durban, 7/5/84, p. 5.

88

Mitchell, John, *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, 8/8/83, p. 7.

company because of the sanctions legislation imposed by the United States Congress, prohibiting the purchase of programme material from South Africa.

The SABC's approach towards international co-productions varies according to prevailing circumstances. Should the corporation favour the concept, it could make a financial contribution, and be acknowledged along with the other financial backers in the closing credits of the drama, and be eligible for a share of the profit. (Such a relationship, however, is more a form of co-financing than co-production). Alternatively, the SABC could negotiate a pre-sale agreement with an overseas company, thereby earning a production credit. There is also the possibility of subsidising one or more episodes of a drama, which could be shot in the host country. In this respect, the SABC could earn a certain percentage of the distribution profit and the right to broadcast all the other episodes. A further possibility is for the SABC to initiate the entire project and then get together with one or two partners to make the series.

However, the problems of international co-productions are complex and varied, involving exchange rates, different values attached to various production elements, such as, combining actors from different countries insofar as their status and salaries are concerned. Moreover, the problems of language and communication, as well as different cultural and production methodologies also need to be resolved. According to Ken Leach, co-productions are regarded as strong revenue earners and a means of 'upping the quality of a production.' However, they are being promoted at the expense of the single play, which is seen

as 'failing badly' in commercial terms.⁸⁹

In respect of local co-productions, the English Drama Department has negotiated several theatrical-release-features with South African companies, where the production is first shown on the local cinema circuit before being screened on television. (cf. Appendix 1) The first of these was *TORN ALLEGIANCE* (1985), an SABC/Mandalay Progear co-production, which made its debut as a film on the local circuit under the title, *SANNA*, prior to its screening on TV-1. Set during the Anglo Boer War, the film included several leading South African and British performers. Prior to its screening on television, *TORN ALLEGIANCE* was shown at the American Film Market in Los Angeles and the Cannes Film Festival in May 1984. Although the production is listed among the single plays for 1985, it was conceived as a feature film and had to meet the commercial demands of the American film buyers who wanted the production 'paced up,' and, in the process, it lost some ten minutes of running time.⁹⁰

7.9. CONCLUSION:

The moral codes of the series/serial genre, as with nineteenth century melodrama, which prescribes the destruction of evil and the rewarding of the just, are in accord with the values of the prevailing socio-political order.

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Leach, Ken, Head of English TV Drama, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

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The Daily News, Durban, 19/7/85, p. 3.

Notwithstanding incidents of physical violence, including the killing and maiming of other human beings by the 'good' and their agents, such destruction is justified within the context of maintaining good social order. Furthermore, the reassurance of middle-class values through these conflicts of good and evil, also perpetuates the notion that the end justifies the means, provided the means are executed with efficiency and skill. (cf. the litany of death and injury to the evildoers in AIRWOLF, THE A-TEAM).

Thus the capacity to offend an audience is less likely to occur within the context of a series or serial, as these dramas and their value systems reflect indirectly on the wholesome character of the commercial products which punctuate their narratives. Such moral codes are in keeping with the tenets of good commercial advertising, where products, like soap powder, triumph sparkling clean over unwanted dirt; and where 'good characters' dispense with their enemies with the clinical efficiency of a video game; where McGyver, the 'Houdini of the box,' neutralises errant human life on behalf of the illustrious Phoenix Foundation. These series create their own sense of logic and reality, and according to Cor Nortje, their myths are derived from the American comic, where the dominant intentions are to provide thrilling adventure and pure escapist fantasy.⁹¹

Within the context of television commercial broadcasting, which functions as an industry, accountants are constantly assessing income and profit profiles, and putting pressure on producers, directors and schedulers to promote popularity

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Nortje, Cor, Production Director, Entertainment Programmes, Safritel, SABC, Johannesburg, Interview with author, May 1992.

and entertainment, at the cost of polemical discourse and controversial social introspection. Consequently, dramatists, irrespective of their status, are drawn into this industrial process and, wittingly or unwittingly, subordinate their craft to these prevailing pressures.

However, with the demise of the single play, a novice writer must first discover the formula of episodic drama construction before gaining acceptance to this esoteric genre; yet having done that, the challenge would be to function creatively and imaginatively within the limitations of a such a commercially oriented formula. Furthermore, the position of the writer in series and serial is not only difficult to locate at times, but the writer's function in many instances is reduced to being merely a production device within the institution of broadcasting. The corporate nature of the medium which industrialises the production of drama, as well as the many levels of interpretation through which the script must pass, whether it be imagistic or linguistic, from script editor to drama committee to director to actor, further undermines the position of the author and the integrity of his/her vision. Moreover, the formula approach to both serial and series drama, with its hierarchy of main writer, assistant writers and committee writers, is subservient to the bureaucracy of the broadcasting institution it serves.

The future of the single play is not encouraged by the attitude of the English Drama Department towards the submission of unsolicited dramatic material. Out of nearly 200 scripts submitted by writers throughout the country to the

English Drama Department in 1990, not one was accepted, though a few were considered worthy of further development, within a serialised format.⁹² As the vast majority of these submissions and subsequent rejections were single plays, nothing could be more discouraging for writers to discover that their efforts are largely worthless in pursuing this genre. It is no coincidence that the period during which the single play flourished, (1976 - 1986), was coupled with active steps by former drama managers to foster and encourage writing for television through scriptwriting competitions, seminars and workshops. (cf. Chapter Four).

With the current emphasis on commercially viable dramas, the future of English language television drama is likely to shift even closer to the American model of 'drama by committee,' whereby many voices, besides that of the dramatist, shape the script. However, the creation of drama as a corporate effort does have distinct advantages, if it is taken out of the committee room and involves the creative input from its various participants. For instance, consideration could be given to workshopping a television drama, (possibly a short four part serial), from concept through to final scripting, in the presence of a talented scriptwriter who could set the dialogue and shape the material. The workshopping of stage drama has been integral to the collaborative approach adopted by playwrights such as Athol Fugard, who, together with John Kani and Winston Ntonsha, created *SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD*, *THE ISLAND* and *STATEMENTS*. Ideas were

92

Rodel, Clive, Organiser English Drama, TV-1, Interview with author, Johannesburg, February 1992.

discussed and improvised, with Fugard providing the overall dramatic structure, as well as refining dialogue and character.⁹³

Similar approaches have been used in television drama overseas; for instance, the BBC soap opera, *EASTENDERS*, engages members of the local community to devise suitable plots for the serial, through a process of discussion and improvisation. According to Albie Sachs, the potential of workshopping a television drama in this manner, whether it be a single play or a series/serial, is one which should be actively encouraged by the SABC, as the scope for providing authentic dialogue, character and situation can only be enhanced.⁹⁴ A creative response to such a challenge can help lift the drama series and serials out of the mould of the 'deadly theatre' syndrome, particularly those serials such as *TRUCKING* and *TIMBER*, which superimpose superficial American values on South African stories. According to Peter Brook, 'deadly theatre' occurs not only within the context of such superficiality, but even when the most talented of writers are involved. Referring to the works of Shakespeare in this context, he says:-

We see his plays done by good actors in what seems like the proper way -- they look lively and colourful, there is music and everyone is all dressed up, just as they are supposed to be in the best of classical theatres. Yet secretly we find it excruciatingly boring - and in our hearts we either blame Shakespeare, or theatre as such, or even ourselves.⁹⁵

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Fugard, Athol, Interview with Allen Auld, ARTS ON ONE, May 1992.

94

Sachs, Albie, Member of the National Executive of the African National Congress, Interview with author, Durban, July, 1992.

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Brook, Peter, *The Empty Space*, Penguin, London, 1973, p. 12.

As indicated in this chapter, the trend towards international co-productions in South Africa has been at the expense of the single play; similarly, this phenomenon has been observed in Britain to a limited extent. As Trevor Griffiths says, that in being "tied to the regime imposed by co-productions and its preference for period drama and 'internationalised' series, even the BBC is progressively withdrawing its support for the single play."⁹⁶ The investment made by the SABC in co-producing multiple episode dramas with overseas interests has contributed to the demise of the local single play by diverting funds away from this genre. As several of these major contracts, notably, REAP THE WHIRLWIND and SHAKA ZULU, were negotiated by the SABC from a position of weakness, it places in serious doubt the long term viability of these projects.

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Griffiths, Trevor, Powerplays, British Film Institute, London, 1984, p. 9.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION.

8.1. CONSTRAINED BY THE SYSTEM.

The investigation into the single play and its eventual demise has shown that it was a victim of several impinging factors. As a genre it was hampered in its development by the excessive conservatism of the respective drama managers of the English Television Drama Department; by bureaucratic controls and political intervention within and without the SABC, ranging from the various restrictive laws governing the country to a management structure that was controlled throughout the period under review by personnel sympathetic to the National Party and its policies.

However, the main reason for the collapse of the single play on TV-1 was caused by the changing character of the channel itself. As this channel became the major revenue earner for the SABC through the sale of advertising on TV-1, it made the controllers of the channel more susceptible to the demands of a commercially oriented service. The appointment of an accountant in the late eighties as chief executive of this service, further separated TV-1 from the ideals of a public service broadcaster. The economic realities facing the SABC during the late eighties meant that in order to sustain its level of growth the corporation had to compete with the commercially run M-Net and Bop-TV for its 'slice of the advertising cake.' As a result, dramas were evaluated by programme schedulers in terms of audience ratings, and those productions which were considered to have limited 'popular' appeal and were therefore unable to attract large audiences for the advertiser, became marginalised. Furthermore, commercial

advertisers were less secure with the single play, characterised by its unpredictability and discreteness, and preferred to be associated with regular on-going narratives that reinforced familiarity, were largely non-controversial, and did not alienate the general public. Such preferences have contributed towards the growth of serialised dramas with their formulistic approach and predictable plots.

Without significant protest from the English Drama Department to retain the single play, a consenting attitude towards the inevitable consequence of financial stringency during the economic recession of the late eighties, shifted the focus and budget to the promotion of these more popular series and serials, with their formula approach and derivative American style, such as *TIMBER* and *TRUCKING*. Cost effective measures were applied to production budgets which severely disadvantaged the single play as it was more expensive to produce on a cost-per-minute basis than episodic dramas.

Major drama practitioners likewise did not protest against the demise of the single play. According to Gray Hofmeyr:

I'm a realist! That doesn't mean that I lie down and accept things too readily, but these were financial realities. The SABC was going through a period of financial stringency, and they said the TV one-off was 'a luxury' which they could no longer afford. So I put my energy into finding alternative areas, as opposed to saying 'this cannot be allowed to close down.'¹

While practitioners such as Hofmeyr found more lucrative markets in episodic dramas (such as, *THE BIG TIME*) and in feature films, (such as *JOCK OF THE*

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Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) Centre, London, September 1992.

BUSHVELD and LAMBARENE), the general attitude gleaned from the many interviews with practitioners inside and outside the SABC was that although the single play provided significant creative challenges, it was 'a luxury.' (cf. Sandra Kotze, Edgar Bold, Henk Hugo). However, a strong plea for its retention came from Cor Nortje, who said that:

I don't think one of the legitimate genres of television drama should be abandoned in a civilised country. It's like deciding that Shakespeare will no longer be prescribed in schools and universities. You cannot say we're not going to do that because we cannot afford it. No civilised country can make such a decision for whatever reason - least of all for money.²

The findings, however, point directly to a question of money. The Viljoen report on the future of broadcasting in South and southern Africa, which expressed concern about the current dependency on advertising income, recommended that it should be reduced to a level not exceeding 50% provided that alternative sources can be found. Among the suggested alternative sources was a levy of 2,7% on the wholesale price of electricity for domestic consumers, with a relatively higher levy for mining and industrial users.³ However, to introduce such radical measures prior to a new political dispensation, particularly on a unilateral basis by the present government, which would need to approve of such a funding structure for the SABC, would undoubtedly meet with widespread opposition from the ANC and other political and trade union organisations.

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Nortje, Cor, Production Director, Entertainment Programmes, Safritel, Interview with author, Auckland Park, May, 1992.

3

Viljoen, Christo, (chairman), "Report on the Task Group on Broadcasting in South and southern Africa," August 1991, pp. 43-44.

One of the reasons why writers have not voiced strong opposition to the demise of the single play is that fees paid to them, especially during the late seventies and early eighties, were not commensurate with either the effort involved, or competitive with those paid to writers overseas. Although British dramatists are likewise unhappy with the fees paid by the BBC and ITV, they are considerably better off than their South African counterparts. For instance, in 1983, when the SABC was paying established writers less than R2000 a minute, the BBC was paying 3450-pounds per minute, and ITV, 3800-pounds per minute for a 60-minute drama.⁴ Consequently, local writers could not afford to engage their energies full-time in writing single plays. Being discouraged by the low return on material which had been accepted, they turned their talents to more profitable outlets, such as the television series and serials, as well as to theatre.

Among the factors which inhibited the development of the single play was a lack of experimentation with alternative forms, such as epic, absurd, cruel, chronicle, expressionism and symbolist, among others. The single play relied too heavily on naturalism as a dominant form during its early years in South Africa. Stylistically, video tape productions in a studio were associated with theatrical naturalism as opposed to the realism associated with 16 mm film and authentic locations. This is not to suggest that naturalism is an unworthy form; on the contrary, it has been the most significant movement of the twentieth century, from Ibsen to Fugard.

The forms reacting against naturalism have sought to express realities that naturalism finds difficult to handle, whether in the depths of the psyche (expressionism), or in the world of politics (epic theatre) or in some transcendence (verse and symbolist drama).

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Self, David, Television Drama: An Introduction, MacMillan, London, 1984, p. 78.

The findings do not suggest that the studio should be abandoned as a production venue for television drama; on the contrary, the studio could provide the environment within which to experiment with alternative forms. The studio, however, was found to be a restrictive environment for practitioners who aimed at positioning their dramatic narratives within the real world and thereby giving the work a strong sense of realism. Furthermore, several directors found the studios at Auckland Park to be more susceptible to the intrusion of bureaucrats in the execution of their work.

As the content of a drama can determine its form, and in that sense, form is a manifestation of content, the largely conservative treatment of subject matter of most English single plays was reflected in the lack of experimentation with alternative forms. In accordance with the shared belief of Marx and Hegel that "forms are historically determined by the kind of 'content' they have to embody," and change as the content itself changes,⁶ the South African English language single play was severely inhibited in its potential development by censorship within and outside the SABC. The bureaucratic and political environment in which English television drama functioned during the period under review, was one in which writers were not encouraged to enter the contemporary political debate. Had such involvement been encouraged it is possible that a style similar to that of epic theatre could have been a natural consequence.

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Hodgson, Terry, Modern Drama, From Ibsen to Fugard, B.T. Batsford, London, 1992, p. 214

6

Eagleton, Terry, Marxism and Literary Criticism, Methuen, London, 1976, p. 22

Experimentation in alternative forms is inextricably linked to an environment which encourages freedom of expression, and furthermore, where production methodology is flexible and not rooted in any one particular preference, for instance, the extensive studio system during the early years of TV-1. (cf. Chapter Three) Consequently, the dramatist, in providing the blueprint of the drama's content, and the various practitioners in their selection and application of technology as well as the chosen production methodology, are factors which determine the form of television drama. The preferred form that evolves from these determinants should be one that reflects upon some or other aspect of reality more honestly and accurately than any alternative form. Hence the technological shift towards an increasing use of film and locational shooting was a positive move to break the mould of mainly studio produced single plays in the early years.

Television dramatist, John Cundill, who in his later single plays, moved the genre closer to filmic values by writing scenes that demanded locational shooting, achieved limited success in projecting themes which touched, albeit somewhat obliquely, on the socio-political nerve of the country. The surface realism achieved in *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE* and *THE OUTCAST*, gave both works a greater sense of immediacy, relevance and credibility. Furthermore in applying humour as a device to deflect the serious political undertones in his satirical play *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*, Cundill succeeded in implying criticism with a subtlety that did not offend the bureaucracy. Although Cundill and Manie van Rensburg never seriously challenged the SABC's 'sensitivity' towards socio-political subjects, they both condemned self-censorship as an insidious form of restricting the freedom of expression which they and other

writers had to impose upon their own work in order to win bureaucratic approval. (cf. Chapter Five)

The fact that several original single plays managed to make meaningful social statements as, for instance, *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE*, supports Trevor Griffiths' notion of 'leakiness' in television, where despite efforts of the bureaucracy to inhibit free expression, ideas will filter through that challenge the dominant socio-political order. In this respect, Griffiths draws on the writing of H.M. Enzenberger, who sees television as a 'leaky' system which can be exploited to transmit works subversive of itself and of the dominant consensus.⁷ Because of the size and scope of a broadcasting operation it is impossible effectively to police every idea that filters through the many programmes, particularly those ideas which are not blatantly obvious in their intent.

However, the investigation has indicated that approval for *TWO WEEKS IN PARADISE* was made easier by the acceptance of its predecessor, *THE OUTCAST*. Approval for *THE OUTCAST*, in turn, was based largely on grounds of expediency as the SABC was anxious to win an international award at the Prix Italia in Milan, and set up a committee to evaluate suitable material for submission to this event. Although the committee supported *THE OUTCAST*, as it was "slightly politically risky at that stage,"⁸ the production was not entered and, in its place, the SABC submitted an opera.

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Griffiths, Trevor, *Powerplays*, British Film Institute, London, 1984, p. 2.

8

Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August 1987.

However, what could not possibly pass through the SABC system during the period under review, was an entire generation of protest theatre. Among the successful dramas of this genre which were workshopped and later taken overseas included, *THE HUNGRY EARTH*, (1979), *EGOLI* (1980), *WOZA ALBERT* (1981), *ASINAMALI* (1985) and *SARAFINA* (1988). However, none of these productions was considered suitable for either TV-1/2 or 3. As with Fugard, where the SABC chose selected works to broadcast but ignored plays such as *BOESMAN AND LENA*, *MASTER HAROLD AND THE BOYS*, and *MY CHILDREN MY AFRICA*, among others, the corporation displayed a similar ambivalent attitude towards writers such as Gibson Kente. While TV-2 had no difficulty in broadcasting *GOING BACK* (1981), a love triangle within the context of an urban/rural clash of values, his play, *SEKUNJALO*, with a political theme was banned before it could be transferred from the Grahamstown Festival in 1987 to the townships, notwithstanding the 'message' of this play that revolution is unlikely to bring about a Utopian existence.

Had the single play continued to exist as a season of regular plays after the post February 2, 1990 period, perhaps many of these restrictions would have fallen away? For a genre that had shown itself capable of expressing challenging themes even during the period under review, its demise is a loss to South African drama, particularly when live theatre in the country is severely strained by declining audiences, attributed to some extent by the current wave of violence and crime in many of the main urban areas, and the effects of the economic recession.

8.2. CONSUMED BY THE MOVIES.

At the time of writing, the single play has been completely removed from the Drama Department's budget, and in its place are 'made-for-television' movies which can be either funded entirely by the SABC or co-produced with outside companies and/or television networks. This is an indication that the commercial interests within the corporation see in the television 'movie feature' a more viable prospect than the traditional single play or teleplay. This is confirmed by Clive Rodel, Organiser of English Drama, TV-1, who says that they are "more commercially oriented."⁹ To date, however, no 'made-for-television' movie has been planned or negotiated by the English Drama Department. Instead, several 'theatrical-release-features' have been co-produced with local film companies to make drama features that are first screened on the national film circuit before being shown on television, such as, TORN ALLEGIANCE, THE RUTANGA TAPE, THE TRACKERS and AFRICA EXPRESS. (cf. Appendix 1) Although Gray Hofmeyr's LAMBARENE was also first launched on the national film circuit before being transmitted on TV-1 in 1992, it was not negotiated as a 'theatrical-release-feature' but as a straight purchase for television screening.

'Theatrical-release-features' satisfy several important financial criteria as far as the SABC is concerned; they are generally co-produced with financial input from outside companies as well as film distributors; publicity is created around their release on the general film circuit before being screened on television. As films, they qualify for subsidy from the Department of Home Affairs, and the SABC, as co-producer, is entitled to a share of the profit from its general release. Yet,

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Rodel, Clive, Organiser English Drama: TV-1, Telephone Interview with author, November 1992.

'theatrical-release-features' remove from the television medium the creative originality of the material, as the production is designed to satisfy the commercial criteria of the cinema box office, and the technical demands of the big screen.

As the production values of television drama have moved progressively closer to those of film, it is not surprising that the single play, through its major practitioners has aspired to the feature film, thereby distancing the genre further from its antecedent roots in the stage play. The narrative structure of many single plays, as opposed to that of the 'well-made-play,' makes the genre "more like short stories than stage plays or novels."¹⁰ Such a perception is confirmed in the investigation which points to adaptations of short stories, such as *THE HIDING OF BLACK BILL*, *THE PAIN* and *THE HONEYBIRD* having made successful single plays, and original narratives, such as Hofmeyr's *THICKER THAN WATER* and Cundill's *THE OUTCAST*, also point to a departure from the structure of the conventional stage play. However, as Martin Esslin points out the new media, (television and radio), have already produced "an extremely stimulating cross-fertilisation, from which the live theatre was by no means the last to profit."¹¹

The breakdown of the rigid structure of the well-made-play, the ease with which cinematic techniques are now accepted by the audiences of live theatre (very brief scenes cross-cutting each other) and indeed the easy acceptance of narration (which returned to the theatre via radio) are all very clear indications of the influence of the new media upon the old.¹²

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Mitchell, Julian, "Television: An Outsider's View," *Ah! Mishcief: The Writer and Television*, Faber and Faber, London, 1982, P. 65.

11

Esslin, Martin, *An Anatomy of Drama*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1977, p. 83.

12

Ibid, pp. 85 - 86.

Notwithstanding the departure from the concept of the 'well-made-play,' as reflected in many studio produced single plays and a move towards film technology, as in Hofmeyr's *THICKER THAN WATER* and Cundill's *THE OUTCAST*, these dramatised narratives still rely upon the basic elements of drama, namely, theme, plot, character, dialogue and climax, as structural components. (cf. Chapter Two) Although during its formative years in South Africa the single play revealed, mainly through its choice of subject matter and direction methodology, its close ties to either radio drama or to theatre, the genre has managed to liberate itself from these antecedent forms through the production of material written specially for the medium, and it is within this context that the single play can justifiably claim to be a genre in its own right.

Notwithstanding theatre's declining influence in this evolutionary process, it is significant to note that both the penultimate and ultimate single plays presented by the SABC before the genre was abandoned in 1990/1, were adapted stage plays, namely, *A LESSON FROM ALOES* and *HAPGOOD*. Furthermore, the BBC relies on translations from the theatre in its repertoire of single plays; for instance, their 1991 season included, *UNCLE VANYA*, *OLD TIMES* and *ABSOLUTE HELL*,¹³ attesting to the medium's capacity and flexibility to accommodate both original and adapted works.

Although *THE OUTCAST*, which Andrew Unsworth describes as 'legendary' and "the only competent English production in living memory,"¹⁴ was shot

13

BBC Annual Report and Accounts, 1991/92, p. 20.

14

Unsworth, Andrew, Sunday Express, Johannesburg, 20/1/85, p. 7.

entirely on 16 mm film in the Knysna forest, it remained quintessentially a television drama. This is confirmed by Hofmeyr who says that it was originally conceived for the small screen, and the performances were directed with extensive use of close up shots to express tight dramatic action and reaction.¹⁵

Notwithstanding the acclaim of *THE OUTCAST*, Hofmeyr sees no future for this genre on SABC TV.

I don't think we'll ever do them again in South Africa. The SABC and M-Net are putting money into local features, or 'made-for-television' movies. These will have the same function as the single play.¹⁶

Owing to many of its early producers (directors) having entered the medium from radio and other disciplines, or being in possession of mainly theoretical and practical credentials from film schools, the single play was poorly served by their lack of professional directing experience in television. None of these early practitioners, with the possible exception of Ken Leach, had any professional experience in directing live performers. Gray Hofmeyr, referring to the series, *QUEST*, the first television drama that he worked on and co-directed with Bill Pullen, says;

I was terrified of actors. It was a major step for me to direct an actor. I thought actors were 'big deals.' Consequently, I watched what they did in rehearsal, and picked up from there.¹⁷
(Hofmeyr directed the studio scenes of *QUEST* and Pullen the outdoor filming).

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Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, August, 1987.

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Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, BAFTA Centre, London, September 1992.

17

Hofmeyr, Gray, Interview with author, Johannesburg, 12/8/87.

Furthermore, as shown in Chapter Three (cf. SALOME), relatively inexperienced drama directors were often too absorbed in the technical demands of the medium, and left performers to interpret the roles as best they could, a situation similar to that which existed in the early days of the Hollywood film industry.

Evidence to date, however, does not point to the 'theatrical-release-features' having the same function as the single play. As no 'made-for television' movies have been produced, it is not possible to assess their impact at this stage. However, within the context of diverse financial and distribution interests, which are characteristic of 'theatrical-release-features' the material becomes product oriented and is subject to competitive commercial pressures which do not demand fidelity to the writer's intention, but to maximising investment capital in the project. To this end, the Organiser of English Drama: TV-1, Clive Rodel, sees his major role in the production of television drama as facilitating the best possible financial deals for Channel One, in his negotiations with various co-producing companies. ¹⁸ (The SABC's investment in recent 'theatrical-release-features' has varied between twenty and fifty per cent). ¹⁹

With the shift to 'theatrical-release-features', the scriptwriter, as primary creator, is considered no more important than one of several contributory factors within the total commercial package; the script being the vehicle upon which the potential profit and success of the investment is based, a variable that is

18

Rodel, Clive, Interview with author, Johannesburg, May 1992.

19

Ibid.

manipulated to suit the changing circumstances of the project. In this respect, the function of the scriptwriter of 'theatrical-release-features' is comparable to that of his/her counterpart of multiple episode dramas.

Concurrent with the decline of the single play in the late eighties, was the decision to scrap the post of Script Editor - a legacy of British television drama - in the English Drama Department. After John Hind resigned in 1989, Andre Bothma occupied the post for some 18 months before he was retrenched when the SABC established business units within the Department, and the focus shifted to producing commercially viable dramas. The only incumbent who continues to function as script editor today is Clive Rodel, but according to him, that is only one of his responsibilities; moreover, he deals mainly with established writers.²⁰ Compared with the time when the Department had three full time script editors who were actively fostering the work of writers, the novice or potential scriptwriter is now largely ignored. According to Lee Marcus, the script editor not only helped in shaping the script to meet the criteria of the medium, but also safeguarded the writer's fundamental intent from being undermined by the director.²¹

The investigation has shown that the single play, certainly in the form in which it evolved during the period under review, is unlikely ever to be produced for TV-1 in the future. According to the Chief Executive of SABC Television, Quentin Green, the single play has no future on commercial television, but could possibly find a place on the spare channel known as TSS, along with other minority

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Rodel, Clive, Telephone interview with author, 13/12/92.

21

Marcus, Lee, Interview with author, Johannesburg, May 1992.

interest programmes, such as the arts, education and training.²² TSS, however, relies heavily on sponsorship, which places minority interest programmes in direct competition for funding with corporate support for socially-expedient education and training programmes. Although TSS is designed to function as a public service channel, much of its present programme content is largely determined by private sector commercial sponsorship. (For instance, a documentary programme entitled, *THE WONDER OF WATER* (1993), was totally sponsored by Umgeni Water in order to promote water awareness among users). However, should the revived single play find a niche on TSS, it will be severely disadvantaged by the very small audience which this channel at present attracts, namely, 166,000 viewers, or 0,7% of the total television audience in the country.

8.3. THE FUTURE.

Although it is not possible, and certainly not within the scope of this investigation to project a vision of broadcasting into a so-called 'new' South Africa, certain policy statements, recommendations and discussion papers have been published by competing political parties and other interested bodies that do have some bearing on what kind of system could emerge from a negotiated settlement. Thus a perspective on new management and programme structures that are likely to flow from a negotiated political settlement could point the direction in which television drama, as a whole, and the single play in particular, could be treated. Viewpoints on a future broadcasting structure in South Africa have been

22

Green, Quentin, Chief Executive, SABC Television, Interview with author BAFTA Centre, London, (Seminars and Screenings of SAFTI and FAWO videos and films), London, September 1992.

expressed by the Viljoen Task Group Report, the ANC's Jabulani Conference (August 1991), coupled with their Media Seminar resolutions on a new Media Charter, the Rhodes University Policy Conference (1990), the Fair, Free and Open Media Conference held at the University of the Western Cape (January 1992), the Democratic Party's discussion document on broadcasting (1991) and the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting, chaired by Raymond Louw.

However, as the National Party and ANC have emerged as the two dominant political players, it is fair to assume that elements of the Viljoen Report and the ANC media resolutions are likely to find their way into a new vision for South African broadcasting. Among the aims set out in its preamble to a Draft Media Charter, the ANC calls for the democratisation of the media.

The forms and methods of the media shall take account of the diversity of communities in respect of geography, language and interests.

Measures shall be taken to ensure that all communities have access to the technical means for the receipt and dissemination of information, including electricity, telecommunications and other facilities.

Diversity of ownership of media production and distribution facilities shall be ensured.²³

The recommendations of the political 'left' envisage a restructured broadcasting policy based on three sectors, namely, public, commercial and community, which in broad outline are not in major conflict with the aims of the Viljoen recommendations. However, as Richard Collins points out broadcasting policy often requires "a trading off the (partial) achievement of one (or more) goal

23

African National Congress, Resolutions Adopted at the Dip National Media Seminar, 23 - 24 November 1991. p. 2.

against the (partial) neglect of another(s)." ²⁴ Hence any proposed model will need to consider compromises among contesting agents in respect of policy detail and emphasis on one or other of the three envisaged sectors. Insofar as transforming public utility structures, such as the SABC, from a body that has been in sympathy with the apartheid government to one that respects the tenets of a non-racial democracy, the co-ordinator of the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture, Wally Serote, says;

It is our task to negotiate, facilitate and explore with all of those bodies of culture which practised apartheid, so that they can be transformed from being of the dark eras to enter into a new era of non-racialism, democracy and to express the rich diversity of the nation. ²⁵

During the interim period of government, the ANC believes that the present privileged relationship between the National Party government and the SABC cannot be allowed to continue as the corporation's "programming, coverage and news reporting would not be fair, impartial and balanced during the interim period." ²⁶ The document has criticised the government in its attempt to unilaterally de-regulate broadcasting in South Africa, in terms of the Viljoen Task Group.

The Viljoen Task Group on broadcasting was appointed undemocratically, was unrepresentative and has operated in secret. It represents the interest of a minority grouping. Not only has consultation not taken place regarding the future of broadcasting but the public debate within the

24

Collins, Richard, "Broadcasting Policy for a Post Apartheid South Africa: Some Preliminary Proposals," Critical Arts, Vol 6, No. 1, 1992, p. 28.

25

Serote, Mongane Wally, Speech given at the first graduation of the Kwasu students trained by the Natal Performing Arts Council in Durban, February 1992.

²⁶ African National Congress, "Resolutions Adopted at the Dip. National Media Seminar," 23 -24 November 1991.

democratic movement around the issue has been ignored.
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Although the Viljoen Task Group received submissions from 138 bodies and individuals, there was no input from significant Black organisations, such as the African National Congress, (ANC), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Film and Allied Workers Organisation (FAWO), the Azanian Peoples' Organisation (AZAPO), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Owing to the composition of the Task Group being so heavily weighted in favour of government supporters, many of their findings will remain suspect in the eyes of oppositional forces. According to Willie Currie, Council Member of FAWO (Film and Allied Workers' Organisation), "the very people who were running broadcasting in the country, were being asked to make judgments on how it should be reorganised." 28

Notwithstanding these serious shortcomings the report does, however, reflect a convergence of views in one critical area, namely, that an independent broadcasting authority be established to determine overall policy directives relating to the future of radio and television in South Africa. As an interim measure, the ANC has recommended that the All Party Congress should appoint an Interim Broadcasting Consultative Committee, (IBCC), to assume responsibility for the control and regulation of broadcasting. Among the responsibilities of the IBCC would be to appoint a representative Board of

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Ibid. p. 6.

28

Currie, Willie, Council Member of FAWO, Interview with author, BAFTA Centre, London, September 1992.

Control for the SABC, and to establish guidelines concerning the impartiality of all broadcasting, particularly news and current affairs programmes. Furthermore, the ANC recommends an Independent Media Monitoring Commission to evaluate performance of the IBCC. In order to redress the political bias of the SABC, Willie Currie of FAWO says:

We'd like a situation where there is a mechanism, approved by an interim government, whereby an independent media commission would appoint a new Board to assume the responsibilities of running the SABC. ²⁹

Significantly both the ANC and the Viljoen report recommend a body that is independent and impartial to regulate aspects of broadcasting. For instance, in the mission statement of the Viljoen Report on the question of an Independent Broadcasting Authority, it states that this body should "ensure that broadcasting in South Africa serves the public in such a way that the ideals of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society are pursued and advanced." ³⁰ Likewise in the Policy Discussion Paper on Telecommunications and Broadcasting, the Democratic Party calls for an independent body, known as the South African Communications Authority.

.....the DP proposes that certain steps be taken to move away from our current centralised broadcast media to a system better suited to the needs of our society and population.

Central to this is the need to create a public body, independent of the government and the SABC, to regulate national communications and media. ³¹

29

Ibid.

30

Report of the Task Group on Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa, Chairman, Prof. Christo Viljoen, August 1991, p. 62.

31

Democratic Party Policy Discussion Paper on Telecommunications and Broadcasting, June 1991, p. 1.

Among both major and minor political players there is consensus that the SABC should be free of future government interference, an aspect which, in principle, augurs well for programme content. In respect of drama and documentaries in a restructured SABC, the ANC document specifically states:

That public broadcasting services must be obliged to broadcast a substantial number of existing drama and documentary programmes on South Africa which have never been widely distributed.

That public broadcasting services should commission and broadcast drama and documentary programmes, including documentaries on the interim period, to be made by independent producers.³²

Among the dramas made during the apartheid era that were never shown on the SABC, are the adaptations of Nadine Gordimer's short stories, COUNTRY LOVERS, CITY LOVERS and SIX FEET OF THE COUNTRY. These and other dramas shown on overseas film circuits and broadcasting networks, as well as those permitted by the Directorate of Publications to be shown at selected local film festivals, would have a chance of being screened to a wider South African audience under a restructured SABC. Furthermore, the SABC should consider following the British example, where both the BBC and ITV are mandated to contract at least 25% of all programmes, including drama, to independent producers.

Willie Currie says that within a 'new' SABC there should be less policing of subject matter of television drama, allowing for greater freedom of expression;

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African National Congress, Resolutions Adopted at the Dip National Media Seminar, 23-24 November 1991, p. 14.

³³ such freedom benefiting not only drama as a whole, but genres such as the drama documentary which could be developed to articulate areas of social and political discourse. Such material would contrast strongly with the inoffensive social drama, *FEVER WARD*, which had been offered as a drama documentary, or the former English Documentary Department's profile on the life of Emily Hobhouse. Moreover, recently produced ethnographic documentaries that have been shown to international audiences such as, *THE LONG JOURNEY OF CLEMENT ZULU*, directed by Liz Fish on returning ANC exiles, and *DEAR GRANDFATHER, YOUR LEFT FOOT IS MISSING*, on forced removals from District Six, could also find their way onto the 'liberated' screens of the SABC.

A more representative SABC would also need to examine the current discrepancy in the production values of drama produced as second language as well as those produced in English and Afrikaans. At the heart of this discourse is the disparity of financial allocation between White and Black drama. Also to be addressed is the future of multi-lingualism in television drama and how the cross-over of language and ethnic-cultural barriers can help to shape a more embracing South Africanism.

I think the particular challenge here is to find ways in which the diversity of the South African reality can be explored dramatically; certainly in a way which uses all the language resources and the differences between people in a creative way. I'm not suggesting that we try to enforce a kind of national television culture, but in some ways there is a need to explore these issues beyond apartheid divisions in what it means to live in South Africa, I think drama can play a very crucial role in helping people understand and make sense of the changes, and to look at all the various divisions within

our society related to class, race, ethnicity, gender, rural and urban communities in an imaginative way.³⁴

Tentative steps have already been taken in this regard with the move away from single-race dramas to so-called cross-over comedy series such as GOING UP, screened on the multi-cultural entertainment channel, TV-2/3/4, (now known as CCV-TV).³⁵ GOING UP was a sequel to the cross-over series S'GUDI S'NAYSI, that was voted the most popular television programme on the entertainment channel in 1990.³⁶ According to its producer, Roberta Durrant of Penguin Films, these dramas cut across racial barriers, and help to create an understanding of Black and White cultural differences.³⁷

Within the context of a 'new age' of democracy in South Africa, drama, as a whole, is likely to reflect the fundamental changes in terms of its form and content. During the apartheid era, drama has been used as "a means of objectifying social reality for the purpose of changing it."³⁸ But in a non-racial democracy it should no longer be necessary to manipulate drama to serve the needs of the liberation struggle; protest theatre would have lost its sting, and the apartheid apologists would have lost their cause. Drama can finally be released

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Currie, Willie, FAWO Council Member, Interview with author, BAFTA Centre, London, September 1992.

35

The pilot episode of GOING UP went out on TV-2/3 in February 1991.

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Sunday Tribune, TV and Radio Supplement, Durban, 24/2/91, p. 9.

37

Durrant, Roberta, Director: Penguin Films, Interview with author, BAFTA Centre, London, September 1992.

38

Tomaselli, K, Muller, J, "Class, Race and Oppression: Metaphor and Metonymy in Black South African Theatre," Critical Arts, Vol 4, No. 3, 1987.

from the 'pillars' of a struggle against a universally discredited system of social engineering.

Theatre for national liberation involves, like the four pillars of our struggle, a programme of revolutionary, cultural action among the masses, in the working class movement, among the armed fighters, and in the countries all over the world to mobilize, conscientize and win support for our struggle. (cf. Chapter Four for a fuller extract of this quote).

The history of the Black liberation struggle, however, is likely to provide rich material for dramatisation for years to come, just as the Anglo Boer War continues to provide fertile soil for SABC television dramas, as in the Afrikaans serial, MEESTER (1991). The post-apartheid period is likely to be coupled with an aggressive policy of affirmative action within statutory bodies such as the SABC, thereby diluting existing management structures.

The implications of such affirmative action for locally produced drama can only be speculative, although certain directions can be extrapolated from statements made by leaders whose voices are likely to be heard within new broadcasting management structures. According to Willie Currie, organisations such as FAWO, which runs a Community Video School in Johannesburg to train Black directors and technical crew in the television medium, is likely to become an important source of recruitment for future television personnel for the SABC. 40

39

Kavanagh, Robert, "Theatre and the Struggle for National Liberation," Based on a paper prepared by Kavanagh as reconstructed after discussions and submissions by members and institutions represented on the Theatre Committee, CASA (Culture in Another South Africa) Conference, Amsterdam, December 1987.

40

Currie, Willie, Council Member, FAWO, Interview with author, BAFTA Centre, London, 1992.

From these young directors, technical crew members and writers could emerge a new generation of documentaries and dramas, based on a wide range of socio-political themes, ranging from aspects of the liberation struggle to the experiences of birth, growing up, love, marriage, violence and death in the turbulent townships and cities of South Africa; shared dramatic experiences that entertain, inform and illuminate, and not merely propagate a political viewpoint. The imaginative experience that television drama can provide is that,

it can sharpen our sensitivity to the disturbing possibilities which lie unnoticed or disregarded in our society and our everyday routines. The great strength of television drama is its power to place the extraordinary in the context of the ordinary, to reshape our world by throwing light into its areas of accustomed shadow.⁴¹

8.4. TOWARDS A NEW SOUTH AFRICANISM.

One of the most cogent reasons for reviving the single play is that unlike the serialised dramas, it has escaped the dominant American influence that pervades the serials, series and sitcoms. Within a new socio-political context the genre should be given the opportunity to become a transmitter of indigenous discourse and ideas, promoting the enrichment of its people as a major factor in the building of a more inclusive South African culture. Furthermore, the South Africanism of these dramas, when freed of the narrow apartheid vision, is likely to attract a wider cross-cultural audience, who could possibly identify with local issues and values, recognising their relevance to their own lives and situation.

The non-elitist nature of the television medium could draw audiences to these dramas that no national theatre could ever aspire to reach. However, one of the

41

Rice, John, "On Television," *South East Arts Review*, Issue No 18, Summer 1981, Kent, p. 58.

militating factors against the engagement of the television medium to channel drama to a wider audience is a lack of electrification to the majority of South African dwellings.⁴² However, in any examination of the revival of the single play, cognizance should be taken of the genre's potential outreach in terms of audience size compared with live theatre. As a means of fostering drama within a 'new' South Africa, and of promoting inter community understanding, as well as providing an affordable means of channelling 'meaningful' indigenous drama to the wider population, the television single play presents a viable option for future planners to consider. Although it does not have the present audience capacity of radio, the progressive electrification of the country continues apace, giving television a steady potential growth factor. (Although only 20% of the metropolitan areas are without electricity, the figures for the TBVC states and the so-called national states are 93% and 89% respectively; areas of technological neglect during the apartheid era, where the extension of the electrification grid will progress well into the 21st century).⁴³

Former BBC Drama Head, Shaun Sutton talks about television drama being "the largest theatre in the world," and former Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych, David Jones, poses the question whether television is the "true national theatre?"^{44, 45} Is such a notion, however, beyond

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According to Eskom spokesman, Rene Rogers, by 1990 some 43% of dwellings in South Africa had electricity. See appendix for breakdown of component areas, such as metropolitan, towns, TBVC, etc.

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See Appendix Six.

44

Sutton, Shaun, The Largest Theatre in the World, BBC Publication, London, pp. 4 - 10.

45

Jones, David, "TV - the True National Theatre," *The Observer*, 30/7/78.

consideration in this country? At no stage in the history of South Africa has there ever been a truly national theatre, notwithstanding the existence of the National Theatre Organisation (NTO), which functioned between 1948 and 1963, until the formation of the five performing arts councils, (including the now defunct South West African Performing Arts Council) in 1963. However, the NTO was created to serve the cultural needs and interests of the White community only; therefore, despite its generic title 'national,' this organisation was never a national theatre in the full sense of the word.

In terms of attracting larger audiences, the theatres controlled by the respective arts councils have enjoyed limited success, despite the lifting of restrictions on racially exclusive audiences, and the application of the Stumpf subsidy formula which encourages the production of popular spectacles and musicals in order to increase the number of 'bums on seats.' For instance, the impressive State Theatre in Pretoria, built at a cost of R55-million, attracted less than a hundred thousand people to its drama productions throughout 1986.⁴⁶ In the same year, the Market Theatre in Johannesburg attracted only 85 277, while 37 112 attended performances in the Upstairs Theatre and 16 717 in The Laager, whereas, the single play reached an average audience of some 800 000.⁴⁷ (cf. Chapter Six)

In a largely homogeneous society such as Britain, where one episode of a dramatised serial such as CORONATION STREET, can play to about half the adult population of the country, and where many single plays have reached audiences of more than ten million on one evening, the non-elitist character of

46

Annual Report of the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal, 1987.

47

The Market Foundation Annual Report, 1987, Johannesburg, p. 1.

television drama is undisputed.⁴⁸ However, within a heterogeneous society such as South Africa, with its large third world component, such a comparison is questionable, though there is evidence to show that in this country, most people are exposed to drama not through theatre, but through the medium of radio, followed by television. Notwithstanding that since the late 70's all theatres run by the performing arts councils have been open to all races, their audiences throughout the period under review, have remained overwhelmingly White, and consequently they have been seen by the political 'left' as theatres pandering to an elitist minority.⁴⁹ (There have been concerted efforts during 1991/2 to change the image of these councils with outreach projects, such as NAPAC's Kwasa which have seen greater Black involvement, as well as the presentation of productions such as SARAFINA, which played to predominantly Black audiences at the Playhouse in Durban).

TV-1, on the other hand, in 1987, had a so-called 'non-White' viewer component of some 20%, growing to some 40% in 1991. Although TV-1 was never designed to attract a national audience, but aimed instead at catering for the social, cultural and entertainment needs of the two White language groups, (Afrikaans and English), the penetration of Indian and Coloured viewing was evident from the beginning. For instance, in 1976, some 46% of the White population group owned television sets, compared with 20% of the Indian, and 9% of the Coloured. By 1985, however, 94% of the White, 93% of the Indian and 61% of

48

Figures taken from *TV and Radio*, IBA Publication, London, 1982.

49

Herrington, Sandra, "Performance Polemics in a Plural Society: South African Theatre in Transition," Ph.D thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1988, Chapter Five.

the Coloured population owned television sets.⁵⁰ Among the Black population virtually no sets were bought in 1976. Although the figure for the following year was a mere 0.2%, the percentage had risen to 20% by 1985. (cf. Chapter Six). In terms of audience size, the following figures of live performances, staged by the four provincial performing arts councils between 1983 and 1986, include drama, ballet and opera.

ATTENDANCE FIGURES FOR THE FOUR PERFORMING ARTS COUNCILS BETWEEN 1983 AND 1986.

	1983/4	1984/5	1985/86
PACT	726 500	535 525	517 708
CAPAB	470 484	423 038	456 416
NAPAC	141 291	165 158	177 691
PACOFs	116 075	149 336	129 787

In contrast, the average audience size for a single play during the mid-eighties was 800 000.⁵² Even where single plays have attained lower audience figures, for instance, Fugard's A LESSON FROM ALOES, (averaging 180 000 viewers throughout the drama), they nevertheless remain impressive figures compared with NAPAC's and PACOF's total audience for the years 1983 to 1986.^{53 /54}

50

Figures supplied to author by the SABC, Auckland Park, August 1987.

51

Figures obtained from the annual reports of the four performing arts councils.

52

Figure supplied by the English Drama Department: TV-1.

53

Average audience size for single plays during this period were given by the English Television Drama Department.

54

Figures obtained from the annual reports of the four performing arts councils.

8.5. REDEFINING EUROCENTRIC CONCEPTS.

Although the concept of a 'national theatre' in South Africa raises a number of serious problems and issues, such as, defining a 'national cultural identity,' the old mould of apartheid has been broken and evolving socio-political paradigms are beginning to emerge and shape, in small measure, a new national consciousness. This is evident, for instance, in attempts to unify arts bodies in the country, where for the first time, diverse and oppositional bodies came together with former apartheid establishment institutions, at a national arts policy plenary in Johannesburg in December 1992. Notwithstanding several isolationist bodies, from the far left to the far right wing, who stand outside the current moves towards unity, there are encouraging signs that a number of significant cultural bodies wish to unite, as for instance, the current dialogue between the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC) and the Natal Cultural Congress (NCC), and the latter body and the Durban Arts' Association.

Although 'national theatres' are First World eurocentric concepts, normally state-funded with private sector support, they could be considered as options within an African context. Furthermore, the establishment of a national theatre in London on the lines of the Comedie-Francaise in Paris, first suggested by David Garrick in the 18th century, has evolved out of a pre-electronic age of communication which ignores the possibilities of other media achieving some of the main aims of a national theatre.⁵⁵ Among these aims are to make an important contribution to a nation's image of itself, as well as to define it in relation to its neighbours.⁵⁶

55

Although the National Theatre on the South Bank in London opened in 1976, with the Lyttleton and the Olivier theatres, followed by the Cottesloe in 1977, their original concepts are rooted in earlier centuries.

56

Esslin, Martin, An Anatomy of Drama, Hill and Wang, New York, 1977, pp. 29-30.

While a fine edifice such as the NT in London, or the State Theatre in Pretoria, expresses symbolic meaning of permanence and stature, its real value is limited if the image that it projects of the nation and its people through the choice of dramatic material is never shared by the majority of that population. The level of exclusion is particularly evident within a Third World context, where going to the theatre is regarded as elitist, largely middle class and expensive. However, radio and television are media that can provide 'meaningful,' accessible and affordable drama relative to the total population as a whole.

Furthermore, the power of television to engage Black involvement is evidenced from the introduction of TV-2 and -3 which impacted significantly on Black township theatre, and attracted many Blacks into the industry.

".....broadcast television undercut Black township theatre. Black workers in entertainment were attracted by the promise of secure employment, better wages, technological training -- and, above all, media exposure. Television in turn spawned independent video and film companies, and soon the promise of employment in film and television lured workers away from the theatre.⁵⁷

The increasing availability and exposure to television among Black South Africans further indicates the innately non-elitist character of the medium, and the potential to exploit this channel for 'meaningful' drama. Notwithstanding the established norm of a 'national theatre' being structured around 'live performance' genres, this should not necessarily disqualify alternative possibilities. Although radio presents the most cost-effective means of transmitting drama, the case for television, and the single play in particular, as

57

Steadman, Ian, "Black South African Theatre after Nationalism," *The English Academy Review*, Johannesburg, 1983/84, p. 45.

one of several possibilities, is deserving of further evaluation. It is certainly not within the scope of this investigation to examine the full implications of such a suggestion, but merely to plant the idea.

Similarly it is not the intention to undermine the important aims and functions of live theatre, but simply to advance the argument that the television single play is a meaningful genre that could work in tandem with theatre. It is likely that live theatre will continue to be an important source of inspiration for television drama, providing, as it has done in the past, trained and skilled performers and directors. Furthermore, during the present socio-economic recessionary climate, when the performing arts councils have had their subsidies severely pruned as a result of state finances being channelled into more pressing social needs, such as Black education, health and housing, their capacity to bring drama to the respective communities they serve, has been severely restricted. While not diminishing the role of the performing arts councils, or their future counterparts; their attendance figures could ultimately improve in that a public introduced to drama through the medium of television, may well be stimulated to experience the excitement of live theatre in a playhouse. Referring to the European experience in this regard, Martin Esslin, says:

People who would never have gone to the theatre throughout their lives are now exposed to vast quantities of dramatic material on television and radio (at least in Europe where radio drama is still a strong ingredient of public service broadcasting) and this in turn will inevitably produce a large new and sophisticated audience clamouring for work of high literary and artistic value and intellectual level which only a minority medium such as the live theatre can ultimately provide.⁵⁸

58

Esslin, Martin, An Anatomy of Drama, Hill and Wang, New York, 1977, p. 84.

In respect of the impact of television in Britain, David Jones says that "it has spread an awareness of drama to 80 per cent of the population who could not have told you what a play was before the arrival of television."⁵⁹ For television in South Africa to assume the function of a 'national theatre' would possibly mean a revised funding basis for subsidised live theatre, as the single play (if this is to be the dominant genre of such a service), would need to be accommodated on a non-commercial channel, though the details of such an arrangement are beyond the scope of this investigation. However, it is important that television does not merely become a vehicle for the transmission of plays that would normally be the preserve of the performing arts councils, or similar structures which may be established in the future; such a step would be retrogressive for the television single play, and return it to a phase in its early development in Britain, where West End plays were transmitted 'live' from the theatre. South African scriptwriters, new and established, should be encouraged to write material specially for the medium.

Although drama is a shared experience that can be channelled through several media, the single play, having evolved with the medium of television, has acquired its own unique identity. Furthermore, within the context of a developing country like South Africa, where major public funding in the future will move into much needed housing, education and health services, and less into subsidised theatres, the cost-effectiveness of the single play should be evaluated in terms of its potential to capture a large national audience.

59

Jones, David, (former Artistic Director of the RSC, and producer of BBC-TV's 'Play of the Month'), *The Observer*, 30/7/78.

Although the present management of the SABC have indicated that they have no intention of restoring the English language single play, and have focussed instead on 'theatrical-release-features' and 'made-for-television movies,' a restructured corporation may wish to re-evaluate programmes options, should it be in the interest of fostering a wider sense of South Africanism among its various and diverse peoples. Benefiting from such a positive evaluation would be both the defunct straight documentary programme as well as the single play, as they would be seen as viable transmitters of 'meaningful' and creative indigenous works that are affordable in the national interest.

Thus within a restructured SABC, funding could be restored to the English Drama Department for the production of single plays that should, in the interest of fair-mindedness, satisfy certain criteria. (In fact, there should be only one drama department with one budget for all dramas produced by the SABC, and not apportioned according to racial criteria). At the outset, the present mindset that single plays are 'a luxury,' has to be broken, because if such a view prevails in the SABC under new management, there would be scant chance of any revival. However, if the single play can be seen as a means of providing the new democracy with a cost-effective means of achieving some of the aims of a 'national theatre,' then such a proposal may well be viewed sympathetically.

The old argument that the financial allocation for one single play could have provided x-number of episodes of a series or serial could then be resisted and shown to be misplaced. Although it is not the task of this investigation to suggest how the SABC could effect savings in order to accommodate these plays within the Drama Department budget, it may well consider broadcasting for fewer hours per week if it meant that 'quality' instead of sheer 'quantity' becomes a balancing criterion of programme planning. As Cor Nortje says:-

The SABC should rather broadcast for fewer hours -- finish at 11 pm and start at 6 pm, instead of 2 pm, but the last option it should take is to abandon a meaningful part of the broadcasting programme structure.⁶⁰

Furthermore, the single play should be renamed, to release it from its theatrical connotations, losing the term 'play.' Terms such as 'teleplay' also suggest a play adapted from the stage, and 'one-off' sounds dismissive, whereas, 'teledrama' is one which connects the medium directly with drama. The term 'teledrama' would enable original texts to be distinguished from adapted stage plays, which could retain the term 'teleplay.'

In addition, it should be policy that at least 60% of future teledramas be original and indigenous; that single race dramas be discouraged, unless these are set within a specific historical or social context; that the racial and gender bias towards White male scriptwriters be altered so that the voice of Black and of female writers can be heard; and that greater freedom in the choice of subject-matter be permitted. Finally, an interim government should restructure the funding policy of the SABC to make the institution more accountable to the public and less to the commercial advertiser, so that space and finance can be allocated for 'meaningful' and entertaining South African single plays.

60

Nortje, Cor, Production Director, Entertainment Programmes, Safritel, Interview with author, Auckland Park, May 1992.

APPENDIX I

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1976
SINGLE PLAYS (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Carmen
 Author: Bizet
 Director: William C Faure
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX2	DURATION
6.1.76	16.6.77	48'18"

(2)

Title: Delusions (of the mind)
 Author: Esther Flowers *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX2	DURATION
3.2.76		34'35"

(3)

Title: You're So Good To Me, Jonesy
 Author: Cameron McClure *
 Director: Cecil Jubber
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX2	DURATION
2.3.76		54'46"

(4)

Title: Residential (Hotel)
 Author: David Shreeve *
 Director: Bill Pullen
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX2	DURATION
30.3.76		50'36"

(5)

Title: A Husband for Nancy
 Author: Peter Davis
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
27.4.76		34'03"

(6)

Title: Enemy
 Author: Robin Maugham
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
25.5.76		63'10"

(7)

Title: Adrian's Mother
 Author: Rosalie Grayson
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
22.6.76		54'57"

(8)

Title: The Wonderful World of Dr Monk
 Author: Nigel Vermaas *
 Director: Nigel Vermaas/Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
14.9.76		34'49"

(9)
 Title: James Barry
 Author: Story by:
 Script: A Nathanson *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
9.11.76		45'40"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1977
SINGLE PLAYS (* = South African Author)

(1)
 Title: Charley's Aunt
 Author: Brandon Thomas
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
15.1.77	27.9.79/21.8.83	86'54"

(2)
 Title: In Confidence
 Author: Sheila Hodgson
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
21.4.77		

(3)
 Title: A Dream in a Wood of Ghosts
 Author: Michael McCabe *
 Director: M Leeston-Smith
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
28.4.77		52'53"

(4)
 Title: People are Living There
 Author: Athol Fugard *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
5.5.77	19.6.80	80'22"

(5)
 Title: Excursion
 Author: George Candy *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
12.5.77		46'30"

(6)
 Title: Ducktails
 Author: Christopher Hope *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
9.6.77		

(7)
 Title: Much Ado About Nothing
 Author: Shakespeare
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
6.10.77	31.7.80	93'54"

(8)

Title: Duet ("Redundant" & "Waiting")
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
20.10.77	11.9.80	64'01"(total)

(9)

Title: With The Cherry Blossom The Dawn
 Author: Luanshya Greer
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
3.11.77	8.5.80	61'36"

(10)

Title: Ring Around The Moon
 Author: Jean Anouilh
 Director: M Leeston-Smith
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
17.11.77		89'58"

(11)

Title: El Amor Brujo (Ballet)
 Author: Manuel de Falla
 Director: William C Faure
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
1.12.77	26.4.79	47'25"

(12)

Title: The Birthday Treat
 Author: Bertie Foyle *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
30.12.77		27'27"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1978
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Colombe
 Author: Jean Anouilh
 Director: M Leeston-Smith
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
14.3.78		55'01"

(2)

Title: Arms and the The Man
 Author: George Bernard Shaw
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
6.4.78		88'09"

(3)

Title: The Human Voice
 Author: Jacques Cocteau
 Director: M Leeston-Smith
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
20.4.78		54'35"

(4)

Title: Night Ride
 Author: Jack Moffitt *
 Director: Bernard Buys
 Producer: Heyns Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
18.5.78	13.8.81	32'16"

(5)

Title: Antigone
 Author: Jean Anouilh
 Director: Douglas Bristtow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
1.6.78	3.9.81	78'37"

(6)

Title: Hello and Goodbye
 Author: Athol Fugard *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
15.6.78	11.9.80	91'21"

(7)

Title: Cry of the Peacock
 Author: Jean Anouilh
 Director: M Leeston-Smith
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
14.12.78		71'59"

(8)

Title: Blithe Spirit
 Author: Noel Coward
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer:

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
28.12.78		71'21"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1979
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: The Giaconda Smile
 Author: Aldous Huxley
 Director: M Leeston-Smith
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
12.4.79		88'28"

(2)

Title: Conversations in a Mirror
 Author: James Ambrose Brown *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: Hancock Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
26.4.79		50'00"

(3)

Title: Salome
 Author: Oscar Wilde
 Director: William C Faure
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
10.5.79		83'05"

(4)
 Title: Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed ?
 Author: Martin Worth
 Director: Percival Rubens
 Producer: Heyns Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
24.5.79		61'35"

(5)
 Title: A Circle of Sun
 Author: Jonathan Berwick *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
7.6.79		58'45"

(6)
 Title: Better The Devil You Know
 Author: Luanshya Greer/adapted by Margaret Heale *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
21.6.79		59'55"

(7)
 Title: Kami (Ballet)
 Author: Story by L Leipold *
 Director: Ken Kirsten
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
5.7.79		52'33"

(8)

Title: Is That Your Body ?
 Author: Andrew Davies
 Director: M Leeston-Smith
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
5.7.79		29'55"

(9)

Title: Kate in the Park
 Author: Michael McCabe *
 Director: Percival Rubens
 Producer: Heyns Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
19.7.79		46'21"

(10)

Title: The Chicken Run
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
2.8.79		71'04"

(11)

Title: The Stairway
 Author: James Ambrose Brown *
 Director: M Leeston-Smith
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
16.8.79		57'40"

(12)

Title: We Three Kings
 Author: Norman Partington *
 Director: Percival Rubens
 Producer: Heyns Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
16.12.79	24.12.81	36'20"

(13)

Title: Poor Bitos
 Author: Jean Anouilh
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

PART	DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
1	13.12.79		30'50"
2	20.12.79		35'00"
3	27.12.79		35'54"
4	3.1.80		32'12"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1980
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Fever Ward
 Author: Victor Gordon *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
10.4.80		75'00"

(2)
 Title: Happy Days Are Here Again
 Author: Denis Woolfe
 Director: Percival Rubens
 Producer: Lotus Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
24.4.80		32'12"

(3)
 Title: The Flow
 Author: Patricia Johnston *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: Hancock Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
22.5.80		58'28"

(4)
 Title: Mickey Kannis Caught My Eye
 Author: Geraldine Aron *
 Director: Manie Van Rensburg
 Producer: Visio Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
5.6.80		51'52"

(5)
 Title: House Of Bernarda Alba
 Author: Federico Garcia Lorca
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
3.7.80		77'44"

(6)

Title: Bye-Bye Booyens
 Author: Christopher Hope *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
14.8.80		60'30"

(7)

Title: The Pain
 Author: Pauline Smith * Adapted by Richard Beynon*
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: Hancock Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
28.8.80		31'90"

(8)

Title: The Visit
 Author: Edgar Bold *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: Hancock Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
28.8.80		28'18"

(9)

Title: Macbeth
 Author: Shakespeare
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
25.9.80		122'38"

(10)

Title: Right You Are
 Author: Luigi Pirandello
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

Part	DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
1	9.10.80		30'15"
2	16.10.80		31'40"
3	23.10.80		30'53"

(12)

Title: Romeo And Juliet (Ballet)
 Author: (Music: Prokofiev)
 Director: Ken Kirsten
 Producer: SABC

ACT	DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	Duration
1	10.7.80		55'07"
2 & 3	13.7.80		75'46"

(13)

Title: The Wind Blew Her Away
 Author: Susan Pleat
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
17.7.80		53'40"

(14)

Title: Misa Flamenca (Ballet)
 Author: (Mercedes Molina Spanish Dance Group)
 Director: Ken Kirsten
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
25.21.80		43'03"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1981
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Murder on Demand
 Author: Richard Harris
 Director: Hanro Mohr
 Producer: Heyns Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
23.7.81		52'28"

(2)

Title: Not A Good Day For Dying
 Author: Luanshya Greer
 Director: Chris du Toit
 Producer: Heyns films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
30.7.81		53'42"

(3)

Title: Harry's Kid
 Author: Jack Cope * Adapted by Geraldine Aron *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
6.8.81		75'26"

(4)

Title: Brief Interlude
 Author: Axel Braumann *
 Director: Hanro Mohr
 Producer: Heyns Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
13.8.81		56'09"

(5)

Title: The Potato Eater
 Author: Patrick Owen Wilson *
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
20.8.81		58'54"

(6)

Title: The Importance Of Being Ernest
 Author: Oscar Wilde
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
27.8.81		98'11"

(7)

Title: Requiem For Canaan
 Author: Dick Findlay *
 Director: Sven Persson
 Producer: Sven Persson Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
10.9.81		57'30"

(8)

Title: The Master Builder
 Author: Henrik Ibsen
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
17.9.81		117'44"

(9)

Title: The Memorandum
 Author: Vaclav Havel
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
15.01.81		91'09"

(1)

Title: Twelfth Night
 Author: Shakespeare
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
22.10.81		120'52"

(11)

Title: The Honeybird
 Author: Stuart Cloete * Adapted by Michael McCabe *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
29.12.81		42'37"

(12)

Title: Raka (Ballet)
 Author: (Poem by N P van Wyk Louw *)
 Director: Sven Persson
 Producer: Sven Persson Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
29.12.81		42'37"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1982
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Authors)

(1)

Title: The Sound of Murder
 Author: William Fairchild
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

Part	DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
1	7.1.82		29'46"
2	14.1.82		30'54"
3	21.1.82		30'33"

(2)

Title: The Big Killing
 Author: Philip Mackey
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

PART	DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
1	28.1.82		37'36"
2	4.2.82		37'36"
3	11.2.82		36'26"

(3)

Title: Dear Irene
 Author: Richard Harris
 Director: Carl Fischer
 Producer:

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
18.2.82		33'16"

(4)

Title: Simon and Laura
 Author: Alan Melville
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer:

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
10.7.82		83'03"

(5)

Title: Along Came A Spider
 Author: Geraldine Aron *
 Director: Ralph Mogridge
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
23.9.82		83'26"

(6)

Title: The Royal
 Author: James Ambrose Brown *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
30.9.82		63'26"

(7)

Title: Moving
 Author: Stanley Price
 Director: Peter Bode
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
7.10.82		86'02"

(8)

Title: Claws (Of The Cat)
 Author: Stuart Cloete * Adapted by Margaret Heale *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
16.10.82		84'10"

(9)

Title: The Touch Of Pink
 Author: Geraldine Aron *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
21.10.82		58'00"

(10)

Title: A Midsummer Night's Dream
 Author: Shakespeare
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
28.10.82		112'12"

(11)

Title: The Picture of Gysbert Jonker
 Author: Herman Charles Bosman * Adapted by Andre P Brink *
 Director: Elmo de Witt
 Producer: Elmo de Witt Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
16.12.82		62'30"

(12)

Title: The First Day of Christmas
 Author: Richard Beynon *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: I.F.C.

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
25.12.82		84'38"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1983
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: The Earthmover
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC/I.F.C.

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
12.5.83		54'36"

(2)

Title: The Skull
 Author: Brian Johnson-Barker *
 Director: Carl Fischer
 Producer: SABC/I.F.C.

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
19.5.83		49'44"

(3)

Title: The Music Maker
 Author: Herman Charles Bosman * Adapted by Val Rosenberg *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
26.5.83		47'22"

(4)

Title: The Hiding of Black Bill
 Author: O'Henry adapted by John Cundill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC/I.F.C.

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
9.6.83		52'34"

(5)

Title: The Outcast
 Author: Gray Hofmeyr & John Cundill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: I.F.C.

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
2.10.83	17.1.85	81'04"

(6)

Title: Looking For Afrika
 Author: Stephen Coan *
 Director: Stephen Coan *
 Producer: Filmcraft

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
27.10.83		27'07"

(7)

Title: Song and Dance Man
 Author: Cedric Sundstrom * & Norman Coombes *
 Director: Cedric Sundstrom
 Producer: C.M.S. Productions

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
27.10.83		29'17"

(8)

Title: For King And Country
 Author: John Wilson
 Director: Bob Hird
 Producer: SABC/Elmo de Witt

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
10.11.83	17.11.85	80'07"

(9)

Title: Hamlet
 Author: Shakespeare
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
13.11.83		160'13"

(10)

Title: An Entirely New Concept in Packaging
 Author: Christopher Hope *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
17.11.83		57'19"

(11)

Title: Man In A Side Car
 Author: Simon Gray
 Director: Peter Goldsmid
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
1.12.83		90'01"

(12)

Title: Dear Kosie
 Author: Willem Steenkamp *
 Director: Robert Davies
 Producer: Davnic Productions

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
8.12.83		26'05"

(13)

Title: A Jury Of Her Peers
 Author: Susan Glaspell
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC/Heyns Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
2.6.83		37'17"

(14)

Title: Turn Of The Tide
 Author: Kathy Viedge *
 Director: Ralph Mogridge
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
15.12.83		99'42"

(15)

Title: The Canterville Ghost
 Author: Oscar Wilde
 Director: Ralph Mogridge
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
22.12.83		69'44"

(16)

Title: Highrise Cowboy
 Author: Bill Flynn * & Paul Slabolepszy *
 Director: Bobby Heaney
 Producer: Ashley Lazarus

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
8.12.83		27'27"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OFF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1984
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Chopsticks
 Author: Luanshya Greer * (now living in S.A.)
 Director: Etienne Puren
 Producer: Brigadiers

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
25.10.84		51'52"

(2)

Title: Time and the Wood
 Author: James Ambrose Brown *
 Director: Carl Fischer
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
15.11.84		56'50"

(3)

Title: Shakes Vs Shav
 Author: Based on Works by G.B. Shaw. Devised by D Bristow * &
 Christopher Dingle *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
22.11.84		46'56"

(4)

Title: The Mountain
 Author: Luanshya Greer * and Cedric Sundstrom *. Idea by John Michell
 Director: Cedric Sundstrom
 Producer: Heyns Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
229.11.84		51'54"

(5)

Title: Hayfever
 Author: Noel Coward
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
13.12.84		107'04"

(6)

Title: Richard Gush Of Salem
 Author: Guy Butler * and Joe Stewardson *
 Director: Vincent Cox
 Producer: United Talents

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
20.12.84		107'06"

(7)

Title: The Miser
 Author: Moliere
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
27.12.84		91'03"

(8)

Title: The Bay Window
 Author: Peter Wilhelm *
 Director: Peter Goldsmid
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
6.12.84		50'42"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1985
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Green and Gold Hero
 Author: George Canes *
 Director: George Canes
 Producer: Davnic Productions

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
4.1.85		48'44"

(2)

Title: Sabrina
 Author: John Hunt *
 Director: Chris Gyoury
 Producer: Burmeister & Gyoury

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
10.1.85	31.3.86	26'38"

(3)

Title: Blind Justice
 Author: Story by Ethelryda Lewis * - Adapted David Wicht*
 Director: David Wicht
 Producer: Film Afrika

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
10.1.85		26'13"

(4)

Title: Senor Smith (pilot ep)
 Author: Bill Flynn * & Paul Slabolepszy *
 Director: Carl Fischer
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
24.1.85		56'37"

(5)

Title: The Girl Who Hated Jimmicks
 Author: Geraldine Aron *
 Director:
 Producer:

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
14.3.85		26'46"

(6)

Title: Two Weeks In Paradise
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: Dapple Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
28.3.85		87'19"

(7)

Title: Seth
 Author: John Burch *
 Director: Michael Atkinson
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
11.4.85		30'50"

(8)

Title: Blind Date
 Author: Luanshya Greer *
 Director: Carl Fischer
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
25.4.85		26'58"

(9)

Title: In Broad Daylight
 Author: Mary Hick (nom de plume of Geraldine Aron*)
 Director: Janice Honeyman
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
9.5.85		24'23"

(10)

Title: Knights Pawn
 Author: Brian Johnson-Barker *
 Director: Ralph Mogridge
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
23.5.85		32'48"

(11)

Title: Mirror Image
 Author: James Ambrose Brown *
 Director: Peter Goldsmid
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
6.6.85		26'42"

(12)

Title: The Critical Factor
 Author: Franklin D Head *
 Director: Bobby Heaney
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
20.6.85		26'01"

(13)

Title: Torn Allegiance
 Author: (Story by Bertha Goudvis*) Adapted by Alan Nathanson*
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC/Mandalay Progear (co-production)

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
20.7.85		92'13"

(14)

Title: An Uys Up My Sleeve
 Author: Pieter Dirk Uys
 Director: Peter Vaughan
 Producer: Shreeve & Vaughan

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
31.12.85		21'24"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1986
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: My Friend Angelo
 Author: Alan Scholefield *
 Director: David Lister
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
13.4.86		74'18"

(2)

Title: The Summerhouse
 Author: Luanshya Greer *
 Director: Chris Gyoury
 Producer: Burmeister & Gyoury

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
11.5.86		58'16"

(3)

Title: Death of a Teddy Bear
 Author: Simon Gray
 Director: Peter Goldsmid
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
8.6.86		105'45"

(3a)

Title: Professional Foul
 Author: Tom Stoppard
 Director: Bobby Heaney
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
22.6.86		99'03"

(4)

Title: The Territory
 Author: Luanshya Greer *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: I.F.C.

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
6.7.86		70'00"

(5)

Title: The Sentimentalist
 Author: John Burch *
 Director: Robert Davies
 Producer: Davnic Productions

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
31.8.86		52'50"

(6)

Title: Thicker Than Water
 Author: Gray Hofmeyr*
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: Dapple Films

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
26.10.86		89'33"

(8)

Title: Playing With Fire
 Author: Alan Nathanson */Hillary Prendini *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: Mandalay Progear

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
31.8.86		86'51"

(9)

Title: Alfonso The Great
 Author: Patricia Johnstone
 Director: Carl Fischer
 Producer: Burmeister & Gyoury

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
21.12.86		44'12"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1987
SINGLE PLAYS: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: The Merchant Of Venice
 Author: William Shakespeare
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
12.4.87		125'19"

(2)

Title: Fable for Video
 Author: Patrick Lee *
 Director: Peter Goldsmid
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
26.4.87		28'37"

(3)

Title: Jollers
 Author: Adapted by Marius de Vos * from "Skyvers" by Barry Rekord
 Director: Peter Goldsmid
 Producer: Brigadiers

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
01.5.87		56'43"

(4)

Title: Samantha's Men
 Author: Zebbi Hitt
 Director: Cedric Sundstrom
 Producer: Heyns Film & TV

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
24.5.87		49'20"

(5)

Title: The Learner
 Author: Patricia Johnstone *
 Director: Hanro Mohr
 Producer: The Film Company

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
7.6.87		26'51"

(6)

Title: Deadly Consequences
 Author: Esther Flowers *
 Director: Ralph Mogridge
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
21.6.87		54'14"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1988
SINGLE PLAYS (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: The Winter's Tale
 Author: William Shakespeare
 Director: Bobby Heaney
 Producer: Pact

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
28.08.88		146'58"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1989
SINGLE PLAYS (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Grandad's Footprints
 Author: Luanshya Greer
 Director: Sheena Cooper
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
04.05.89		

Title: Ladies In Waiting
 Author: Zebi Hitt
 Director: Franz Marx
 Producer: F.M.P.

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
18.05.89		

Title: Odd Man In
 Author: D.G. Margach
 Director: Sheena Cooper
 Producer: Dapple

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
25.05.89		

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1990
SINGLE PLAYS (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Final Edition
 Author: Robert Kirby
 Director: Bobby Heaney
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
22.04.90		

(2)

Title: The Guests
 Author: Ronald Harwood
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
08.04.90		

(3)

Title: The Old Brigade
 Author: Lee Marcus
 Director: Hanro Mohr
 Producer: The Film Co.

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
11.03.90		

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1991
SINGLE PLAYS (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Hapgood
 Author: Tom Stoppard
 Director: Bobby Heaney
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
01.01.91		

(2)

Title: A Lesson from Aloes
 Author: Athol Fugard
 Director: Peter Goldsmid
 Producer: SABC

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
02.06.91		

THEATRICAL RELEASE FEATURES 1992

(1)

Title: Rutanga Tapes
 Author: George Goldsmith
 Director: David Lister
 Producer:

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
18.08.92		

(2)

Title: Africa Express
Author: Terry Asbury
Director: Bruce MacFarlane
Producer:

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
25.08.92		

(3)

Title: The Trackers
Author: Bruce Keating/ Richard Schiller
Director: Ivan Hall
Producer:

DATE TX 1	DATE TX 2	DURATION
04.08.92		

APPENDIX 2

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1976SERIES: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: The Villagers
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	5.4.76	2.10.85	29'20"
2	12.4.76	4.10.85	29'10"
3	19.4.76	9.10.85	25'25"
4	26.4.76	11.10.85	29'14"
5	3.5.76	16.10.85	29'27"
6	10.5.76	18.10.85	28'13"
7	17.5.76	23.10.85	29'40"
8	24.5.76	25.10.85	27'18"
9	31.5.76	30.10.85	28'32"
10	7.6.76	1.11.85	29'05"
11	14.6.76	6.11.85	29'40"
12	21.6.76	8.11.85	28'50"
13	28.6.76	11.11.85	27'37"
14	5.7.76	13.11.85	28'24"
15	12.7.76	15.11.85	29'38"
16	19.7.76	18.11.85	29'19"
17	26.7.76	20.11.85	29'39"
18	2.8.86	22.11.85	29'50"
19	9.8.76	25.11.85	29'58"
20	16.8.76	27.11.85	28'50"
21	23.8.76	29.11.85	29'19"
22	30.8.76	2.12.85	29'58"
23	6.9.76	4.12.85	29'36"
24	13.9.76	9.12.85	27'55"
25	20.9.76	11.12.85	29'00"
26	27.9.76	13.12.85	28'49"

(2)

Title: Quest
 Author: Sidney Gill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr/ Bill Pullen
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	9.9.76		29'33"
2	16.9.76		30'56"
3	23.9.76		31'36"
4	30.9.76		31'26"
5	7.10.76		31'18"
6	14.10.76		32'13"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1977
SERIES (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: (Date with) The Dingleys
 Author: Delphine Lethbridge *
 Director: William C. Faure
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	3.1.77		26'28"
2	10.1.77		26'55"
3	17.1.77		25'31"
4	24.1.77		25'05"
5	31.1.77		24'31"
6	7.2.77		25'02"
7	14.2.77		25'31"
8	21.2.77		24'31"
9	28.2.77		25'41"
10	7.3.77		23'04"
11	14.3.77		28'02"
12	21.3.77		23'52"
13	28.3.77		24'59"

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
14	4.4.77		28'51"
15	11.4.77		29'02"
16	18.4.77		31'01"
17	25.4.77		29'52"
18	2.5.77		27'56"
19	9.5.77		29'46"
20	16.5.77		29'13"
21	23.5.77		31'10"
22	30.5.77		30'20"
23	6.6.77		30'39"
24	13.6.77		29'40"
25	20.6.77		27'59"
26	27.6.77		28'38"

(2)

Title: Jordan
 Author: Beverley Peirce *
 Director: Bill Pullen
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	16.6.77		28'20"
2	23.6.77		29'18"
3	30.6.77		30'05"
4	7.7.77		29'45"
5	14.7.77		29'35"
6	21.7.77		28'45"
7	28.7.77		29'40"
8	4.8.77		25'40"
9	11.8.77		25.50"
10	18.8.77		22'46"
11	25.8.77		25'50"

(3)

Title: The Villagers (II)
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	4.7.77	16.12.85	29'02"
2	11.7.77	18.12.85	30'57"
3	18.7.77	20.12.85	28'18"
4	25.7.77	23.12.85	28'07"
5	1.8.77	25.12.85	32'33"
6	8.8.77	27.12.85	30'45"
7	15.8.77	30.12.85	33'34"
8	22.8.77	1.1.86	30'23"
9	29.8.77	6.1.86	29'15"
10	5.9.77	8.1.86	34'14"
11	12.9.77	10.1.86	36'31"
12	19.9.77	13.1.86	30'39"
13	26.9.77	15.1.86	30'49"
14	3.10.77	17.1.86	29'43"
15	10.10.77	20.1.86	30'03"
16	17.10.77	22.1.86	30'08"
17	24.10.77	24.1.86	28'12"
18	31.10.77	27.1.86	30'02"
19	7.11.77	29.1.86	28'56"
20	14.11.77	31.1.86	30'10"
21	21.11.77	3.2.86	30'32"
22	28.11.77	5.2.86	30'06"
23	5.12.77	7.2.86	30'29"
24	12.12.77	10.2.86	29'09"
25	19.12.77	12.2.86	27'17"
26	26.12.77	14.2.86	29'58"

(4)

Title: Call Me Kelly
 Author: David Shreeve*
 Director: Percival Rubens, Bernard Buys, David Shreeve, Bernard Buys
 Producer: Heyns Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	3.10.77	25.4.82	27'39"
2	10.10.77	9.5.82	28'29"
3	17.10.77	23.5.82	27'52"
4	24.10.77	6.6.82	82'18"
5	31.10.77	20.6.82	28'13"
6	7.11.77	4.7.82	28'34"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES-YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1978
SERIES (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Guests at the Villa Victoria
 Author: James Ambrose Brown *
 Director: Alan Nathanson
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	13.4.78		25'51"
2	20.4.78		25'58"
3	27.4.78		25'36"
4	4.5.78		25'34"
5	11.5.78		25'30"
6	18.5.78		25'36"
7	25.5.78		25'32"
8	1.6.78		25'33"
9	8.6.78		52'48"
10	15.6.78		25'30"
11	22.6.78		25'30"

(2)

Title: The Villagers III
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	3.7.78	17.2.86	26'13"
2	10.7.78	19.2.86	26'41"
3	17.7.78	21.2.86	26'27"
4	24.7.78	24.2.86	26'07"
5	31.7.78	26.2.86	24'05
6	7.8.78	28.2.86	25'51"
7	14.8.78	-	26'52"
8	21.8.78	-	25'59"
9	28.8.78	3.3.86	25'33"
10	4.9.78	5.3.86	26'24"
11	11.9.78	7.3.86	26'00"
12	19.9.78	10.3.86	24'07"
13	25.9.78	12.3.86	25'52"
14	2.10.78	14.3.86	26'27"
15	9.10.78	17.3.86	27'33"
16	16.10.78	19.3.86	25'31"
17	23.10.78	21.3.86	26'23"
18	30.10.78	24.3.86	23'55"
19	6.11.78	26.3.86	25'57"
20	13.11.78	28.3.86	25'16"
21	20.11.78	2.4.86	24'51"
22	27.11.78	4.4.86	26'31"
23	4.12.78	7.4.86	26'53"
24	11.12.78	9.4.86	27'07"
25	18.12.78	11.4.86	26'42"
26	25.12.78	14 & 16.4.86	55'55" (sic)

NOTE: final episode edited into 2 x 23' for second tx

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1979
SERIES (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: 99 Caroline Street (originally a British TV series, "The Liver Birds")
 Author: Carla Lane/adapted by Alexandra Dane* & Ken Leach*
 Director: Ken Leach
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	2.4.79		28'42"
2	9.4.79		28'19"
3	16.4.79		28'15"
4	23.4.79		28'22"
5	30.4.79		28'30"
6	7.5.79		28'34"
7	14.5.79		28'26"
8	21.5.79		28'37"
9	28.5.79		28'35"
10	4.6.79		28'33"
11	11.6.79		28'09"
12	18.6.79		28'29"
13	22.7.79		36'15"

(2)

Title: Matiwane's Gold
 Author: Etienne Smit* & Dale Cutts*
 Director: Sias Odendaal
 Producer: Elmo De Witt Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	19.2.79		26'00"
2	26.2.79		27'13"
3	5.3.79		24'58"
4	12.3.79		26'04"

5	19.4.79		26'00"
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ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1980
SERIES (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: She
 Author: Rider Haggard Adapted by Michael McCabe *
 Director: Peter Thornton
 Producer: Heyns Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	7.1.80		28'29"
2	14.1.80		28'28"
3	21.1.80		28'25"
4	28.1.80		28'39"
5	4.2.80		28.17"
6	11.2.80		28'15"
7	18.2.80		28'31"
8	25.2.80		28'20"

(2)

Title: Story of an African Farm
 Author: Olive Schreiner Adapted by Desmond Jones* & Edgar Bold
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: Raymond Hancock Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	3.3.80		26'30"
2	10.3.80	1.5.83	26'30"
3	17.3.80		26'50"
4	24.3.80	15.5.83	26'50"
5	31.3.80		27'00"
6	7.4.80	29.5.83	27'00"
7	14.4.80		27'30"

8	21.4.80	12.6.83	
9	28.4.80		27'30"
10	5.5.80	26.6.83	32'37"

(3)

Title: The Diggers
 Author: Ian Yule * / Margaret Heale *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC/Karat Film International

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	12.5.80		25'33"
2	19.5.80		25'53"
3	26.5.80		25'37"
4	2.6.80		25'31"
5	9.6.80		25'34"
6	16.6.80		25'39"
7	23.6.80		25'31"
8	30.6.80		25'32"
9	7.7.80		25'44"
10	14.7.80		25'21"
11	21.7.80		25'14"
12	28.7.80		25'32"
13	4.8.80		25'48"

(4)

Title: Hospital
 Author: Ann Graham *
 Director: Douglas Bristow
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	11.8.80		26'30"
2	18.8.80		27'29"

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
3	25.8.80		21'58"
4	1.9.80		25'08"
5	8.9.80		23'53"
6	15.9.80		24'51"
7	22.9.80		23'35"
8	29.9.80		23'11"
9	6.10.80		24'41"
10	13.10.80		23'36"
11	20.10.80		24'16"
12	27.10.80		22'14"
13	3.11.80		25'28"

(5)

Title: The Settlers
 Author: Andre P Brink *
 Director: Elmo de Witt
 Producer: Elmo De Witt Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	17.11.80		34'29"
2	24.11.80		30'00"
3	1.12.80		29'51"
4	8.12.80		29'56"
5	15.12.80		30'07"
6	22.12.80		30'07"
7	29.12.80		29'34"

(Remaining 6 Episodes transmitted in 1981)

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1981
SERIES (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: For Love of Gold
 Author: Pierre Nivolett & Jean Claude Camredon
 Director: Claude Boissol
 Producer: Co-production - SABC, TELECIP, TELE-MUNCHEN

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	9.1.81		53'34"
2	16.1.81		52'44"
3	23.1.81		54'19"
4	30.1.81		55'06"
5	6.2.81		53'12"

(2)

Title: The Settlers (Continued)
 Author: Andre P Brink *
 Director: Elmo de Witt
 Producer: Elmo de Witt Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
8	5.1.81		30'20"
9	12.1.81		29'55"
10	19.1.81		29'00"
11	26.1.81		29'03"
12	2.2.81		31'30"
13	9.2.81		30'50"

(3)

Title: Oh George
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	16.2.81		25'36"
2	23.2.81		25'40"
3	2.3.81		26'23"
4	9.3.81		26'04"
5	16.3.81		26'072
6	23.3.81		26'26"
7	30.3.81		25'20"

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
8	6.4.81		26'33"
9	13.4.81		26'31"
10	20.4.81		24'44"
11	27.4.81		25'59"
12	4.5.81		26'15"
13	11.5.81		25'49"
14	18.5.81		26'07"
15	25.5.81		23'56"
16	1.6.81		25'16"
17	8.6.81		25'07"
18	15.6.81		23'58"
19	22.6.81		
20	29.6.81		
21	6.7.81		23'58"
22	13.7.81		24'58"
23	20.7.81		28'01"
24	27.7.81		24'26"
25	3.8.81		24'40"
26	10.8.81		25'35"

(4)

Title: Westgate I
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: Independent Film Centre (I.F.C)

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	3.9.81		52.15"
2	10.9.81		52'05"
3	17.9.81		52'06"
4	24.9.81		52'04"
5	1.10.81		51'59"

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
6	8.10.81		52'05"
7	15.10.81		51'41"
8	22.10.81		52'08"
9	29.10.81		52'07"
10	5.11.81		52'01"
11	12.11.81		54'53"
12	19.11.81		52'05"
13	26.11.81		52'00"
14	3.12.81		52'07"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1982

SERIES: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Valley of the Vines
 Author: Joy Packer * Adapted by Hazel Adair *
 Director: Hans Kuhle
 Producer: Karat Film International

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	4.1.82		52'44"
2	11.1.82		52'21"
3	18.1.82		52'39"
4	25.1.82		52'52"
5	1.2.82		53'38"
6	8.2.82		52'39"
7	15.2.82		52'42"

(2)

Title: The Settlers II
 Author: Andre P Brink *
 Director: Elmo de Witt
 Producer: Elmo de Witt Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	22.2.82		25'17"

2	1.3.82		25'02"
3	8.3.82		25'13"
4	15.3.82		25'20"
5	22.3.82		25'23"
6	29.3.82		25'29"
7	5.4.82		25'16"
8	12.4.82		25'13"
9	19.4.82		25'11"
10	26.4.82		25'12"
11	3.5.82		25'18"
12	10.5.82		25'19"
13	17.5.82		25'20"

(3)

Title: Westgate II
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: I.F.C.

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	29.4.82		53'49"
2	6.5.82		53'54"
3	13.5.82		53'20"
4	20.5.82		53'12"
5	27.5.82		53'42"
6	3.6.82		53'33"
7	10.6.82		53'34"
8	17.6.82		53'39"
9	24.6.82		54'58"
10	1.7.82		53'52"
11	8.7.82		53'32"
12	15.7.82		53'48"

(4)

Title: Big City Beat
 Author: Stanley Grondas *
 Director: Pierre Hinch
 Producer: Walter Heynacker Productions

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	24.5.82		25'20"
2	31.5.82		26'01"
3	7.6.82		26'02"
4	14.6.82		26'01"
5	21.6.82		25'31"
6	28.6.82		25'44"
7	5.7.82		25'46"
8	12.7.82		25'53"
9	19.7.82		25'45"
10	26.7.82		25'41"
11	not transmitted		25'45"
12	2.8.82		23'51"
13	9.8.82		25'59"

(5)

Title: Miss Candida
 Author: Karen S Meil * / Hazel Adair *
 Director: Hans Kuhle
 Producer: Karat Film International

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	23.8.82		26'17"
2	30.8.82		26'15"
3	6.9.82		26'13"
4	13.9.82		26'13"
5	20.9.82		26'20"
6	27.9.82		26'09"
7	4.10.82		26'17"
8	11.10.82		26'15"

9	18.10.82		26'15"
10	25.10.82		26'10"
11	1.11.82		26'14"
12	8.11.82		26'13"
13	15.11.82		62'13"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1983
SERIES (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Scotty Smith
 Author: Joe Stewardson * & Others
 Director: Vincent Cox
 Producer: United Talents

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	15.4.83		26'04"
2	22.4.83		24'23"
3	29.4.83		24'53"
4	6.5.83		22'19"
5	13.5.83		24'25"
6	20.5.83		24'36"
7	27.5.83		22'28"
8	3.6.83		21'45"

9	10.6.83		24'02"
10	17.6.83		25'43"
11	24.6.83		22'31"
12	1.7.83		24'05"
13	8.7.83		24'04"

(2)

Title: The Heart of the Matter
 Author: Graham Greene
 Director: Marco Leto
 Producer: (co-Production) SABC/TELE MUNCHEN/R.A.I/ANTENNE II/
 CHANNEL 4/KARAT

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	4.8.83		58'17"
2	11.8.83		60'45"
3	18.8.83		55'45"
4	25.8.83		64'46"

(3)

Title: Good News
 Author: Brian Johnson-Barker* & Manie van Rensburg*
 Director: Manie van Rensburg
 Producer: Visio Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	8.9.83		31'51"
2	15.9.83		29'26"
3	22.9.83		30'16"
4	29.9.83		31'53"
5	6.10.83		30'58"
6	13.10.83		31'08"

(4)

Title: The Best of Mates
 Author: (from a British series, "The Likely lads", by Ian la Frenais) Adapted by
 June Dixon *
 Director: Donald Monat & Ian Hamilton

Producer: Donald Monat Productions

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	24.9.83		28'26"
2	1.10.83		29'55"
3	8.10.83		29'24"
4	15.10.83		27'38"
5	22.10.83		26'22"
6	29.10.83		27'51"
7	5.11.83		27'38"
8	12.11.83		28'19"
9	19.11.83		26'57"
10	26.11.83		26'01"
11	3.12.83		28'11"
12	10.12.83		26'28"
13	17.12.83		27'26"
14	24.12.83		49'06"

(5)

Title: Town Guard
 Author: Brian Johnson-Barker *
 Director: Elmo de Witt
 Producer: Elmo de Witt Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	17.10.83		47'01"
2	4.10.83		47'13"
3	31.10.83		47'12"
4	7.11.83		47'12"
5	14.11.83		46'56"
6	21.11.83		47'03"
7	28.11.83		47'01"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1984
 SERIES: (* = South African Authors)

(1)

Title: The House of Mankowitz
 Author: Sandra Lynn Baker* & Lee Marcus*
 Director: Hans Kuhle and Nicholas Simmonds
 Producer: Karat Film International

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	2.1.84		23'38"
2	4.1.84		24'40"
3	6.1.84		23'33"
4	9.1.84		24'16"
5	11.1.84		24'03"
6	13.1.84		24'02"
7	16.1.84		24'30"
8	18.1.84		24'20"
9	20'1'84		24'34"
10	23.1.84		24'20"
11	25.1.84		24'37"
12	27.1.84		24'16"
13	30.1.84		23'50"
14	1.2.84		24'19"
15	3.2.84		24'39"
16	6.2.84		23'38"
17	8.2.84		24'13"
18	10.2.84		24'30"
19	13.2.84		24'36"
20	15.2.84		24'38"
21	17.2.84		24'16"
22	20.2.84		24'18"
23	22.2.84		24'30"
24	24.2.84		24'25"
25	27.2.84		24'12"
26	29.2.84		24'23"

(2)

Title: "1922"
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: I.F.C.

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	10.5.84		52'44"
2	17.5.84		52'53"
3	24.5.84		53'47"
4	31.5.84		54'03"
5	7.6.84		54'07"
6	14.6.84		54'11"
7	21.6.84		52'36"
8	28.6.84		53'40"

(3)

Title: Winchester
 Author: Delphine Lethbridge *
 Director: Chris du Toit
 Producer: Heyns Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	16.8.84		50.44"
2	23.8.84		49'28"
3	30.8.84		48'33"
4	6.9.84		49'57"
5	13.9.84		46'22"
6	20.9.84		44'53"
7	27.9.84		43'10"

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1985
SERIES: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: City People
 Author: Luanshya Greer *
 Director: Gray Hofmeyr
 Producer: Elmo De Witt Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	11.5.85		44'34"
2	18.4.85		44'12"
3	25.4.85		44'06"
4	2.5.85		44'28"
5	9.5.85		44'01"
6	16.5.85		44'13"
7	23.5.85		44'32"

(2)

Title: Westgate III
 Author: John Cundill *
 Director: Edgar Bold
 Producer: I.F.C.

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	30.5.85		53'10"
2	6.6.85		53'05"
3	13.6.85		52'50"
4	20.6.85		52'56"
5	27.6.85		52'44"
6	4.7.85		53'00"
7	11.7.85		53'35"
8	18.7.85		53'31"

9	25.7.85		52'44"
10	1.8.85		52'58"
11	8.8.85		52'55"
12	15.8.85		52'47"
13	22.8.85		52'11"

(3)

Title: Señor Smith
 Author: Bill Flynn * & Paul Slabolepszy *
 Director: Carl Fischer
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	11.12.85		24'50"
2	18.12.85		26'35"
3	25.12.85		24'53"
(Continued in 1986)			

ENGLISH DRAMA PROGRAMMES - YEAR OF FIRST TRANSMISSION: 1986
SERIES: (* = South African Author)

(1)

Title: Senior Smith (Continued)
 Author: Bill Flynn * & Paul Slabolepszy *
 Director: Carl Fischer
 Producer: SABC

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
4	1.1.86		24'02"
5	8.1.86		24'00"
6	15.1.86		24'26"
7	22.1.86		23'43"
8	29.1.86		25'11"

9	5.2.86		24'07"
10	12.2.86		24'54"
11	19.2.86		25'58"
12	26.2.86		24'02"
13	5.3.86		20'17"
14	12.3.86		21'02"
15	25.3.86		24'34"

(2)

Title: The Riverman
 Author: (Story by Emil Noval*) Script by John Burch*
 Director: Ivan Hall
 Producer: Aurora Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	9.1.86		50'04"
2	16.1.86		51'00"
3	23.1.86		49'40"
4	30.1.86		48'29"

(3)

Title: Heroes
 Author: Johan van Jaarsveld * & Manie van Rensburg *
 Director: Manie van Rensburg
 Producer: Visio Films

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	3.4.86		52'52"
2	10.4.86		51'20"
3	17.4.86		49'21"
4	24.4.86		52'24"

5	1.5.86		51'33"
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(4)

Title: Faulkner's Law
 Author: Luanshya Greer *
 Director: Christian Marnham
 Producer: Brigadiers

EPISODE	DATE TX1	DATE TX2	DURATION
1	3.7.86		48'07"
2	10.7.86		50'32"
3	17.7.86		49'47"
4	24.7.86		49'05"
5	31.7.86		51'52"
6	7.8.86		53'51"

APPENDIX 3

AFRIKAANS DRAMA - SINGLE PLAYS AND SERIALS/SERIES1974

'n BARS LOOP DEUR DIE WASBAK'	(E)
'GEUR VAN ROSE'	(E)
'MOEDER HANNA'	(E)
'OOM DIEDERIK LEER OM TE HUIL'	(E)

1975

'AMBISIE VAN 'n POLITIKUS'	(E)
'DIE ARRESTASIE'	(E)
'DIE DUBBELE ALIBI'	(E)
'DIE HEKS'	(E)
'KEERTYD'	(10)
'LIESBET SLAAP UIT'	(E)
'OOM WILLEM EN DIE LORD'	(E)
'STORIEBOEKMOORD'	(E)
'WILLEM'	(10)

1976

'BLOMME VIR MA'	(E)
'BART NEL'	(E)
'n BRUIDSBED VIR NONNIE'	(E)
'DIE BURGEMEESTER'	(E)
'BEN BRANDT'	(10)
'DOKTER DOKTER'	(30)
'DIS KOUD HIER'	(E)
'EEN RAND 'n DROOM'	(E)
'LA MUSICA'	(E)
'DIE NAGLOPER'	(E)
'NET 'n BIETJIE LIEFDE'	(25)
'PA MAAK VIR MY 'n VLIËR PA'	(E)
'PERMISSIWITEIT DEUR DIE EEUE'	(E)
'PANNEKOEKHUIS'	(E)
'SEBASTIAAN SENIOR'	(10)
'SPIOEN SONDER STORIE'	(E)

1977

'BART NEL'	(E)
'BETHLEHEM STER'	(E)
'ARME MARAT'	(E)
'FYN NET VAN DIE WOORD'	(8)
'DIE KOSTER'	(E)
'DIE MAN MET DIE BLOM IN SY MOND'	(E)
'NAGSPEL'	(E)
'DIE RYK WEDUWEE'	(E)
'SEEPSTEENBATALJON'	(10)
'TJ7'	(10)

1978

'DIE BUFFEL'	(E)
'DRAMA DRAMA'	(10)
'DIE EENSAMES'	(E)
'HUWELIKSAANSOEK'	(E)
'ONDER DIE STIL WATERS	(E)
'OU SUURKNOL'	(E)
'PASE'	(E)
'PHOENIX & KIE'	(21
'DIE SKAAM MAN'	(E)
'n SAAK VAN SKEIDING'	(E)
'WILDE LOOT'	(E)

1979

'ATTIE EN JOOS'	(10)
'BOSVELDWINKEL'	(15)
'BUITESTAANDERS'	(E)
'JOPIE FOURIE'	(E)
'KLIM VAN DIE OOSTORING'	(E)
'KONINGIN EN DIE REBELLE'	(E)
'LAASTE VAN DIE TAKHARE'	(E)
'LOKVAL VIR 'n MAN ALLEEN'	(E)
'MOORD OP EENDEVLEI'	(E)
'NOMMER ASSEBLIEF'	(22)
'NTUNZINI SPA'	(14)
'DIE OPENBARE OOG'	(E)
'SKEMERAAND IN DIE LAAT HERFS'	(E)
'SAND'	(E)
'TAAKMAG'	(9)
'DIE WILDE EEND'	(E)
'ZAP ZAP'	(E)

1980

'AVONTURE VAN JOACHIM VERWEY'	(6)
'GIDEON SCHEEPERS'	(E)
'LUGLOKVAL'	(E)
'n LUG VOL HELDER WOLKE'	(E)
'MEULENHOF SE MENSE'	(4)
'MATUSALEMBOOM'	(E)
'NIE VANWEË DIE DUISTERNIS'	(10)
'NOMMER ASSEBLIEF II'	(14)
'PASGETROUD'	(E)
'SLAMPAMPERSIRKUS'	(6)

1981

'BROOD VIR MY BROER'	(10)
'BOSVELD HOTEL'	(14)
'CARMEN'	(E)
'DIE DAME MET DIE KAMELIAS'	(E)
'DANIE THERON'	(E)
'DROME VAN GRUIS'	(10)
'FAMILIEDAE'	(10)
'GASETTE'	(10)
'HARMONIE'	(17)
'DIE INSPEKTEUR'	(E)
'DIE KERSIETUIN'	(E)
'DIE MAN MET 'n BESTEMMING'	(E)
'DIE PERDESMOUS'	(E)
'ROMEO & JULIET'	(E)
'PIET MY VROU'	(E)
'VLAKTE DUSKANT HEBRON'	(8)
'VREDE VAN VEREENIGING'	(E)

1982

'ANNA'	(E)
'BESOEKER IN DIE LAATAAND'	(E)
'DENNEKRUIN 12'	(9)
'FYNBOS'	(16)
'GENESIS KONTRAK '	(E)
'HEDDA GABLER'	(E)
'HANDLANGER (DIE)'	(E)
'DIE KAKTUSTUINTJIE'	(E)
'KLEIN JAKKALSIES'	(10)
'DIE KLIMOP'	(E)
'KOÖPERASIESTORIES'	(13)
'KROMBURG'	(6)
'MATTEWIS & MARAAI'	(10)
'MEISIE VAN SUIDWES'	(9)
'1945'	(10)
'SKOPPENSBOER'	(10)
'STERRETJIE'	(10)
'VERSPEELDE LENTE'	(6)
'VOORTREFLIKE FAMILIE SMIT'	(10)

1983

'DIE BUITESTAANDER'	(E)
'DODEDANS'	(20)
'DIE DOOD VAN ELMIEN ADLER'	(10)
'DIE DRIE SUSTERS'	(E)
'DIE FLUITER'	(E)
'HERBERG'	(8)
'HET VAN VERLANGE KRAAL'	(3)
'DIE JARE	(E)
'DIE JARE DAARNA'	(10)
'JASPER LE FEUVRE'	(5)
'JUFFROU JULIA'	(E)
'KAMPUS'	(12)
'KLARADYN'	(E)
'LAAT VRUGTE'	(E)
'SWANESANG VAN MAJOOR SOMMER'	(E)
'TRANSKAROO'	(13)
'WEL EN WEE VAN THYS COETZEE'	(10)
'WITGOUD'	(10)

Up until 1983 all series were 36 minutes long.
Single drama's +-100 minutes.

1984

'AGTER ELKE MAN'	(30)	x 26min
'AS ONS TWEE EERS GETROUD IS'	(E)	x 90min
'ANNELI EN JERRIE'	(E)	x 60min
'DIRK HOFFMAN'	(10)	x 36min
'DONKERHOEK'	(E)	x 100min
'GALERY'	(13)	x 36min
'HARSEERWALS'	(E)	x 60min
'HOEKIE VIR EENSAMES'	(30)	x 26min
'JANTJIE KOM HUISTOE'	(E)	x 90min
'DIE LOSPRYS'	(9)	x 40min
'MANNHEIMSAGE'	(15)	x 40min
'MAUWIE'	(E)	x 80min
'MOORD OP DIE LUG'	(13)	x 36min
'OP 'n GRENS'	(E)	x 60min
'SO 'n LIEFDE'	(E)	x 110min
'SONDAARSPOORT'	(13)	x 36min
'SEEMEEU'	(E)	x 120min
'TWEE OM TE SLAAP'	(E)	x 70min
'VUURTORING'	(E)	x 100min

1985

'ARME MOORDENAAR'	(E)	x 110min
'BITTER LIED VAN DIE SOMER'	(E)	x 100min
'CUL DE SAC'	(13)	x 26min
'HALFMANSPUNT'	(E)	x 100min
'KOOS KLUITJIES'	(5)	x 26min
'DIE MAN MET 'N LYK OM SY NEK'	(E)	x 100min
'DIE SONDAAR'	(E)	x 60min
'SUIDPUNT HOTEL'	(10)	x 36min
'TEKWAN'	(E)	x 100min
'VYFSTER II'	(6)	x 46min
'WOLWEDANS IN DIE SKEMER'	(18)	x 26min
'HOUTBORD'	(E)	x 80min
'HUISJAKKER'	(8)	x 46min
'ROSIE'	(10)	x 26min

1986

'BALLADE VIR 'n ENKELING'	(14)	x 46min
'KOöPERASIESTORIES III'	(10)	x 26min
'DIE ONGELUKSVOël'	(7)	x 46min
'OU GROTE'	(10)	x 46min
'CUL DE SAC II'	(13)	x 26min

1987

'AGTER ELKE MAN II'	(26)	x 46min = 1,196min
'BEELDE'	(E)	x 60min = 60min
'CUL DE SAC III'	(13)	x 26min = 338min
'DOT EN KIE'	(12)	x 26min = 312min
'FIELA SE KIND'	(E)	x 90min = 90min
'MOEDERS & DOGTERS'	(E)	x 90min = 90min
'MAPLOTTERS'	(15)	x 26min = 390min
'ORKNEY SNORK NIE'	(E)	x 40min = 40min
'PAD VERBY DIE BERG'	(E)	x 90min = 90min
'TOT WAAR DIE PAD DOODLOOP'	(E)	x 90min = 90min
'UITDRAAI'	(E)	x 90min = 90min

APPENDIX 4

EXTRACT FROM "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"
BBC PRODUCTION - LONDON - 1981

OPENING TITLES - TO BE ADDED AT THE VT EDIT

THE COMPLETE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

PRESENTED BY
THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Producer
JONATHAN MILLER

Director
ELIJAH MOSHINSKY

Cameras 2B-1B

125. 2 B 1. INT. ATHENS. PALACE. (TWILIGHT)
BCU HIPPOLYTA - (ACT ONE. SCENE ONE)
favouring EYES -
follow her (THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA,
movement L-R ATTENDANTS,
back and forth PHILOSTRATE)
- PULL BACK and THESEUS:
CRAB R. for Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial WIDE-s
against hour
windows Draws on apace; four happy days
 bring in
 Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow
 This old moon wanes! She lingers my
 desires,
 Like to a step-dame or a dowager,
 Long withering out a young man's
 revenue.
- HIPPOLYTA:
 Four days will quickly steep them-
 selves in night;
 Four nights will quickly dream away
 the time;

And then the moon, like to a silver
bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the
night
Of our solemnities.

126. 1 B
MCU THESEUS

(BREAK NEXT)

THESEUS:

Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to
merriments;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit
of mirth;
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our
pomp.

PAN him to
HIPPOLYTA for
2s TH./HIPPI.
and TIGHTEN
(silhouette)

(EXIT PHILOSTRATE)

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my
sword,
And won thy love doing thee
injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with
revelling.

BREAK

CAMERA REHEARSALS AND RECORDING:TC1. A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Tuesday, 19th May, 1981

NOTE:VHS TAPES TO BE
MADE OF ALL
RECORDINGS

13.00 - 14.00 LUNCH

14.00 - 18.00 Camera rehearsal

18.00 - 19.00 SUPPER/LINE-UP

19.00 - 19.30 LINE-UP

19.30 - 22.00 REHEARSE/RECORD (2½ HRS): 50-LDP-D-733D(1)

Wednesday, 20th May, 1981

11.00 - 13.00 camera rehearsal

13.00 - 14.00 LUNCH

14.00 - 14.30 Line-up

14.30 - 17.15 REHEARSE/RECORD (2½hrs): 50-LDP-D-733D(2)

17.15 - 18.00 camera rehearsal

18.00 - 19.00 SUPPER

19.00 - 19.30 LINE-UP

19.30 - 22.00 REHEARSE/RECORD (2½ HRS): 50-LDP-D-733D(3)

Thursday, 21st May, 1981

11.00 - 13.00 camera rehearsal

13.00 - 14.00 LUNCH

14.00 - 14.30 LINE-UP

14.30 - 17.15 REHEARSE/RECORD (2½ HRS): 50-LDP-D-733D(4)

17.15 - 18.00 camera rehearsal

18.00 - 19.00 SUPPER

19.00 - 19.30 LINE-UP

19.30 - 22.00 REHEARSE/RECORD (2½ HRS): 50-LDP-D-733D(5)

Friday, 22nd May, 1981

11.00 - 13.00 camera rehearsal

13.00 - 14.00 LUNCH

14.00 - 14.30 LINE-UP

14.30 - 17.15 REHEARSE/RECORD (2½ HRS): 50-LDP-D-733D(6)

17.15 - 18.00 camera rehearsal

18.00 - 19.00 SUPPER

19.00 - 19.30 LINE-UP

19.30 - 22.00 REHEARSE/RECORD (2½ HRS): 50-LDP-D-733D(7)

Saturday, 23rd May, 1981

RE-SET DAY

APPENDIX 5

EXTRACT FROM "CLOUD HOWE"
BBC SCOTLAND - 1981

TRUCKED UNIT OUT. DOOR CORNER IN.

Q

2A 1E 3A Booms.

47: INT. THE SEGGET ARMS: NIGHT.

45. 2 A
LS Arms, Dite
seated f/g, Peter P
L Melvin behind
bar/. Hogg & Alec
Hogg at bar R.
PETER PEAT IS EXCITEDLY
REPORTING TO THE COMPANY,
AMONG THEM HOGG, ALEC HOGG
AND DITE PEAT.
46. 1 E
LS along bar,
Peat & Melvin L,
Hogg R.
PETER PEAT: It's the truth.
Young Mowat's sacked every
servant in the house./He said he'd
no choice, you see - he being
taxed to death by those Labour
tinks.
47. 3 A
M 2-s Hogg &
Alec Hogg
HOGG: It's a damned disgrace./
By God, it's changed days since
he used to come back from a
London jaunt with half a dozen
whores in his car.
48. 1 E
MCU Peter Peat
PETER PEAT: No more than you'd
expect a gent to do if he's got
the money to do it./
49. 3 A
M 2-s Hogg/
Alec a/b.
HOGG: Oh, true enough. Only
what you'd expect of a gent.
50. 2 A
LS a/b.
DITE PEAT: Or Dalziel./ (HE
LAUGHS).
I was up at his place today
to ask if he'd take me on.

THEY IGNORE HIM

51. 1 E
MS Dite Peat. DITE PEAT: He did/ and got me damned cheap at that. (LAUGHS AGAIN) His new housekeeper's in the same old way. Like the doctor said, there must be something in the air of Meiklebogs./
52. 2 A
LS a/b. AN EMBARRASSED SILENCE.
53. 1 E
MCU Dite ALL EYES GO TO ALEC./
54. 3 A
3-s Melvin/
Hogg & Alec. DITE PEAT REALISES HIS GAFFE./
55. 1 E
MCU Dite a/b ALEC:(QUIETLY)You just shutup../
56. 3 A
3-s a/b. Dev
to M 2-s Dite L,
Alec R.
1 to A DITE PEAT: Eh - what was that ?/

ALEC: We're sick of you and your foul mouth. You're bloody clever - even though you can't keep your shop roof over your head.

DITE PEAT: Don't talk to me like that, Hogg !
57. 1 A
Tight 2-s
Dev to MS Dite
going thru' door. ALEC GRABS/HIM BY THE SHIRT FRONT.

ALEC: By God, I'll talk to you the way Ake Ogilvie did and finish the job for him !

DITE PEAT TEARS HIMSELF AWAY, DOWNS HIS DRINK AND EXITS HURRIEDLY./
58. 2 A
M 2-s Ake &
Peter Peat.

RECORDING BREAK: HOGG'S COBBLERS NEXT...

DAY TWO: RUNNING ORDER

<u>SHOT</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>EP/ SCENE</u>	<u>SET AND LIGHT</u>	<u>CAMERAS SOUND</u>	<u>SET DETAILS</u>	<u>CHARAC TER</u>
<u>276- 278</u>	<u>56+ 46</u>	<u>3/ 46</u>	<u>SEGGET MANSE. KITCHEN .DAY.</u>	<u>1B 2B Boom Playback</u>		<u>Robert Chris</u>
RUN ON:						
<u>278</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>AS ABOV E</u>	<u>As Above</u>	<u>1C Boom P'back</u>		<u>Chris</u>
RECORDING BREAK						
<u>279- 283</u>	<u>58+ 59</u>	<u>3/ 42</u>	<u>SEGGET MANSE KITCHEN .DAY.</u>	<u>1C 2B Boom P'back</u>		<u>Chris Maidie</u>
RUN-ON CAM 1 to A 2 to A						
<u>284- 293</u>	<u>60- 63</u>	<u>3/ 43</u>	<u>SEGGET MANSE EWAN'S ROOM. .DAY.</u>	<u>2A 1A Booms</u>		<u>Ewan Chris</u>
RECORDING BREAK: 2 to G CLEAR KITCHEN TABLE OUT OF KITCHEN SET.						
<u>294- 299</u>	<u>64+ 65</u>	<u>3/ 48</u>	<u>SEGGET MANSE BEDROO M. .DAY.</u>	<u>3D 2G Boom P'back</u>	<u>Flat 'W'out. Brown's shop counter not set in today</u>	<u>Chris Maidie</u>
RECORDING BREAK.						

<u>SHOT</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>EP/ SCENE</u>	<u>SET AND LIGHT</u>	<u>CAMERAS SOUND</u>	<u>SET DETAILS</u>	<u>CHARAC TER</u>
300	66+ 67	3/ 57	SEGGET MANSE LIVING ROOM. <u>NIGHT.</u>	3C Boom		Robert Chris
301	68	3/ 58	SEGGET MANSE HALL. <u>NIGHT.</u>	2E Boom		Jock Cronin Chris
302- 309	69+ 70	3/ 59	SEGGET MANSE LIVING ROOM & HALL. <u>NIGHT.</u>	3C 5A 2E 1A Booms		Jock Chris Robert
RUN ON						
310+ 311	71	3/ 62	SEGGET MANSE LIVING ROOM. <u>NIGHT.</u>	5B 3E Boom		Chris
312+ 313	72	3/ 63	SEGGET MANSE HALL.	2E 4A Boom		Chris
RECORDING BREAK						

APPENDIX 6

STATUS ELECTRIFICATION IN S.A. - 1990

	METRO	TOWNS	FARMERS	TRUST AREAS	TBVC	NAT STATES	TOTAL
TOTAL DWELLINGS	2139000	1288000	390000	85000	1115677	1398000	6415677
WITH ELECTRICITY	1718000	657000	63000	32000	77083	154000	2701083
WITHOUT ELEC.	421000	631000	327000	53000	1038594	1244000	3714594
% WITHOUT ELEC.	20	49	84	62	93	89	57
POTENTIAL	223000	244000	151000	32000	413328	545000	1608328
% POTENTIAL	90%	70%	55%	75%	37%	50%	
'LEFT-OVER'	198000	387000	176000	21000	625266	699000	2106266

NOTE : *UCT DATA USED TO CALCULATE FARM ELECTRIFICATION

SOURCES : ESKOM, NEC, CSIR.

ELECT.PLAN 4/92
FL 1

Television 1

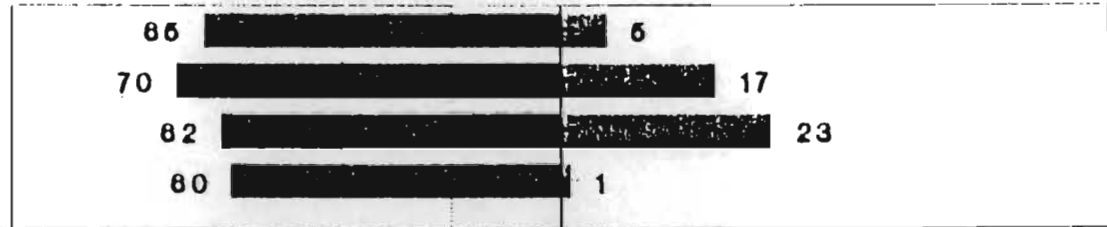
18 - 24 November 1991

WED

APPRECIATION

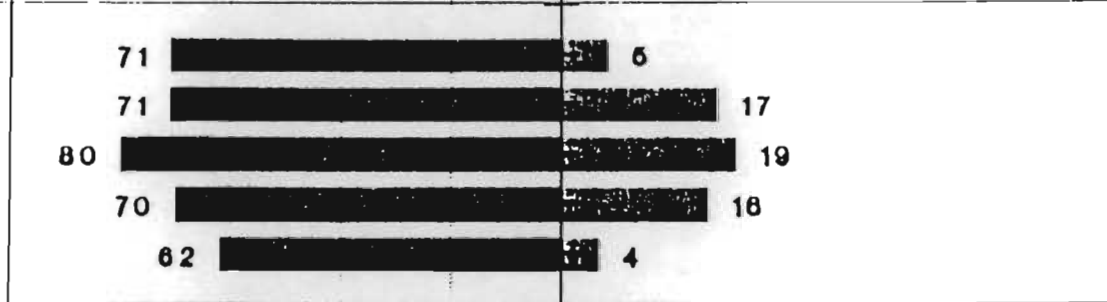
AR's

Raising Miranda
Family Man
Mantis Project
Arts on One



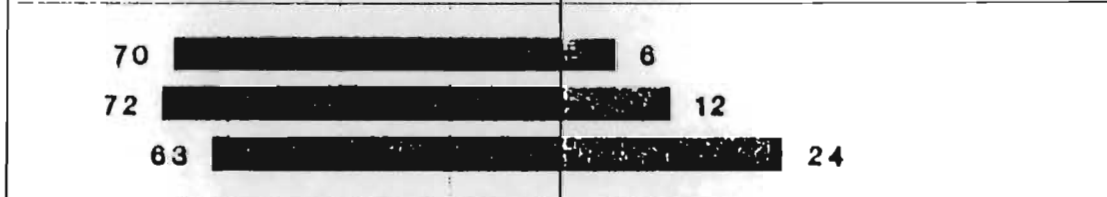
THU

Swartwoudkliniek
Brakanjan
The Golden Girls
Night Court
Fathers & Sons



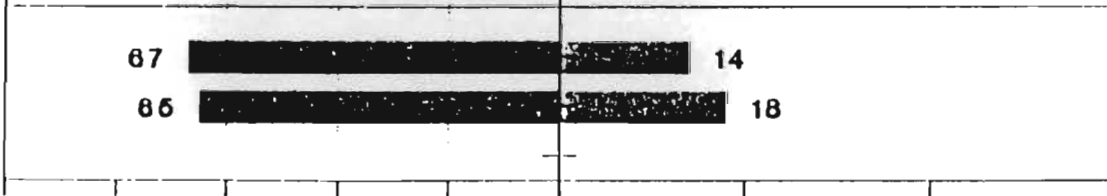
FRI

Bushmaster
Gillette Sport
Tropical Heat



SAT

Teletreffers
Man who loved cat
dancing



HG1

100 80 60 40 20 0 20 40 60

MINISTRIES RESPONSIBLE FOR SABC SINCE 1936:

Posts and Telegraphs: From 1936 to November 1970.

National Education: 27 November to June 1979.

Posts and Telecommunications: 20 June 1979 to 6 October 1980.

Minister in the Office of the State President, Administration and Broadcasting: 1 December 1986 to 31 March 1988.

Information, Broadcasting and the Film Industry: 1 April 1988 to 1 September 1989.

Home Affairs: 1 September 1989 to date.

In addition, several ministries and state departments have a direct or indirect involvement in broadcasting:

Home Affairs: Responsible for broadcasting within the borders of South Africa.

Foreign Affairs: South Africa's external radio service, and broadcasting matters involving the TBVC countries.

Posts and Telecommunications: Responsible for broadcasting and telecommunications technology.

Development Aid: Responsible for broadcasting in the self-governing national states.

TECHNOLOGY NOTES.

1) Ferdinand Recca and other early film makers working in narrative forms that aspired towards realism, were largely influenced by the naturalism of French novelist, Emile Zola.

2) There are two types of portable video cameras which have been designed for specific programme requirements. The widely used 'electronic news gathering,' or (ENG) camera is designed for a minimum back-up in lighting and sound, using its attached microphone for picking up ambient sound. It was originally in the ENG field that the portable first made its impact. The American CBS network were the first to introduce a portable recording system in 1974, but this entailed a split unit, ie. a separate camera and recorder. Similarly, the existence of broadcast quality, mainly hi-band U-matic 3/4" recorders and broadcast quality cameras, were the forerunners of the 'electronic field production' (EFP) cameras, used for magazine inserts, documentaries and drama. A field producer, having to maintain high standards of quality, would generally need a greater array of lighting and sound equipment, as well as additional technical personnel than an ENG producer.

3) A.A. Campbell Swinton (1836 -1930) was the first man to propose the all electronic method of television in 1908. However, the first person to develop an electronic camera was the Russian-born, Vladimir Zworykin, who emigrated to the United States after the Revolution, and worked in the Westinghouse laboratories where he developed the 'iconoscope' camera (1928). In Britain,

however, the EMI team, under Frank McGee, developed the 'emitron' camera, (with 405-line system) which was based on the principles of Zworykin's iconoscope.

(Armes, Roy, On Video, Routledge, London, 1989, pp. 58 - 59).

4) In single plays such as JOLLERS, that have included scenes shot on both film and video, the change in picture quality is evident, especially when interior video studio scenes are juxtaposed to exterior filmed segments. The transition is smoother when both exterior and interior scenes are shot entirely on either video or film. For instance, in the serial drama, THE BIG TIME, both interior and exterior scenes were shot on 16 mm film and made for transitions that were not optically jarring.

GENERAL NOTES.

a) The designation, Drama Organiser, was changed to Drama Manager, though the title Organiser has been restored to designate the incumbent who holds the post one below that of manager.

b) Much of the pioneering work in formative audience evaluation was carried out by the planners of the American series, SESAME STREET, who spent eighteen months of formative research into the programme before going on air. Filmed segments were tested on economically disadvantaged children to ascertain if the programme held their attention, and resulted in short-term learning. ("Sesame Street" Revisited, Formative and Summative Evaluation Research, p. 46)

c) The Democratic Party's Policy Discussion Paper on Telecommunications and Broadcasting recommends the establishment of an independent communications authority, namely the South African Communications Authority (SACA), which will regulate broadcasting in much the same way as the IBA does in Britain. Such a body would be free of political bias and interference.

d) SAFRITEL:- Since 1990, the SABC's in-house company, Safritel, controls the production of drama, documentaries, light and serious music, children's and educational programmes. Safritel is also in charge of local as well as international co-productions and sells its programmes to either TV-1, TV-2/3/4

(these three channels merged to form CCTV at the beginning of 1992) Among the other companies are TOP SPORT and TNP (Television News Production) business unit which also includes, magazine, ecology, economics, political and religious programmes, as well as Good Morning South Africa.

e) DALLAS QUESTIONNAIRE: Notably, 74% of the panel watched the episode right up to the end; 3% started watching halfway through; a further 3% switched off before the end; and 16% chose not to watch it. The remaining 4% could not watch it for one or other reason. Of those who were pleased with the return of the series, 32% replied 'Immensely;' a further 32% said, 'Very Much;' while 23% said they were 'Not Really' pleased with the return of the series, and 13% said they were 'Not at all' pleased. (38)

f) A.R. CALCULATIONS:- Actual numbers can be calculated from AR percentages in terms of the following formula:- $\text{Percentage} \times \text{Population/or Household and divided by } 100$. Thus a percentage AR of 20 x Total population of WCA (namely, Whites, Coloureds and Indians who could be watching TV 1) estimated at 4,215,000 divided by 100. AR is the abbreviation for AMPS Rating; AMPS in turn is the abbreviation for All Media and Products Survey conducted by the South African Advertising Research Foundation.

g) CROSS-OVER DRAMA; During the late eighties, so called cross-over television drama began to make its mark on TV 2 and 3, (now known as CCV-TV). These productions include Black and White actors in leading roles, as well as allowing them to address each other in their respective language. For instance, GOING UP, the most racially mixed cast of a current television drama,

is a prime example of this genre. In respect of TV-1 dramas, this trend has been limited to mixing the official languages, as for instance in *ARENDE* (1989) and *MEESTER* (1991). The leading roles, however, have remained overwhelmingly White.

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(The majority of these interviews were tape recorded).

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