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U N I V E R S I T Y

Class and Ideology:
Reflections in South African Cinema

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Until recently, criticism of South African cinema has been couched predominantly
in aesthetic or literary terms. Local offerings are generally compared with
film emanating from the commercial circuits of Europe and Hollywood. Consequ-
ently, little attempt has been made to study it in terms of indigenous images,
its own inner dynamics or as an expression of South African social history.
More typically, it continues to be regarded as disreputable rubbish being put
out by con-men who owe little allegiance to aesthetics or other generally
accepted cinematic criteria.

A study of South African cinema in terms of the tenets of popular history has
not occurred other than the *Broederbond inspired propositions of Hans Rompel*
(1942) and the rather diluted and vague non-sociological concepts of "social
significance" offered in Thelma Gutsche's (1972) vast historical chronology
of the local industry from 1895-1940. The present author's study of The South
African Film Industry (1979a) offers some insights into how the industry works
in a capitalist economy and how this mode of production affects what is offered
in aesthetic and thematic terms. Little, however, has been written dealing
with the structural bases of the images and recurring motifs reflected in
local cinema (I). This paper represents an attempt to rectify this lack and
should be seen to fill the area of film in much the same way as David Coplan
(1979) has investigated Black music, Tim Couzens (see, eg., Couzens, 1977)
and Kelwyn Sole (1979) have studied popular Black literature and Peter Horn
(1978; 1979) has analysed South African poetry.

The methodology utilized in this paper assumes a social structure/culture
distinction between the media and society. "Culture" refers to patterns of
belief, values and ideas, as well as the artifacts in which they are imbedded.
According to Williams (1977, pp.128-129), *culture and history coexist in a*
symbiotic relationship where "Culture is simultaneously the fruits of a
people's history and a determinant of history". Such an abstraction singles
out relevant factors from a concrete social situation making them available
for analysis. Similarly an abstraction, "social structure" refers to estab-
lished patterns of social relations: class determination, role structures,
organizational patterns etc.

This approach employs *structuralism, the identification of opposites (eg.
good versus bad)*, as a meeting point. This paradigm also seeks to separate
out the superficial surface meaning from the deeper hidden messages embodied
in the text. It is a catch-all which invokes historical materialism, anthro-
pology, semiotics and and sociology, in an attempt to grasp the intrinsic
complexity of the relations between society and the media. Such a methodology
demands that movies are understood within a social context, but without their
being reduced to that context. Above all, it looks for patterns and recurring
motifs. Structuralism is not concerned with film as art, or good movies or
bad movies, but treats film as an index of social data and as a *reflection*
of society. Analysis ventures beyond the simple investigation of the indi-
vidual characters or superficial storylines or plots. The characters are
defined rather in terms of the social roles they play, their social relations
with other participating or non-participating characters and their position
within the class structure of society.

An individual's role in society is governed by his class determinations, that
is, his position in the economic, social and political structures of that
society. Each class may be identified by a specific ideology, which, according

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to Althusser (1970) is:

> ... the lived relation between men and their world, or a
> reflected form of this unconscious relation ... It is
> distinguished from a science not by its falsity, for it
> can be coherent and logical (for instance, theology) but
> by the fact that the practico-social predominates in it
> over the theoretical.

Although Althusser states that "ideology is determinant in the last instance", this paper assumes the basic position that all individuals are the product of their class determinations. Ideology functions to reinforce a given relation within a society's conditions of existence and adapts individuals to the tasks that society sets for them. It permeates all aspects of life and represents an objective reality (eg. the apartheid slogan: "the right of all population groups to self-determination"). This reality is nourished and reinforced by popular cinema which takes the view that society "causes the movies" (Tudor, 1974, p.152). Whereas film genres (Westerns, love stories, thrillers etc.) are conceived to reflect and reaffirm existing relations within the dominant society, revolutionary or breakaway movies project possible future states whic work out the existing ideology to its logical conclusion.

In a class society such as found in South Africa, genre films function to re-inforce social roles according to the division of labour. In other words, the characters must not see themselves in roles other than those articulated by the social relations of production. The content of film, as with other media, is suggested and propelled by the economy and vested interests. South Africa claims to adhere to a free enterprise, capitalist economy, and if this mode of production is to survive, then individuals within society have to be re-conciled to both the established class structure and the class positions they occupy. "Give the public what it wants" is the marketing cry of film executives and producers. What the public gets, however, is largely a consequence of the attitudes and ideology of those in control of the means of production. Films, whether good or bad, artistic or conventional emanate from the same social structure of production. They are viewed by the same audience and the images society sees reflected are an index of the national consciousness: its fears, values, beliefs, myths, guilt, contradictions and motivations. In other words, film seen as a system of cultural indicators provides a symbolical insight into the ideological structures of society.

The state is able to harness cinema as part of its ideological apparatus through three interlinking mechanisms of control:

1. The first and most important of these concerns the availability of sources of finance. State controlled or state affiliated monies are the most common supple of funds available to the feature film industry in South Africa. Under these circumstances it is clear that the filmmaker would bave the greatest difficulty in promulgating anything but the dominant ideology as it is articulated by the ruling regime.

2. Despite the constraints of this ideological capital, some producers have been able to raise finance for breakaway movies (eg. <u>How Long</u>, <u>Die Kandidaat</u>, <u>Jannie Totsiens</u>, <u>Land Apart</u>, <u>Boesman and Lena</u>, <u>The Guest</u>, <u>Marigolds in August</u>). Some of these productions had to raise finance from foreign sources since local investment capital was not forthcoming. On completion of the movie producers have to face the problem of distribution and exhibition. Distribution companies are unlikely to act as crusaders while they are earning sufficient returns through the release of safe genre pictures. A further complication is that independent producers are denied direct access to the majority of exhibitors because most of the

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first run urban cinemas belong to the same monopolistic holding company,
Satbel, which also produces the bulk of locally made feature films.
In the last instance, those films which escape both the constraints of
finance and distribution (and exhibition) are still subject to the ultimate
constraint of state censorship. This affects both breakaway movie as well
as the conventional genre film for the constant fear of restriction in-
evitably leads to the deformation and warping of depictions of reality.

Bearing these points in mind, this paper should be seen as a development of
earlier tentative analyses of South African cinema as it is directed to both
the Black and White sectors of our Society. As in previous papers by the
present author, this study will utilize a structural analysis drawing on the
concepts of class, ideology and state control as they have become manifest
in the South African film industry.

Film made for Black Audiences

Previous work in this area has argued that "In films made for Black audiences
... ideology assumes the function of ensuring class domination. It forces
the exploited to accept their conditions of exploitation as natural, moral
and inevitable" (Tomaselli, 1979b, p.36). What follows in this section is
a further development of this postulate.

In contrast to media directed at Whites in this country, the messages aimed
at Black South Africans have much in common with the imperialist media beamed
to other developing countries in the Third World. At best, when the content
of this media is of a 'benevolent' humanistic flavour it is very often trans-
ported directly from the sponsoring country without thought for local needs,
social conditions or aspirations and is generally inappropriate in the new
situation in terms of both technology and content. Wilber Schramm (1967, p.6)
for example, states that the demands of communication are proportionately
greater in such developing countries than at any other stage of their social
growth. Communication is exhorted to help survey a new environment, raise
peoples aspirations, guide and control a dynamic process, teach new skills
and socialize citizens to a new and different society that is still only in
the process of becoming. What Schramm neglects to mention is the ideological
orientation of such communication. In South Africa this is best exemplified
in the policy of Homeland development. This geo-political and economic
arrangement is propogated by the media which aims to incalculate the values,
beliefs and ideology of the dominant group into the mainstream of the dominated
society. The diffusion of this ideology is facilitated primarily through the
government monopoly in radio and television broadcasting, particuluarly Radio
Bantu. Most of the content of this station is aimed at the maintenance and,
in fact, the rennaissance of traditional tribal values and social institutions
and their implementation in the Homelands.

The case of South African film as it has been prepared for Black viewership
is analagous, and bears many of the marks of imperialist media. Like radio
and television, its efforts may be equated with the formal or informal exercise
of political control over subordinate Black communities.

Media imperialism in cinema performs a triple function: (I) to distort
recorded history in terms of the perspectives of the dominant group, i.e.
the Whites. The dominated culture is over-ruled and cinema transmits back
to them the ruling class' own image of that group. The objective is to pre-
vent the development of a cohesive class identity or ideology which is at
variance with the dominant ideology, for example, Black consciousness; (2)
(2) cinema distorts the image of the dominating group to justify to members
of the dominated that their rulers are protecting them from their own ignorance

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which is their essential state of mind; and (3) to convince members of the
ruling class to accept as "natural" their God given superiority and to create
cultural myths which relate to and reinforce a perceived ideologically deter-
mined reality. The proletariat or working class must be induced to 'live'
their exploitation and oppression in such a way that they do not experience
or represent to themselves their position as, in fact, one in which they are
exploited or oppressed. This coercion functions by ideology where the be-
haviour, beliefs and attitudes produced are of an imaginary or false perception
of their actual conditions of existence. In this way, ideology functions to
reconcile individuals to their given social positions. The cultural meanings
carried in the texts of South African films in general operate primarily to
bring that false reality into line with the social experiences and aspirations
of the dominant culture, that is, White South Africa.

The maintenance of a capitalist economy in South Africa depends on the availa-
bility and control of a large force of cheap labour. This has been achieved
and perpetuated through the sustained depression of the living standards of
Black labourers. Wolpe (1970), Legassick (1974) and others have illustrated
how this objective was brought about initially through the economic depression
of the reserve areas, and more latterly, through the control mechanisms of
ideology and brute force. Cinema offers one of a number of important channels
(eg. schools, radio etc.) utilized by National capital in the spread of the
dominant ideology.

Three typologies of cinema aimed specifically at Black South African audiences
may be identified - the 'back to the Homelands' movie, the coopted movie and
the conditional urban movie. In all cases these films are made by White film-
owned companies and financed with White capital aided by a government subsidy,
Development Corporation funds and Information Department grants. The production
crews, while not always totally White, nevertheless remain under the control
of Whites. The three types of film do not necessarily occur in a temporal
sequence or identifiable clusters, but tend to overlap, a function of the
different stages of ideological manifestation of the apartheid policy. In
general, it would appear that the earlier images offered in film directed at
Black audiences correspond to the concept of Grand Apartheid while later re-
flections acknowledge the accomodation of sufficient numbers of urban Blacks
to cover the functional necessities of urban industry.

At the most extreme end are to be found the 'back to the Homelands' movies
which are an explicit evocation of apartheid policy. These are exemplified
primarily in the renditions of Bayeta Films where the imagery is deeply rooted
in the traditional concept of the Black man as an unsophisticated and raw
rural dweller. Moloyi (1978), for example, relates the story of a sophisticated
urbanite woman who is bewitched by a tribal sorcerer and who discards her
Western ways for the mysticism of tribal life. A musical, Yuma (1978) describes
the courtship and marriage of a pair of young Zulu lovers "depicted in an
authentic way". Igoli Films' Isiviko (1979) shows a young migrant worker's
return to a Zulu village where life is controlled by witchdoctors and water
spirits. Other offerings in this vein are Ngomopho (1974), Iziduphunga (1977)
and Wangeza (1977). Such movies, according to Theti Matsetela function "to
misguide their viewers in what they are aspiring for (Tomaselli, 1980). The
'back to the Homeland' movie worked to reinforce the then official government
rationale that urban life constitutes an alien existence for the Black person
and thet Homeland policy was indeed designed to assist Black people to outgrow
their ignorance in their own time, place and manner. This observation pre-
supposes that densely populated housing settlements found in the Homeland
border areas somehow qualify as an expression of their 'traditional way of life'.

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The second type of film is the <u>coopted movie</u> where Black filmmakers are financed and controlled by Nationalist capital. In addition, attempts were made to co-opt 'opposition' filmmakers whose previous work and public statements have shown them to be highly critical of the present structure of politico-social relations. All of the films, however, in this category have been made by Heyns Films which proved to be a front organization for the now defunct Department of information. It appears that these films were largely financed by the Department (Erasmus Commission, 1979). In addition, an amount of R33 316.80 was paid to Mrs. van Zyl Alberts, anthropologist wife of the company chairman for "consultation" fees (Erasmus Commission, 1979, Appendix D4). According to the State Trust Board (1980), the State holding in Heyns films at this time was 52% and financed the company to the sum of RI.6 million. A further RI.5 million was loaned for the financing of <u>Tigers don't Cry</u> (1976) and <u>Escape From Angola</u> (1977) which were were aimed at White audiences as well. There is no doubt that this money was put to an ideological purpose to regulate the reflections of social relations and to control the consciousness of Black viewers, their attitudes and conduct in pursuance of their designated duties and conditions of existence.

In terms of content, the coopted movie projects an indigenous identity of sorts which has been ideologically filtered to approximate the norms and values of the dominant group. Simon Sabela, who works for Heyns films, is not able to choose the scripts he directs. The Whites choose them, "Then I have to revise them, and bring them into touch with reality" (Deane, 1978, p.162). The plots and storylines are sealed within Black society with little or no communication occurring between the races as happens in real life. Closest to the 'back to the Homelands' category is Sam Williams' <u>Inkunzi</u> (1976) which was financed by the Transkei Development Corporation. In this movie a Trans-keian man returns to his Homeland and becomes a successful shopkeeper. Most of Simon Sabela's films, on the other hand, reflect the confusion of rural and urban values found in Black urban societies. Such films include <u>U-Deliwe</u> (1975), <u>I-Kati Elimnyana</u> (1976), <u>Inkedama</u> (1975), <u>Nqwanaka</u> (1976), <u>Setipana</u> 1979) and <u>Nqaka</u> (1977). The fact that Sabela, whatever his location within the the web of South African social relations, is invested in a degree of autonomy by his producers (Information funds notwithstanding), is significant in terms of cinematic reflections. His movies, although simple and perhaps naive, nevertheless incorporate his urban-rural ambivalences, a function of migrant worker social experience. Despite his ignorance of the effects of structural violence, his films do, within the context of the unsophisticated ruralite or urban dweller, reflect the confusion and disorientation experienced by town-ship dwellers. This is to be expected, for until late 1979, Black urban areas were simply governed as labour reservoirs.

By 1979, a new trend of film theme became apparent as evidenced in the <u>conditional urban movie</u>. This genre represents an attempt by Nationalist capital to harness the support of the growing Black middle class in terms of the structural bases of apartheid. In physical terms this is being done through the granting of municiple status to satellite towns like Soweto. This modification in political status has been parallelled by the emergence of movies which implicitly reflect an acceptance of Black urban living as a permanent feature, the result of a manufacturing workforce which requires "... a more skilled, more contented worker, with lower job turnover and less incentive to malinger or to sabatage the productive process" (Legassick, 1974, p.14). On the one hand are the privately financed gangster movies, for example, Cineworld's <u>Utotsi</u> (1978) and <u>Phindesela</u> (1979) and Intercity's <u>Umzingeli</u> (1979). On the other are the disco movies. Stimulated by the township successes of Saturday Night Fever and other titles, Black audiences were pre-pared for movies like <u>Isoka</u> (1979) and <u>Botsotso</u> (1979). Such disco motifs, whether an accurate reflection of an aspect of Black city life, or simply a

perpetuation of the White filmmaker's stereotype of Black people having an in-
nate "sense of rhythm", do nevertheless convey an understanding of change in
the Black worker's conditions of existence. No longer is he the recipient of
a constant cinematic bombardment of messages telling him that he is unsuitable
for city life. Rather, it is tacitly accepted that he is part of city life,
though still separate from the mainstram of urban White culture.

Lying outside the above triple typology are two further categories of film
which may be identified in terms of their projected audience and treatement
of theme. The first of these might be labelled authentic cinema given by
such examples as Jim Comes to Joburg (1949), Magic Garden (1961), Dingaka (1964),
Boesman and Lena (1973) and Marigolds in August (1980). Such movies, although
dealing with other than White characters are designed to appeal to a wider
than purely Black audience. Such offerings are not intended for a particular
population group but according to Mtutuzeli Matshoba "... because that group
recognizes itself authentically represented in the theme, it will respond
positively to it". A more general classification of this type of movie would
involve an ethnographic definition. That is to say, authentic cinema would be
subsumed into the general category of ethnographic film.

The second category would most closely approximate Third World examples of the
"cinema of popular culture". Only one film, Gibson Kente's black financed
How Long (1976) would fall into this category. Despite Gibson Kente's Black
middle class determination, in the context of cinematic reflections of South
African society, this film would qualify in such a category. Only examples
of Black written theatre such as Egoli, Working Class Hero and The Last Man
would be further to the left. Indeed, in the context of Black theatre, How
Long which is based in the play of the same name, avoids a structural in-
vestigation of the causes of township life, and must therefore be located
cinematically to the right of the cinema of popular culture. This, despite
the fact that Kente was detained by the Security Police during production and
that the film was banned on four counts (obscenity, blasphemy, causing harm
to race relations and prejudicing the safety of the state).

To conclude this section of the argument, we have shown that the White man's
version of the Black man's cinema, thst is, the 'back to the Homelands' movie,
the coopted movie and the conditional urban movie is predicated upon the twin
premises of profit and ideology. In the case of the coopted movie, profit does
not appear to be of great importance, while in the 'back to the Homelands' and
conditional urban movies a strong correlation exists between the profit motive
and ideological content. Whether the ideology implicit in such films is
opaque or not, that is to say, whether the ideological intensions of these
films are recognized or not, is immaterial to the final result. In fact, the
hidden messages function better when they are not identified for what they are.
The more educated, aware urban Black is able to isolate the underlying purpose
of these films and place them in a politico-economic context. Such offerings
ard thus rejected and the cultural myths carried in the texts become impotent.
Box office takings, however, suggest that a large, if uncritical audience,
patronize such movies. Since the means of production are owned by White capital
and since the supply of Black capital is scarce, it is unlikely that a Black
cinema within the context of a Third World paradigm will emerge. This type of
film seeks to counter imperialist images with an ideology vested in the cinema
of popular culture and to rediscover history from the point of view of the
working class struggle. The development of variant ideologies will be prevented
and Blacks will continue to be fed a reality and condition existence filtered
by the dominant group. This perception does not come from the desire of the
ruling class to deceive, but rather from the objective character of the economic
systen as such. The origins of the colour bar, for instance, were not an

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rrational response to some deep-seated ideological beliefs or prejudices,
but rather, as Johnstone (1976, p.74) expresses it, "... a response to a
specific class problem, produced by the system of production and the class
structure from which the problem itself was derived". The intervention of
politics and ideology was crucial for the reproduction of the relations of
production, both as the division of labour and its expression as class re-
lations. Racism was the most effective instrument of class rule utilized
by capital.

Thus in the Black South African movie, we see both a reflection of Black
society, albeit a muddled one, and a clear desire to control that society
through an ideologically filtered indoctrination. The popular response to
such movies would suggest that, like Radio Bantu (BMR, 1975; Switzer, 1979),
that they have met with relative success, at least as far as the less ar-
ticulate and politically naive viewer is concerned.

White South African Cinema

This brings us to a discussion of how the dominant ideology permeates White
South African cinema and convinces its viewers of their class position. This
section will also identify specific cultural indicators and discuss their
significance in terms of the wider society.

Most South African films, particuluarly those made in the Afrikaans language,
have at the level of appearance, a key plot structure; the insider versus
the outsider. This concept has been dealt with elsewhere (see Tomaselli,
1979b; 1980) but deserves elucidation here. This theme is typically found
in the conflict-love type story where one of the lovers (usually the girl)
dies an unnatural death, usually at the hand of the jilted party. Al-
ternatively, she may be blind, pregnant out of wedlock, rejected because of
her colour, or even a leper. This cultural indicator, that of the maimed
heroine, indicates some sort of trauma about the status of the boeredogter,
the pure archetypal daughter of the Afrikaner nation. The outsider is generally
perceived to be a threat to Afrikanerdom, an urbanized Afrikaner or some other
form of uitlander or foreigner.

The origins of this clash can be traced to the genesis of diamond mining in
the 1880's and was consolidated by the gold mining industry on the Witwaters-
rand after 1886. Prior to the expansion of mining, most of South Africa's
cities were located on the coast. No cities existed in the interior and when
mining commenced few South Africans possessed the skills or capital to exploit
the new wealth. Consequently, skilled miners were imported from overseas.
As a result of this immigration, during the 1870's and 1880's, Afrikaners
sold their land to mining speculators and trekked off to more distant pastures.
The mining cities of Kimberley and Johannesburg thus became predominantly
English speaking.

The year 1903 was pivotal to the urban-rural value clash. The Anglo-Boer War
created a large number of penniless Afrikaner refugees pushed off the land and
forced into the towns to seek a livelihood. This exodus was exacerbated by
the Rinderpest epidemic of 1902 which destroyed most of the herds left in tack
by the British. This state of affairs was even the more unpalitable given
the discriminatory behaviour of the British colonists. O'Meara (1977, pp.160-
161), for example, observes:

                    Within the imperialist colonial states a clear
                    cultural oppression operated against Afrikaans
                    speakers. Long before the war ended the indep-

dence of the Republics, so generating a fierce cultural re-
sponse, the language movement of the Cape had inspired a
strong cultural nationalism. More importantly, in an es-
sentially peripheral economy dominated by the ideology of
imperial interest, for those Afrikaners unprepared to accept
cultural assimilation and who possessed a modicum of training
rendoring them unsiutable for manual labour, employment oppor-
tunities were limited. English was the language of the Economy.

Wilkins and Strydom (1978, p.39) put it more bluntly: "From the bitterness of
military defeat, they were forced to the greater bitterness of economic sub-
jugation by the same foe, British imperialism". This Afrikaner hostility was
intensified through the change from surface gold mining to deep level excavation.
Whereas in the former case, a single prospector aided only by a few "natives"
was able to pan for gold, deep level mining required large capital committments
and centralized mining rights in the hands of a few, usually British entrepeneurs.
Wassenaar (1977, p.II4) describes in vague and general terms how the power of
money became a threat to Afrikanerdom: "... the forefathers of Afrikanerdom
sat on the sidelines watching how excessive wealth was accumulating in the hands
of individuals who were to them, foreigners or 'uitlanders" ...". Elsewhere
Wassenaar (1977, p.I22) states that gold and the wealthy individuals associated
with it were identified as the enemy which had "... herded Afrikanerdom ever
more closely into a condensed group with their back to the wall".

The newly urbanized Afrikaner "poor White" found himself in an invidious position.
Initially he has neither the skills for non-manual labour nor the right colour
skin for manual labour in the mines. The imported skilled miner saw the Afrik-
aner as a threat to his position and sought to keep him out at all costs. In
I907, however. large numbers of unskilled Afrikaans workers were invited by
mining capital to scab on the (skilled) strikers but were not paid at the
same rate. This marked the Afrikaners entry into mining on a large scale.
Later, united with imported labour against mining capital they were successful
in entrenching the colour bar which functioned to stop the erosion of White
wage levels. This process culminated in the notorious I922 strikes. Against
such a background, it is not surprising that Afrikaners preferred life on the
veld (See Report on Commission In Re Pretoria Indigents, 1905). Walker (1960),
Patterson (1957) and de Kiewiet (1941) have dealt comprehensively with the
religious and cultural character of the bond between the Afrikaner and his
agrarian lifestyle. This is reflected in a number of Afrikaans films where
the unspoiled mythical image of the rural Afrikaner remains paramount. Farming
symbolizes the roots of the insider, the opposite of the outcast urban mentality.
Having been forced into the cities by the war, most intended to return to 'the
farm' once they had accumulated sufficient capital – an ambition realized by
only a few.

The main thesis of Rompel's (I942b, p.60) plea was the genesis of an Afrikaans
cinema developed in narrow contact with the Afrikaans soil (bodem) from whence
will come their inspiration. The attainment of a pure idealistic Volks-film
should be wary of the evils of the city, he warned. Rompels two exigeses
were clearly intended to suggest how the deployment of film as an ideological
weapon could fend off volksvreemde (alien) and volksgevaarlike (dangerous to
the nation) influences. Afrikaner cultural integrity must be maintained at
all costs. Film was to be used as a bond to maintain social cohesion and to
ensure that Afrikaners play their God given designated roles and act out their
inherent functions as members of the same community. This could only be achieved
by keeping the group closed and subordinating the differing ideologies to devine
will and the Afrikaner ideology. Hence the preoccupation with the outsider in

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Afrikaans film. The <u>uitlander</u> stands for a social role which is of a two tiered order. The first tier concerns the outsider in the widest sense. He is identified with British imperialism, and more latterly, with English speaking South Africa. Rarely seen in the film himself, he is , however, often referred to in conversation. This may be partly due to the warping effect of the state subsidy system which demands language purity within the cinema and which rewards purely Afrikaans films with a higher payment than English versions. The second tier refers to the urbanized Afrikaner who has cut his ties with the "solid inherited <u>Boerekarakter</u>". He is portrayed as a traitor to the values and ideals of the Afrikaner nation and has become contaminated with <u>volksvreemde</u> (alien) and <u>volksgevaarlike</u> influences. Rompel's (1942b, p.60) statement that "... at root of the matter the urban Afrikaner is not radically different from his rural fellow citizens" should be seen as an acknowledgement of the possibility of these prodigal sons eventually returning to their soil. (These remarks should not imply that this genre is not unsympathetic to the outsider. Sometimes the director will use these myths to criticize the narrowness of the the society he is portraying). This attitude is a consequence, not of the fact that the Afrikaner is essentially rural in character, but because the Afrikaner was historically thwarted in his attempts to wrest economic power away from the English entrepeneur.

Ideological Adaptation, Social Breakdown and Economic Renewal

This returns the discussion to a consideration of the problems facing the boeredogter and her consequent traumas and personal degredations. Since examples and descriptions are offered elsewhere (Tomaselli, 1979b; 1980), the present discussion will elucidate   the ideological implications of the treatment of the boeredogter.

The first concerns the social effects of the Anglo-Boer War. During this time it was the Afrikaner women who had to tend to the soil, bring up the children and run the household while the men were away fighting. The reult was the formation of a strongly matriachial society where the woman became the authority figure. Later, due to unsanitory conditions and a lack of fresh food, nearly 30 000 women and children died in concentration camps administered by the British. These women assumed the status of martyrs, and symbolized a continuing flame of purity in the midst of a devestating assault by British imperialism against Afrikaner wealth, culture, identity and sanctity. The consequent hatred engendered in the Afrikaner of the British continues to the present, a sentiment which is questioned in Elmo de Witt's film '<u>n Beeld vir Jeannie</u> (1976). This film, which takes the side of the outsider, is critical of the personal hatred still carried by the Afrikaner whose demand for things pure has distorted and vitiated his perception of the world around him.

Second, during the rural-urban migration, very often it was the women who remained behind on their impoverished farms while their husbands sought work in the towns. They became the guardians of purity and cultural integrity while their men-folk were drawn to labour for the enemy which had defeated them, both on the battlefield and economically.

The third element of the boeredogter personality concerns her ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This relates inparticular to the economic ascendence of the Afrikaner. This new status must inevitably move him into the cities, for it is in these areas that the seat of economic power lies. The solution to the dilemma facing Afrikaners in respect to the discrimination against them was, to quote Broederbonder LJ de Plessis (1934), "... to capture the foreign (capitalist) system and transform and adapt it to our national character".

In this aim Afrikanerdom has largely been successful, first by capturing political
power and latterly, economic power. The resulting urbanization offers anomymity,
a chance to cast off the close social restrictions of an agricultural community.
In short, the boeredogter has become an individual. In some cases she has lost
her collective spirit, the cement which binds Afrikanerdom. In others, the
ravages of capital have assigned new social roles, new patterns of social org-
anization, new far more liberal sexual mores and a wider set of social relations.
The new boeredogter has moved to the city, she has lost her rural heritage, she
epitomizes a materialist, sometimes non-religious threat to the Rompel stereo-
type of Aryan purity. Parallel with this move to the city has occurred a new
threat to Afrikanerdom - what is labelled as "the total world onslaught" against
South Africa. This has caused a restructuring of the key plot which no longer
sees social relations in terms of rural versus urban lifestyles, but more dia-
lectically in Black versus White terms. This modification operates at various
levels of significance. First, the idea of the urban Afrikaner has been accepted
in cinematic myth, but achieving this, the sexual and cultural purity of the
boeredogter has been demolished. The outsider or uitlander is still there, but
but he is no longer seen in rural-urban terms, but in relation to a new psycho-
logical state which has superceded the purity symbols of 'the farm'. This
modification in the key plot is the result of a new war, a new set of res-
surrected traumas bent on the destruction of Afrikaner culture. This mental
state is typified as 'the Border' - which stands for an imperialist world on-
slaught which, like the British war on the Boers, seeks to take away what
belongs to Afrikanerdom - its wealth, its culture, and its priveledged God
given position in life.

The concept or cultural indicator of the outsider becomes, consequently, more
complex. It should now be analysed not as a two tiered, but as a three tiered
structure. The first, though now less important, remains the image of the
English speaking South African. The second is a new kind of Afrikaner villain,
who is not defined by his urban geographical location, but by the fact that
he wants to flee the country (hy wil van die land vlug). The third element
of the outsider is a new one. The outsider is no longer seen in purely White
terms - he has become a mortal enemy personified in terms of his Blackness.
He is seen in the war movie, he is a stupid communist dupe bent upon the aim-
less destruction of White civilization in the sub-continant. This confrontation
is inevitable, a price to pay in the maintenance of Afrikanerdom - like the
endless wars of the Hebrews agianst the Philistines. Each of these elements
is identifiable in the portrayal of the outsider, though one may be more im-
portant than the other two. Until the mid-1970's, Blacks were simply not part
of South African cinematic myth. Where he did appear, he fulfilled the tra-
ditional White stereotype of the 'witchdoctor' or the role of the trustworthy
servant. In the war movie he has betrayed his masters, he has become 'cheeky'
and no longer knows his place in life. The image of the English speaker too, has
has changed, a function of the war and a rapproachment with the Afrikaner.
Fighting for a common cause against Blacks, the English speaking South African
is united with the government in its desire to entrench the dominant position
of White nationalism. This is partly exemplified in the merging of Afrikaner
and English capital into a single ideological entity - Nationalist capital.
This unification is a result of increasing Afrikaner influence in the economic
and financial sectors of the political economy and attempts by the Prime Minister
PW Botha to buy off the English speaking business man. The latter stratagy
has proved successful (2) replacing Afrikaans capital and English capital
with National capital.

:he study of a nation's cinema cannot be conducted in vacuo. An examination of images in relation to the society portrayed will offer insights into the social structure and ideological orientations of a society. This study has looked at the ideology of South African cinema and related its images to the social history of its people. Through this correlation, recurring cultural motifs and indicators were identified which provide a table of values with which to evaluate the semiotics of South African cinema. Often the signs produced suggest future social traumas and hint at ideological adjustments which may be employed to meet them. Already evident is a posturing amongst Whites in general to meet and contain a communist onslaught fed and sustained by continuous media propaganda where the enemy of the present structure of South African society is shown to be influences emanating from outside the country.

Few images are available from the perspectives of Black filmmakers for, apart from Gibsen Kente, few Blacks are involved in the cinematic medium. The result is two-fold: first, ideologically unpalitable films such as How Long are prevented from circulation thus preventing the witness of alternative interpretations of South African society; and second, the control by Whites of Black cinema tells the viewer far more about the ideology, values and attitudes of the White filmmaker than it does about the community he is portraying.

This paper has dealt with only a few of the many cultural indicators which are to be seen in South African cinema and further research remains to be done in the correlation of recurring images with social history.

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NOTES

1. The only exceptions are Greig (1979), and Tomaselli (1979b; 1979c)

2. Witness, for example the Prime Minister's public relations success in winning over the support of English speaking businessmen at his congress held at the Carlton Centre in November, 1979.
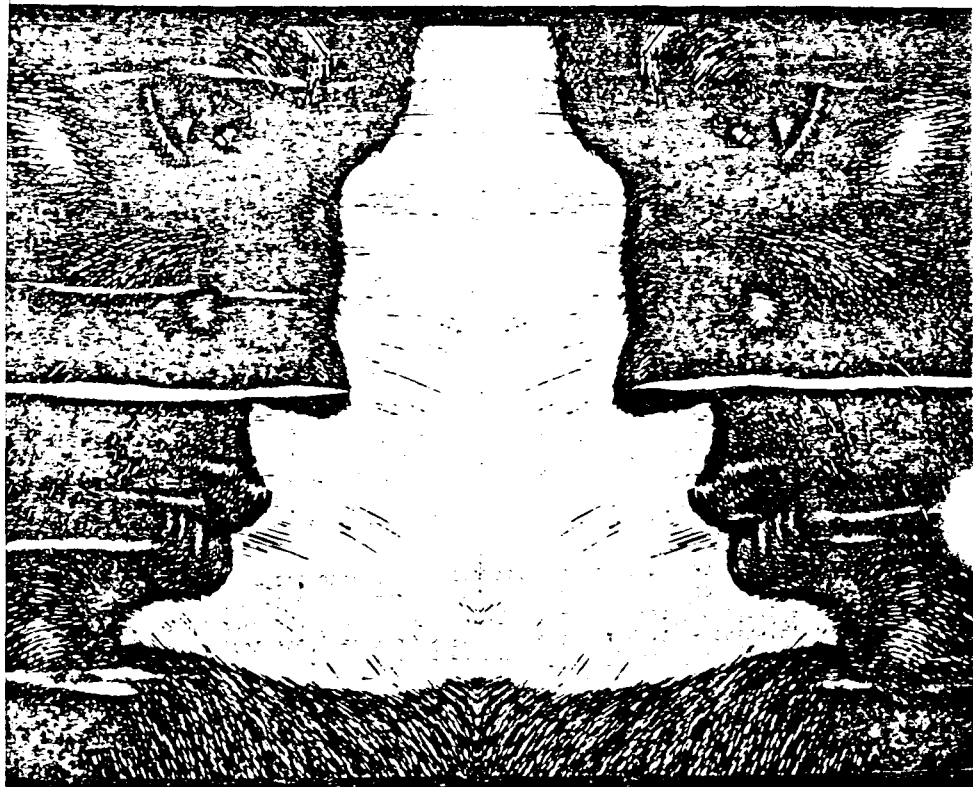
Still Riding: TLALI, GORDIMER, MATSHOBA, ABRAHAMS, MUTLOATSE, GRAY, SILUMA, POLAND, MPHAHLELE, WILDMAN, BAYAJULA, KWANZA, SOARTA, ZAMANI, MBAKASIMA, CYA, GUYO, ABANGANI, MOROPA, GARTASSO, MADI, MPUMALANGA, MALOPOETS, KHAULEZA and many others.