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Popular Culture and Democracy in Some Southern Contexts: An Introduction

Preben Kaarsholm and Deborah James

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The essays in the present volume originate in papers that were presented first at a series of two workshops on 'Popular Culture and Democracy', organised by a research programme on 'Livelihood, Identity and Organisation in Situations of Instability' based at the Centre for Development Research in Copenhagen and International Development Studies at Roskilde University. The first workshop was held at Tongaat in KwaZulu-Natal in November 1998 and the second, for presentation of revised versions of selected papers, in Copenhagen in September 1999. The workshops brought together scholars from a variety of disciplines – ranging from history and the social sciences to cultural geography, literary criticism, musicology, drama, theatre practice and poetry.

The titles of the workshops, and of this volume of essays, bring into conjunction two terms which are not commonly seen together. Their relationship is a complex one, and one of the purposes of the workshop was to give substance and meaning to this relationship, and to show that each term can be better understood in the light of the other. The final papers, presented here, embody these aims:

- to focus on the role of popular cultural articulations and genres in societies where instability and violent upheaval have made political institutions fragile or undemocratic, and have led political debate to seek more indirect forms of expression.
- to debate the function of culture in situations of transition where civil society organisations are seeking to find new balances of democratic interaction with the local state.
- to examine popular cultural institutions as means of expression for groups of people who are disadvantaged in their access to political influence.
- to address the potentials of particular forms of popular culture in providing structures of organisation and self-identification in situations which have been destabilised by displacement, migration and violent conflict, and to discuss the understandings of democracy given voice in different varieties of popular cultural expression.

The 28 scholars who attended the first workshop came from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, India, Guatemala, Peru and Denmark. Reflecting this diversity, the present volume breaks new ground in the broad comparative perspective it provides. It is true that southern countries like Kenya (and, even further afield, India and Latin America) are not normally considered to be the subject of 'southern African studies'.¹ The papers persuasively demonstrate, however, that these southern countries' common experiences of colonial domination, rapid urbanisation, ethnic and racial division, and political repression and resistance, make such a comparative exercise a valid one. Given these shared experiences, the papers reveal strikingly similar themes in their accounts of the complex ways popular culture interacts with democracy – sometimes being expressive of or dovetailing with, but sometimes substituting for or challenging, the formal political processes which democracy is understood to entail. In demonstrating these interactions, the papers present a challenge to some existing definitions of 'culture' and 'democracy' which focus on and thereby tend to essentialise forms and products rather than looking at actions and processes.

The pages which follow, while not attempting a comprehensive comparative review of existing literature, briefly sketch of some of the major issues which this literature raises, showing

how these have a bearing on the papers presented and on the workshops' discussions. It is hoped that this account will serve to encourage further interaction between the scholars and literatures of these southern countries.

Democracy in southern countries debated

Since the 1980s, questions concerning the nature of democracy have become prominent in debates on development in Africa, Asia and Latin America for two sometimes contradictory reasons. First, internally, new movements mobilising for political reform came to the fore in countries that had experienced decolonisation in the two decades after the end of World War Two and challenged the equity of the political systems that had come into existence at independence. Second, external pressures for democratisation were brought about by international donors who wrote political conditionalities into agreements for the provision of development aid packages, and called for human rights and civil liberties to be included in the constitutions of receiver nation states. This process was accelerated with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe around 1989.

In earlier debates, it had been possible to play down the importance of democratisation in a variety of ways. In nationalist ideologies of independence, Western notions of 'liberal' democracy had been dismissed as inappropriate since they did not necessarily involve real processes of popular participation. Such ideas had, in any case, been inadequately applied - many colonial societies had had dual systems of rule, in which an 'Athenian' democracy for a minority of colonial settlers was supplemented by authoritarian and communalist systems of indirect rule for the masses of the population. At the same time, the economic effects of such colonial regimes were grossly unjust and had resulted in patterns of uneven distribution which made a mockery of any pretensions of democracy and liberalism.

Instead, there were claims by new nationalist governments that they were moving towards more 'real' forms of democracy, based on the nationalisation and redistribution of economic goods, and organising governance around systems of one-party or movement rule that were said to involve high levels of participation. Notions of Western democracy could, in any case, be dismissed as ethnocentric and culturally alien to underdeveloped African, Asian or Latin American nations.

If liberal democracy was seen as an often inappropriate form of governance within southern countries, it was far from being unambiguously advocated in European and US American discussions of Third World development before the 1980s. Early theories of development focused on economic growth as the essence, and on the "take-off" and establishment of national cycles of accumulation, on the basis of which a middle class of modern entrepreneurs could establish itself. Optimistic versions of theory assumed that capacities for participation and democracy would necessarily emerge with the changes of identity and group association that were entailed in modernisation.² According to more gloomy prognoses, democracy was a luxury developing nations could not afford since it would be accompanied by instability, inefficiency and the political squandering of economic gains to favour population groups on whose support regimes would be dependent.³ In this sense, democratisation would belong to an agenda of the future which societies might address when they had reached a certain stage of economic prosperity. Even in advanced versions of liberal democratic theory today, such as the writings of John Rawls, it is assumed that democracy can only make sense in societies which have developed a certain level of growth and welfare distribution. By implication, it would therefore be meaningless in principle to discuss democracy within contexts of underdevelopment.⁴

In the 1980s, however, the notion of democracy became a central battlefield of meaning, and new movements for democratic reform began to emerge in Third World countries. This was not least the case in Africa where the performance of a number of states based on one-party systems and 'authenticist' ideologies could be presented as degenerating into rent-seeking, corruption, cronyism, political oppression and negative growth.⁵ The new forces of opposition reintroduced tenets of liberal understandings of democracy, such as pluralism, protection of human rights of expression and organisation, and protection of election procedures. They also, however, attempted to develop alternative models of democracy in greater accordance with local political cultures and traditions.

In Kenya and Zimbabwe, for example, oppositional movements, having emphasised multi-partyism as an important antidote to the *de facto* one-party regimes of their societies, experienced problems constructing alliances in the absence of parties of representation, and thus were unable to achieve much clout against the powers of state control. In a different way, in Uganda, Museveni and his National Resistance Movement developed a programme for non-party democracy based on structures of 'hierarchism from below' and 'running with the grain of local political culture rather than against it, demonstrating that even a broadly undemocratic culture contains elements which can be deployed in a democratic direction'.⁶

Similarly grounded in the mobilisation of guerrilla war against an oppressive previous government, movement-based programmes promising democracy were launched in Eritrea and in post-Mengistu Ethiopia, as well as later on in Rwanda after the 1994 take-over by the Rwandan Patriotic Front. All these ventures of political reform in the wake of the *ancien regime* of corrupt first-generation nationalist governments met with considerable sympathy from Western donors and governments since they were seen as laboratories for the working out of a particularly African democratic formula. But they then plummeted in prestige as the Rwandan civil war became a multi-national military confrontation in the Congo, and as, in 1998, the formerly allied governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia began to engage in a surreal war of self-destruction.⁷ In the meantime, events in the Congo in particular had sparked off important and lively debates among African scholars and intellectuals about the meaning and significance of democracy. They lamented the burdensome legacies of the colonial past - systems of indirect rule and artificially-constructed ethnicities - but also reasserted the importance of values and requirements related to liberal democratic theory, such as rights of association, and the rights of associations to be politically active and stand for elections.⁸

In Latin American countries and in India, developments in the 1980s and 1990s also led to serious rethinking of the nature, requirements and problems of democracy. In Peru, the terror and intimidation used by the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) movement made political activists reconsider their conceptions of radicalism and develop new political alternatives to both governmental authoritarianism and the coercive policies of the Maoist left.⁹

In Guatemala, the early 1980s saw a massive Government-backed onslaught against left-wing guerrillas who had attempted to establish bases primarily in the Mayan highlands of El Quiché, Huehuetenango, Chimaltenango and Alta and Baja Verapaz. The campaign followed 'scorched-earth' principles and included massacres of civilians and the destruction of villages suspected of guerrilla support, the displacement of large numbers of people, and appropriation by Government sympathisers of land belonging to those who escaped. Though the guerrilla presence never amounted to a serious military threat, confrontations and the emergency terrorism of the state continued until 1996 when the Oslo peace agreement was signed. During this period, the army's tactics involved *reduccion* (the relocation of rural people in fortified villages) and the establishment of 'self-defence patrols' mobilising peasants against the guerrillas and turning the conflict into patterns of localised civil war. The peace process since 1996 has included the establishment and reporting of a 'Commission for

Historical Clarification’, referenda on local government reform proposing increased ‘cultural rights’ for Mayan communities, and initiatives to reform taxes and the legal system, and reduce the military apparatus. These efforts to build institutions of liberal democracy and to protect human rights have however proceeded slowly, being obstructed by right-wing and military groups as well as by referendum results. At the elections held in November 1999, a conservative Government was elected, including General Efraim Rios Montt who was a prominent army hardliner and President during a central period of the terror in the early 1980s (see Gonzalez’ paper, this volume).

In the context of India, debates about the nature of democracy in recent years have taken as their point of departure the emergence of new and powerful forms of ‘communalism’ and of Hindu nationalism. Such forms of communalism have emerged both within the local politics of states, districts and cities, and at national level with the coming to power of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The ‘secularist’ understanding of democracy as rooted primarily in individual citizenship has become increasingly undermined and problematised. This has been effected both by Congress manoeuvres to hold on to power and privilege, and by what has been referred to as a ‘democratic revolution’ which has turned groups of previously disenfranchised communities into holders of real power and rendered their understandings of politics impossible to ignore.¹⁰ Responses have included authoritarianism, anti-Islamic xenophobia and fascism – but there have also been suggestions about new conditions for the development of democracy, involving the establishing of a balance between individual rights and ‘group’ or ‘cultural’ rights.

Such developments parallel the situation in South Africa in significant ways. Both before and since the dismantling of the apartheid state and the country’s first national democratic elections of 1994, democracy has featured as an issue for intense discussion. As in India, there have been contestations over democracy between an ‘individualist citizenship’ orientation in the Congress tradition and more communalist forms of ethnic or cultural nationalism as represented, for example, by the Inkatha Freedom Party. The latter style embodies political traditions both of resistance and of collaboration. At the same time, while the struggle at a national level was for a democratic and majority-rule-based alternative to apartheid governance, the form taken by local confrontations during the period of apartheid’s collapse left little space for appreciation of the niceties of ‘liberal’ democratic procedure. The post-1994 period has therefore been one of contestation about how to build a locally-rooted political culture of democracy. One set of discussions relating to the nature of democracy has focussed on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which - in contrast to its Guatemalan parallel - has centred its work on public hearings. In the process, there have been disagreements about which forms of public knowledge are required as the basis for a new democracy. At the same time, at the Winnie Mandela hearings for example, the TRC’s procedures have exposed a glaring gap between the ideals of openness and publicness it represents, and the conditions of misinformation, confusion and destabilisation which characterized the struggles of the 1980s and early 90s.

Going back to outside and donor-linked assessments of political development, it has been increasingly realised, first that automatic equations between authoritarianism and efficiency are erroneous, and second that democracy can also be regarded as a precondition for stability and a necessary vehicle for redistribution.¹¹ It has also been recognized that establishing democracy requires more than a change in constitution and the holding of elections. Thus, while donors have successfully supported elections and democratic transitions, they acknowledge that the new democracies will still need to be developed and ‘consolidated’. Although most world regions - even those with agrarian economies, low per capita incomes and minuscule middle classes - have made the transition to democracy,¹² consolidation of these gains, in Latin America, Asia and Africa, will require both a

stabilizing of democratic institutions and procedures and cultural change and the ‘emergence of a democratic culture’.¹³ The building of democratic political culture, Bratton suggests, will support institutional reforms by making people “agree to be reasonable” and play the game of democracy. It will also widen the scope for democracy through the diffusion of attitudes and values outside the more narrowly defined political sphere, and among both ‘elites’ and ‘masses’.¹⁴

Considerations about the building of a ‘democratic political culture’ in hitherto undemocratic contexts will lead, at a later point in this introduction, to a discussion of civil society and its relationship to the state. But for the moment these considerations point us away from thinking about institutional politics as normally understood, and towards a discussion of culture – and in particular the ‘popular culture’ of this volume’s title. In the context of the poorer southern countries, where colonial and more recent histories have left legacies of stark inequality and violent intolerance, the building of a democratic culture has often necessitated more informal means of expression. Sometimes this is because what is understood to be institutionalised as ‘politics’ has become the scene of such alienation, self-seeking and irrelevance that a real articulation of needs and values appears possible only within cultural realms which do not, at first sight, appear to be really political. Sometimes it is because the sphere of politics seems remote and inaccessible, as among the young women in Nairobi discussed in Frederiksen’s paper (this volume), for whom ‘the democratisation of everyday life’ proceeds rather through a creative engagement with magazines and soap operas. And sometimes it is because channels for the articulation of political priorities are less than well-worn, as Seleti describes in the case of police reform in Mozambique (this volume) - here it is through informal narratives and the media that people have brought pressure to bear on state institutions.

Culture and the popular

The authors featured here understand culture in varying ways. Some use sociological or anthropological notions of culture as practices and discourses embodying a whole way of life, while others define culture, in more aesthetic terms, as referring to a distinct set of artistic genres and institutions. Embracing both of these, what came to prevail during the workshops was an emphasis on the importance of social context and hegemonies of power to an understanding of particular kinds of symbolic expression. Popular culture, rather than being a reified “thing” set apart, is seen here as comprising a whole set of processes in social life. In Rowe and Schelling’s words it is a ‘decisive area where social conflicts are experienced and evaluated’.¹⁵

To assert the processual nature of culture in this way is not to deny that in southern contexts, as in northern ones, there has been a split between ‘art’ or ‘leisure’ on the one hand and ‘everyday life’ on the other. It is a split which is colonially engendered, but it has also been contested. The high cultures of colonial and post-colonial elites, increasingly oriented towards international media and markets of communication, have incorporated globalised notions of the specificity of the aesthetic object, or of ‘leisure’ as an activity separate from everyday life. Imitating these elite cultures, yet simultaneously merging them with local discourses to create new syncretic forms, subordinated populations appropriated these for their own ends. In this way the practitioners of popular culture have often merged into a kind of syncretic blend the mainly oral ‘traditional’ cultures thought of as deriving from the precolonial past and the mainly written elite cultures of the emerging middle classes.¹⁶

But the more direct interventions of colonial administrations and officials also influenced the understanding of what constituted ‘culture’ as something closely related to

new notions of 'leisure'. In Brazzaville, for example, the colonial elite introduced an elaborate series of activities associated with the use of leisure time, seen as separate from work. Some of these were pastimes of a 'high' cultural nature, from which the African populace were generally excluded: segregated spaces of social control were thereby maintained.¹⁷ But there were also activities designed explicitly for Africans' recreation. Similarly, in Bulawayo, native leisure policy promoted activities - didactic drama as well as 'traditional' dancing - which, alongside agricultural skills, would keep African township residents healthily aware of their essentially rural identities.¹⁸ Such activities, in turn, were appropriated by local African communities and transformed into resources for survival and resistance. The creation - and attempted 'moralisation' - of leisure time by elites was thus both accepted and contested, in Brazzaville and Bulawayo as in other African contexts, by the popular classes - often those on the margins of society.¹⁹ The contestation can be seen in the fact that popular organisations apparently devoted to leisure and recreation, such as women's rotating credit clubs, at the same time became sources of economic aid and support. To this extent the attempted introduction into everyday life of a split between enjoyable activities and the function-oriented ones of daily life was only partly achieved.²⁰

While popular culture as leisure activity can thus serve purposes which extend well beyond play, its significance also derives precisely from the fact that it may appear as no more than play. If it is seen as mere entertainment, it need not be taken seriously. Instances of what may appear to be mere escapist performance have served as masks to hide more serious political and social commentary - this is an area where popular culture and democratic struggles intersect very tangibly. Through what Scott has called 'hidden transcripts', people living under authoritarian forms of government can disguise their observations about society before expressing them in the public domain.²¹ Similarly, the case of African oral poetry shows that it has sometimes been possible to speak truth to the holders of power only with the poetic licence afforded by formalized artistic expression.²² The impact of such forms of expression have been evident to activists - as in the case of the Peruvian anarcho-syndicalist leader Vienrich, discussed in Wilson's paper (this volume), who saw the indigenous 'Dance of the Incas' as 'one of the many ways subjugated peoples protest against the iniquities of their oppressors'. 'Secret' popular cultural resources may also be used directly in efforts of resistance. This occurred, for instance, in the Mayan highlands of Guatemala where villagers' story-telling describes the attempted use of *brujeria* (witchcraft) to halt the expropriations by *ladino* land owners at the end of the last century - symbolically represented in the tales as a huge invading snake being turned away by the insistent attacks of wasps which were conjured up against it by local people under threat.²³

Perhaps echoing the division between 'play' and 'life', much of the existing literature on popular culture is focused on discussions of aesthetic or leisure-oriented genres. But the social workings of these have given rise to much disagreement, and have resulted in a dichotomized view. Popular culture may stand out as the 'heroic' expression of resistance by marginalized people without access to official channels of power, but can also be seen as a manifestation of the passive acceptance of colonialist, or even fascist, ideologies: it is either celebrated as the creative and imaginative product of communities expressing their needs or dismissed as *ersatz* pulp forced upon an unperceptive mass audience. One view has it that popular culture, because of its capacity for ambiguity, remains to some small extent beyond the grasp of media hegemony, while another sees the project of mental colonisation, achieved through American media and the like, as a totalising and hegemonic one.²⁴

In part, these conflicting ideas about the workings of popular culture derive from contrasting observations about its role in superseding or consolidating existing social groupings. It may, on the one hand, describe the processes through which heterogeneous groups of people, newly in contact with each other, create new identities within the ebb and

flow of urban living, hence transcending existing boundaries of ethnic group, regional/rural orientation, and class, to embrace overarching visions of social belonging.²⁵ This, for example, was the unifying, pan-ethnic flavour of the *marabi* music which flourished in the Johannesburg of the 1920s and 30s, of the Brazilian carnival with its mixture of musical influences from diverse groups, and of Brazilian football culture which provided the blueprint for an idea of modern, national identity.²⁶ A similar working-out of new urban identities, drawing on complex discourses of race and culture, is discussed in Wilson's paper (this volume). In postcolonial Andean Peru, much cultural energy has been spent on forging new hybrid or non-Indian social identities in order to transcend - or re-invent - the colonially-imposed duality which divides 'Indian' from '*mestizo*' (half-caste). Such a transcendence has been achieved in particular through *carnaval*, which in its Andean form celebrates processes of *mestizaje* (hybridisation) by mixing cultural forms.

Alternatively the popular has, at certain moments, been deployed to reinvent or entrench ethnic identities and consolidate conservative values. In Latin American, Indian and African colonial contexts, popular cultural responses have drawn on complex and intersecting discourses of 'culture', 'community' and 'race'. Ruling elites have drawn on these in populist attempts to appeal to the rank and file. At the same time, they have used a rhetoric about race and culture to distinguish themselves from - as well as seeking to appropriate and control - the habits and customs of indigenous and subordinate groups. But the empire, in many cases, has 'struck back' by using the same or similar notions as strategies of defiance. Thus, as Wilson shows (this volume) 'popular culture has been a highly charged field in which people deemed inferior according to the dominant social-racial hierarchy have addressed, reflected on and shaped ethnic/racial identities as well as their political future'. But these identities, originally imposed from above, have not simply been jettisoned. Ironically, in the 'new South Africa', official attempts to transcend the racial and ethnic divisions of apartheid by building democracy on the basis of universalist ideas, incorporating gender equality and the like, have been countered in the popular responses of local communities emphasising primordial notions of 'tradition' in their bid for autonomy.²⁷

Where popular cultural responses appear to endorse existing identities, the situation may be more complex than it appears. The importance of context to an understanding of popular culture is shown in a workshop paper by Kaarsholm - published elsewhere - about the area called Amaoti in KwaZulu-Natal. It demonstrated how different sets of political agendas interact within the same narrow political boundaries and are used to express fundamentally different notions of morality and identity. The popular, here, expressed fundamental oppositions linked to gender and generational domination.²⁸ Also concerned with gender roles in the context of KwaZulu-Natal, Bonnin's paper (this volume) shows how women, through various kinds of popular protests predicated on their position as mothers, challenged the way in which domestic and public spaces - and their accompanying gendered power relations - had been fundamentally altered through violent political conflicts in that province. In this case, the popular cultural response was one which contested existing understandings of social and gender roles. But Bonnin points out that the results of this contestation cannot necessarily be assumed to be far-reaching - evidence from Latin America suggests that a political identity nurtured by the identity of mother is too limited to change subjectivities and power relations in any fundamental way.

Similarly demonstrating the mutable nature of popular cultural response, Hansen's paper (this volume) outlines the changing role of Indian 'community theatre' in Durban. Initially this genre, positioned between the rigidly-defined worlds of black and white, promised to yield satirical insight into broader South African society, and hence to transcend particularistic racial identities. In later versions, however, this theatrical form contributed to the 'ethnic closure' which has occurred among many Indians in post-apartheid South Africa.

Culture industries

The development of modern popular cultures in Africa, Latin America and India has necessarily been influenced by new mass media - radio, films, records, cassettes, television, videos - entering into people's life worlds. There is one approach to popular culture which privileges the role of the media – indeed, some writers consider only materials produced by the mass market, for consumption in an urban context, to be classifiable as 'popular'.²⁹ At the same time, there is a tendency within popular culture studies which dismisses this culture industry as manipulative, indoctrinating and pacifying. This tendency, tracing its roots to the Frankfurt School writings of Adorno and Horkheimer, has been reformulated by Latin American scholars as a vigorous critique of 'cultural imperialism' and of the domination of cultural production by transnational companies.³⁰

But to say that the media are central to the definition of popular culture is not necessarily to claim that audiences have been passively 'created' by its hegemonic images. On the contrary, as Martin-Barbero points out in the case of Latin America, it is not so much that the spread of mass culture within particular countries produced a homogenised mass, but rather that mass culture became possible in the first place - and found an engaged audience - because of parallel processes of market integration and nation-state formation.³¹

The relationship between popular culture and culture industries is, then, a complex one. It has been pointed out that audiences are capable of appropriating commodified forms and integrating these into 'subjectively motivated social practice' and, through the power of popular demand, to have some influence on the nature, and certainly on the interpretation, of the commodities produced and disseminated.³² Also, the fact that access to mass media products and discourses is so unevenly distributed means that their impact can never be uniform or hegemonic.

In the present volume, the 'cultural imperialism' thesis is given convincing counterpoint in several papers. These show that forms of popular culture disseminated by the media, rather than unambiguously underpinning the status quo, may enable people to engage with present difficulties in a creative manner, in part by expressing a yearning for a better, more 'modern' or less parochial life. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, Gunner (this volume) shows that the characters and plots of Zulu radio drama, although obviously stereotyped, have a capacity to speak to people's anxieties and engage with the - mostly domestic - problems of everyday life. Dealing with such problems is an effect, too, of stories and features in popular magazines, discussed here in the context of Kenyan society by Frederiksen (this volume). Nairobi youths reading magazines and spending time in video cafes transcend the dilemmas of domestic existence by embracing images of a more modern and universalist lifestyle while reconciling these with the particularities of the local context. Indeed, these magazines - and their readers - inextricably intertwine two contradictory messages. These are the yearning for the freedom and emancipation of modern American youth culture with its celebration of 'free love', and the more parochial and conservative values of Kenyan patriarchy. The paper thus demonstrates that US American popular cultural images make up a space for the formulation of utopian visions and points to video cafes as important shared spaces for debating, and for democratizing, the 'politics of everyday life'.

Showing a similar tension and integration between imported American and local meanings - and in particular between imported and local views on gender - were workshop papers on hip-hop and rap music. These genres have been embraced with enthusiasm by Indian youngsters in Phoenix outside Durban, where mini-bus taxi-drivers compete for customers by boosting the output levels of their cassette-playing amplifiers into super-human

dimensions, and where female rappers have taken up the challenge of performing in this style with its message of male chauvinism. In the neighbouring African ghetto of Amaoti, Gangsta rapper Tupac Shakur is adulated by young women as well as young men, in spite of the violently sexist imagery that forms part of the message. But providing a more substantial sphere of sanctuary and articulation to young black girls – and opportunities to develop skills of performance which may occasionally even lead out of the ghetto to careers of stardom and record-making - is American-inspired gospel music. Also dealing with rap music and with the tension between imported and local meanings was the workshop paper on Ugandan music by Ssewakiriyanga, published elsewhere. In part through recently-established FM radio stations, Black American popular cultural forms are appropriated, becoming the basis for local rap songs.³³ As in Frederiksen's paper, an imported youth culture here provides the idiom in which intergenerational conflicts are re-formulated.

'Cultural imperialist' influences, however, are not only of US American provenance. In Central, East and Southern Africa, Zaire or Congo rumba or *soukous* has been a massive influence which continues, at times, almost to paralyse local original ideas of modern dance music. The background to the genre is in itself a wonderfully complex story of interaction between Cuba, the USA, Ivorian recording entrepreneurs based in the Antilles and Central Africa.³⁴

Another globally influential genre within popular culture has been Indian film which, in African societies, has been put to different uses and provided with alternative meanings by different audiences - such as those in Northern Nigeria, for example.³⁵ And the genre could be as powerful in its absence as in its presence. In Uganda the world of film and cinemas was completely controlled by Indians: their expulsion by Amin in 1971 removed cinema-going from the list of leisure activities. In the absence of film shows, new genres of drama and musical show performances came into existence - often playing during four-to-five hour long shows on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to ensure that audiences got their money's worth. After the peace and gradual prosperity following the coming to power of Museveni and the NRM in 1986, stars featured in these afternoon shows transformed their performances into soap operas shown on television. These shows again were copied commercially and redistributed as video tapes - altogether illustrating both some of the complexities of media involvement in the circulation of popular culture and the craving for its offerings.

The life worlds of Indian diasporas around the world - one of which is discussed in this volume in Hansen's paper on Indian theatre in Durban - have also been strongly influenced by the world-wide circulation of Indian films. The impact of film (as well of other cultural genres including TV series and programmes) has grown with the advent of access to satellite television, but has also been influenced by this media development in contradictory ways. On the one hand, satellite television opens the door to the globalisation of popular culture. On the other hand, the accessibility across global distances of the authentic products and articulations from home may also help to strengthen ideas of the Indian diaspora as something primordial, unified, and different from what surrounds it. Thus access to global popular cultural media seems to have made some Indians in Durban more cosmopolitan and others more Indian than they already were.³⁶ In this way the political dynamics around and within diaspora-formation have been intensified.

The role of media in the circulation of popular culture points to its nature as an economic system - its relations of production, mechanisms for distribution and patterns of consumption. In order to become popular, products must be priced so as to make them available to the less well-off. Very poor people may, however, be prepared to spend a surprisingly large proportion of their income on popular cultural consumption. In spite of - indeed, because of - its character as entertainment, popular culture provides opportunities for

making money. Coplan points to the prominence in South African townships of the 1920s and 30s of savings associations, *stokfels*, *marabi* dances and similar institutions as contexts within which particular popular cultural forms emerged as income-generating activities.³⁷ This appears very much still to be the case - *mfene* (baboon) dance parties held in Inanda squatter camps in the late 1990s are a direct continuation of *marabi* practices of the 1930s.³⁸ Self-produced cultural activity is faced today, however, with much more powerful competition from commoditised products on CD or cassette.

Popular culture can thus be deeply commercial in nature, yet it would be a misunderstanding to regard this as signalling 'prostitution' and 'inauthenticity'. Commercialisation need not indicate a loss of control over culture. On the contrary, successful marketing of a cultural product may bring into reach resources and technologies for refining and sophisticating it, thus improving quality and competitiveness and broadening its potential impact. One may look, for example, at the success in mastering the economies of producing and marketing popular culture experienced by 'the more than 100 fully viable commercial theatre companies' in Nigeria. These, by 1982 were 'now touring the Yoruba-speaking areas... The halls where they perform are almost always packed'.³⁹ One may look at a musician like Youssou N'Dour in Senegal who has successfully taken on international recording moguls and local cassette pirates as well as the Dakar night club scene. One may also look at the Zimbabwe case of local star Mukadota (Zafirio Madzikatire) who has managed to combine profitably and entertainingly his success as a national TV series comedian with that of running a travelling stage show of African music hall.

In this sense, popular culture may be identified as the culture of the poor, not only in offering self-entertainment within an accessible public sphere, but also as providing the potential for self-initiated growth and economic empowerment (if not always necessarily on a grandiose scale). But popular cultural creations and responses go beyond this. Seen in the context of local and global relationships of power, they incorporate multiple - often apparently contradictory - perspectives and interpretations, as will be demonstrated below.

Popular culture, resistance and power

There has been a tendency, in some writings on popular culture, to present things in dichotomous terms. On the one hand popular culture appears as a valiant expression of resistance against domination by the oppressed masses, while on the other it has been seen as an instrument of hegemonic control by local elites or American capitalism. If, as is being suggested here, ideas and practices concerning democracy are often played out in the popular cultural realm, then the 'resistance' role might seem to be quintessentially democratic while the 'hegemonic' role appears as its opposite - and any attempt to link popular culture with democracy by latching onto the first could be quickly countered by citing examples of the second. A way out of this impasse is suggested by Hall's statement that popular culture is neither pure resistance nor pure domination but rather 'the ground on which the transformations are worked', but we are warned against complacently misinterpreting this as meaning that 'the answer lies somewhere in between' the two positions.⁴⁰ How then are these apparently contradictory aspects of popular culture to be understood? Exploring the underpinnings of this dichotomy - or rather, pointing out why it should be reconceptualised - requires a critical examination of the 'hidden resistance' strain of studies on popular culture touched upon earlier, through an examination of tradition and folklore.

In opposition to the view, outlined above, which privileges mass culture, there are writers who consider that popular culture includes rural forms, and forms which are both 'produced and consumed by the people', in some cases without media intervention.⁴¹ In

Africa, Barber points out, 'the electronic media exist as vulnerable islands washed over by a much bigger sea of live popular genres produced by small-scale localized artisanal methods' which are disseminated face-to-face.⁴² Custom-oriented, rurally-based genres have been included as part of the popular in other southern contexts as well. While scholars of Africa, engaging with the lively debate on the meaning and role of 'tradition', have taken a cue from their informants and called such forms of performance and activity 'traditional', the equivalent category of phenomena, in the Latin American and Indian contexts, tends to be thought of rather as 'folklore'. What the terms 'tradition' and 'folklore' have in common, when used by both participants and academic analysts, is their imparting of greater weight and legitimacy to areas of cultural expression and experience than is suggested by the somewhat more transient new-fangledness of the 'popular'. Having a legitimising function in this way, both terms have become highly politicised. (In India the term 'subaltern' has been similarly politicised. Originally used to denote subordinate groups, the term has more recently been used to grasp the ambiguity of forms of expression defined both by their situation within hegemonic power relations and by their defiance of such hegemony.)

Folklore, in Latin America, has been manipulated by ruling elites: but its manipulation has also been contested – sometimes leading to the dismissal of the entire field as lacking in authenticity. In a study of popular culture in Mexico, Canclini sees folklore as comprising arts and crafts which have been appropriated by museums and hence have undergone a process of resignification. This has rid them of any real symbolic significance for 'the people' – their sole value is in the context of capitalist interests.⁴³ Only by a process of organisation into co-ops and unions, Canclini claims, would the popular sector be able to reclaim folklore as its own and thus reappropriate the meanings of its products. Folklore was also manipulated in societies like Argentina and Brazil, where it became part of the legitimisation of 1940s and 1950s populism through which leaders attempted to keep an ear to the ground and shape policy in accord with perceived responses from 'the people'. Countering the dismissal of such manipulative practices, however, folklore has been seen as a repository of true worth. It appears as a domain in which the collective memory of the people - threatened by the homogenising power of television's soap operas and 'telenovelas' - can survive and provide the symbols for a communal consciousness which resists domination.⁴⁴

In India, there were similarly populist appropriations of folklore and crafts by nationalist governments after Independence in 1947. These represent attempts to position local popular-cultural products and expressions securely within the image of India as a unified nation, into which various cultures were being successfully integrated. Tourism boards and outlets for crafts became agents for both the commercialisation of local cultures and for their national integration. Similar processes were active in nationalist dealings with 'higher' forms of culture such as classical music where 'traditions' were redefined in accordance with an overall national paradigm.⁴⁵

In Africa, 'tradition' - rather than 'folklore' - is the characterisation most frequently used to validate practices and forms of expression. Before considering the implications of this for expressions of resistance, however, it should be pointed out that there are complex sets of relationships between the 'popular' and 'traditional'. In the case of Nigerian juju music, for example, performers use 'traditional' motifs in order to make the music more distinctly 'popular'. In contrast, in the case of the South African migrant genre *kiba*, women borrow from popular forms such as radio serials in order to enhance the weightiness and significance of their 'traditional' music, thus ensuring that it retains the attention of its rurally-committed and somewhat conservative audience. This, rather than being a case of syncretism or genre-boundary blurring, shows how boundaries between the 'traditional' and the 'popular' can be intensified by sustained traffic across them.⁴⁶

A number of writings on southern Africa emphasise the previously neglected experiences of common people and thereby explore the potential of apparently 'traditional' forms of cultural expression - albeit in hidden ways - to resist exploitation and control.⁴⁷ It has been easy, in popular cultural genres and practices of this type, to detect resistance-oriented or heroic themes – in part because they are most often produced by members of one definable social grouping in their struggles against those of another.

Other works, however, have foregrounded forms of expression arising out of uneasy alliances between social strata, and have been more circumspect about the capacity of these forms to enable resistance against domination (if, indeed, they believe this to be possible at all). In part, this is because of such authors' awareness of communities' internal differentiation. A popular form in 1930s Durban which featured choir arrangements of Zulu folk tunes, for example, emerged in the context of links forged between a westernising African elite insecure about its own position and an underclass of migrants and unemployed. This style, *Isizulu*, expressed the emergence of a fragile opposition against the forces of white racism. But it was perhaps only marginally stronger than internal antagonisms which threatened to tear this uneasy alliance asunder.⁴⁸ The deploying of "traditional" musical styles and symbols, here, was a conscious strategy aimed at muting the intensity of these internal antagonisms. Popular culture was in this case being created not by a class with a uniform and clear-cut identity, nor even by an emergent class in the process of forging itself out of diverse constituents. Rather, it was a form of expression by people within a loose and heterogeneous conglomeration which might, without it, have crumbled into its discrete components. In such a context, the conscious use of 'tradition' represents an attempt to authenticate the presence, or inordinate influence, of people from one kind of background in an alliance in which many other kinds of groupings are incorporated. It is also a manifestation of the creative efforts of cultural brokers, often people occupying a liminal status between more easily-recognised social categories who have been crucial in the configuration of popular culture.⁴⁹

In those cases where the culture, rather than articulating the existence of groupings, is the means through which segments of society not really united by other interests can find some common ground, the resistance theme becomes muted and ambiguous. Indeed, if the popular cultural domain is one which facilitates interaction between different classes or groupings, the identification of a common 'oppressor' against whom resistance should be mounted will be difficult. A heroic or resistance-oriented understanding of the link between popular culture and democracy is thus flawed because it posits a monolithic 'people'.

The ambiguities of popular cultural expression, then, should be understood not as the 'either/or' polarities of a dichotomy. Rather, they should be seen as inherent in, and expressive of, the unstable alliances of social groupings which produce 'popular consciousness'. A discussion of this concept by Glassman, set in the context of plebeian/elite interactions on the 19th century Swahili coast of Africa, explains why ambiguity is an inextricable part of the popular.⁵⁰ The literature on resistance in Africa, he suggests, has been too much concerned with identifying bounded classes operating in terms of their own clear interests, and too little concerned to recognize the intricate dependencies which transcend these boundaries and bind unequals together. Beliefs are not formed within one class or another, but rather are 'forged within the crucible of social interaction' between them. Popular consciousness, being formed interactively in this way, consists of different - even irreconcilable - fragments of thought. When actions are undertaken or events interpreted, the result - as Gramsci pointed out - is 'contradictory' because in popular consciousness this variety of disparate thoughts is deployed to combine ideas of resistance with ideas of dependency.⁵¹ Meanings will not necessarily adhere to or derive from members of one or the other social class, but will reflect the interactions between these.

There is another problem with the heroic position. If we move away from tradition and refer once again a media-oriented definition of popular culture, we can see that much of it appears not to be about oppression and social ills at all. It is more often about love and heartache - girl meets boy, gets attracted, sings about it, they fall out, she laments the fact, and so on. Although this may be a product of the spread of Western mass culture, it has become firmly established in local African contexts.⁵² The theme is also omnipresent in Latin America, and romance and melodrama are similarly central to the massive popularity of modern popular Hindi films.⁵³ If the representations and narratives of popular culture are preoccupied with romantic themes, it seems unlikely that they will express antipathy to the status quo. Rather, they appear to endorse existing hierarchies in the relationships between men and women, both those of courtship, and those in the marriages and households which ensue. But, as Frederiksen (this volume) demonstrates, the engagement with such apparently banal and conservative popular cultural themes may also involve the formulation of utopian visions which transcend people's entrapment in deprivation. Such visions are important elements in the politics of emancipating everyday life.

We should therefore not only be careful to avoid assuming that the people are united (and divided from their opponents) by a single purpose. We should also beware of distinguishing too rigidly between 'cheap thrills' and serious political engagement in popular cultural activity. Instead we should try to grasp the popular as a field within which the 'political' and the 'everyday' are mediated. One way to understand this is to recognise that a single event or utterance can have several meanings simultaneously.⁵⁴ A text, perhaps intended to facilitate compliance, can be 'subverted and appropriated' by those on the margins.⁵⁵ Conversely, an expression of popular feeling can be commandeered and reinterpreted by local elites. Exemplifying the contested nature of meanings attributed to, and embodied by, popular cultural events, is Wilson's paper on the town of Tarma in Peru (this volume). In the Tarma *carnaval*, songs which express a desire to transcend the barriers of race and class are also ambivalently implicated in maintaining such boundaries. Intellectuals, attempting to give their town a distinctive cultural profile, attempt to co-opt colourful *carnaval* practices but try to sanctify them by controlling the violence which often ensues in the wake of festivities.

Cultural forms originally endorsing the old order may also be transformed to embrace new meanings, as happened among the Andean people of Ayacucho in Peru discussed by Gamara (this volume). After Catholicism had proved incapable of offering them succour in the wake of the violent displacements caused by the Maoist Shining Path movement, they embraced the hopeful messages of the new religious movements brought to their villages by preachers called *hermanos* (brothers). Religion, here, was reappropriated and reshaped to fit a contemporary set of post-violence social identities which are wider in their scope than those existing before the era of violent displacement began.

Even if, as in *carnaval*, the different groupings involved in popular cultural events appear to have diverging interests, their respective interpretations influence each other. Thus, for example, a Mexican pot in a museum is not only a symbol of cultural appropriation, but retains a residual meaning relating to its original maker and function, and could in turn become the basis for a future cultural revival.⁵⁶ And a love song broadcast on the radio can express the longing of a woman for her man while at the same time also recasting romantic love as something which provides nurture and sustenance for a whole community experiencing poverty and rapid change.⁵⁷ Or it may be interpreted as an image of possible freedom - what Frederiksen (this volume) refers to as the potential 'democratisation of everyday life.'

Popular culture, civil society and the structuring of public spheres

If, then, the desire for political representation, or for freedom - or the will to shore up the status quo – has often been expressed in indirect ways, it is sometimes through the forms labeled ‘popular culture’ that this has occurred. We have shown above how contributions towards a ‘democratic political culture’, in various southern contexts, have been constructed in this way. But the discussion has, till now, been focused on specific forms, styles and genres. Thus far, little attention has been given to the idea of popular culture as encompassing all those practices and discourses which embody a ‘whole way of life’⁵⁸ or to a definition such as Rowe and Schelling’s, of popular culture as ‘a site or, more accurately, a series of dispersed sites where popular subjects, as distinct from members of ruling groups, are formed’⁵⁹. Several papers at the workshops illuminated this broader perspective. Some did so by making use of Habermas’ concepts of the public and private spheres, elucidating in the process some of the ways in which civil society interacts with the state. We return here, once again, to debates on political culture and democracy, showing how these have played out in various southern contexts, and how they relate to the papers in this volume.

As intimated earlier, there has been a renaissance of ideas about ‘political culture’ in discussions about the prospects for democracy in the Third World. Formerly, the concept tended to imply homogeneity in nations or continents, portraying them as entities without internal contradictions and differences. Diamond argues for a desegregation of political culture – not simply because ‘different ethnic and regional groups within a single country often have different value systems and world-views’, but also because ‘distinctive types of beliefs and norms may prevail in different institutional settings [D]ifferences in basic cultural biases are often greater within nations than between them’. He thus suggests that we replace the idea of a ‘political culture’ with that of ‘political subcultures’.⁶⁰

We have heard that the ambiguities of popular culture may express alliances between different sectors of society, and may conceal specific and divergent interests. Political culture, likewise, is a homogenizing concept which suppresses difference. But Diamond is encouraging us to expose rather than conceal such difference. As well as examining the interaction between state and society, then, his remarks suggest that we need to address different social contexts and levels of space (domestic and public, urban and rural, national and local) and to examine political interaction and culture at these different levels. Rather than focusing on the abstract value systems, world-views, beliefs and norms implicit in political culture, an examination of political *cultures* - and of associated democratic practices - entails looking at the institutions, genres and discourses through which these are given expression. It also necessitates an examination of the structural relationships, and interrelational dynamics, between such institutions, genres and discourses.

Political culture is thus not something essential and shared by a unified group of members. To find an acceptable alternative way of examining this concept, we are pointed towards an examination of public culture, the constitution and modes of functioning of the public sphere, and the ways in which civil society may relate to and interact with the state. Within this frame of reference, the consolidation of democracy depends on the functioning of - and systems of control within - public culture. It also depends on the strength of civil society in providing safeguards for citizens against invasions and encroachments by the state, and the extent of freedom or domination in interactions between civil society and the state.

The notion of ‘public culture’, as presented for example by Appadurai and Breckenridge in their writings on India, is a descriptive notion referring to ‘a *zone* of cultural debate’, or ‘of contestation and mutual cannibalization ... in which national mass, and folk culture provide both mill and grist for each other’.⁶¹ By contrast, the concept of ‘civil

society' as developed most influentially by Habermas is a normative idea against which different types of 'actual' settings can be measured. But this concept, like that of political culture, has been subjected to critical scrutiny. In particular, the notion of civil society as developed by scholars in the West has been seen as eurocentric and inadequate. It is said not to be an adequate characterisation of the way in which politics and public cultures have developed in Third World and post-colonial societies.⁶²

While there can be little doubt from Habermas' writing that his perspective is indeed eurocentric, this does not necessarily mean that his working out of civil society as a normative and critical concept is irrelevant in non-European contexts. In later writings than *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas makes it clear that the civil society he presents as having emerged within early bourgeois societies of the 18th century is to be understood rather as a utopian ideal than a representation of typical realities. He also shows that, as an idea of a democratic public culture, it becomes increasingly undermined in later phases of capitalist development, in Europe as well as globally. He concedes that the public sphere is not necessarily a unified one, suggesting that a society may have different public spheres in which the aspirations of different groups are articulated and debated. The relationship between these different public spheres is a hegemonic one, in which foundations of power and resources determine the range and impact of different types of articulations.

All this, however, does not necessarily negate the idea of civil society as independent and protected from the influence of the state, and of the public as an open, unrestricted and all-comprising ideal. On the contrary, locally-rooted notions of civil society and a public sphere as critical ideals may, in themselves, inspire practical actions which are important contributions to the building of a democratic political culture.

Using Habermas' ideas, Breckenridge's paper (this volume) attempts to address questions about the relationship between the public sphere, democracy and the private self in southern Africa. Developing alongside an emerging public sphere, mine workers' letter writing on the Witwatersrand in the 1920s and 30s appeared as a popular cultural contribution to the creation of a working-class private sphere. This sphere, facilitating the expression of an ethic which was both individual but at the same time collaborative and communal, enabled the defence of an autonomous and private life world. It may also, the author tentatively suggests, have contributed to the production of individuals able to articulate their rights and expectations of the state, by allowing for the development of new forms and structures of communication.

In the context of political developments in India, but equally applicable to other southern contexts, Chatterjee has argued recently that 'civil society' is an inadequate term since

most of the inhabitants of India are only tenuously, and even then ambiguously and contextually, rights-bearing citizens in the sense imagined by the constitution. They are not, therefore, proper members of civil society.⁶³

This has to do with the fact that 'the nation' and 'democracy' have been imposed on Indian society in ways which can be argued to have been as autocratic as earlier colonial interventions. There has been an enforced imposition of alienated modernisation which has led to responses of 'communalism' and of xenophobic Hindu nationalism. Popular cultural activities have been important here. When in 1993 a mosque was stormed in Ayodhya, which is claimed to be at the site of Rama's birth, the mobilisation was helped by the recent showing on Indian television of an elaborate version in weekly instalments of the *Mahabharata* epic and led, in turn, to the creation of numerous other popular cultural products.⁶⁴

‘Civil society’ is thus restricted, in India, to a limited number of citizens within a privileged elite. In its place, Chatterjee proposes the concept of ‘political society’: a term designating the democratic aspirations of popular groups in India to link up and gain influence with institutions of power. He points to internal dynamics within these forms of organisation as the more real site of democratic struggles:

The encounter with the constitutional state and the normative requirements of civil society has engendered a certain demand for representativeness within the various communities that are the social forms of populations in India. This is the most tangible effect of democratization in that country. Even as population groups engage with and resist the agencies of the state, they give rise to an internal process in which community leaders are criticized, new voices are heard, other examples of other communities are cited, and the demand raised for greater representativeness within the community.⁶⁵

A useful way to interpret this might be to see civil society and the public sphere as existing in the plural. Through and within a variety of arenas, people engage not only with different levels of the state but also with other hierarchies of power like those of gender and generation. These diverse aspects of the public sphere and of civil society are sites in which engagement with or resistance to ‘agencies of the state’ may occur more directly, while the popular cultural forms of expression discussed earlier seem to lend themselves to a engagements of a more muted and indirect character. But in both arenas, and in the complex dovetailing between them, we can find evidence of the emergence and strengthening of democratic resources.

In India, as Ghosh’s paper shows (this volume), the contesting of public domains since the end of the 19th century created a space between the state and society, in which public opinion, rather than being ‘based on free and equal participation conditioned by access to information ...’, found articulation under the colonial regime as performances and symbolic enactments’. And even in post-colonial India, such rituals as the formerly elite Durga *puja*, creatively usurped by Calcutta commoners and recast as a secular, cosmopolitan festival, have been popular cultural sites where public meanings of citizenship and identity are expressed and contested.

A rather different search for public arenas in which citizens-in-the-making may engage with the agencies of the state is described in Seleti’s paper (this volume). Offering more direct challenges to officialdom, but nevertheless relying on informal narrative forms such as nicknaming, the public in postcolonial Mozambique posed challenges to this ex-colony’s corrupt police force. Their criticisms were uttered and articulated, with increasing force, within a nascent public sphere: a sphere whose formation was vastly aided through efforts made by journalists and the press.

Other papers, although not explicitly addressing debates about the public sphere and civil society, showed that physical spaces and locations may be of key importance in enabling - or frustrating - changing roles for the public. Discussing a period of violent conflict in Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Bonnin’s paper (this volume) gives an account of how public and private spaces, reconstituted along with gender roles in the wake of conflict, led to a situation in which women began to hold more sway in the area. Through a variety of informal, popular cultural means, their civic and political influence was thus expanded, albeit perhaps only temporarily. In somewhat similar vein, all three papers on Latin America illustrate the key importance of the central village space or *plaza* in which carnival normally takes place. In the case of Tarma, Peru, it provided a venue for ongoing disputations about the changing nature of the colonially-imposed, but now transforming, ‘Indian’/*mestizo* racial

divide (Wilson, this volume). In that of Ayacucho, Peru, refugees displaced in the wake of Shining Path's devastation regrouped to form a new space for celebrations in which the practices dictated by their evangelical faith could interact with revived Andean cultural festivities (Gamara, this volume). And, in a darker mood, Gonzalez describes how a religious festival to commemorate the patron saints of the Guatemalan village of San Bartolo was taken over, and militarized, by the men who had 'brought the danger to the village' and undertaken repeated acts of violence against its citizens. Here the *plaza*, far from being a site for the enunciation of public sentiment, became an arena in which the military flaunted its successes and gloated at its enemies.

These examples from Latin America, like the ones from southern Africa, demonstrate that the end of political conflict and the achieving of formal democracy do not necessarily ensure a healthy 'democratic culture' or guarantee a well-established public sphere. The role of popular culture may, indeed, become more important than ever in such situations, as was shown at the Tongaat workshop in the case of Zimbabwe. Here, during the 1980s 'period of silence' when political opposition was suppressed and anything of a remotely political nature in civil society was clamped down upon or co-opted by the ruling ZANU-PF party, discussion theatre in Bulawayo became a site where debate, satire and challenges to propaganda were possible.⁶⁶ That a similarly potent and critical popular culture persists in Zimbabwe today was shown by dramatist Andrew Whaley, who introduced his recent play *Citizen Chi* which satirizes political figures in that country, and by formidable poet, ex-guerrilla, and commercial farmer Freedom Nyamubaya, who talked about popular culture as 'a vehicle for participation' which may help 'to rid those who manage to live - but not to change much - of the culture of fear.'

Popular culture, as in these cases, may be consciously used in satirical initiatives. It can become part of a deliberate strategy for reconciliation, as in the work of Chris Hurst and Stanley Blose whose Tongaat paper described their collaboration with local groups and activists in Bhambayi, in Inanda outside Durban, to launch a peace 'celebration' and to produce a participatory video presentation of the history of violence in the area. It can provide an arena for the debate of moral issues and self-understandings, as Gunner's paper on Zulu radio drama shows (this volume), and thereby offer a model for the resolving of issues which, rather than being coercive or directly confrontational, depends on words and the development of shared understanding. It defends existing gains, and provides 'sanctuaries' for articulation and debate which are protected against invasion and violation by the local or central state or other hostile powers. In this sense popular culture can be understood as offering a scene for the articulation of 'hidden transcripts' of resistance. But it can also be seen as contributing to public spheres-in-the-making and to a world of civic culture which may initially be transitory and evasive, but which represents an image of a civil society rooted in local needs and interactions. It is from this perspective that the present volume attempts to represent popular culture in the South as being of crucial importance to the development of consolidated forms of democracy. In different ways, and within different contexts and situations, the papers published here attempt to come to terms with the complexities and dynamics of this relationship.

Footnotes

¹ But see Ran Greenstein's recent book ***

² J.S. Coleman, 'Modernization: Political Aspects' in D. L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1968), p.398.

³ See S.P.Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), p. 3.

⁴ See, for example, C. Kukathas and P. Pettit, *Rawls: A Theory of Justice and its Critics* (Oxford, 1990).

⁵ See, for example, R. Sandbrook, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation* (Cambridge, 1987) and J.F. Bayart, *The State in Africa: the politics of the belly* (Harlow, 1993).

⁶ M. Karlstrom, 'Imagining democracy: Political culture and democratisation in Buganda' *Africa* 66, 4 (1996), p.499; see also P. Tidemand, 'The resistance councils in Uganda: A study of rural politics and popular democracy in Africa', PhD thesis, Roskilde University, 1995.

⁷ Apparently a particular ruthless variety of elite competition between the Eritrean ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front) and their cousins and trainees in the ruling Ethiopian TLF (Tigrean Liberation Front).

⁸ M. Mamdani 'Pluralism and the right of association' in M. Mamdani and J. Oloka-Onyongo (eds) *Uganda: Studies in living conditions, popular movements and constitutionalism*, Vienna: Journal fuer Entwicklungspolitik (1994); M. Mamdani and E. Wamba-dia-Wamba 1995 *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy* (Dakar, 1995); M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (Princeton, 1996); S.S. Kayunga, 'No-Party Democracy, Ethnicity and Associational Life in Uganda', PhD thesis, Roskilde University, forthcoming. Wamba-dia-Wamba, who moved from being chairman of Dakar-based CODESRIA (the Council for Social Research in Africa) to become the spokesperson for the initial organisation of Eastern Congo rebels, for a while appeared almost as an impersonation of the practical urgency of such debates.

⁹ See C.I. Degregori, 'How difficult it is to be God: Ideology and political violence in Sendero Luminoso' *Critique of Anthropology* 11,3 (1991); R. Wilson, 'Violent Truths: The politics of memory in Guatemala' in *Accord: Negotiating Rights: The Guatemalan peace process* (London, 1997).

¹⁰ See, for example, Thomas Blom Hansen, 'The Saffron Wave: Democratic revolution and the growth of Hindu nationalism in India', PhD thesis, Roskilde University 1987, pp. 348-454.

¹¹ J. Kelly, 'Democracy Redux: how real is democracy in Latin America?' *Latin American Research Review* 33,1 (1998), p.213; L.Diamond, J. L. Linz and S. M. Lipset (eds.) *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing experiences* (Boulder, 1995).

¹² M. Bratton, 1998, 'Towards a democratic culture in Africa', (unpublished paper, Stockholm, 1998), p.1.

¹³ *Ibid.*; Kelly, 'Democracy Redux', p.214.

¹⁴ Bratton, 'Towards', pp. 2-4.

¹⁵ W. Rowe and V. Schelling 1991 *Memory and modernity: popular culture in Latin America*, (London,1991), p.12.

¹⁶ It is because of its status in-between these other more easily recognisable forms that popular culture has been so often ignored by scholars in favour of either 'high' or 'traditional' culture. See K.Barber, 'Popular Arts in Africa' *African Studies Review*, 30,3 (1987) pp.1-78; 'Introduction' in K Barber (ed), *Readings in African Popular Culture*, (Oxford, 1997), p.1.

¹⁷ P. Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 6.

¹⁸ P. Kaarsholm, 'Inventions, imaginings, codifications: Authorising versions of Ndebele cultural tradition', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23, 2 (1997).

¹⁹ T.Couzens, 19**[reference missing in bibliography]

²⁰ Martin, *Leisure and Society*, pp.140-2.

- ²¹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* *****
- ²² L. Vail and L White, *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African voices in history*, (London, 1991).
- ²³ M. Gonzalez, *The war in San Bartolo Jocotenango, El Quiche*, (Guatemala City, forthcoming).
- ²⁴ C.Tatum, 'From Sandino to Mafalda: recent works on Latin American popular culture' *Latin American Research Review* 29,1 (1994), pp.198-214.
- ²⁵ Barber, 'Popular Arts, p.*.
- ²⁶ D. Coplan, *In Township Tonight! South Africa's black city music and theatre*, (Harlow, 1985), p.**; C.Ballantine, *Marabi nights: **** (Johannesburg, 19**); Rowe and Schelling, *Memory*, pp.128-140.
- ²⁷ See Deborah James "'Equity, Hierarchy: 'Popular' or 'Traditional' Culture?" (unpublished paper, Durban, 1998).
- ²⁸ Preben Kaarsholm, 'Gangsta Rap y Pruebas de Virginidad: Cultura Popular en Sudáfrica del Post-Apartheid/Gangsta Rap and Virginité Testing: Popular Culture in Post-Apartheid South Africa' in F. Wilson (ed) *Violencia y Espacio Social: Estudios sobre Conflicto y Reconciliación* (Lima, 1999), pp.89-117.
- ²⁹ This is the definition employed, for example, by the journal *Studies on Latin American Popular Culture*, and by Peter Manuel in his book *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World* (Oxford, 1988).
- ³⁰ See, for example, A.Mattelart, *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture: The ideological apparatuses of imperialism* (Sussex, 1979); *Transnationals and the Third World: The Struggle for Culture* (South Hadley, Mass., 1983).
- ³¹ J Martín-Barbero, *De los Medios a las mediaciones/From media to mediation*, (Barcelona, 1987), cited in Rowe and Schelling, *Memory and modernity*, p.98.
- ³² R. Middleton, *Studying popular music*, (Milton Keynes, 1990), p.139.
- ³³ Richard Ssewakiryanga, '“New kids on the block”: African-American Music and Uganda Youth', *CODESRIA Bulletin*, 1-2 (1999), pp. 24-28. A similar analysis of Ugandan popular cultural songs as moral debate is provided by Josephine Ahikire in her paper 'Of Conformity, Criminality and Contestation: Popular Culture and Gender Identities in Kampala City, Uganda', forthcoming in Tapati Guha-Thakurta (ed.) *Enreca Occasional Paper* no. 6, CSSS, Calcutta 2000. For Durban see V. Narayanan 'Identities in motion: music and taxi culture among working-class Indian youths in Phoenix, Durban' (unpublished paper, Durban, 1998); Kaarsholm, 'Gangsta rap'.
- ³⁴ P.Martin, *Leisure and Society*, p.143; see also S. Bemba, *50 ans de musique de Congo-Zaire*, (Paris, 1984).
- ³⁵ B. Larkin, 'Indian films and Nigerian lovers: Media and the creation of parallel modernities' *Africa* 67, 3 (1997), pp.406-40.
- ³⁶ See B.Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban 1910-1990* (London, 1995), p. 87-88.
- ³⁷ Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*
- ³⁸ Kaarsholm, 'Gangsta rap'.
- ³⁹ Barber 'Introduction', p.92.
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- ⁴¹ Rowe and Schelling, *Memory*, p. 98, Barber, 'Popular arts', p.***.
- ⁴² Barber, 'Introduction', p.4.
- ⁴³ N.G.Canclini, *Transforming Modernity: popular culture in Mexico*, (Austin, 1993), cited in Tatum, 'From Sandino', p.202.

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⁵⁶ Tatum, 'From Sandino', p.201-2.

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⁵⁸ Paul la Hausse 'The Struggle for the City. Alcohol, the Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936' in Paul Maylam and Iain Edwards (eds) *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth Century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg, 1996); see also other papers in the same collection; I. Edwards ***

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