

categories is taken into account, thus allowing for subject matter that may appear to fall in another discipline, to also be considered part of the field of politics.

The research theme is situated within the field of Political Science, and also has relevance to the field of International Relations. The theme is relevant to Political Science as it looks at the development of political discourses and suggests that such discourses have to be critically examined to determine how they are formed and what function they fulfil. The theme also has relevance to the field of international Relations as the examination of Western political discourses on Africa is concerned with the relations between the West and Africa and how these relations are reflected as well as shaped by the discourses the West produces of Africa. The research theme also has relevance to the field of South African politics in particular, as South Africa has been integrally involved in discussions regarding the African Renaissance.

The research undertaken here is significant as it assesses the African Renaissance in an original way. It indicates how important it is that the African Renaissance involve an examination and challenge of Western discourses, as these discourses are intricately involved in the power relations which the African Renaissance seeks to change. The study is also significant in that it draws attention to the role of discourse in maintaining current power relations between the West and Africa.

## **1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The dissertation examines the question: 'What is the African Renaissance's response to dominant Western political discourses on Africa?' Three secondary questions are asked: 'Does the African Renaissance challenge Western discourses?'; 'Has the African Renaissance the potential to provide a critical challenge to Western discourses?'; and 'How can the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses be improved?' These questions are grounded in the proposition that Africa will not be able to assume a more prominent role in global affairs and to shape its own destiny, if Africans have little control over the generation of knowledge about their continent. The rebirth and revival of Africa is unlikely while discourses regarding what Africa is, what it is capable of, and what its future holds, are produced by the West rather than by Africa itself. The African Renaissance will be no more than an empty buzz-word if it does not challenge Western discourses

regarding Africa and provide alternative discourses. Before an African response can be put forward, Western discourses about Africa need to be critically examined.

The research problem is demarcated with reference to two key concepts: discourse and the African Renaissance. Discourse is a debated term which is used in different ways and with different connotations. Before examining Western discourses of Africa, it is thus essential to clarify what discourse means. This is done by first rooting the concept in the broader framework of postmodernist critical theory. The conceptualisation of discourse by postmodernist critical theorists is then discussed. The concept of an African Renaissance must also be carefully studied, as it too has been assigned a variety of meanings. The origins, predecessors and current articulation of the African Renaissance must be examined in order to get a clear idea of what the African Renaissance is taken to mean today. Once the concepts of discourse and the African Renaissance have been adequately examined, it is possible consider discourses regarding Africa and the response provided by the African Renaissance.

While the main focus of the research is Africa, its scope is broader. Ideas of an African Renaissance have been articulated not only by those on the African continent, but also by people in other parts of the world (especially the United States of America) who identify themselves as being African or African-American. Movements based upon Pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness, African Revival and related ideas have provided a foundation for the current articulation of an African Renaissance. The dissertation's scope is not only relevant to Africa, but also to the West and to groups who feel that discourses regarding themselves but articulated by outsiders, have a detrimental effect on their current position and future.

In order to ensure that the scope remains manageable, only certain forms of discourse will be discussed. Obviously discourse may be articulated by means of different modes and media, but in order to limit the scope of discourse in this dissertation, discourses articulated in written form in academic and journalistic sources form the focus of the discussion.

The time-frame of the research regarding both the Western production of discourses regarding Africa, and the articulation of the idea of an African Renaissance is potentially very broad. Western discourses regarding Africa stretch back centuries and the ideas

embraced by the African Renaissance have been expressed by other African schools of thought from the early colonial era onwards. However, the focus of this study will be upon current Western discourses regarding Africa and the current articulation of the African Renaissance. More specifically, the focus will be upon discourses produced during the years 1990 to 2001. When examining the African Renaissance, the focus will be on the period 1994 to the present, as the concept only became popular during the years following South Africa's first democratic elections. Because of the prominence of South African government officials and South African academics in the formulation of the African Renaissance, considerable attention is given to the role of South Africans in the conceptualisation of the Renaissance.

### 1.3 LITERATURE SURVEY

The subsequent research is based on a diversity of literature. While there are no studies looking particularly at the African Renaissance and its ability to confront Western discourses regarding Africa, there is a variety of literature which have some relevance to the theme.

The theoretical foundation of the research is based on literature regarding discourse and the relationship between discourse and politics, with a focus on the relationship between discourse and politics in Africa. This survey of discourse and its functions is rooted in critical theory, especially postmodernist critical theory. Sources introducing critical theory, postmodernism and postmodernist critical theory and situating postmodernist critical theory within political theory include Agger (1991,1992), Geuss (1998), Ermarth (1998), West (1993), Linklater (1996), Leonard (1990), Poster (1989), Fairlamb (1994), Gibbins & Reimer (1999), Smith (1997). Sources exploring the general meanings and uses of the concept discourse include Jaworski & Coupland (1999) and Van Dijk (1997). Sources specifically examining postmodernist and critical conceptions of discourse include McHoul & Grace (1993), Lemert & Gillan (1982), Macdonnel (1986), Foucault (1972) and Leroke (1996). Sources relating discourse and politics include Fairclough (1989), Rothgeb (1993), Clegg (1989), Rouse (1987), Ball (1987, 1988), Foucault (1972, 1980), Singh (1987), Young (1995) and De Kock (2000). Sources looking at discourse in the context of the academic and journalistic domains include Parenti (1993), Agger (1991), Neuman *et al.* (1992), Rajab (1995), Awa (1986), and Somerville (1995). After analysing what discourse is, an examination of how power and knowledge are related through discourse

is needed. The following sources provide insight into this subject: Lemert & Gillan (1982), Foucault (1980), Clegg (1989), Painter (1995) and McHoul & Grace (1993). Subsequent to this, what is meant by 'dominant' is based on the following sources: Leroke (1996), Young, R. (1995), Foucault (1980), Derrida (1994), De Kock (2000), Leysens (2000) and Dubiel (1985).

The historical background to this research as well as the definition of the concepts 'Africa' and the 'West' requires an examination of the meaning of the terms 'Africa' and the 'West' as well as the history of relations between Africa and the West. Relevant sources here include Safire (1993), Scruton (1996), Sullivan (1970), Harris (1998), Mudimbe (1988), Nederveen Pieterse (1992), Akinrinade & Falola (1986), Bennet (1975), Davidson (1994), Thomson (2000), Young, C. (1995), Cheru (1996) and Callaghy (1995). Sources on the subsequent discussion of the decolonisation of African minds include Sogolo (1995), Ngugi (1986), Nederveen Pieterse & Parekh (1995), Louw (1995), Hattingh (1995), Young, R. (1995), Said (1978) and Mudimbe (1988). Their use allows the argument that the African Renaissance should challenge Western discourses, to be presented.

Conceiving the Western academic and journalistic discourses on Africa as such, these discourses are examined under two broad themes: discourses on the African situation, and discourses on ways to improve the African situation. Although the main focus of this dissertation is upon academic and journalistic sources of discourse, Western discourses are also reflected in many popular sources presented using a variety of media. The Western academic discourses come from a variety of sources including: Baker (2000), Simon (1995), May (2000), Michaels (1993), Van de Walle (1995, 1996), Dowden (1993), Oliver & Atmore (1994), Pfaff (1995), Rotberg (2000), Diamond (1999), Clark (1993), Jaycox (1992) and Spence (1997). The Western journalistic sources come from a variety of Western newspapers and magazines including: Dellios (1998) and Salopek (2000) in *The Chicago Tribune*, Robert (1999a, 1999b), Marin & Rekacevicz (2000) and Sada (2000) in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Anderson (1997) in *Deutsche Press-Agentur*, *The Economist* (1996, 1998, 2000a, 2000b), Morrow (1992) in *Time*, Russel (1996, 1998), Deedes (1999) and Simpson (2000) in *The Electronic Telegraph* (1996, 1998, 1999), DeYoung (1999) and Fletcher & Mufson (2000) in *The Washington Post (DC)*, Kent (1999) in *The World Today*, Fox (2000) in *Reuters*, Lewthwaite (2000) in *The Sun (Baltimore)*, Shillinger (2000) in *The Boston Globe (MA)*, Wright (1996) in the *Los Angeles Times (CA)*,

Carter (2000) in *The Washington Times (DC)*, and Maligorne (1999) in *Agence France-Press*.

The discussion of the meaning of the concept 'African Renaissance' and the analysis of the extent to which the African Renaissance challenges Western discourses relies on a number of sources. These include sources such as: Maloka (1997, 1999, 2000), Vale & Maseko (1998), Ntuli (1998, 1999), Cornwell (1998), Bankie (1998), United Nations University (2001), Magubane (1999), Mulemfo (2000), Napier (2000), Ramose (2000), Privorov & Shubin (2000), Kwaa Prah (1999), Mazrui (2000), Khoza (1999), Landsberg & Hlope (2001), Guèye (1999), Le Père (1997), Kritzinger-van Niekerk (2000), Botha (2000a, 2000b), Stremlau (1999), Cleary (1998), Kornegay & Landsberg (1998), M. Mbeki (1998), Karithi (2000), Seepe (2000, 2001), Liebenberg (1998), Mamdani (1999), Holiday (2001). The discussion of the African Renaissance was also based upon primary sources that include speeches made by South African government officials, official government documents, as well as African National Congress (ANC) documents. The following were particularly useful here: Mbeki (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c), Mandela (1994), J. Zuma (2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c), N. Zuma (2001), Pahad (2001), Shezi (1998), Netshitenzhe (1999), Shilowa (2000), Fraser-Moleketi (2001), ANC (1997a, 1997b), Department of Foreign Affairs (2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2001e). Sources on the predecessors of the African Renaissance movement include: Ramose (2000), Ka Seme (1906), Maloka & Le Roux (2000), Biko (1998), Snyder (1990), Lemelle (1993), and Thompson (1969).

#### **1.4 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

When looking at the methodology used it is necessary to ask what approach is adopted and what methods are used in order to address the research problem. The approach adopted is that of postmodernist critical theory and in selecting this approach a positivist methodology is rejected. Western discourses are not considered to be accurate reflections of reality based on empirical observations, nor are they considered to be inaccurate reflections of reality which must be shown to be fallacious and then rejected. Rather, the approach adopted here scrutinises Western discourses in order to determine the underlying assumptions that allow these discourses to be produced. An attempt is made to 'read between the lines' and elicit the implications of Western discourses, rather than just examining their content.

Accepting this approach rooted in postmodernist critical theory, the methods adopted are those of careful critical analysis and of comparison. When discussing research methods it is important to indicate how information is gathered, whether qualitative or quantitative methods are used and whether the study is inductive or deductive. In this study, information is gathered by a broad literature survey. Written works from academic and journalistic sources as well as primary sources such as speeches are used.

The research method used will be qualitative rather than quantitative. The research problem being can only be addressed with the use of careful assessment and critical judgement. The writings of various Western academics and journalists as well as the writings and speeches of the proponents of the African Renaissance have to be carefully and critically examined. This method of careful reading and critical examination is rooted in the approach chosen, that of postmodernist critical theory.

The research method used is deductive rather than inductive. The choice of postmodernist critical theory as an approach makes the inductive method of moving from empirical evidence to a generalisation, impossible. The deductive method, on the other hand, is compatible with the chosen approach as it allows for propositions to be posited and conclusions to be logically drawn from these propositions. The critical analysis of Western discourses and the African Renaissance allows certain propositions to be put forward and certain deductions to be made which enable the research problem to be addressed.

Although the study is essentially not a comparative study, the comparative method is used in order to address the research problem. Once Western discourses and discourses produced as part of the African Renaissance have been analysed, it is necessary to compare them in order to address the research question 'What is the African Renaissance's response to dominant Western political discourses?' The comparative method must be used to identify whether the African Renaissance responds in agreement with Western discourses or whether it disputes these discourses and their underlying assumptions, and posits alternative discourses on Africa.

## 1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to this study and indicates the research theme, the research problem, the literature survey, methodological aspects and the structure of the dissertation. The structure of the rest of the dissertation is as follows.

Chapter 2 consists of a discussion about discourses which focuses specifically on discourses within the context of critical theory as well as the politics of discourse. The entire discussion is related to its African context. The Chapter begins, firstly, with an analysis of critical theory, the influence of postmodernism on critical theory and the relevance of postmodernist critical theory to Africa. Secondly, there is a discussion of discourse and postmodernist critical reconceptualisations of discourse. Thirdly, the politics of discourse is carefully examined, looking at the way that discourse unites knowledge and power, and in this way serves as a political tool. Fourthly, a brief examination of the meaning of the concepts 'Africa' and the 'West' as well as a brief overview of past relations between Africa and the West is then conducted. Finally, discourse and the politics of discourse is applied to the African context and the proposition is advanced that Western discourses regarding Africa need to be challenged and that alternatives need to be presented.

Once the meaning and usage of the concept discourse has been clarified, it is possible to examine several dominant Western political discourses. This is done in Chapter 3 of the dissertation. The focus is upon written academic and journalistic discourses produced between 1990 and 2001. Chapter 3 begins with an overview of Western discourses on the African situation. This is followed by an examination of these Western discourses on the African situation from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory. Subsequent to this, Western political discourses on a possible 'cure' for Africa's current situation are discussed. Discourses on democratisation and development are focussed upon here. These discourses are then more closely examined in order to root out the assumptions implicit within these discourses. Chapter 3 culminates in the reiteration of the argument that Western discourses on Africa need to be challenged by the African Renaissance.

Chapter 4 of the dissertation clarifies what is meant by the concept 'African Renaissance'. The Chapter begins with a discussion on the conceptualisation and components of the African Renaissance. This is followed by a critical discussion of the role of Thabo Mbeki

and the South African government in the conceptualisation of the African Renaissance. Subsequent to this tensions in the conceptualisation of the African Renaissance are highlighted. This discussion is followed by an overview of the roots of the African Renaissance. Predecessors to the current African Renaissance movement are discussed, and the similarities and differences between the earlier concepts and the current African Renaissance movement are noted. This discussion of the roots of the Renaissance is followed by an examination of ideas which have branched out of the Renaissance concept, such as the conceptualisation of a plan for Africa's recovery which has been given a number of titles, the most recent being the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Chapter 5 looks at the responses provided by the African Renaissance to the dominant Western political discourses discussed in Chapter 3. This Chapter aims to answer the questions posed in Chapter 1 by assessing whether or not the African Renaissance truly challenges and confronts Western discourses, and whether it posits alternative discourses. The Chapter begins with a brief argument regarding why the African Renaissance should challenge Western discourses. The African Renaissance's response to Western discourses on the African situation is then critically examined and assessed. This is followed by a discussion of the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses on democratisation and development and the assumptions implicit in these discourses. The Chapter concludes with a critical assessment of the overall response to Western discourses provided by the African Renaissance.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation. It presents a summary of the findings of the examination of the African Renaissance as a response to dominant Western political discourses about Africa.

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

The African Renaissance is one of the most popular political concepts being debated in South Africa, and to some extent the rest of Africa, at the moment. The idea of Africa rising up and finally taking up a position of equal importance and equal influence in the world, is one that cannot but appeal to everyone who loves the continent of Africa. The concept rekindles hope in the hearts of Africans who have before hoped that Africa could be reborn, but have been disappointed.



The West has had a profound impact on Africa's situation and destiny for the last few hundred years. Africa has intrigued Westerners, and has led to the generation of many Western discourses on Africa - discourses on the African situation, as well as discourses on what should be done to improve the African situation. These discourses cannot be seen as irrelevant to the goal of an African Renaissance. If one accepts the postmodernist description of discourse and how it serves as a juncture where power and knowledge meet, it must then also be accepted that Western discourses on Africa are part of the intricate web of global power relations which the African Renaissance wishes to change. This means that the African Renaissance must engage with and respond to Western discourses on Africa. This dissertation presents this argument and then goes on to critically assess the response to Western discourses currently provided by the African Renaissance and to provide some comments which can hopefully contribute to the project of uplifting and revitalising the beautiful and majestic continent of Africa.

## 2.1.1 An Overview of Critical Theory

### 2.1.1.1 The origins of critical theory

Critical theory has been defined as being 'any social theory that is at the same time explanatory, normative, practical and self-reflexive' (Gorham, 1993:145). More specifically, the term critical theory usually refers to an approach to the study of society which was developed by the Frankfurt School between the years 1930 and 1970. The Frankfurt School was a group of theorists who were associated with the Institute for Social Research which was founded in 1923 in Frankfurt, Germany (Gaus, 1995:72). Critical theory also describes later ideas and movements which have been established upon the foundations provided by the Frankfurt School.

While critical theory has its roots in the Frankfurt School, the Frankfurt School has its own philosophical roots. Foremost among these is the thinking of Karl Marx (1818-1883). The members of the Frankfurt School were inspired by Marx's (in West 1863:40) famous statement that while until now 'philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways, the point is to change it'. Philosophers should look at the faults of existing society,