

PART II:
Theoretical Reflections

Chapter Two:

Revisiting Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid state:
New avenues for inquiry

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the nature of Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid state, framed within Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as an imagined community. It is argued by many scholars that the South African experience of apartheid was exceptional. One of the mechanisms by which to counter a focus on exceptionalism and its reductionist implications is to insert debates on Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid within a broader inquiry about cultural forms of nationalism with a specific emphasis on the construction of identity and the invention of the nation. A reading of Afrikaner nationalism through this lens is aimed at identifying new avenues for inquiry that will be explored in the broader study.

Benedict Anderson: Postulating the nation as an imagined community

For a number of reasons, theorisation on the emergence and nature of nationalism before the 1980s has been very limited. In part, nationalism presented an anomaly to Marxist thinkers, but nationalism also had no great thinkers closely associated with its 'idea' and as such had no intellectual 'champions'. Depending on their theoretical approach, scholars often regarded nationalism as a specific expression of or an aberration from another ideology, i.e. a type of fascism or liberalism. Developments in the late 1970s, for example the wars in Cambodia and Vietnam, produced new interest in the subject of nationalism. In the 1980s, nationalism came back onto the agenda as an area for serious scholarly investigation. The most important works to emerge during this period are, arguably, that of Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (originally published in 1983), and Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism since 1788* (1990). The demise of statism in the former USSR and DDR at the end of the nineteen eighties and the subsequent political turmoil in those regions resulting in a number of ongoing conflicts with a nationalist focus saw increased interest in the subject of nationalism in the early 1990s. The resurgence of nationalism in many present day conflicts, as well as nationalist tendencies evident in the north such as the closing down of the public sphere in the Unites States of America as well

as tightened anti-immigration policies and move to rightwing politics in Western Europe have made the need to come to grips with the phenomenon all the more poignant.

In *Imagined Communities* (1991), Benedict Anderson's central problematic is how the concept of the nation and nationality can be understood from the perspective of culture. Anderson's analysis opens up creative possibilities for linking the study of nationalism with the study of literature. In part, this is achieved by his use of the concept *imagination* – a construct that is closely linked to the production of fiction. Other elements of Anderson's analysis, though, such as the way in which he employs the imagery of the structure of the novel, the role he allocates to print texts, and the emphasis he places on language - specifically the vernacular and the national print-language – are closely connected to studies on the production, dissemination and reception of literary texts. Not only do many of the constructs and themes in Anderson's work derive from or reminds us of literary studies, but also his method of enquiry adds a further element of depth to this association. Anderson makes use of historical data in combination with interpretations of various forms of creative imaginings – both in written form (the book, the novel) and visual representations (the painting, the icon).

Part of Anderson's substantial influence on studies on nationalism can be ascribed to the deceptively simple way in which he postulates the nation as an *imagined community*. In his influential study on nationalism, Benedict Anderson argues that

[n]ationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind (Anderson 1991:4).

According to this definition, the nation as entity is thus constructed or crafted. However, Anderson warns that communities are therefore 'to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (1991:6) He outlines the attributes of his definition of the nation as follows:

[I]t is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (1991:6).

and

The nation is limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.

It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm.

Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings (1991:7).

The first question that arises then, is what the theoretical and analytical implications are of a theory that postulates the nation as an imagined community. Anderson disagrees with Gellner's assertion that all nations are invented – read here as fabricated, or as false - as, for him, such a notion implies that there do exist 'true' communities (as opposed to 'fabricated nations', a notion which he is strongly suspicious of) (1991: 6). For Anderson, there are no 'nations' that have not been invented in a process of creative formation, but equally, only the smallest of communities could possibly claim to be authentic rather than imagined.

The argument Anderson espouses in *Imagined Communities* is summarised in brief. Nations and nationalities first emerged in the eighteenth century. To understand this development, nationalism should be located not in terms of political ideology, but rather in terms of the large cultural systems that preceded or predated its existence. Anderson identifies two such cultural systems, namely the religious community and the dynastic realm. The point is that the relevance of nationality - unlike age, which is regarded as an attribute of each person, but which does not amount to much more than an analytical expression - as an attribute of a person is generally accepted as self-evident and constitutive. Anderson therefore sets out to answer the question on what it was that gave these cultural systems their self-evident plausibility and to identify the central elements that played a role in the decomposition of those very systems.

Anderson identifies three factors that opened up the possibility to start imagining the nation, albeit in a very limited sense. First, is the demise of the religious community, which was effected in part by the development of the printing press and book printing as it undermined the notion of the sacred language – used in religious texts - that united the religious community and opened up the opportunity to produce texts in other languages than the ‘sacred’. The religious community was further eroded by the ‘discovery’ of the ‘other’ – the existence of other civilisations -, which threatened the notion of being at the centre of the cosmological order. Second, the legitimacy of the ‘sacral monarchy’ came under pressure in Western Europe during the eighteenth century and had to be actively defended – providing evidence that the legitimacy of the sacral-monarch was no longer self-evident after the developments in France in 1789. A third development Anderson identifies as a contributing factor that opened up the space for imagining the nation was the development of a sense of ‘homogenous, empty time’ as opposed to the ‘mediaeval conception of “simultaneity along time”’ (1991:24). According to Anderson, the latter was exemplified in the development of new forms of imagining, namely the novel and the newspaper, both of which employ the form invoked by the word ‘meanwhile’, i.e. the principle of simultaneity, or an understanding that different processes are taking place parallel to each other in calendrical time. On the convergence of these factors, Anderson comments that

[t]he slow, uneven decline of these interlinked certainties, first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, ‘discoveries’ (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications, drove a hard wedge between cosmology and history. No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power, and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways (1991:36).

These developments made it possible to start thinking of or imagining a community of persons framed within ‘horizontal-secular, transverse time’ (1991:37). However, Anderson argues that it was the convergence of capital and print technology, together with what he calls ‘the fatality of human linguistic diversity’ (1991:43), that provided the building blocks from where to start imagining a specific form of community, the modern nation. In this process, language occupied a central role. In his analysis, Anderson tracks the expansion of print-capitalism in the search for new markets, moving it

beyond the boundaries of Europe. Initially, from the fifteen hundreds, books were published in Latin. Eventually, after a period of hundred and fifty years, this market was exhausted. The process of printing books in the vernacular thus commenced. This process was aided by 1) the fact that Latin came to acquire a more esoteric quality as writers influenced by the Humanist movement aspired to meet stylistic achievements of the ancients, 2) the Reformation and the close alliance of Protestantism with print-capitalism, and 3) the emergence and spread, albeit slowly, of particular vernaculars as 'instruments of administrative centralization' initiated by strongly positioned monarchs.

Anderson warns that the notion of vernacular should not be confused with the idea of a national language, but should rather be seen as a language of the state. A major development was the transformation of these vernaculars and idiolects into a smaller number of print-languages. Various idiolects were combined into single print languages, thereby enlarging the market for the print-capitalists. Anderson argues that the emergence of these print-languages laid the basis for the development of a national consciousness in three ways. First, the development of print languages resulted in 'unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars' (Anderson 1991:44), that is, larger groups of people started to belong to exclusive language communities. Second, the development of print languages gave languages a certain kind of 'fixity', as the printed book is a permanent fixture of language in time and space. In turn, this contributed to the standardisation of the language and helped to develop a sense of antiquity for the language, which Anderson argues is central to the idea of the nation. Third, print-capitalism 'created languages of power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars [as] [c]ertain dialects inevitably were "closer" to each print-language and dominated their final forms' (Anderson 1991:45).

Anderson argues that three 'versions' of nationalism can be distinguished. His approach is innovative – and perhaps revolutionary – in the sense that he situates the origin of nationalism in the 'new world'. He then shows how this first understanding of nationalism is modularly applied in Western Europe and then exported to the third world for the 'last wave' of nationalisms. According to Anderson, the first version or variant of nationalism developed in the new American states of the late eighteenth century as these states were the first in which the possibility to imagine the nation was realised. He acknowledges the economic interests that in part motivated the anti-metropolitan resistance from the colonies, as well as the influence of Liberalism and Enlightenment thought. However, he suggests that it is not the resistance to the

metropolises that is significant, but the fact that this resistance was moulded in a 'national' form, and not in any other:

What I am proposing is that neither economic interest, Liberalism, nor Enlightenment could, or did, create in themselves the kind, or shape, of imagined community to be defended from these regimes' depredations; to put it another way, none provide the framework of a new consciousness – the scarcely seen periphery of its vision – as opposed to centre-field objects of its admiration or disgust. In accomplishing this specific task, pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial creole printmen played the decisive historical role (1991:65).

Nationalist movements in Europe arose in the period 1820-1920. For Anderson, two aspects of the European nationalisms that emerged distinguish them sharply from the movements in the New Americas. The first is the central role that a *national* print-language played ideologically and politically⁸, and second is that these nationalisms could be modelled on something else – either the nationalisms of the new Americas, or, after 1789, that of the French Revolution and its subsequent history. The point Anderson makes is that it was in this period that it became possible to aspire to being a nation, i.e. the process of becoming a nation rather than the nation being the particular end product of a process. What is more, it became possible to copy the model of the nation and adapt it to different contexts. The period is characterized by the close links between a nation and a 'private property language' (1991:68). For Anderson argues that the period of exploration and conquest from Europe had a profound impact on the way in which Europeans thought about language. By the end of the eighteenth century, the comparative study of language had commenced. From these discoveries, it became clear that, for example, the Indic civilisation was older than that of Judaea; that Hebrew was not uniquely ancient; and – with the discovery and deciphering of hieroglyphics – that there were numerous antiquities besides that of Europe. All of this served to confirm and deepen the notion of homogenous, empty time. With philology, the comparative study of grammar and language families, it became possible to reconstruct proto languages that have not existed for many years. Through philology, the status differentials that existed between languages were equalised – all languages were equally worthy of study. Anderson shows how, in the nineteenth century, this process of claiming the national print-language was closely associated with the work of numerous academics – grammarians, lexicographers, philologists, and litterateurs –

⁸ Anderson points out that speaking and writing in Spanish and English were never an issue in the New World.

compiling dictionaries, grammars and so forth. Their efforts were pivotal in shaping the nationalisms that emerged in the 19th century.

Anderson draws attention to the fact that these professionals, the philologists, grammarians, and others, were bound up in production processes for the print market, and therefore linked to the consuming publics. As a result, he introduces an element of class analysis by posing a question about who constituted the consuming public. First, he points out that, in the context of high illiteracy rates in Europe, the consuming public had to comprise of the reading classes. In turn, the reading classes comprised not only of the old ruling class, landed notables and so forth, but also – importantly - of the rising numbers of 'rising middle strata of plebeian lower officials, professionals, and commercial and industrial bourgeoisies' (Anderson 1991:76). Anderson argues that the notion of reading classes refers to entire families:

In the most general sense: the families of the reading classes – not merely the 'working father', but the servant-girded wife and the school-age children (1991:75).

The event of reading, the existence of a shared print language, and the new possibilities these offered for members of the bourgeoisie to 'picture' other members of bourgeoisie and their activities made it possible for the bourgeoisie to become the first class to achieve a kind of class solidarity on an 'imagined basis' (Anderson 1991:77).⁹ Of course, the scope of the imagined community was limited by the extent to which members of that class had access to the specific print language. There was, however, still one problem that stood in the way of opening up the consumer markets for the works generated by the new professionals. At the time, Europe was marked by the fact that the geographies of dynastic empires did not correspond to vernacular geographies. An increase in trade, literacy, communication and the deployment of increasingly sophisticated state machinery led to a drive 'for vernacular linguistic unification within each dynastic realm' (Anderson 1991:77-78) and subsequently to the notion of language-of-state in Europe. These were highly political processes, as the selection of a vernacular in a particular geographic domain could benefit those who already used that language as a print language. These processes provided the clientele for the lexicographers. Anderson (1991:78) states that it was 'not surprising to

⁹ Of course, members of aristocracy and noble classes were 'linked' to each other through kinship and other blood relations.

find very different bodies of customers according to different political conditions', but that the most typical of these formations

was a coalition of lesser gentries, academics, professionals and businessmen, in which the first often provide leaders of 'standing', the second and third myths, poetry, newspapers, and ideological formulations, and the last money and marketing facilities (1990:79).

The extent to which the masses (the peasants, the poor, the illiterate) bought into the kind of nationalism championed by the petty bourgeoisie varied greatly from region to region, depending on specific local conditions. However, Anderson concurs that 'as literacy increased, it became easier to arouse popular support, with the masses discovering new glory in the print elevation of languages they had humbly spoken all along' (1991:80). Thus, Anderson concurs with Tom Nairn's statement (quoted in Anderson 1993:80) that '[t]he new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation-card had to be written in a language they understood', even though he points out that the middle-class intelligentsia were not in all cases the host of the party. However, for Anderson a more pressing question is why it was that this type of nationalism seemed so attractive that the masses were willing to accept the invitation and that various strategic alliances were able to issue it. The answer to this historical oddity, he believes is to be found yet again in the power of the printed word. The argument Hobsbawm (1991) outlines in *Nations and Nationalism since 1788* is that the French revolution, which today is regarded as an event of enormous significance, was in fact not a 'thing', a planned intervention, in the same way as many subsequent revolutions were fashioned. There were, in fact, no central leaders or organising centres. Through its representation in printed text, a series of actions - sometimes chaotic and often disassociated - that together produced certain historical changes, became fashioned into a historical event, concept and, later on, model, on which subsequent 'revolutions' could be based. Therefore, the print text made a particular kind of piracy possible that enabled various groups to model their nationalisms on that of the French Revolution, and to adapt and mould the model to local conditions. In the same way, the independence movements in the Americas became immortalised as structured events – and yet more models - through texts, so that a range of options and models became available for pirating.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, dynasts in Europe were presented with a problem in the form of intra-nationalist movements that had arisen as a result of

capitalism and because of the 'elephantiasis' of dynasts themselves. Many of these dynasties adopted print vernaculars as language of the state. However, these languages did not corresponded to the range of languages that were spoken within the broad territory of the dynasty. The work of the philologists created the space to equate a language to a particular group (or imagined community) and to argue on that basis for an authentic space of their own. In response to these developments, the dynasties reacted by claiming particular national identification for themselves. The Romanovs, for example, claimed the national identification of Great Russians and the Hanoverians that of Germans. This gave rise to what Anderson refers to as the emergence of 'official' nationalism – which he defines as 'the willed merger of nation and dynastic empire' (1991: 86). He explains that this form of nationalism developed in response to linguistic-nationalism – and, would in fact have been impossible to imagine without these movements. The notion of official nationalism was an attempt by dynasties – although not exclusively – to forge a merger between two types of authority – the one ancient and the other modern. The aim of official nationalism was to prevent the exclusion of dynastic and aristocratic powers from popular imagined communities (1991:110). The way in which these developments were effected is through a process of homogenising the languages spoken in a specific territory. Examples are forced Anglicisation or Russification, using mechanisms such as school policy. Anderson shows that 'official nationalism concealed a discrepancy between nation and dynastic realm' (1991:110).

Anderson makes a similar point about the official nationalism pursued in the name of imperialism. On the one hand, there had been in place policy to homogenise the people of the empire, such as in India where Anglicisation mechanisms were in place. On the other, however, there remained a tension between nation and dynastic realm, which meant that Indian nationals would never become English. Anderson says that the reason for this tension should not merely be sought in racist attitudes and that one should be mindful that this very contradiction was partly rooted in the fact it was only in this period that nations (i.e. English, French and Spanish) were starting to emerge in the heart of where the empire was operating from.

After the First World War, with the establishment of the League of Nations in 1922, the concept of the nation state became hegemonic. Moreover, the concept of a nation-state came to carry a distinct political content. The twentieth century saw a wave of nations emerge, mostly from former colonies in Africa and in Asia. Anderson argues that these nationalisms were often spearheaded by the bilingual middleclass

intelligentsia from the colonised geographies, who, because of the tensions between nation and empire had been given privileged access to travel to and sometimes study in the capital city of the imperial power. Yet, at the same time, they were excluded from both the powerhouse of colonial capitalism and from being regarded as citizens of the imperial nation. It is this group, according to Anderson, that was the first to start thinking of themselves as nationals. As was the case with the Americas, the print-language that drove the wave of nationalisms in most cases were European, derived from the language-of-state of the former colonial powers and their 'Russification' policies. Anderson reminds us that

[I]t is always a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them – as emblems of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest. Much the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities. After all, imperial languages are still vernaculars, and thus particular vernaculars among many. If radical Mozambique speaks Portuguese, the significance of this is that Portuguese is the medium through which Mozambique is imagined... Print-language is what invents nationalism, not a particular language per se (Anderson 1993:133-134).

The wave of nationalisms that emerged in the post-colonial moment was different from previous forms of nationalisms in three ways. First, more than any other form of nationalism that preceded it, models of the nation-state about which information was now widely circulated in print form shaped this wave of nationalism. Moreover, the concept of the nation-state and its attributes, as a normative form, was disseminated through the formal education systems that the colonial powers established in the colonies. Second, the development and spread of capitalism and its associated technologies opened up the space to move beyond print language in imagining communities. Third, these nationalisms were made possible by the legacy of colonial rule. Through formalising and making official the (arbitrary) borders of the colonial state, collecting information and classifying the population and everything as well as a type of 'political muzeuming' - it became possible to replicate this state (Anderson 1993: 184-185). In many ways, the establishment of the colonial state was a modernist project, which was both premised on and made possible by scientific progress:

For the colonial state did not merely aspire to create, under its control, a human landscape of perfect visibility; the condition of this 'visibility' was that everyone, everything had (as it were) a serial number. This style of imagining did not come out of thin air. It was the product of the technologies of

navigation, astronomy, horology, surveying, photography, and print, to say nothing about the deep driving power of capitalism (Anderson 1993:185).

In a chapter entitled, *Patriotism and racism*, Anderson explores the relationship between nationalism and racism. He argues against the position taken by 'progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals', who 'insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism' (Anderson 1993:141). Rather, Anderson suggests that there is another position from which to formulate questions about the nation, which is the understanding that nations have the ability to instil a kind of love that can only be compared to love for the family. The love for the nation is often expressed in a range of cultural products, from poetry to folk music. The question Anderson poses, is what is it that makes it possible to love the nation or to be prepared to die for the nation. For Anderson, one's nationality, like skin colour and gender, is not a matter of one's own choosing. Thus, nationality is a fatality, but 'precisely because such ties are not chosen, they have about them a halo of disinterestedness' (Anderson 1993:143). Anderson puts forward a controversial preposition in arguing that racism and the nation are not congruent. Racism, he argues, is often rooted in ideologies of class. As such, racism is most often an intra-national problem rather than a cross-border problem. A defining attribute of the nation or nation-ness, Anderson contends, is that it accepts the principle of naturalisation, insofar as even very insular societies acknowledge that it is somehow possible to become part of the nation. This he sees as evidence that the nation is conceived of in language, and is not defined in terms of blood (i.e. race).

Anderson's argument, though persuasive and compelling in most instances, is weak in the sense that it underestimates the material realities in which those very imagined communities operate. Bozzoli (1987:6) agrees with Anderson's contention that all communities are in a sense constructed or imagined, yet she is mindful of the fact that these communities are at the same time also real and embedded in particular material realities. Anderson's project is hampered by his intention to counter what he regards to be a mainly European trend to pathologise nationalism. Perhaps the true failure of Western intellectuals is the tendency to pathologise other nationalisms, particularly those in Africa and in the East European block, whilst failing to recognise their own nationalisms (French nationalism, English nationalism, etc.). As such, they are therefore unable to interrogate the effects of these nationalisms. Anderson provides us with a very powerful metaphor that can be used analytically to examine the events of the 1930s and 1940s in South Africa and the kind of nationalism it produced. It is

therefore a pity that Anderson is not able to extend this metaphor to explain the form of nationalism we found Apartheid South Africa. Afrikaner nationalism constituted a particular form of nationalism where the concept of the nation and the physical borders of the nation-state did not correspond. Alternatively phrased, in the case of Afrikaner nationalism, the nation was indeed an imagined community. Whilst there was something that constituted a South African 'nation' – defined in terms of citizenship and the geography of the nation state – there was another 'nation within the nation' (defined this time in terms of 'race' and linked to the right to vote) and yet another 'nation' that also referred to itself as the 'Afrikaner volk'.

South African exceptionalism theses and critiques

It has been argued that the experience of apartheid and the form of the South African apartheid state were exceptional, lacking similarities with any other forms of state. The case for South African exceptionalism has been made from different ends of the political spectrum to explain peculiarities in South Africa's historical trajectory, in particular the *development and nature of the apartheid state*. More recent theories invoking South African exceptionalism that are found, among others, in transition theory and theories on Africa are also pertinent and are therefore briefly discussed. The reasons why scholars have opted to look at the South African apartheid experience through the lens of exceptionalism are many and varied. Primarily, notions of exceptionalism are instrumental in disrupting and breaking down the idea of historical continuities and therefore politically powerful, but exceptionalism theses are also used to explain deviations in practice from theoretical models without having to rethink the model itself, another strategy that carries political weight.

The most vociferous argument for exceptionalism as an explanation for the particular form of the apartheid state has been advanced by liberal authors, whose accounts dominated the debate on the origins and function of the apartheid state until the 1970s. The central premise of their argument was that the apartheid state was dysfunctional to capitalism, and that the discriminatory and racist nature of the state derived from racial beliefs and frontier prejudices held by the Afrikaner (Worden 1994:66). In the 1960s, communist thinkers too presented a case for exceptionalism, which they termed 'internal colonialism' (or 'colonialism of a special type' and 'settler colonialism') to explain the racially discriminatory, repressive nature of the apartheid state. The notion of South African exceptionalism has been strongly contested and four critiques are discussed. The first of these emphasises South Africa's colonial past and the linkages

and continuities between the colonial state and the apartheid state. A second critique examines the similarities between South Africa's apartheid state and other post-colonial states. The third critique comes from neo-Marxist quarters and challenges the notion of South African exceptionalism by demonstrating through structuralist Marxist class analysis that apartheid was not an aberration, but rather a strategy for building an industrial economy on cheap migrant labour. A fourth critique, also from revisionist quarters and essentially a variant of the previous understands the apartheid state as the product of an exceptional form of capitalist development and therefore as a variant of a fascist state. At the heart of critiques of exceptionalism theses is the claim that the racial dimension of the apartheid state has been overemphasised. This, it is believed, has obscured or masked the links and similarities between the South African state and state forms elsewhere, thereby limiting the insights that could be gained from a comparative perspective.

It should be noted that most academic texts in Afrikaans on the apartheid state and Afrikaner nationalism have been written from a 'nationalist' and culturalist perspective. O'Meara (1983:4) remarks on the fact that this body of literature in the majority of cases 'self-consciously' seeks to construct a kind of mythology, political and cultural, around the phenomenon of Afrikaner nationalism. The nationalist perspective has been severely criticised, not merely because of questions about the theoretical underpinnings of the work, but in many cases also the factual basis and therefore legitimacy of the conclusions drawn. Much of the Afrikaans writing on the subject is heavily imbued with a kind of culturalism, with no attempts made to contextualise this notion of culture as self-explanatory and given, or to link it to other social categories such as class. Indeed, the Afrikaner nationalism portrayed in much of this writing created around it its own mythology. Worden (1994:87) alludes to the way in which the idea of the unity of the Afrikaner 'volk' is emphasised in this mythology:

Born on the old Cape frontier, trekking away from the British in 1836, surviving attacks by hostile Africans in the interior, defending themselves against the British in the 1870s and again in the South African War, suffering maltreatment in British concentration camps, rebelling against South African support for the British cause in the First World war, partially triumphing in the 1920s under the Hertzog government which made Afrikaans an official language, reacting against the English-dominated Fusion government of Hertzog and Smuts in the 1930s and early 1940s, finally winning the election of 1948, and – the ultimate achievement – breaking from the Commonwealth and establishing a republic in 1961.

Whilst interpretations of the events mentioned in the quotation above may vary, that these events did in fact take place is not in dispute. Rather, it is the silences in this mythology that are of interest. For example, the different experiences of people from different classes and regions are ignored (Worden 1994:87), and, of equal importance, no attention is paid to the resistances from within, such as Afrikaans workers in the Garment Workers Union (Brink 1987), the trade union movement and its opposition to the state (Alexander 2000) or Afrikaners who fought on the British side in the First World War. The 'canonised' texts on Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid state have therefore mostly been in English and first emerged from a liberal tradition.

A group of theories, termed by Mamdani (1999) and Simson (1980) as 'economist', explains the origins and/or function of apartheid by exploring the relationship between capitalism and apartheid.¹⁰ It is in this tradition that liberal and pluralist authors explain the origins of the apartheid state as the outcome of a combination of a brand of nationalism and frontier prejudices espoused by Afrikaners, who won political power in 1948, and a sophisticated industrialising economy based on minerals developed by the British. Liberalism as an ideology posits that there exists a positive association between industrialisation and democracy, and, following from this, that democracy thus is a necessary consequence of industrialisation. Based on this assumption, most liberal scholars then understand the apartheid state, based on white supremacist rule, as an exception to or aberration from this model. The conclusion most liberal authors reach is that, because of this perceived 'irrationality' of the apartheid state, the internal contradictions cannot hold and, hence, that apartheid would eventually be replaced with a democratic system of governance. Ralph Horwitz's book, *The Political Economy of South Africa*, published in 1967 is perhaps the best example of the liberal thesis on apartheid. Sarakinsky (1996: 288) summarises the liberal position on the functionality of the apartheid state as follows:

There is an essential contradiction between racism and capitalism. Racism is dysfunctional to the rational development of an industrial economy.

Restrictions on the mobility of black labour (influx control) and the reservation of jobs for whites make no economic sense.

¹⁰Posel (1991: 9) argues that this debate, which has generally become known as the 'liberal-revisionist' debate, is better understood as comprising two questions rather than one. She distinguishes between the apartheid design and apartheid practice, i.e. the implementation of apartheid policies. For Posel, the two questions that underpin this debate are: (1) What is the impact of capitalist development and dominant class interests on the design and objectives of apartheid, and (2) what is the degree of compatibility between capitalism and the way in which apartheid policies are administered in practice.

Posel (1991:9) argues that the liberal position on the origin and function of apartheid was not necessarily as uniform as might have been perceived by revisionist scholars. The liberal position was later somewhat modified and has become more nuanced. Writing in 1985, Merle Lipton concedes that apartheid cannot be explained simply as the outcome of racism or capitalism. However, principally she retains the original liberal argument by asserting that apartheid was the outcome of the *political* power of Afrikaners, and that the form of political power came under pressure only in the mid-1960s when a generation of Afrikaner industrialists had emerged for whom apartheid policies no longer made 'economic sense'. In support of this position, she states that 'the strength of ethnic ties, the institutionalisation of apartheid, and time lags before changes in interests fed into the political system – as well as deep divisions among the opposition – enabled the Afrikaners political establishment to maintain its power base and hegemony' (Lipton 1985:365).

Another type of exceptionalism thesis emerged from communist and Marxist theorists. A theory of 'internal colonialism' was developed in the 1960s, the general gist of which is that South Africa is an exceptional example of a form of colonialism where the colonisers (white South Africans) colonised the (black) indigenous people of the land. What made this type of colonialism exceptional, according to the theory, is that both the colonised and the colonisers shared the same geographical space, i.e. occupied the same land, South Africa. This theory, which was espoused in *The Road to South Africa*, a document of the South African Communist Party published in 1963, drew on Lenin's theory of imperialism, but modified it to accommodate this peculiar feature of South African society (Sarakinsky 1996:289). Greenberg (1980:20) points out that Lenin's position emphasises "lagged" development - the belief that "backward" areas would ultimately catch up and escape "national" concerns', thereby indicating that this kind of approach is underpinned by the view that South African exceptionalism, with the focus on race, is a deviation that will inevitably be overcome. A theoretical approach similar to that of the SACP underlies the work of Bunting (1986), *The Rise of the South African Reich*, and Simons and Simons (1983), *Class & Colour in South Africa 1850-1950*. The latter argues that 'South Africa uniquely demonstrates that a dominant racial minority can perpetuate social rigidities and feudalistic traits on an advanced and expanding industrial base' (Simons and Simons 1983: 618). However, though these theorists can be classified as supporting an exceptionalism thesis insofar as they tried in the first place to account for the unique racial basis of the apartheid state, the authors have also attempted to link this unique South African phenomenon to a general model of fascism. O'Meara (1983:10) criticises this approach for (1) using the term

fascism as a 'descriptive devise' rather than an analytical concept; and (2) developing theory that rests on a 'racial polarity' that treats 'class and race as independent factors in South Africa'. O'Meara shows that the link to fascism was made by analogy in an attempt to place the South African situation in a framework that made sense, and not the outcome of a rigorous theoretical analysis.

From the 1970s a group of theorists, who became known as revisionist historians or neo-Marxists emerged. Simson (1980:2) claims that '[u]ntil the 1970s, scholarly analysis of the apartheid system and South African history in general had scarcely been undertaken by Marxists. It was commonly thought that Marxism was incapable of throwing light on the South African society where 'race struggle' rather than 'class struggle' was the obvious determining factor". The revisionists used structural Marxist analysis to challenge the claim of South African exceptionalism advanced by the Liberals, introducing class analysis and theories of accumulation to demonstrate how apartheid fitted with capitalist development. Whereas Liberal theorists have argued that apartheid was dysfunctional to capitalism, a fact that they believed would necessarily and inevitably lead to its demise, neo-Marxist theories attempted to show that the racism entrenched in the apartheid state was functional for the development of capitalism. Though the work of this group of theorists was not homogeneous, O'Meara (1983:2) points out that these authors:

reject the liberal notion of a fundamental contradiction between the racist apartheid policies of Afrikaner nationalism on the one hand and a supposedly inherently colour-blind capitalist economy on the other. On the contrary, despite some deep differences, the various authors have all sought to situate the analysis of the South African social formation squarely within the context of the processes of capital accumulation and the class struggles through which it takes place.

Simson (1980:30) argues that Marxists focused on the weakest aspect of the liberal analysis to show how apartheid played a key role in the 'expansion of monopoly capitalism' with specific emphasis being placed on the 'labour repressive side'. Within the broader Marxist school of thought, he distinguishes between two approaches. The first of these comprised of a group of thinkers who gave preference to the economic and structural determinants of the apartheid state's labour policy. The second group, according to Simson, comprised those who focused on the class struggle (Simson 1980:30-31). To the first group of revisionist scholars belong Harold Wolpe, Martin Legassick, Frederick Johnstone, and Stanley Trapido. Wolpe, in particular, amended

the theory of 'internal colonialism', employed earlier by, among others, the SACP, to focus on the functionality for capitalist development of a 'prolonged unevenness' in a model of 'colonialism of a special type' (Greenberg 1980: 20-21). The revisionist position was later modified and expanded, influenced in particular by the work of Nico Poulantzas, by Rob Davies, David Kaplan and Dan O'Meara (Posel 1991: 11, Simson 1980:32). Bonner, Delius and Posel (1993:1) stress the fact that "the early revisionists gave an essentially functionalist explanation for apartheid, which interpreted state policies as emerging simply in response to capital accumulation".

Among these revisionist historians were a number of scholars who attempted, by making use of comparative methodology, to underline the similarities between the apartheid state and various fascist states. The most comprehensive and rigorous of this work was undertaken by Howard Simson. Simson recognises the shortcomings in earlier attempts by the left to link the apartheid state to fascism. His argument is summarised by O'Meara (1983:11) as: "[a] theorisation of fascism as an 'exceptional capitalist state form'... presented as a series of watertight social laws about the character of the class struggle, the crisis confronting monopoly capital, and the alliances formed by the petty bourgeoisie". Simson (1980:33-35) criticises, in particular, Heribert Adam's *Modernizing Racial Domination*, which concludes that apartheid cannot be equated with fascism. Simson contends that Adam would have reached a different conclusion - one that matches his own - if only he had used class and not race as unit of analysis. Simson (1980:204) finds that:

the former [Afrikaner fascism] closely correspond to the latter [National Socialism] in all four respects. The most significant qualitative difference between the fascism resides in their national settings. Afrikaner fascism takes place in a multi-national/racial society, while European fascism occurred in 'homogenous' nation s tates.

Simson's position is challenged by O'Meara (1980:11) for a lack of 'historical specificity' and for using a method of analysis that O'Meara terms 'verificationist analysis'. These points are taken up in the concluding comments to this section.

Two critiques to the notion of South African exceptionalism both stem from South Africa's colonial history. The first of the two emphasises continuity between the form of state under British rule and the apartheid state. The second, developed by Mahmood

Mamdani, also takes colonialism as starting point, but focuses more on the break with colonialism, i.e. the post-colonial state.

Yudelman, in his important study on the emergence of modern South Africa, focusing on the period from 1902-1939 and the link between state and capital, argues that the difference between the colonial state and the apartheid state might be regarded as a difference of degree rather than a difference of kind. He makes a particularly strong argument against the notion of South African exceptionalism. Yudelman rejects the Marxist and neo-Marxist interpretations of the apartheid state as representing and being shaped by the interests of capital. For him, the relationship between the state and capital, both during the period of British rule after the South African Anglo-Boer war and under Nationalist Party rule, is symbiotic. Yudelman concludes that South Africa, so often seen as deviant and exceptional, 'in many ways, is the precursor and model of development in the "advanced industrial societies" rather than their flotsam' (Yudelman 1984:1). Magubane, arguing strongly against the way in which the race/class debate has unfolded in South Africa, states that 'racist ideas and the type of state which followed from its assumptions arose from the engagement of imperial entrepreneurs and their political allies with practical problems of accumulation, and necessarily reflect the will to commit economic, political and social acts against those construed as "inferior"' (Magubane 1996:357). Magubane focuses on the ideology of social imperialism as an explanation for what has happened in South Africa, and as way of understanding the form of the apartheid state. Magubane's main argument is that the consequence of South African exceptionalism theses is that what has happened in South Africa has been studied in isolation, without seriously looking at the way in which South African history interfaces with what was happening elsewhere in the world, in particular in other dominions.

Mahmood Mamdani renders another powerful critique against the notion of South African exceptionalism in his work *Citizen and Subject*. Mamdani's argument is that the apartheid state, if one looks beyond its racialised form, mirrors and exemplifies the form of the post-colonial state in Africa, that is, according to Mamdani, the bifurcated state. For Mamdani, a striking characteristic of the post-colonial state in Africa is its de-racialised nature. This de-racialisation masks what Mamdani calls the actual form of the state, namely a bifurcated state, where the urban population is governed as citizens and the rural population is ruled as subjects. Mamdani argues that analyses of the racialised structure of power in South Africa under apartheid have hitherto masked the

similarities between the South African system of homelands and forms of traditional rule in other African states.

From this first part of the discussion, a number of initial conclusions may be drawn. The first conclusion, then, is that the apartheid state was not exceptional, and that it certainly did not lack similarities with other forms of state power. The basis for this conclusion is the sheer weight of the critiques to the exceptionalist position discussed here, and the valuable insights derived from these. This does not mean that elements of the apartheid state were not unique, and that these elements need not be analysed. Yudelman (1984:5) reminds us that '[t]he fact that [South Africa] is not deviant does not mean that it is therefore typical. Its importance from a comparative perspective lies more in the additional dimensions it can give the so-called typical state than in the degree to which it conforms to the typical'. It is therefore not argued that the critiques against exceptionalism have made a convincing and conclusive argument that, for example, the apartheid state was indeed a type of fascist state or a model of the post-colonial state. It is that these scholars have sufficiently demonstrated that the apartheid state needs to be interpreted in a broader framework. Moreover, critiques of exceptionalism theses have taken the debate forward and have opened new avenues for analysis and understanding. Perhaps the strongest contribution by the various schools that set out to demystify South African exceptionalism theses has been to show that by theorising exceptionalism, one might overlook (or intentionally hide) factors that show how a particular local experience is linked to occurrences in world history and the world economic system. Following from the first conclusion, the second modifies or contextualises that argument. If it is argued that the notion of exceptionalism results in an overemphasis on race as a category for analysing the apartheid state, or masks or hides other categories, what then is the status of the various critiques of that position? It is the contention of this author that none of the critiques presented can in their own be regarded as sufficient to encompass and explain the origin and function of apartheid. The second conclusion therefore is that the arguments set out here remind us of the limitations of meta-theory in general, and model-building in particular, in explaining social phenomena. A third conclusion pertains to a matter of methodology. Peter Alexander (1997) argues that

Although exceptionalism, of whatever variety, embodies an implicit comparison (usually with an ideal type), there is a danger of exceptionalist conclusions discouraging explicitly comparative study, thereby stifling an assessment of the importance of international processes within national histories.

A similar point, though phrased differently, is made by both Magubane (1996) and Mamdani (1999). This point needs to be clarified: attempts to classify a social phenomenon as exceptionalist or to place it within a broader framework run the risk of presenting a reductionist account of that phenomenon. There is a danger in positivist approaches to classify a phenomenon as either exceptional or linked in a broader framework through falsifying or verifying that the construct does indeed fit the model. Claiming exceptionalism is therefore not problematic as such. However, caution should be exercised when this construct is used, as arguing exceptionalism often seems to foreclose further action. As Mamdani explains, if South Africa is regarded as exceptional, the South African experience cannot be used to engage with developments in other countries, such as other postcolonial states or any others for that matter, in a comparative manner. Therefore, the notion of exceptionalism tends to paralyse political action through its failure to link the local to broader developments elsewhere in the world. There is a further political reason for why one should be cautious when presenting a case for exceptionalism, which is that locating South African events in a broader framework and demonstrating both similarities and differences between the South African experience and other experiences is part of resistance to hegemonic western models. Using Yudelman's argument, it should not be forgotten that colonies can illuminate the metropolises.

Having argued for the need to move beyond notions of South African exceptionalism, the question is how does one then frame a research project in such a way that it speaks to broader debates on postcolonialism and the postcolonial state, nationalism and fascism, and the development of capitalism? Moreover, the end of apartheid has opened up opportunities for new kinds of academic inquiry for scholars, and these opportunities need to be taken on. The politics of scholarly work and research under apartheid dictated a narrow framework of inquiry, where leftist scholars have rejected that race and class can be independent factors and have paid little attention to issues of subjectivity. In particular, many Marxists were forced into a kind of class straightjacket resulting in the situation where Marxist analyses were mainly informed by understandings of class whilst many analyses could have benefited from a wider

inquiry that took into account and engaged with other identities, including gender and race. The way by which this research proposes to move beyond the limits of exceptionalist theses on South Africa and address some of the challenges posed by post-apartheid scholarly work is to take one step back to look for the gaps in scholarly work on the apartheid state and to revisit questions that have been left unanswered or were not fully explored. In particular, then, this study examines questions of identity, race and class in relation to the Afrikaner nationalism and the power base of the apartheid state. As the research is located in debates on Afrikaner nationalism, a brief review of literature on this subject is offered below, and then some of the new questions that have been emerged following the end of apartheid, some of which this study proposes to engage with, are outlined.

Afrikaner nationalism and the construction of an Afrikaner identity

I first provide a brief overview of developments preceding the National Party victory by a very narrow margin in 1948. For this account, I rely mostly on Dan O'Meara's book *Volkskapitalisme*, which is still widely regarded as the most comprehensive account of developments in this period (see Hyslop 1996, Posel 1991).¹¹

Following the peace treaty that concluded the Anglo-Boer War in 1902 signalling the end to the two independent Boer republics, the first attempt to reconsolidate Afrikaner political power was the establishment of the Het Volk party in 1906. The National Party was established in the Orange Free State province in 1914 by General J.B.M Hertzog, and in the following year, National Parties were also formed in the Cape Colony and the Transvaal (O'Meara 1983:59). Afrikaners got a taste of political power again in 1924 when the Pact government was formed through a coalition between General Hertzog's National Party and Colonel F.H.P. Creswell's Labour Party. Hertzog managed to win the 1929 election with a full parliamentary majority, but in the aftermath of the Great Depression he entered into a coalition agreement with General Jan Smuts from the South African Party, which resulted in the 'fusion' of their parties into the United South African National Party (later known as the United Party). In reaction to the coalition between the NP and the SAP, D.F. Malan in 1934 established a splinter group from Hertzog's National Party first called the Gesuiwerde Nasionale

¹¹Posel is critical of O'Meara's notion that a single 'Apartheid-idea' was the ideological cement that bound together the Afrikaner nationalist class alliance (Posel 1991:3).

Party (Purified National Party) and later the Herenigde Nasionale Party (Reunited National Party). Malan's party wins the general election in 1948.

The election victory of the National Party in 1948 signalled the success of efforts to create Afrikaner unity under the umbrella of an Afrikaner nationalism that had been crafted from the beginning of the twentieth century. The idea that Afrikaner identity was not a given or historical inevitability is widely accepted. Scholars such as Hofmeyr (1987) have shown that there emerged from the late nineteenth century a number of loosely organised 'movements' dedicated to the creation of an Afrikaans literary tradition and, more ambitiously, a collective identity for 'Afrikaners'. These efforts were spearheaded by fractions within the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie, notably clergy and teachers, who were not benefiting from the policies of after-war Milnerism. There were various cleavages in the ranks of the group of people that would a few decades later be consolidated into the 'Afrikaner volk'. Some of these cleavages were among Dutch, English and Afrikaans speakers of 'Boer' or 'Dutch-Afrikaans' descent, another was the division between the 'landed notables' and the landless *bywoners*, while yet another cleavage was that between the North and South. Conditions in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had always been different from those in the Cape and Natal, but the devastation caused by the Anglo Boer War exacerbated these differences and made them appear starker. It is thus clear that in the first decades of the twentieth century, there was no such thing as a single united Afrikaner identity. Moreover, from the late nineteenth century the spill over of the mineral revolution would catapult the geographical space that in 1910 became the Union of South Africa into an industrial capitalist economy. In turn, this brought about new cleavages in the ranks of the Dutch-Afrikaners as it led to the formation of a white Afrikaans speaking working class, made possible through a large movement of Afrikaners from the rural areas to industrial towns and cities.

Many scholars have commented on the nature of urbanisation amongst Afrikaners after the Anglo-Boer War (Vincent 2000, Brink 1987, O'Meara 1983, Callinicos 1987, Hyslop 1995, Hofmeyr 1987). Already before the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, many Afrikaners were forced off the land they occupied because of the mineral revolution. After the War, with the destruction of more than 30 000 Afrikaner homesteads and the large-scale loss of much of the livestock, many more landless Afrikaners (*bywoners*) and small farmers sought refuge in the cities, in particular the towns of the Witwatersrand (Callinicos 1987:219). In the aftermath of World War One, a period characterised by a depressed economy and disease amongst cattle, yet more Afrikaners streamed to the

city in search of employment opportunities. The Great Depression of the 1930s saw a fourth stream of Afrikaner migrants flowing to the urban areas. These were not the only reasons for the move to the cities. Others included the rise of commercial agriculture, which made traditional farming methods unsustainable, traditional inheritance practices of subdividing land among sons of the family - which drastically reduced the viability of the proceeds of the land to support a family - and natural disasters such as drought (Stals 1986:5-10). These and other factors, contributed to increased poverty in the rural areas, and comprised the 'push' factors. The pull factor of the industrialised Johannesburg and the surrounding towns of the Rand was the mining industry and secondary industries that sprung up around it. Of course, the migration patterns were uneven. Much of the work opportunities available in the cities depended on manual labour, which favoured the young and the strong. These circumstances altered authoritarian and paternalistic patterns in Afrikaner households in significant, if unexpected, ways.

The move to the cities in the first four decades of the twentieth century fostered the growth of a large Afrikaner working class whose interests were different from those of the petty bourgeoisie. White Afrikaans speakers moving to the cities included skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Skilled workers included those that worked on the mines as artisans and craft persons and those that took up clerical positions. However, a large number of those moving to the cities were either unskilled, or did not possess any transferable skills. Moreover, a substantial number of those that migrated to the cities did so precisely to escape conditions of utmost poverty in the rural areas. O'Meara states that by the 1920s, an average of 12 000 whites per annum were migrating from rural areas to the cities, where they came to constitute a large 'army of the unemployed, known as "poor whites"' (O'Meara 1983:26). In 1928, the Carnegie Commission was established to investigate the so-called 'Poor White Question'.¹² In 1930-32 the Carnegie Commission released its report on the so-called 'Poor White Problem'. The report highlights in particular the desperation found among whites in the rural areas, but also covers aspects pertaining to the conditions of the urban white

¹² The Carnegie Commission was established after a visit by the President and the Secretary of the Corporation to South Africa in 1927. A number of organisations, in particular the Dutch Reformed Church, approached them to provide support for a proposed investigation that would both track the nature and extent of the 'poor white problem' and propose possible remedies for the situation. In addition to funding most of the research work and carrying the reproduction and printing costs of the report, the Carnegie Corporation made available two researchers, Dr Kenyon L. Butterfield and Dr C.W. Coulter, to participate in the study. In 1932, the Commission released its report in five volumes, each respectively covering an economic, psychological, educational, medical and sociological approach (see Grosskopf 1932, Wilcocks 1932, Murray 1932, Rothmann 1932, Albertyn 1932, and Malherbe 1932).

poor. Based on data collected during 1929-1930, the report found that 17.5% of all (white) households with school-going children could be classified as very poor. The Commission used those figures to estimate that approximately 300 000 persons out of a white population of 1 800 000 fell into the category of 'very poor' (Grosskopf 1932: vi-viii). The majority of these persons were Afrikaans-speaking. By 1936, 540 000 Afrikaners were residing in cities. This figure roughly comprised half of the white Afrikaans population (Stals 1986:2). Based on a total white Afrikaans speaking population of 1,1 million in 1936, and working from the assumption that the white population figures remained fairly stable from the late 1920s to the early 1930s, it can be argued that almost a third of all Afrikaners could be classified as 'very poor' in the early 1930s.

The idea of nation as an imagined community is not new in the study of Afrikaner nationalism and various authors have made use of either Anderson's notion of the 'imagined community' and/or Hobsbawm's (1990) concept of the 'invention of tradition' (see Bozzoli (1987:6), Hyslop (1996), Hofmeyr (1987), and Hyslop (1995)). For these authors, and others, one of the main advantages of thinking about nationalism and the nation as a process of imagining is the emphasis this places on the *constructed* nature of ethnic identity and ethnicity. Bozzoli regards Afrikaner nationalism as a movement whose main features were remarkably congruent with the kind of analysis Anderson provides. For Bozzoli, Anderson's 'imagined communities' centres on ethnic communities and nationalities. Nonetheless, she asserts that all communities are in a sense constructed or imagined, yet at the same time also real and embedded in particular material realities. In analysing this, she draws on another body of literature that sees the community as a concrete reality.¹³ She regards Anderson's position as a fruitful way to analyse ethnicity since

[t]he idea of an imagined community asks us to look at community not as a solid, timeless given, but as a creation on the level of myth, and to see it in tandem with other forces. Self-conscious groups may act to create communities... Classes, consisting of real social actors, become the motive force behind the construction and myth-making involved in communities (Bozzoli 1987:7).

¹³ See Stedman-Jones, G. 1974. 'Working Class Culture and Working Class Politics in London 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class', *Journal of Social History* 7(4); Foster, John. 1974. *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*. London; Cumbler, J.T. 1979 *Working Class Community in Industrial America: Work, Leisure and Struggle in Two Industrial Cities 1880-1930*. Connecticut: Westport.

Of importance here and particularly relevant to the study is the strong emphasis Bozzoli places (also present in the work of Hyslop (1996) and Hofmeyr (1987)) on actors who are fashioned as self-conscious creators of the myths around which communities and ethnicities are shaped. Consequently, these theorists are interested in the way in which Afrikaner identity has been constructed and invented. In exploring this issue, they focus on the creators of the very myths and symbols that make it possible to 'invent a nation' and on the artefacts or products that are produced to speak to those that the creators want to endow with a particular identity. However, it is recognised that community creators do not operate in an unlimited field. Identity is fragmented and fractured along many other lines, including class, ethnicity, geography, etc. The question is therefore what strategies these self-conscious community-creators employ in order to craft myths and symbols that transcend, for example, class fractures. Another way of phrasing the question is provided by Bonner & Lodge's (1989:7) rephrasing of a question posed by Paul la Hausse in the same volume:

'the extent to which leaders [of popular political movements (eds)] (sic) had their own class agendas, and the way in which 'the common-sense ideas and the culture of [the] (sic) labouring poor set important limits' to these leaders' freedom of action, forcing them to 'negotiate within a particular [and usually regionally centred (eds)] cultural universe', if they wished to succeed.

Yet another implication of taking Anderson's imagined communities seriously is the way in which it highlights the relationship between the production of cultural artefacts and capitalism. Bozzoli argues that

every cultural institution acquires an economic character as soon as incomes are to be made from its existence – and those who survive and prosper because of their involvement in a cultural institution, find their interests taking a distinctly material form as well as a cultural one (Bozzoli 1983:22-23)

Now, at the time of the release of the Carnegie report there did exist among Afrikaners a stratum of educated professionals or a petty bourgeoisie. Lazer argues that the definition for the intelligentsia should in this case be expanded not only to include writers, journalists and academics, but also teachers, clerics, and to some extent lawyers (quoted in Bonner, Delius & Posel 1993: 21). Their fate was closely tied in with that of the Afrikaner working class, as they lacked a support base of their own. The civil service favoured the employment of English speakers and the large-scale move of Afrikaners to the cities eroded their traditional base in the country. While they had been

active in projects to uplift the white poor, this group intensified their involvement with the white poor after the release of the Carnegie report. It is this group that is generally regarded as the self-conscious community creators, the actors in the construction of Afrikaner nationalism. The petty bourgeoisie was not a homogenous group and their efforts to capture a new power base for themselves culminated in the establishment of a wide and disparate range of movements and interventions. This took place against the background of the full incorporation of Afrikaners into a capitalist economy. The most powerful of these organisations was the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB).

The Afrikaner Broederbond (AB) was established in the Transvaal in 1918. In 1921 it was reconstituted as a secret organisation. The AB was a distinctly 'urban grouping of the petty bourgeoisie' (O'Meara 1983:60). The AB came to be dominated by academics (specifically theologians) from the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education in the second half of the 1920s. For most of the 1920s the organisation confined itself to operations in the cultural domain, focusing on issues such as mother tongue education, the development of Afrikaans literature, and the promotion of the use of Afrikaans as language of instruction in schools and medium of education in commerce (Pelzer quoted in O'Meara 1983:61). The establishment of the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations), known as the FAK, in 1929 constitutes an important new phase for the AB. It is clear that the AB saw itself as the patron of the FAK, and, indeed, the FAK was described as its public arm (see O'Meara 1983: 61). In the period after the establishment of the FAK, the AB not only expanded its membership, but also broadened and consolidated its influence by following a policy that encouraged the 'infiltration' of its members into key positions. This process is described by O'Meara as follows:

A picture emerges of an immense informal network of influence in all regions and all sections of the Afrikaner community, together with a powerful organisational bond forging very strong group loyalties. The vital significance of the Bond as it developed after fusion lay in the fact that through it the intellectual cream of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie was independently organised into a militant, highly disciplined body. Through the coordination and direction of the disparate individual talents of this class, and their 'systematic infiltration' into all 'key bodies in national life' where they could exercise 'quiet influence', the Bond provides a superb vehicle for the discussion, elaboration and adoption and eventual execution of what, after fusion, amounted to the independent programme of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie (O'Meara 1983:64).

Membership of the AB was on invitation only, and was exclusively white, male and Afrikaans:

This heavily petty-bourgeois membership comprised in effect the cream of the northern Afrikaner intelligentsia, and came to be regarded – and so regarded itself – as the self-chosen elite of 'Afrikanerdom' (O'Meara 1983:63).

The Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie were not unified classes either. Far from being the united force setting out to capture the Afrikaner working classes to the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism, many of the white Afrikaans-speaking members of these classes were embracing another identity. Even by the 1940s, both the Afrikaner bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie (Afrikaners in professional careers such as medical doctors and lawyers) were small in number, and, significantly, the language of the bourgeoisie was English (Bonner, Delius & Posel 1993: 22, Lazer, J. 1987). The following statistics provide some idea of the spread of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie:

By 1946 3,1% of Afrikaners were directors or owners, 4,35% were professionals or teachers and 7% were clerks (the equivalent figures for English speakers were 11,3%, 9,9% and 15, 9%).¹⁴

Many of these professionals were speaking English at work and at home and slowly became delinked from their Afrikaans and/or Afrikaner backgrounds and assimilated themselves into English culture. Stals (1986:22) explains this phenomenon among the Afrikaner elite in Johannesburg on the Rand:

[t]he small percentage of Afrikaners that rose to a more affluent level was not so many in numbers that they could become the majority in affluent neighbourhoods. Consequently, they settled in affluent neighbourhoods where English-speakers were the majority by far, and as individuals in a completely strange environment they came very strongly under the influence of the English culture and way of life. Thus, in many cases they became separated from their fellow Afrikaners [my translation].

¹⁴ (Bonner, Delius & Posel 1993:39 quoting Lazer, J. 1987, *Conformity and Conflict, Afrikaner Nationalist Politics in South Africa, 1948-1961*. Doctoral Thesis, Oxford University, p. 96).

In his analysis of Afrikaner nationalism, O'Meara focuses on the way in which various classes and class formations within what was cast as 'Afrikanerdom' managed to build an alliance that led to the National Party victory in 1948. He therefore does not explain Afrikaner nationalism as a type of frontier prejudice common to Afrikaners – as most – at times perhaps disingenuous – interpretations of their work attribute to Liberal scholarship. Influenced by Poulantzian Marxist scholarship, O'Meara examines the relationships between capitalist accumulation, class fractions and the nationalist project, paying specific attention to the economic movement, best captured in the phrase *Volkskapitalisme*. O'Meara shows how the balance of power in Afrikaner class fractions shifts after 1948. In the 1930s, it is the intelligentsia and the petty bourgeoisie who draft the nationalist agenda. By October 1950, at the second *Ekonomiese Volkskongres*, delegates are mostly from commerce and industry. In his analysis of events, O'Meara argues that the Afrikaner bourgeoisie succeeded in shifting the contents of Afrikaner nationalism away from a socialist anti-capitalist (though probably more anti-imperial) stance to an embrace of capitalism. This, O'Meara argues, indicates that by the time of the National Party victory in 1948 the bourgeoisie had successfully displaced the petty bourgeoisie as the delegates of the 'volk' (1983:248).

Revisiting Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid state: New questions

Anderson's analysis of nationalism points to the importance of a study of print texts in examining specific forms of nationalism. In particular, he shows that print-capitalism, language and the interests of the intelligentsia are joined together in the development of texts. This study has as its principal focus an examination of the role of popular literature in the construction of Afrikaner identity and the dissemination of the ideologies of Afrikaner nationalism. Revisiting the terrain of Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid state with a specific emphasis on the construction of Afrikaner identity and the invention of the nation as postulated by Anderson, what then are some of the questions that need to be restated, which are the areas of inquiry that display gaps and silences, and - given the space for inquiry that has been opened up in the post-apartheid era - what are new questions that can now be posed? This question can be answered in varied and numerous ways, but given the focus of the present study, six primary fields of inquiry have been identified. These are (1) exploring in more detail the way in which ideas and ideology of Afrikaner nationalism formulated by the elite were disseminated and turned into a form of 'mass consciousness', in other words, exploring and explaining how Afrikaner subjectivities were constructed; (2) revisiting issues of class and class fractions within 'Afrikanerdom' with a focus on examining the

composition of the petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, exploring the upward and downward mobility between this class and other classes, and documenting contestation and resistance; (3) restating the question about what the central idea or ideas were that Afrikaner nationalism was premised upon and held together by and examining critically the preposition that it was the idea of apartheid; (4) engaging with problems of explanation of Afrikaner nationalism, in particular the national focus of most studies; (5) posing questions about the construction of identity and subjectivities, in particular looking at the kind of subjectivity the apartheid state required from its citizens and tracking the ways in which these subjectivities were produced and changed in order to answer a question about the way in which changes in subjectivity played a role in the undoing of apartheid, and (6) moving beyond the limits of exceptionalism theses to insert research on Afrikaner nationalism within present debates on ethnic nationalism and the politics of identity and debates on the construction of a new South African nation. These fields of inquiry are discussed in greater detail below.

Reviewing theoretical accounts of Afrikaner nationalism, there seems to be in the first instance a gap in terms of the way in which the process through which the ideas and ideologies of the intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie successfully permeated the consciousness of Afrikaners of all classes is explained. O'Meara articulates this challenge as follows:

'Christian-nationalism' or 'Afrikaner nationalism' was more than a complex intellectual-ideological framework representing certain views of the world. The terms also encompass the mass social and political movement which emerged, comprised of widely disparate groups, mobilised through this ideology. It is not enough simply to trace the literary forms of development of the ideational structure and simply assume its inherent appeal to all Afrikaans-speakers. The actual translation of such literary forms of ideology from intellectual journals and the debates of elite groups into a form of mass consciousness – the process by which the new subject was successfully interpellated – has to be investigated (O'Meara 1983:74).

Drawing on Gramsci, O'Meara distinguishes between ideology on the literary level and the practical or popular. He argues that during the 1930s, through the Afrikaner Broederbond, Afrikaner intellectuals were successful in crafting the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism on the literary level, i.e. as a form of discourse shared among intellectuals, but that this had not yet penetrated to the majority of Afrikaners:

In effect, then, the intellectual ideological debates in the Bond succeeded in the elaboration and development of the concept of a new historical subject – an organically united Afrikaner volk... Yet the ideologues' concept of an organically-united Afrikaner volk was confronted with the reality of intense cultural, class, and political divisions among Afrikaans-speakers (O'Meara 1983:73).

Given these divisions among the ranks of 'Afrikanerdom' and linking this to the elite's project to construct Afrikaner identity and subjectivities, it seems that not one but three questions are raised. First, how did the ideologies of Afrikaner nationalism espoused by the Afrikaner intelligentsia seep into or find their way into forms of discourse and representation that spoke to or was accessed by Afrikaners (or then potential 'Afrikaners') from other classes and class fractions? Second, how does exposure to this discourse or participation in such cultural and symbolic representations explain the transformation of the mind and the emergence of an Afrikaner subjectivity, i.e. what is the theoretical and empirical explanations of the way in which the process of subjectivity formation works? Third, how were the discourses of the elite modified, adapted and interpreted by Afrikaners from different classes who had different interests and concerns?

A second field of inquiry that can benefit from further exploration encompasses the composition of various class formations within what is generally referred to as 'Afrikanerdom'. This includes revisiting issues of class and class fractions with a focus on examining the composition of the petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, exploring the upward and downward mobility between this class and other classes and documenting contestation and resistance from within and between class formations. One of the features of discussions about Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid state has been the ubiquitous phenomenon that notions of Afrikanerdom, Afrikaners, Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid state are merged, the one substituted for by the other, or simply conflated. Underpinning many, though by no means all, of these analyses is a perception of Afrikaners as monolithic *volk* whose unity is not questioned. It has been shown that exceptionalist theses on the apartheid state and Afrikaner nationalism are closely associated with analyses of the South African experience that privilege the issue of race. Most of the theoretical approaches presented above share an essentially structuralist approach to enquiries into the apartheid state. There exists too a body of scholarship that has challenged proponents of structuralist and post-structuralist approaches on the issue of agency and resistance. Bozzoli (1983:17), for example,

reminds us that ethnicity is neither unified nor monolithic, and that the same is true for culture and ideology. This begs for a return to questions about the different groups that made up 'Afrikanerdom' and to disaggregate these groups in order to uncover other and yet untold strategies for securing political power for Afrikaners in 1948. This is articulated by O'Meara as follows:

[W]ho were the differential constituents of Afrikanerdom, and what were the conditions and struggles which led to the rise of Afrikanerdom' (O'Meara 1983:8).

Bonner, Delius & Posel (1993:21-22) comment that the two aspects related to accounts of Afrikaner nationalism that have not received sufficient attention are first understandings of the petty bourgeoisie and the composition of this class and second the interaction and overlap between the petty bourgeoisie and the working class:

Questions remain about the varying degrees of economic differentiation, *patterns of upward and downward mobility*, the extent of co-residence, and the degree to which cross-cutting ties of kinship and marriage existed [my emphasis].

They make a case for a research agenda that looks at the 'contradictions and transformations [that] fostered a whole new complex of pressures and insecurities in the ranks of the white working class and the Afrikaner bourgeoisie' during the period 1935-1962. It is generally acknowledged that the architects of apartheid were members of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie. Bonner, Delius & Posel (1993:21) point out that while much research has focused on the Afrikaner intelligentsia there has not yet been a serious effort to map the composition, changing positions and consciousness of this stratum. To this one can fruitfully add the expansion of this class and the incorporation of members of the working class into this stratum.

A third field of inquiry relates to the coherence and central premises of the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism. Posel (1991) raises a question as to whether there exists evidence to support a claim that Afrikaner unity in 1948 was informed by a single apartheid idea. The investigation can be broadened by expanding the question to ask what was the central idea or ideas that held together and underpinned the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism.

A fourth area for inquiry is linked to the scope of and choice of research sites in studies of Afrikaner nationalism. This issue is raised by Jonathan Hyslop in an article outlining some of the problems of explanation in the study of Afrikaner nationalism. Hyslop (1996) argues that most studies of Afrikaner nationalism try to explain the phenomenon on a national level rather than on a local level. To this one can add tendencies of such research to focus on symbolic representations and the discourse produced by and circulated among the intelligentsia, and not so much everyday and/or local discourses. Studies that have attempted to bridge this gap are those of Brink (1987) and Kruger (1991).

Fifth, a new emphasis on issues of identity opens up the space to ask questions about the subjects of the apartheid state and the nature of subjectivities that it produced. Hyslop (2000) asserts that the National Party, between 1948 and 1970, had as its project the construction of a stable social order around a racist modern state. To make this project successful, he argues that 'a specific kind of subjectivity was required amongst whites, comprising a non-reflexive submission to authority' (Hyslop 2000:37). He makes puts forward the idea that the National Party had largely achieved this aim in the 1960s:

Afrikaners of all social classes benefited immensely from the material improvements in their position which government policies brought about. They were encapsulated in a network of schools, social clubs, churches, cultural and business organizations, which created a self-referential Afrikaner world (Hyslop 2000:37).

Framing the question about the modalities of this kind of subjectivity and the processes involved in the construction of a self-referential Afrikaner world within the broader framework of Anderson's notion of the nation as an imagined communities, Bozzoli (1987:7-8) argues that regardless of the processes and actors orchestrating and sitting behind community creation, at some point in history communities do become 'manifest social entities, with important effects on class and ideological responses'. Hence, the relationship and interrelationships between class formation and community formation constitutes an area for further inquiry:

Men and women are not shaped by their work experiences alone, but by the ways in which they survive and interact at home in the family, or during leisure hours. Economic class position may determine whether or not you are a worker or a peasant, but how you behave as a worker or peasant is not explicable only by reference to the type of labour you undertake (1987:8).

Whereas much of the existing scholarship on Afrikaner nationalism focused on the state and its relationship with capital, far less research has been devoted to the study of ideology and culture. Where it is dealt with, it is often explained in crudely structuralist or culturalist terms. Some notable exceptions are studies by Moodie (1975), Hofmeyr (1987), Hyslop (1995, 1996), Bozzoli (1983), Kruger (1991), O'Meara (1983) and others. The silences are understandable. The particular repressive nature of the apartheid state and its racist policies made it extremely difficult for scholars to explore questions of race, the social construction of which is strongly linked to culture. Moreover, Marxist scholars were intent on emphasising continuities between the Union (and thus colonialism) and the subsequent development of the apartheid state, through its link with capitalist expansion (Alexander 2000). Thus, much of the work that speak to issues of race do not move beyond the point of describing what is already in existence, without attempting to explain how these subjectivities were formed. More recently questions are being asked about the undoing of apartheid and the relationship between this process and changes in the subjectivity of white South Africans (Hyslop 2000).

Finally, there is a need to move beyond the limits of exceptionalism theses and to insert research on Afrikaner nationalism within present debates on ethnic nationalism, the politics of identity, and the construction of a new South African nation to highlight the conditions and characteristics of these processes and to extrapolate from that the way in which the experience of Afrikaner nationalism speaks to present concerns and dangers.

Conclusion

In formulating the present research project, attempts were made to take into account these six avenues of inquiry.

The study explores the way in which the ideas and ideologies of the Afrikaner elite were incorporated into discourses that could speak to other classes. In this sense, the study is linked to the work of Hofmeyr (1987) and Kruger (1991) on popular

publications and focuses on the way in which the ideologies of Afrikaner nationalism were articulated in popular fiction for the youth. Chapter Five and Chapter Six outline the central processes related to the production and dissemination of print texts in Afrikaans and the role of the petty bourgeoisie in these processes. These chapters seek to answer a question about the way in which the ideologies of the elite were disseminated to other classes. In Chapter Seven, the research aims to address the second avenue of inquiry, namely issues relating to class formation, by foregrounding and examining the class position of the author, Stella Blakemore and documenting her complex relationship with other members of the Afrikaner intelligentsia. The study also examines the way in which the expansion of the petty bourgeoisie becomes a central theme in the discourse of Afrikaner nationalism as articulated in the *Keurboslaan* series. Moreover, the study explores the processes through which the kinds of discourse that were permitted to circulate were controlled and vetted and how these processes were undermined and resisted by individuals in the ranks of the intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie.

The study addresses the concerns raised by Jonathan Hyslop with regard to problems of explanation in the study of Afrikaner nationalism by focusing attention on the everyday, the commonplace and not on macro level occurrences or symbolic representations. Finally, the study is mooted in an understanding that it is necessary to move beyond the constraints of exceptionalism theses and to explore ways in which peculiarities of the experience of Afrikaner nationalism speaks to forms of ethnic nationalism prevalent today and can help us understand these processes. In addition, this study hopes to contribute to scholarship that traces continuities and discontinuities between the project of Afrikaner nationalism and the current project that is aimed at fostering a new South African nation.

Chapter Three: Studying popular fiction

In the eighteenth century, the ideology of Enlightenment claimed that the book was capable of reforming society, that educational popularisation could transform manners and customs, that an elite's products could, if they were sufficiently widespread, remodel a whole nation. This myth of Education inscribed a theory of consumption in the structures of cultural politics... But all through this evolution, the idea of producing a society by a 'scriptural' system has continued to have as its corollary the conviction that although the public is more or less resistant, it is moulded by (verbal or iconic) writing, that it becomes similar to what it receives, and that it is *imprinted* by and like the text which is imposed on it.

Michel de Certeau (1988:166-167)

There remains the literary domain, which is particularly rich today (from Barthes to Riffaterre or Jauss), once again privileged by writing, but highly specialized: 'writers' shift the 'joy of reading' in a direction where it is articulated on an art of writing and on a pleasure of re-reading. In that domain, however, whether before or after Barthes, deviations and creativities are narrated that play with the expectations, tricks, and normativities of the 'work read'; the theoretical models that can account for it are already elaborated. In spite of all of this, the story of man's travels through his own texts remains in large measure unknown

Michel de Certeau (1988:170)

Introduction

Stella Blakemore's *Keurboslaan* series can be described as popular fiction for juveniles. The narrative structure and plot in each of the twenty books are formulaic and the outcomes of stories predictable. As such, the series has much in common with other formula texts aimed at adult audiences, including the romance and detective novel. Hence, it follows that a study on the *Keurboslaan* series demands at minimum the same analytical approach and methodological tools that are appropriate to the study of adult popular fiction. In this chapter, issues related to methodology and evidence in the study of popular fiction are considered and assumptions about the relationship between popular fiction and ideology explored. In addition, an overview is provided of the study of popular fiction in South Africa, with an emphasis on projects that have illuminated the relationship between Afrikaner nationalism and popular literature.

The question posed in this chapter is how one can study the cultural domain not on a macro level examining symbolic representations, cultural events and manifestations, but on a micro level with a focus on the everyday event, the mundane and the routine. This study is concerned with the relationship between literature and society on the one hand and in the historical emergence of a specific text or set of texts, the discourse it contains, the meaning(s) ascribed to it and the social implications or effects thereof on the other. Alternatively phrased, this study examines the relationship between cultural practices and broader social practices. However, since the study is pitched at a micro level of investigation, the aim is to illuminate the everyday practice of reading popular texts and not the reading practices associated with texts disseminated by the state apparatus through the formal education system or the canonised corpus. The event of reading is – in everyday practice – a solitary activity in which the reader engages with the specific text. As such, positing a relationship between literature and society invokes a micro level question about the relationship between the practice of reading and the construction of particular subjectivities. Postulating a broader relationship between society and literature, or, then, between the text and the creation of subjectivity, necessarily invokes debates on the autonomy of the author in the creation of the text or literary work; the way in which readers utilise strategies to interpret the text; the (elusive) meaning(s) of the text; and the social effects of both the event of reading and the reading of a specific text. Such an undertaking therefore requires a method of reading texts, as well as a theory of the author, a theory of the subject and the making of subjectivity, and a theory of reading. In this regard, the present study draws on the writings of Louis Althusser, Michel de Certeau and Pierre Bourdieu.

Literature and Society: Theoretical footnotes to the present study

Two debates frame this study. The first is methodological and theoretical differences with regard to texts and their meaning(s). The second relates to distinctions between literature and popular fiction. These two debates are briefly discussed and the premises of this study outlined, before a few constructs of major theorists whose work inform this study are examined.

There exists a major cleavage between approaches to the study of so-called 'literary' texts and that of popular fiction. In terms of the former, central questions are asked about the principles of the aesthetic, its conditions for existence, the way in which the value of an artistic work is measured as well as the criteria used to measure that value, and the extent to which what is regarded to be aesthetic is seen to be universal. In

terms of the latter, the question most often posed is on the relationship between the cultural product and ideology. Even though the Romantic tradition of searching the text for remnants of the author's life experiences and worldview is no longer prevalent in the study of literature, it is not unusual to find such analyses in respect of popular texts. It should be noted from the outset that this study contends that the critical project of the Frankfurt School and its analysis of the ideological effects of cultural products, including mass-market products, should be renewed and sustained. However, together with Laclau (1990:51), Bennett (1981) and others the author rejects any crude distinction made between a low culture that is regarded to be ideological and a high culture that is seen to offer prospects for liberation and social change.

Questions on the meanings of a text and the social impact of such meanings have been phrased in a number of different ways. Essentially, though, these debates have mainly oscillated between internal readings of the text and external analyses of the processes around the production, dissemination and consumption of the text. Another fault line that runs through debates on the ultimate meaning of a text and where that meaning is located is the methodological distinction between empiricist and idealist approaches to the study of literature. A choice of methodology mostly corresponds with different disciplinary traditions. Literary and cultural studies generally favour an idealist approach. Beyond the realm of literary studies, however, the sociology of literature and communication studies use empirical (and sometimes quantitative) methods to study issues pertaining to the way in which literature functions as a means of social control, the extent to which literature reflects society, and the impact of literature in shaping and constructing society. The point of departure of this study is that these kind of theoretical and methodological oppositions produce research that is unnecessarily limited and that a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of texts is preferred. This entails using a methodological and theoretical approach that transcends the kind of dichotomies outlined above. In the practice of discourse analysis two directions can be distinguished in Marxist theory, namely more structuralist and more culturalist approaches, or, phrased in other terms, scientific Marxist versus humanistic Marxist methods. Whereas the former draws on the work of the French structuralist Louis Althusser and emphasises the extent to which culture produces the subject, the latter approach gives preference to the possibilities of social agency derived from the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Whilst both theorists subscribe to the notion of an expanded state and highlight the role of the ruling class in ideological and cultural practices, there are significant and fundamental theoretical differences between them. Structuralists maintain that ideology predates history and that it produces subjects.

Theorists in this tradition argue that the domain of cultural practices can influence the economic base and that the cultural domain at times may be the dominant domain even though the economic base remains the determinant in the last instance. Structuralism has been severely criticised because its claim that ideology structures individuals into place rules out the possibility of human agency and social change. Culturalist approaches, on the other hand, highlight the potential of human agency to effect social change and maintain that culture influences social action and can change history. This kind of approach has been critiqued for being too humanistic, thus bestowing onto individuals a lot of authority and freedom, which ultimately erodes the need for collective action.

Different methodological approaches are associated with these two approaches. While structuralist analyses of ideology informed by the works of Louis Althusser start with the text, culturalist analyses often begin with social subjects and how they interact with texts. Antonio Gramsci's cultural materialism places attention on the production, distribution and consumption of culture, while Althusserian critiques are aimed at reading texts symptomatically to identify and expose the gaps and silences in the text, which are taken to be evidence of discourses that have been silenced by the dominant ideology. This does not mean that textual analyses are ruled out by a Gramscian approach. The method of reading against the grain, which is also a text-based method of analysis, is associated with a Gramscian approach. Whilst this method has much in common with Althusser's notion of symptomatic reading, it is different from that method in terms of its purpose. Reading against the grain entails using a set of tools to survey a text for ideological contradictions. These tools are also used to identify and analyse the existence of multiple and competing discourses and the relationship between readers and the popular texts they read. Central to this kind of venture is to identify the dominant meaning of a text and to find ways in which that meaning may be subverted. The purpose of reading against the grain is to collect evidence, which may include speaking to readers about the texts they read and their material realities, in an attempt to find inconsistencies and contradictions that may be exploited in an effort to change the meanings people derive from the texts they engage with. This is aimed at assisting them to build an awareness or consciousness of themselves as workers, women, or so forth in an attempt to develop an alternative hegemony.

The decision about whether to follow a more structuralist or more culturalist mode of operation in this study is an important one. The work of Gramsci certainly presents a very rewarding mode of engaging with the question of popular literature and

nationalism. A brief overview of some of his most important theoretical contributions that are pertinent to this study is offered.

Arguably, Antonio Gramsci is one of the most important Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century. At the core of his political project is the question of power and how it operates in advanced capitalist societies. A strong belief in agency underpins his writings, as he wishes to develop a revolutionary working class consciousness. Gramsci rejects economic determinism in Marxist theory, arguing instead that the economic infrastructure of society is the background against which events in society take place and may therefore influence events. Gramsci defines the state not in terms of institutions, but in terms of the activities of the dominant class. He does not relegate ideology to the super structure but regards it as part of the material conditions of everyday life. Gramsci's cultural materialism, and in particular his notion of hegemony, took classical Marxism with its overemphasis on economic factors, relegating the domain of the culture and ideology as inferior, in a completely new direction. Gramsci provided a far more nuanced and layered understanding of ideology and culture and his notion of hegemony opened up the way to analyse the relationship between culture and politics.

Gramsci argues that the ruling group in society exercises hegemony throughout society. Hegemony is described by Adamson as having two separate but associated definitions in Gramsci's writings, although he concedes that the two understandings of hegemony are used with great independence from each other (Adamson 1980:173). In the first instance, hegemony is understood as the 'consensual basis of an existing political system within civil society'. Gramsci argues that through civil society the ruling class persuades the population to share their beliefs. In order to retain a hegemonic position, the ruling class incorporates alternative or oppositional beliefs, in doing so subverting or co-opting possibilities for radical social change. Yet, Gramsci maintains that ruling class hegemony can never be complete as a result of historical blocs, the alliances that the ruling class enter into as concessions to retain hegemony, and individuals' dual consciousness. Gramsci places a strong emphasis on the role of what he terms organic intellectuals and the way in which organic intellectuals can assist to develop an alternative hegemony that includes an awareness of class consciousness among workers and peasants. In the second instance, hegemony is described as the way in which class consciousness among the proletariat needs to be developed in order to overcome 'the "economic-corporative"... [at] a particular historical stage within the political moment' (Anderson 1980:171). Defining hegemony in this way implies that

the development of an alternative hegemony involves developing class consciousness 'where class is understood not only economically but also in terms of a common intellectual and moral awareness, a common culture' (Adams 1980:171). In this endeavour organic intellectuals have a key role to play. From the above it is evident that Gramsci thought of hegemony as a 'mode of rule' that is the opposite of violent coercion and could be used by both the bourgeoisie and the makers of a proletarian potential state (Anderson 1980: 171). Moreover, accepting the notion of hegemony as a form of rule draws attention to its *cultural form* or orientation.

The decision of which approach to use essentially hinges on (1) the method of analysis employed in this study, (2) the extent to which the author agrees or disagrees with the different embodiments or notions of agency offered by the theorists, and (3) the way in which the practical operation of ideology in popular texts can be explained or illuminated by the different theoretical frameworks. This study explores both the discourse in the *Keurboslaan* texts and the processes of production and distribution of the texts, and employs both text based or discourse analysis techniques and empirical data on the production, circulation and consumption of the *Keurboslaan* series. Yet, whilst it does offer an account of the critical reception of the series, it does not include any reader studies. In terms of method it is therefore indebted more to Althusser than to Gramsci. Given that the study is framed by the notion of the everyday, the notion of agency present in Gramscian analysis is felt to be too strong in a domain where De Certeau's notion of tactics seems to be more appropriate. While he does not present an adequately nuanced theory of the subject, and by implication of the reader and the author, Althusser's account of the way in which the subject is hailed in discourse through a process of interpellation is believed to be a fruitful way of asking questions about popular literature, provided that is it used together with theories that illuminate the subject. Based on these factors, the method of analysis in the present study is derived from Althusser, whilst Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual is employed in Chapter Seven. Whilst Anderson offers an enormously useful analytical framework for interpreting and making sense of the production, circulation and consumption of texts as a practice closely associated with the birth of the nation, albeit constituted as imaginary, there are a number of other approaches that underpin this study. The study combines the method of a structuralist theorist, Louis Althusser, with a theory of reading drawn from the work of Michel de Certeau and a theory of the author and the reader as espoused by Pierre Bourdieu. In this attempt to straddle culturalist and structuralist approaches, it is hoped that Althusser's structuralist notion of the way in which ideology *interpellates* the subject will be tempered by Bourdieu's concept of

habitus and De Certeau's concept of *tactics*, thereby retaining the notion of agency, albeit in a limited sense. The contributions of these three theorists are discussed briefly below

Louis Althusser: The interpellation of the subject and symptomatic reading

Althusser argues against mechanistic Marxism and its exclusive focus on the economic and takes on as his project to restore to Marxist thinking its scientific base. He is particularly interested in cultural practices and ideology and the mechanisms through which the ruling class in society *describes* their society or, alternatively phrased, *creates a particular self-image of society*. Thus, he believes that through ideology it is possible to create for an individual a self-image that is not derived from the economic base – such as the self-image of a worker – but to create a different way for individuals to understand themselves, their material conditions, and the way in which they relate to the world.

In his well-known essay, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', first published in *La Pensée* in 1970, Althusser espouses on his theory of ideology and the interpellation of the subject, which is pertinent to this study. Althusser asserts that classic Marxist theory of the state needs to be expanded to incorporate not only the distinction between state power and the State Apparatus, but also a broader understanding of State Apparatus that includes both the Repressive State Apparatus (that which was originally thought to comprise the State Apparatus *per se*) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). According to Althusser, the Repressive State Apparatus encompasses government, bureaucracy, the army, the police force, and the judicial and penile systems. Ideological State Apparatuses, on the other hand, as defined by Althusser are 'the religious ISA (The system of different Churches); the educational ISA (the system of different public and private "Schools"); the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties); the trade-union ISA; the communications ISA (press, radio, and television, etc.); the cultural ISA (Literature, Arts, sports, etc.)' (Althusser 1977:137).

The differences between the two forms of state apparatus that Althusser identifies are evident. First, the Repressive State Apparatus is a single entity that comprises of different components, whereas Ideological State Apparatuses are scattered and plural. Second, the Repressive State Apparatus is part of the public domain whilst Ideological State Apparatuses belong to the private domain. Third, the Repressive State Apparatus

operates primarily through the use of violence (i.e. repression) and only secondary through ideology, whilst Ideological State Apparatuses use ideology as method of operation, with only a secondary and minor role allocated to repression or force. Althusser's argument for an expanded definition of the state is that the state is inevitably linked to the ruling class:

The distinction between the public and the private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in the (subordinate) domains in which bourgeois law exercises its 'authority'. The domain of the State escapes it because the latter is 'above the law': the State, which is the State of the ruling class, is neither public nor private; on the contrary, it is the precondition for any distinction between public and private... (Althusser 1977:139).

Both the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses are inextricably tied to the ruling class. This forms the foundation of Althusser's broad definition of the state. Althusser argues that the ruling class are the holders of state power *and* of power over the Ideological State Apparatuses through its ideologies:

Given that the ruling class in principle holds State power (openly or more often by means of alliances between classes or class fractions), and therefore has at its disposal the (Repressive) State Apparatus, we can accept the fact that this same ruling class is active in the Ideological State Apparatuses insofar as it is ultimately the ruling ideology which is realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses, precisely in its contradictions (Althusser 1977:137-138).

Whilst Althusser's accepts that there are inconsistencies and contradictions in and between the ideologies that circulate in the ISAs at any given point in time, he argues that these ideologies are bound together and singular in purpose by virtue of the fact that they operate within the framework of the ideology of the ruling class:

If the ISAs 'function' massively and predominantly by ideology, what unifies their diversity is precisely the functioning, insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, beneath the ruling ideology, which is the ideology of the 'ruling class' (Althusser 1977:139).

For Althusser, then, ideology is 'a "representation" of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser 1977:152). Nonetheless, he argues that ideology too has a 'material existence' (1977:155). This denotes that ideology has a realistic component, an element of truth, since it is embedded in and

speaking from a present reality. At the same time, though, ideology has a component that is comprised of ideas, imaginations, myths, and images.

The practice of ideology transforms the way in which a subject relates with his/her real life conditions of existence. Althusser asserts that 'all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects' (Althusser 1977:162). According to Althusser, ideology moulds, transforms and equips individuals to deal with the conditions of their existence through a process that he terms 'interpellation'. A subject is hailed as a subject through the material practices of ideology - which is circulated by discourse - to take up a particular subject position. In other words, ideology constructs the subject, a process that Althusser explains as follows:

I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' (Althusser 1977:162-3).

To make explicit the way in which he understands the process of interpellation, Althusser provides the analogy of an individual walking down a street. When the individual is called upon or hailed - (through a verbal call - Hey, you there! – or a whistle) the individual turns around one hundred and eighty degrees, because he/she *recognised* that 'it was really him [sic] who is being hailed' (Althusser 1977:163). Thus, Althusser emphasises the moment of *recognition* as central to the process of being hailed as a subject. Althusser explains that people are '*always already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects' (1977:161-162). What Althusser means here is that even though his analogy rests on the principle of chronology - in practice this is not the way in which the hailing of the subject functions, since 'in reality these things happen without any succession... [t]he existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing' (Althusser 1977:163).

Althusser's structuralist approach is problematic in a number of ways. First, it offers a very limited theorisation of the subject. Second, and linked to the first critique, competing discourses, which have the ability to produce different self images, circulate in society. Whilst Althusser argues that there needs to be a dominant self image, he

does not adequately explain why some people are hailed as subjects by certain discourses and others not. Third, given the slimly theorised subject Althusser leaves no space for any notion of agency, even in a limited sense, and as a result he rules out the potentiality of agency to effect social change. Finally, Althusser – and here he finds himself in the company of other Marxist scholars such as the Frankfurt School and George Lukács – maintains a sharp distinction between Art (or then literature) and popular fiction. In his *A Letter on Art in reply to André Daspre*, he distinguishes between 'authentic art' and works of an average or mediocre level' (Althusser 1977:204).

Despite the major criticism of Althusserian cultural critique, in cultural and literary studies the Althusserian practice of symptomatic reading is widely understood as a method of analysis that counters some of the major criticisms against Althusser and provides a productive strategy for posing questions about the way in which texts shape the world in which their readers live. Althusser's theory of symptomatic reading (Althusser 1970: 28-29) is a form of ideology critique. Kotsopoulos explains that symptomatic reading is an 'interpretative strategy that searches not only for the structural dominants in a text, but, most importantly, for absences and omissions that are an indication of what the dominant ideology seeks to repress, contain, or marginalize' (Kotsopoulos 2002: 3). It is a way of reading that has as its purpose the uncovering (or deconstructing) of the textual unconscious. Through a symptomatic reading of a text, unconscious practices are laid bare and can be turned into words that can be critically examined. The notion of symptomatic reading is derived from medical terminology and implies that the peculiarities that the reader identifies in the text are symptomatic of something else, in other words that the symptoms of the texts point to something else that is more difficult to capture and that lies beneath the surface:

It is in this sense that symptomatic reading treats the text as symptom, locating the marks of the text's 'dis-ease' relation to itself, reconstructing the problematic concealed by reading from the dominant discourse (Strickland 2001).

Symptomatic reading as a practice involves scrutinising the text for disruptions, which may include a change of tone, an inconsistency or a contradiction, a chance remark or even a turn of phrase that seems to be ill fitting in the specific context. These disruptions or inconsistencies are identified and related to what is going on in the larger culture. Symptomatic reading is therefore premised on the assumption that a text

presents a certain 'problematic' that can be resolved through this reading practice. At the heart of the practice of symptomatic reading is an inquiry into the ideological. Ron Strickland explains the way in which symptomatic reading is embedded in an investigation into ideological frameworks in the following way:

Symptomatic reading is based on the assumption that meaning is the effect of particular power/knowledge relations – that meaning is produced in discursive conflict, not inherently or authoritatively given. No text, therefore, can be read in isolation. All texts are implicated in particular ideological frameworks and systems of reading. To read symptomatically is to reconstruct the conditions that enable the text to make sense within these frameworks. The symptomatic reading makes visible the suppressed discourses, the naturalized (hence invisible) power relations, the system of exclusion which allows the text to make sense in particular ways (Strickland 2001).

As a result of its focus on the ideological domain, the practice of symptomatic reading aims to uncover the extent to which different groups in society's interests are served through discourse. Whilst a text could have competing meanings, there usually is a dominant meaning that is directly available to the reader:

Finally, the symptomatic reading should strive to show what interests are served by the way in which 'meaning' is produced and by the kinds of meaning that are most readily available and/or desirable to us – meanings which seem 'natural' or 'obvious' (Strickland 2001).

Strickland (2001a) argues that in terms of epistemology, the reader practising symptomatic reading is not the idealist subject that is associated with other ways of reading such as close reading, since he or she knowingly occupies a subject position located within a theoretical discourse that interrogates the discourses of the dominant ideologies offered in the text. It is the self-conscious awareness of his or her discursive position that enables the symptomatic reader to construct the text's ideological framework and to identify its silences and absences. As a result, whereas close reading implies interpreting the text on its own terms, symptomatic reading requires an epistemological break between the text and the reader. The strategies associated with the practice of symptomatic reading, include, but are not limited to, the following list:

Some of the ways in which symptomatic reading can proceed include: interrogation of the text's situatedness within literary and/or other discourses; critiques of the ideological functions of particular texts in the various moments

of production and reproduction; analyses of the reader's [subject] positioning in relation to the text (Strickland 2001).

The practice of symptomatic reading is employed in Chapters Eight and Chapter Nine to analyse the discursive frameworks of the *Keurboslaan* series. This study is, however, indebted to Althusser beyond his method of reading, and draws on both his definition of ideology and his notion of interpellation, despite some of the criticisms of his position espoused earlier. It is argued here that a softer reading of Althusser's notion of interpellation provides a constructive way of describing and understanding the mechanism through which ideology work, provided that the notion of interpellation is enhanced with a stronger theory of the subject that can explain why some subjects are hailed through discourse and others not. A softer reading of Althusser's notion of interpellation posits the process of hailing the subject through discourse not as a recruitment of the subject to adopt a specific set of beliefs, but rather as a call to understand him- or herself and their relations to the world in a specific way, or as a *way of being in the world*.¹⁵ Returning to Althusser's definition of ideology, this study is based on an understanding of ideology as 'a "representation" of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser 1977:152) that has a 'material existence' too (1977:155).

Michel De Certeau: Reading as a practice of everyday life

The French theorist Michel de Certeau's work is situated in a tradition of scholarship on the nature and experience of the everyday life. His approach nestles in the way in which people 'make do' in their daily lives, the extent to which they engage with rules in a creative way, and the way in which they fashion their own lives through their practices. The second volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life* published in English (1998) appeared originally as *Arts de faire* (The Invention of the Everyday), which signals the way in which the everyday is not simply that which is given, but that it is a set of practices that is actively constructed, modelled, and produced. The social is seen as analogous to a system of language, with the practice, the competence of speaking, language in use, juxtaposed against that. De Certeau therefore distinguishes between *rules* and *practices* and *strategies* and *tactics*, in much the same way as relationship between *langue* and *parole* is presented. Theoretically he therefore offers an argument about the importance of the study of the everyday and of the tactics through which people make do, subvert, and invent their being in the world through everyday

¹⁵ This phrasing has been derived from Ivor Chipkin.

practices. Hence, Deborah Posel argues that De Certeau helps to 'debunk the romanticism of resistance that characterises so much of social science scholarship', by bringing to the foreground for inquiry the mundane, the commonplace, the humdrum of everyday life and focusing on strategies people use to manoeuvre around.¹⁶

On the question of methodology, he does not produce a finite answer, but hints to the gaps, the silences, that which remains elusive, escapes our grip and hinders our ability to understand. De Certeau does not assume that individuals possess the ability to provide the sole interpretation of their lives. He therefore points to the need to use a wide range of methodological tools and interpretative and explanatory methods. To decipher meaning, to make sense of these micro level practices and their relationship to the macro level, thus requires a sophisticated and comprehensive approach, which, almost by definition, makes it an interdisciplinary undertaking.

De Certeau's notion of agency – and it needs to be emphasised that he does not use this term – is a limited one. The individual can at most temporarily disrupt the social framework by 'playing' the rules: taking a shortcut through a park where there is no footpath; riding 'black' on a train; picking up loose bricks from city pavements and carrying it home to build a porch. De Certeau's interest lies in the routine, the daily, the micro level activity, and not in the historical moment or heroism of individuals. He therefore offers a limited understanding of the possibilities of social action and of the ways in which people 'make do' to secure their livelihoods.

De Certeau provides us with a different way into the question about the practice of reading and the reading subject. This is an ethnographic approach to the practice of reading, which he describes as ethnography of reading. In a chapter entitled, 'Reading as Poaching', De Certeau argues that the domain of art remains exclusive, whereas consumers are being captured by the mass media, namely television, newspapers and books. De Certeau challenges the assertion that consumption, i.e. the act of reading, is a passive activity:

By challenging 'consumption' as it is conceived and (of course) confirmed by these 'authorial' enterprises, we may be able to discover creative activity where it has been denied that any exists, and to relativize the exorbitant claim that a certain kind of production (real enough, but not the only kind) can set out to produce history by 'informing' the whole of a country.

¹⁶ Deborah Posel, notes from lecture, November 2001.

De Certeau restores to the reader, the ordinary reader that reads everyday texts, a certain ability for creative imagining. This can be thought of as tactics used by readers in the event of reading. Creative reading strategies may include the reader turning first to the end of the book to read the end, before turning back to the first page to commence with the book, or the reader who skips descriptive paragraphs, or perhaps the reader whose eyes jump over the names of characters, so that in the end she can recall the narrative, but not the names of any of the characters.

De Certeau outlines three *moments* in the practice of reading that is of relevance for this study. First, De Certeau (1988: xxi) sees in the idiosyncratic reading habits (or practices) of the reader – such as those outlined in the preceding paragraph – evidence that the act of reading, the moment of reading, is a *productive* moment and comprises a silent production:

In reality, the activity of reading has on the contrary all the characteristics of a silent production: the drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance.

The second moment – which takes place simultaneously with the first and the third – is the moment of forgetting, moving on, delving further into the text whilst something becomes lost, some of that which has been read stays behind and is never recovered. He articulates this moment as follows:

But since he is incapable of stockpiling (unless he writes or records), the reader cannot protect himself against the erosion of time (while reading, he forgets himself and he forgets what he has read) unless he buys the object (book, image), which is no more than a substitute (the spoor of promise) of moments 'lost' in reading.

The third moment is the moment of invention, when the reader inserts something of himself/herself into the practice of reading so as to make the text more familiar and ultimately more meaningful:

He insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it like the internal rumblings of one's body. Ruse, metaphor, arrangement, this

production is also an 'invention' of the memory. Words become the outlet or product of silent histories. The readable transforms itself into the memorable: Barthes reads Proust in Stendhal's text, the viewer reads the landscape of his childhood in the evening news. A different world (the reader's) slips into the author's place... This mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment.

Working with the analogy of language, De Certeau argues that just as in the act of speaking, the speaker inserts something about her own history and background - through the accent, turn of phrase - the reader reads and at the same time inserts something of herself and her world into the text and its meaning.

It is then from understanding these *moments*, that one can start making some conclusions about the way in which De Certeau's thoughts can be used to understand the way in which reading *works* and the extent to which the practice of reading can be described as producing certain effects. If reading is conceived of as both poaching and leaving something (of oneself and one's world) behind, whilst at the same time the act of reading is not exercised under conditions of suspension of time, but, on the contrary, is closely linked to the passing of time (as the reader reads, time passes and some of what has been read is lost and forgotten), then this could help us make sense of Althusser's notion of the interpellation of the subject. Remnants of the experience of reading a particular text lingers long after the text has been read. These remnants cannot be distinguished from the experience of reading. It could be argued that this contributes to broaden the world or to co-produce the world in which the reader lives.

Anderson makes a clear argument about the importance of the written text in itself in creating an imagined community on a number of levels. Yet he does not explain the event of reading and its effects. De Certeau's understanding of the way in which people read as a practice similar to the practice of walking through the city, is not a meta narrative of agency. Rather, it is a reminder about the importance of focusing on the way in which ordinary people 'make do' given particular constraints and limitations, and a warning not to see those constraints and limitations as a process that 'informs' subjectivity in a one-way transmission:

But whereas the scientific apparatus (ours) is led to share the illusion of the powers it necessarily supports, that is, to assume that the masses are transformed by the conquests and victories of expansionist production, it is always good to remind ourselves that we mustn't take people for fools (1988:176).

Given the problematic addressed in this study, De Certeau's approach is useful in three ways. First, his notion of the everyday experience frames this study and offers a theoretical base for studying the practice of reading popular literature. Second, he allows us to move beyond the dilemma Althusser left us with, which is the impossibility of human agency. He offers a nuanced notion of human agency, without slipping back into an overemphasis on the power of human agency. Third, his approach is useful in overcoming the limits of the method of symptomatic reading that this research employs. A symptomatic reading of oppositional practices in texts remains an intellectual endeavour. Whereas this type of approach forces the interpreter to self-consciously acknowledge his/her subject position in order to expose the ideological workings of the text, it tells us nothing about the way in which the ordinary reader approaches the text. De Certeau draws our attention once again to the importance of trying to make sense of specific practices and the way in which meaning is generated through those practices from the view of the participants.

Pierre Bourdieu and the habitus

In his work, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu scrutinizes 'the relationship between systems of thought, social institutions and different forms of material and symbolic power' (Bourdieu 1993:1). He asks questions about the way in which specific works (or texts) link with other, and does not limit his scope of enquiry to canonised works of arts, but deliberately extends it to include all cultural productions. Bourdieu's work on literature is perhaps most closely situated to the literary tradition of new historicism. Bourdieu's work is powerful for two reasons. First, he succeeds in working across academic disciplines to create new avenues and methods for analysing the relationship between literature and society. Second, his method is analytically rigorous and comprehensive.

Bourdieu's approach to the study of cultural productions, like all his work, derives from a concern with being comprehensive in analysing the social. In terms of what he calls the literary field, Bourdieu stands critical of both internal, discourse analysis methods of analysis as well as of more sociological studies on the production, consumption, and dissemination of texts. Bourdieu's work is particularly interesting because of the innovative way in which he makes it possible again to introduce questions about the author, without lapsing back into a Romantic tradition. Bourdieu emphasises the

necessity of looking at the text, as well as its conditions of production and consumption when analysing a text:

It can be only an unjustifiable abstraction (which could fairly be called reductive) to seek the source of the understanding of cultural productions in these productions themselves, taken in isolation and divorced from the conditions of their production and utilization, as would be the wish of discourse analysis, which, situated on the border between sociology and linguistics, has nowadays relapsed into indefensible forms of internal analysis (1989:xvii).

While Bourdieu's broader project speaks to the objectives of this study on numerous levels, his theoretical contribution is used in a very limited extent in this study and is primarily confined to his notion of *habitus* and the way in which this concept is linked to his desire to restore agency to the subject:

I wanted, so to speak, to reintroduce agents that Lévi-Strauss and the structuralists, among them Althusser, tended to abolish, making them into simple epiphenomena of structure. And I mean agents, not subjects. Action is not the mere carrying out of a rule, or obedience to a rule. Social agents, in archaic societies as well as in ours, are not automata regulated like clocks, in accordance with laws they do not understand (quoted in Bourdieu 1993:269, original quotation from Bourdieu's work, *In other words.*)

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* has become central in the study of cultural production, dissemination and consumption. Bourdieu's defines *habitus* as systems of 'durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them'. This notion can therefore be understood as a kind of cultural habitat - the existence of which the subject is not conscious of - that the subject internalises in the form of dispositions to feel, respond and act in specific ways. It therefore constitutes a field of possibilities from which and within which the individual can act. A person's *habitus* is derived from acculturation, which includes upbringing and education. *Habitus* is however a much broader concept: various social groups are each associated with a *habitus*. These include groups such as social classes, but can also include other groups such as gender groups, the family, and groups defined by nationality, race, and so forth. Whilst an individual's *habitus* is consists partly of the

various group *habitus* inculcated in the individual, he or she also has personal qualities that are not derived from socialisation or acculturation. These personal qualities together with the various group *habitus* comprise a personal *habitus*. It is important to note that the *habitus* cannot be described as a set of beliefs or ideas. The *habitus* functions on the unconscious level and has no representative content, but can only produce practices and actions:

An acquired system of generative schemes, the *habitus* makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production – and only those. Through the *habitus*, the structure of which it is the product governs practice, not only along the paths of mechanical determinism, but within the constraints and limits initially set on its inventions. This infinite yet strictly limited generative capacity is difficult to understand only so long as one remains locked in the usual antinomies – which the concept of the *habitus* aims to transcend – of determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconsciousness, or the individual and society. Because the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning (Bourdieu 1990:55)

From the above extract it is clear that the *habitus* remains an elusive concept for anyone approaching it from either a subjectivist or an objectivist paradigm. Objectivists err because they assume that since they are able to abstract from individual behaviours a set of patterns that can be linked back to a set of beliefs and ideas, those very ideas and beliefs exist in that form in the minds of individuals. Subjectivists, on the other hand, are tied up in the individual experience, which is per definition subjective and therefore cannot illuminate the objective structures that shape individual behaviours and ways of being in the world.

Returning to the field of literature, it should be clear that Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* opens up a way in which to think of the author and his or her *habitus* as separate but related to the space of the text, and that it becomes necessary to explore the relationship between the two domains:

Scientific analysis must work to relate to each other two sets of relations, the space of works or discourses as differential stances, and the space of the positions held by those who produce them (1993:11).

Bourdieu and De Certeau complement each other and address some of the concerns with Althusserian cultural critique. De Certeau highlights the creativity of consumption, exemplified in the tactics of readers. In doing so, he offers both a limited notion of agency and a possible theoretical model to explain why not all subjects are hailed by the same discourse. Bourdieu, whilst too concerned with restoring agency, provides the sophisticated and complex notion of *habitus*, explained as a field of possibilities, which illuminates both the space in which the author and the reader operate and construct meaning. Through the notion of the *habitus* it becomes possible to explain not only why some individuals are hailed as subjects through discourse and others not, but also why and how individuals are hailed as subjects by specific discourses among competing discourses.

Popular fiction and ideology: The case of formula books

At the heart of Marxist approaches to the study of literature are questions about ideology and power. Nonetheless, Marxist criticism, particularly where it concerns the study of popular fiction, has often been less than emancipatory and has not pushed the boundaries of theoretical assumptions about the relationship between literature and society. In his seminal article of 1982, entitled 'Marxism and Popular Fiction: Problems and Prospects', Tony Bennett articulated what he regarded to be the problem with Marxist approaches to the study of literature, and, in particular, the relationship between Marxism and popular fiction. Whereas he had no intention of construing a Marxist approach to popular fiction he wanted to debunk the very distinction between so-called 'high literature' and popular fiction. Why is it, he asked, that Marxist literary criticism seemed to generate the same list of texts that was produced by textual and other mainstream approaches to literature as examples of 'good' literature, with the only difference being that Marxist critics produced a different set of attributes that they felt made these canonised texts superior. The result of this, he argued, was that Marxist literary criticism effectively upheld the canonical tradition and legitimised the existing canon. He pointed out that this phenomenon could be explained in part by the fact there was a paucity of theory that was able to move beyond the idea that good literature can emancipate us; whilst analyses of popular texts started and ended with

the assumption that popular texts and their contents are merely ideological. It is here that Bennett's project intersects with the one outlined in this thesis.

Debates in cultural studies and literature have shifted significantly since the publication of Bennett's article. However, since the study of popular fiction is not confined to those disciplines and is often an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary undertaking, an understanding of popular texts as purely ideological still underpins much of the research in this area. In many of those disciplines where scholars have shown an interest in the way in which the study of popular fiction can explain or illuminate other social phenomena, including political science and education, the idea that 'good literature', 'high literature' or 'canonical literature' is formative whilst popular fiction is corruptive still goes very much unchallenged.

This study is located within the ambit of the relationship between literature and nationalism, a field that has seen many contributions - if not mainly - from the disciplines of political science, history and education. Here the relationship between popular fiction and 'high literature' is often not adequately theorised or is explained along sometimes crudely structuralist lines. The following extract from the introduction to *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* is exemplary of this approach:

Popular fiction is one of the ways in which society instructs its members in its prevailing ideas and mores, its dominant role models and legitimate aspirations. It both reflects popular attitudes, ideas and preconceptions and it generates support for selected views and opinions. So it can act – sometimes simultaneously – as a form of social control, directing the popular will towards certain viewpoints and attributes deemed desirable by those controlling the production of popular fiction, and as a mirror of widely-held popular views.

Popular fiction has been peculiarly potent because it feeds the imaginative life of the reader, and this may have more immediate, more emotional and arguably longer lasting impact than any number of school lessons, political speeches or church sermons. It provides a sediment in the mind, which it requires a conscious intellectual effort to erase. Since the majority of people are not intellectuals, it follows that only a minority will for a variety of reasons make this effort (Richards 1989:1-2).

While the questions posed by someone like John Cawelti, namely '[h]ow do literary formulas affect human behaviour?' and 'what is the process through which cultural selection of formulas take place?' (quoted in Yanarella & Sigelman 1988:8) are

therefore similar to the ones posed in this study, the theoretical framework within which those questions are presented here is rather different. Similarly, whilst the work of Yanarella and Sigelman (1988) is of interest to this study, the authors fail to adequately explain how popular fiction 'works'. In *Political Mythology and Popular Fiction* (1988), Ernest Yanarella and Lee Sigelman outline an approach to the study of popular fiction from a political sciences approach that is based on the literary scholarship of John Cawelti. Their methodology is not empirical but hermeneutic. Underpinning their work is the idea of a network, which is reminiscent of Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Thus, they see popular fiction as a form of repression (censorship, setting the parameters of what may be said and what not), and - at the same time - a repression not through the use of violence, but consent. They are interested in popular fiction - in particular literary formulas - from a political science perspective, because

buried within these genres and formulas is a deep lode of images, symbols, and myths that shape the cultural and social world that we Americans inhabit and that define the limits of the culturally and ideologically permissible in our society (Yanarella & Sigelman 1988:9).

It is precisely the way in which popular texts are able to mirror and construct the cultural and social world that 'nations' inhabit that is explored in this study but in a context where the mechanisms through which texts 'work' are explicitly theorized, with acknowledgement of the role of readers and recognition of their reflexive abilities. In this respect, the present study is indebted to Elisabeth Radway's work. Radway's *Reading the Romance – Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (1991), has become canonical for anyone interested in popular fiction. Against theorists such as Cawelti, who she argues '[reifies] human process itself and... [accords] extraordinary and pre-eminent power to the commodities produced and used within such processes, rather than to the human activities themselves' (1991:6), she writes about the importance of keeping possibilities open for social agency. Her contribution is important for the following reasons. First, she emphasises the need to study not only the text, but also the industry and processes that produce those texts, the reader of the text, and the event of reading. Second, she is interested in human behaviour and combines empirical anthropological research that is rooted in the premise of reader-response criticism that meaning is not to be found in a text but is 'an entity (that is) produced by a reader in conjunction with the text's verbal structure' with textual analysis, a method that she calls ethnography of reading (1991:11).

Radway contends that the event of reading is quite separate from the process of attributing meaning or of interpreting the text. Her study of American readers of popular romance highlighted the fact that women regard not only the text and its meaning as important, but also consider the *event* of reading to be significant as an experience of pleasure, an escape from a particular reality and as social event in a family context. Moreover, she showed that women readers are generally aware of the fact that the story lines in the romances they read are improbable, but that they nonetheless feel that the portrayal of the world in which the actions of the characters are rendered is congruent with their own. As a result, they gain a strong belief in the autonomous reality of the fictional world. Due to the assumed equivalence of the two worlds, things that readers learn about the fictional world are thought of or interpreted as 'fact', 'information', or 'knowledge' - that is as practical know-how that can be applied to the world of a day-to-day existence (Radway 1991:188). Arguably, the most important part of Radway's study is her point that '[t]o understand just why this occurs and how it might later affect the reader's attitude toward behavioural propositions about the romantic action itself, it will be necessary to trace the *interaction between textual properties and reading strategies* [my emphasis]' (Radway 1991: 188-189).

A number of very strong studies have emerged in recent years on the relationship between literature and nationalism. Many of these, for example the excellent *When Russia learnt to read* (Brooks 1985) goes beyond mere textual analysis and include research on the production, dissemination and reception of popular texts. Yet, a problem encountered in some of these studies is that the distinction between popular literature and 'high literature' is taken as given or, phrased differently, the two concepts are viewed to be referring to two clearly distinct domains. For example, in her study on literature and nationalism, Corse (1997:130) argues that popular culture literature lacks a national symbolic value because the economic value of these texts supersedes their symbolic value. Underlying this statement is an assumption that the production of popular texts is governed by market principles only. While she acknowledges that this approach is problematic and that there is evidence that this distinction is being challenged (for example, Canadian concern about the predominance of American television programmes on Canadian channels, and the high sales figures and commercial success of prize-winning, and therefore canonised, texts) her research does not venture into this domain (Corse 1997:166). She explains the relationship between literature and nationalism in terms of the high literature/popular literature divide. She places emphasis on canon formation and shows that the criteria for selection of texts into the 'national' canon include a criterion of uniqueness or

distinctness, a definitive quality that makes this the work of a nation. Popular texts, on the other hand, Corse argues, have a homogenising quality, as opposed to the distinctness of work of 'literature'.

While this study concurs with the broad outlines of her arguments, it is the symbolic value of popular texts and the way in which these are inserted into the process of nation building at crucial points that is the focus of the present research. Corse's project is hampered by its scope. While this enables her to offer an impressive account of the relationship between literature and nationalism, particularly in the United States and Canada, it is proposed here that it is in the nooks and crannies of nation formation at points where the commercial production of popular fiction and the national project intercedes that some of the interesting aspects of the relationship between popular fiction and nationalism are illuminated.

The binary opposition of high literature and popular fiction is in most instances not very useful. Whilst there may be differences in the production, distribution and dissemination of texts of particular kinds, the boundaries are porous. Moreover, conceptually, the terms 'high' literature' and 'popular fiction' are each attached to a set of assumptions about the way in which texts of this kind work. The reason why such a distinction is untenable is because it offers an explanation of the way in which texts work that is completely independent of the reader.

South Africa, Afrikaans literature and the study of popular fiction

The study of Afrikaans literature, particularly within the Afrikaans academic community, historically displays two weaknesses. The first, which is a lack of a socio-historical tradition, is described by Marianne de Jong in her work, *'n Ander Afrikaanse Letterkunde*, as follows:

It is a remarkable phenomenon that since its emancipation around the thirties, Afrikaans Literature has not produced any social theoretical literature descriptions of note... Existing literary histories up until the work of J.C. Kannemeyer confirms this phenomenon. At the same time, the way in which Afrikaans literary history is presented is one of the best illustrations of this absence of a socio-historical and socio-political conscience. History is presented as a collection of data, organised into ingrained literary categories such as realism, naturalism, genre distinctions, smaller and larger literary figures, etc.

A second weakness is the low priority that has been given to research on popular fiction in Afrikaans. Research on this topic was almost non-existent before the 1990s, and there are virtually no studies on socio-historical dimensions to the production, dissemination and reception of popular fiction in Afrikaans. The end of communism in Eastern Europe and the former USSR in the late 1980s and political developments in South Africa that brought about the fall of the apartheid government roused a new interest in the study of popular fiction, and by the mid-nineties the study of popular fiction in Afrikaans had gained some momentum. Unfortunately, one of the legacies of the lack of a social-historical tradition and the specificity of historical events that sparked the interest in this field is the prominence given to and narrow focus on text-based studies of race and racism in much of the recent scholarship on popular literature in South Africa. While these studies are of importance the findings that projects defined in those terms can yield are limited. Many of the more interesting questions, in particular about the relationship between nationalism and literature and the more complex questions about the relationship between literature and society are still largely left aside.

Studies that do engage with issues of nationalism, the construction of identity and Afrikaans texts are those of Hofmeyr (1987) and Kruger (1991). Isabel Hofmeyr's work, which is discussed in Chapter Five, is a socio-historical study of the production and dissemination of Afrikaans books in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In particular, her research highlights the close links between class formation and the invention of ethnic identity. Lou-Marie Kruger (1991) examines the relationship between Afrikaans women, Afrikaner nationalism and popular texts through a life history of Mabel Malherbe, the editor of a popular magazine called *Die Boervrou* (later *Die Boervrou*), and analyses of articles that were published in this publication. Kruger analyses extracts from the magazine to show how new identities were constructed and crafted for Afrikaans women through discourse. She argues that the discourse of *Die Boervrou* was both a gender discourse and a nationalist discourse. Through a biography of Mabel Malherbe's life, she shows that women were instructive in writing themselves out of the discourse of Afrikaner nationalism and creating the myth of the 'volksmoeder', which was intended to keep women out of the political arena and the workplace.

Despite the paucity of research on popular fiction in South Africa with specific reference to popular fiction in Afrikaans, the area of study has received attention with regard to

popular fiction in English across a wide range of disciplines (see for example Stotesbury (1990) and Stiebel (1992)).

A scholar that also works with the notion of the imagined in relation to popular fiction and ideology in the South African context, although he does perhaps not phrase his research focus in these terms, is Paul Rich. Rich (1983) looks at the popular fiction writer John Buchan's novel, *Prester John*, to illustrate the links between the narrative and Milner's moral legitimisation of white supremacy and rule. Rich argues that the novel can be seen as a strategy for the wider ideological dissemination of Milnerism onto a popular level. He roots the novel in its genre, the popular colonial novel, and, in particular, he shows how the novel closely resembles the key strands of Milnerism and thereby contributes to the construction of a world in which racial discrimination is legitimised. As in many other studies of popular fiction, Rich attempts to illustrate how racial stereotypes are embedded in the narrative. However, he goes much further than merely to state these racial portrayals and attempts to link these to the broader political imperatives of Milnerism, which were closely linked to the interest of mining capital. An important theme in Rich's analysis is the way in which the idea is constructed in the novel of a united white identity that would overcome the division between the English and Afrikaners. This is very much in line with Buchan's own thinking. Rich quotes Buchan as having said that: '[t]he hope of breaking down the racial barrier between town and country... was always near to Milner's heart' and that Milner wanted to 'see the Dutch share in the urban industries and men of British stock farming beside the Boers on the veld'. The construction of 'whiteness' had to mask perceived 'racial' differences between the British and the 'Boers, whilst still retaining the hierarchical relationship where the balance of power is imagined to be on the British side.

Rich does not attempt to explain how literature works, that is, how *Prester John* shapes the consciousness of its readers. He does, however, provide some evidence to support his claim that it is important to consider the ways in which *Prester John* may have contributed to the construction of 'whiteness' and support for Milner's political ideals in the consciousness of readers. First, he argues that the novel has been widely read. Based on the facts that *Prester John* had been made available in cheap Nelson reprints and was reprinted a number of times, he argues that it has had a wide saturation and is still widely read. Second, he argues that the mode of *Prester John*, seen here as the colonial novel in popular form, is being carried forward by modern day authors such as Wilbur Smith. In this way, *Prester John* perhaps constituted the beginnings of a tradition. Third, he argues that the discourse of popular fiction, in this case *Prester*

John, is of equal significance as more 'official' discourse found in newspapers, in this instance an article that appeared in *The State*:

Buchan's novel... can be seen to embody in a popular idiom many of the features of the Milnerite ideology that went into the making of the South African state... In this sense, the novel was as important in the ideological underpinnings behind the South African Union in 1910, the year of the novel's publication, as, for example, *The State* and its rather bland argument for Union as a means to create white unity in the face of a united African 'uprising' (Rich 1983:427)

Another study of popular fiction in English that has been undertaken in the South African context and is of relevance to the present study is *Popular Romance and the Women Reader* by Sarah Nuttall (1991). Nuttall offers a theoretically well-grounded account of ways in which South African women read popular romance. Drawing on Radway, she argues against models of institutional reading such as the notion of the interpretive community developed by Stanley Fish. Rather, she focuses on ways in which women readers engage with the more recalcitrant features of text. Along with Radway, she is interested not only in the meaning of a text for the reader but in the event of reading and the significance that holds for the reading subject. She explores the different ways in which readers read and thereby construct meaning. Nuttall is interested in the relationship between women and reading and argues against the hegemonic idea that women read popular fiction as a result of false consciousness. Nuttall thus explores the way in which women readers *make* meaning and investigates the extent to which their readings of a text are marked by oppositional practices - though she acknowledges that these may be limited. Nuttall focuses specifically on the women reader and the experience of reading as a woman, as she feels that gender as a component of analysis is often sidelined in favour of analyses around class and race. She argues that through reading popular romance, women learn to 'read men'. Through this experience they are then able to retroactively interpret men's behaviour and as a result of this do not insist on a change in behaviour. This is exemplified in the following extract based on interviews with women readers:

Both women think that characters in books are 'not at all similar' to people they meet in real life, and they find that heroines' reactions and feelings towards people and events are not like theirs at all. They find, however, that heroes' emotional response to heroines resembles their experience of the way men relate to women. It is difficult to know how to interpret this. To see men as similar to heroes in books is both to see them as a source of escape from

the self, or of a mending of a fragmented self and to see their responses and actions as proceeding according to an identifiable pattern, as predictable. The message in romance stories incorporates both aspects: if women learn to read recurrent male responses properly (which is what romance reading teaches them to do) then they can create the possibility of their own happiness through a successful relationship with a man (Nuttall 1991: 54--55).

She raises the possibility that in cases where the perceived reality of readers differs too sharply from the fictional world of the popular text, readers could conceive of the text as 'dangerous'. In one of the interviews she conducted, a women reader alluded to the similarities between the use of alcohol and reading in that it allows one to escape a reality whilst making one reluctant to return to it.

New questions

The discussion in this chapter raises a number of questions pertaining to the relationship between literature and society that this study seeks to illuminate. These are (1) whether the notion of popular fiction as a singular and self-explanatory construct that is dominant in literature is tenable; (2) in what ways reader studies or even a theory of reading and the reader as well as a theory of the writer can enhance textual studies and studies on the production, distribution and consumption of texts; (3) the extent to which the relationship between discourse, power and popular fiction has been adequately contextualised within a general understanding of the relationship between discourse and power and the sources of power; and (4) what the links are between popular fiction and nationalism.

Popular fiction and in particular formula books are generally treated as a singular category of literature that is self contained and self-explanatory. This genre of literature is defined by the fact that it is the opposite of high literature. In few studies on popular fiction does one find an understanding of the relationship between high literature and popular fiction as a continuum where the most complex, layered and idiosyncratic texts are on the one pole that is referred to as high literature and the most formulaic, general and one dimensional texts are situated on the other pole which is called popular fiction, with a range of points or nodes on the continuum, including a space in the middle where it becomes difficult if not impossible to identify a text as showing either more literary qualities or more popular fiction qualities. This is an assumption that this study wishes to challenge.

Whilst it is impossible and most probably undesirable too to turn any and all engagements with texts into interdisciplinary undertakings, a scrutiny of literature on the topic shows that both textual studies and studies on the production, dissemination and consumption of texts are hampered by the fact that these phenomena are scrutinised in isolation, that is without offering an adequately nuanced theory of the reader and of writing. Whilst reader studies are certainly important and should be encouraged, this does not imply that all studies on literature or popular literature needs to include such a component. Rather, it is suggested that an explicit theorisation of reading and writing will assist to situate and contextualise findings of studies with another kind or a different focus in broader debates on the relationship between literature and society.

There seems to be a difference of opinion about which of high literature or popular fiction are more likely to be associated with and contribute to forms of nationalism. This debate has its roots in part in the one-dimensional way in which the difference between high literature and popular fiction is commonly understood. Whilst Anderson has shown how popular literature, include newsletters and newspapers, can create a community of readers, Corse argues that popular culture literature lacks a national symbolic value because the economic value of these texts supersedes their symbolic value. Thus, there seems to be scope for examining a specific case to explore how this debate can be taken further.

Studies of popular fiction are frequently underpinned by the idea that popular fiction is tighter controlled by the establishment and less independently 'produced' by the author than high literature. Given that popular fiction is usually discussed within the framework of an assumed dichotomous relationship between popular fiction and literature, popular fiction is regarded to be one of the mechanisms through which 'society instructs its members in its prevailing ideas and mores', in the words of Richards (1989:1-2). Since popular fiction offers itself as an easily accessible and readily available terrain of study, many studies on popular fiction - while acknowledging that popular fiction is only one of the mechanisms through which ideology is disseminated - fail to carry this understanding through in their analysis and interpretation of the relationship between popular fiction and ideas. In other words, studies seldom interpret the practice of reading popular fiction and particular texts within an understanding of the other practices of daily life through which discourse is circulated, including in the case of children's literature the family and the education system among others. The danger in these approaches is that popular fiction becomes reified as *the* terrain in which

ideology is disseminated. It is therefore necessary to interrogate and problematise the relationship between popular fiction and power, both in relation to the similarities and differences between the poles of popular fiction and literature and with regard to its embeddedness within everyday life and the many other practices through which discourse gets circulated.

Conclusion

This study claims that there exists a link between everyday practice and reading popular fiction, and that popular fiction can be examined through the theoretical lens of the everyday life. Furthermore, it has been argued that the *Keurboslaan* series shares the characteristics of popular fiction formula stories and that the same methods of analysis that are applicable to the study of popular fiction for adults can therefore be applied in the study of the *Keurboslaan* series.

At the heart of this enquiry are questions about the relationship between literature and power and the way in which the act of reading a text is perceived to 'work'. On the one hand there is the approach to popular fiction that argues that the practice of reading popular fiction produces sediment in the brain, which readers are not consciously aware of and which only very few individuals, in their role as intellectuals, can challenge and scrutinize (Richards 1992, Richards 1989). On the other hand, there is a devoted group of academics undertaking reception studies who regards the individual's reflection on his or her reading practices and habits as sufficient to explain the meanings derived from the practice of reading and their effects. While the first approach generally produces accounts of popular fiction as restrictive and instructive, the second approach focuses on the way in which readers derive pleasure from the practise of reading and use agency to subvert the intended meanings. It has been argued here that both these approaches suffer from certain shortcomings that make it difficult to answer the questions posed here. A claim that popular fiction, figuratively speaking, can leave traces of sediment in the brain, whilst works of 'high' literature do not, has to be treated with deep suspicion. This kind of approach does not offer an adequate account of the differences and similarities between so-called works of popular fiction and literary works or of human agency. Yet, readers' accounts of the way in which they read and derive meaning, while useful and informative, is based on the assumption that the subject has access to and is able to articulate the way in which he or she derives meaning as well as the results (or effects) of that process. In doing so, these scholars draw on a unified subject, which no longer exists in the social

sciences. It was therefore argued that three shortcomings characterise most studies on popular fiction.

The first of these shortcomings is the failure of some scholars to embed the study of popular fiction in a theory of reading and writing. Both textual analyses and reception studies can benefit greatly from an articulated theory of reading and writing. It is difficult to gauge the implications of either a reception study or textual analysis unless the understanding of agency pertaining to both the reader and the writer is made explicit. A second shortcoming is that few studies on popular fiction provide a nuanced understanding of popular fiction. Generally, popular fiction and literature are seen as two separate entities, and not as variants of writing located on a continuum. Third, while scholars acknowledge that popular fiction is but one of the mechanisms through which discourse is circulated and power relations constituted, this understanding is often not reflected in analyses of popular fiction, resulting in popular fiction being elevated to status where its powers to mould are overstated and where it is not located within the broader sphere of power relations.

This study highlighted the limitations in the dichotomy between internal and idealist readings of the text and more empiricist and external readings of the text. It has therefore argued for a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of popular fiction. Theoretically, the study subscribes to the definition of ideology offered by Althusser and a soft reading of his theory of the interpellation of the subject through discourse. This is, however, enhanced with a theory of agency through De Certeau's notion of *tactics* and Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus*. In addition, the importance of reader studies such as those by Elisabeth Radway is emphasised.

In recent years there have been excellent and extensive studies on the relationship between nationalism and popular fiction. Yet, a problem encountered in some of these studies is that the distinction between popular literature and 'high literature' is taken as given or, phrased differently, the two concepts are viewed to be referring to two clearly distinct domains.

Mapping the field locally, it has been shown that there is a lack of a socio-economic tradition in Afrikaans literary history writing and that studies on popular fiction in Afrikaans are sparse. From the early 1990s, interest in the study of popular fiction in Afrikaans grew substantially. Yet most of these studies have no theory of the subject, power or agency. As a result these studies either embrace the reading of

popular fiction because of the meanings it holds for its readers or scrutinise texts for evidence of racism and sexism. While there are some good studies on the relationship between fiction and nationalism, such as those by Hofmeyr (1987) and Kruger (1991), these are often not located in the field of literature. The weakness of this body of literature is that it does not include reader studies or explain how texts 'work', i.e. a theory of reading. Popular fiction has received more attention in South African studies in English.

Chapter Four:

Selected themes in the study of children's literature

Introduction

Given its target audience, any study of texts aimed at children needs to speak to the debates and concerns - though incomplete and fractured along disciplinary boundaries - that characterises the field of academic study generally referred to as children's literature. Here it should be noted that the *Keurboslaan* series is closely associated with a specific genre within the field of children's literature, namely the school story. In this chapter, the field of inquiry generally referred to as children's literature is defined, the *Keurboslaan* series is located within the field of children's literature, and an overview of the history and academic study of the phenomenon is provided. Finally, the school story genre is considered and developments in the study of children's literature in South Africa are discussed.

Defining the ambit of children's literature

There exists a specific category of literature (or fiction) that is not in the first instance organised and classified in terms of genre, as other literatures are. This is the category of literature for children. This category of literature is defined and classified in the first place on the basis of an attribute of its *readers* – namely their age – and not the attributes of the text (Hunt 1990:1). It should be noted from the outset that both the distinction between adult and non-adult fiction (or adult fiction and fiction for children) and the various categories within the latter are, if not completely arbitrary, often overlapping, blurred and contested. So one can distinguish, for example, categories such as young adult fiction, youth or juvenile fiction, children's fiction, young teens, and even categories based on age, such as 'seven to ten year olds' (Nikolajeva 1996:7). It is only within each of the categories mentioned above that attention is paid to the issue of genre, which forms the second classification mechanism. Genres distinguished in children's literature include school stories, family stories, fantasy, and adventure stories (Butts 1992:xiii). There are more examples, such as animal stories, mysteries, detective novels, thrillers, and series books. There is a third mechanism through which children's literature is classified. This is according to a distinction between children's 'Literature' and fiction for children. In the academic study of children's literature, this form of classification - which is similar to the distinction between popular fiction and

high literature – is sometimes phrased as the difference between the 'good book' and the popular, or the prize-winning book (and, by implication) the non-prize winning book.

Now, the very classification of children's literature (and the sub-categories within the broader rubric) on the basis of age is problematic. This problem is articulated by Hunt (1994:5), when he states that '[c]oncepts of childhood differ not only culturally but in units as small as the family, and they differ, often inscrutably, over time'. Hunt therefore suggests that one uses an understanding of childhood and the social meanings attached to this concept to bring one closer to a definition of children's literature. In defining the notion of childhood, Hunt emphasises that it refers to the part of the cycle of life that the 'immediate culture' regards the individual to be free from responsibilities and receptive to socialisation and moulding through the process of education. It is this understanding of childhood as the formative years that explains the anomaly that children's literature is defined in terms of its readers.

Based on the above discussion, it is then argued that children's literature can be defined as literature written for and circulated among children, which is, for that reason, imbued with particular social significance and therefore scrutinised, censored and controlled in particular ways. The basis on which this scrutiny takes place is far ranging – from character development and richness of language to correspondence to reality and aesthetic quality. In the main, however, debates about children's literature, its domain and its meanings centre on an underlying question about the normative framework that these texts embody and propagate.

This is no watertight definition for a category of literature that is very fluid and that is challenged in a number of ways. First, there are many examples of texts that belong to more than one category or that defy the very notion of genre and category altogether. Examples are Sue Townsend's *The secret diary of Adrian Mole aged 9 ½* and comics. Second, some texts are appropriated by specific audiences even though they had clearly not been written in the first instance with that audience in mind. Take here, for example, the recent phenomenon of the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, which has been widely read by adults. Other examples are *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, which is read and loved by children and adults alike, and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which was not written as a children's book in the first place, but was claimed as such by scores of young readers (Dixon 1978:75). Third, some children's books are not only written *for* children but also *by* children. Finally, readers themselves resist and challenge the categories that comprise children's literature. It is the notion of childhood

and scholarship on the phases of childhood that have led to the fragmentation of children's literature into various categories, each purporting to cater for the intellectual, psychological and emotional needs corresponding with that particular phase of childhood, such as puberty and adolescence. Yet, individual readers show different reading preferences, habits and abilities, which are reflected in the way in which they choose what to read and at what point in their development cycle they access particular works.

The conceptualisation of children's literature as educational and formative has provided us with interesting ways in which the parameters of the category are challenged. It is a practice followed in South Africa and many other countries that prescribed works for the last few years of school are not drawn from the category of children's literature but from general literature. It is perhaps indicative of one of the other contradictions so often referred to in debates about children's literature: the idea that children's literature is not 'good' literature and that children therefore need to be exposed to 'good' literature before they exit the formal education system. So, for example, in the last ten years, set works for Matric pupils in Afrikaans have included *Kringe in die bos* by Dalene Matthee, *Ons wag op die Kaptein* by Elsa Joubert, and Karel Schoeman's *By fakkellig*. None of these texts can be classified as children's literature in terms of the criteria set by the definition we proposed above, as they have not been written with children as the target audience in mind. It is maintained in this study that the boundaries of the category of children's literature, which is a constructed entity, is porous and contested. Hence, the way in which the concept is defined and employed in this study is provisional and open to change.

The decision to use the broader category of children's literature in this study, rather than employing, for example, the notion of juvenile or youth literature, which perhaps seems more appropriate given the thematic of this study, is deliberate and arises from the concern not to fragment the field of study further with imprecise, even if perhaps justifiable, sub-categories.

Children's literature: Its historical emergence and its rise as a terrain for academic study

Children's literature comes of age

There is a dimension to the study of children's literature that is often neglected or glossed over. This is the fact that children's literature, as it exists in its current form (admittedly, a form that changes and gets challenged constantly) has not always existed. Stories, one can argue, have always been part of the social fabric of communities. In their oral form, stories are told in many communities where they are passed on from generation to generation. Through this process the story is constantly amended as each narrator attempts to contextualise and localise the narrative. The emergence of print technology and the rise of capitalism, however, made possible a new type of story, one aimed particularly at children and one that could be reproduced in the same form indefinitely.

Literature for children as cultural products inserted into a market economy emerged much later than general literature, and when it did in the eighteenth to mid-eighteenth century¹⁷, it was closely linked to pedagogical theory and emerging forms of education. Butts (1992:x) and Richard (1992:2) argue that the production and dissemination of children's books were linked to at least three developments. First, ideas on the nature and importance of childhood as espoused by philosophers and scholars such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau influenced the production of children's books. This was influenced in part by scholarly work on the different development phases in the life of the child, such as adolescence and puberty. Second, the spread of education from the eighteenth century through the Sunday School Movement and the subsequent development of formal education systems driven by the state, through mechanism such as legislation¹⁸ stimulated the development of books for children. Thus, discourse on literature for children was from the outset influenced by concerns relating to pedagogy, such as the educational benefits of reading and the role of reading in identity formation and socialisation. Third, technological innovations in the printing and publishing industry (underpinned by the spread of capitalism), made the production of books for children possible.

¹⁷ In the Anglophone world, the children's book was first produced in the mid-eighteenth century (Hunt 1990:1)

¹⁸ An example of such legislation is the passing of the Forster Act in Britain in 1870, which established free elementary schools.

Influenced by intellectuals of the day and the need for general schooling, the production of children's literature was grounded in an understanding that this kind of text had profound abilities to mould children in particular ways and to produce a certain kind of subject. The production of literature for children could in many ways be conceived of as a class project, launched by the intelligentsia and aimed at educating the children of the lower classes. This was possible because of the way in which print technology profoundly influenced the way in which literary markets developed and continue to develop. In her study of the American and Canadian mass-produced paperback fiction market, particularly romance fiction, Radway (1991) traces historical developments in the printing and publishing industry. She argues that specific advancements in technology had an influence on the way in which both the book as a 'product' and the market for this product have evolved. For example, throughout the colonies it was common practice for owners of printing presses (who were often publishers too) to ask authors to pay a flat fee for the production of a book. The author would still be entitled to royalty payments based on the sales of the publication, but the initial fee was a way for printer-publishers to hedge themselves against the risk of poor sales. On the one hand this meant that authorship was limited to those who could raise the capital to pay the flat fee. This included members of the intelligentsia but also societies and organisations, such as religious and women's groups. The system of initial payment meant that to a large extent control over the published work then resided in the hands of the author. It was therefore possible for individual authors and organisations to produce children's texts with particular formative qualities.

Radway argues that subsequent developments in print technology (such as the development of new machinery, perfect binding, synthetic glues) as well as other technological advancements that supported the marketing and distribution of books gradually caused a shift from author risk and control to a situation where greater risk was being taken by publishing companies, but with a subsequent loss of control for the author. Print technology made it possible for print companies and publishing houses to play an active role in the business of commissioning and controlling the production of books, and the increased sophistication of marketing and distribution channels opened up the opportunity for these professionals to actively create the markets for their books.

Children's literature as a field for scholarly inquiry

In line with its historical roots, the academic study of children's literature has traditionally been closely associated with understandings of children's literature as pivotal with regard to in the socialisation and education of children. Corresponding to this, a substantial component of scholarly work on children's literature is located within the disciplines of educational studies and library and information sciences. The primary concern of most of debates on children's literature in these disciplines is not the literariness of these works, but rather the values that the texts are said to transpose; the extent to which reading a particular text enables or disables younger readers to progress to works of high literary quality; the role of reading in the acquisition and mastering of language structures; and ways in which the habit of reading can be fostered among children.

Educational interest in books and the practice of reading among children despite, Peter Hunt argues that 'although a great deal of work has been done on mediating books to children in the classroom, there is a lack of any extensive theoretical discussion of the links between children's literature and education' (Hunt 1992: 14-15). The lack of adequate theoretical models about the way in which children's literature works is a problem encountered in studies on children's literature from various disciplinary angles of incidence. Three factors can be regarded to attribute to this state of affairs.

First, there seems to be general consensus among scholars in this field about the crucial role that children's literature, more so than other literature, plays in societies:

There can be no question that the texts in this area are culturally formative, and of massive importance educationally, intellectually, and socially. Perhaps more than any other texts, they reflect society as it wishes to be (Hunt 1990:2).

As a consequence of this general agreement, the theoretical basis for this assumption either remains unchallenged, or is generally not coherent or is simply not raised as an issue for debate. As a result, the mechanism through which this type of literature functions is often implicitly (or explicitly) understood to be a non-nuanced structuralist understanding that a text transmits an unambiguous message to its reader and that this message is constitutive of subjectivity.

The second reason advanced to explain why the claim that children's literature possesses particular formative qualities is taken on face value in many studies in the field relates to the very accessibility of this area of study. This can perhaps be regarded as a unique feature of academic inquiry into children's literature and in part the reason why scholars from such different disciplinary backgrounds study children's literature:

Children's literature and children's literature criticism attract people who often have a strong interest in children's books based on a conviction of personal knowledge and experience of children, childhood, or reading... Children's literature criticism is about saying: 'I know what children like to read/are able to read/should read, *because I know what children are like*' (Lesnik-Oberstein 1994:1-2).

All social theorists have had a childhood and all of these childhoods involved some engagements with texts. The experience of childhood thus becomes a form of empirical study or ethnographic research on being a child. The accessibility of the field is of concern to theorists such as Hunt (1990) as well as Lesnik-Oberstein (1994), with the former even tentatively raising the question of standards. The idea of childhood as an ethnographic case study results in what can be described as a common sense approach to the study of children's literature: as certain books are fondly remembered by the now grown-up academic and he or she feels that reading those books have had a profound influence on his or her personal development, it is taken as a theoretical assumption that children's literature is formative. Note here, that the assumption that children's literature may be formative is not what is being challenged. Rather, it is the way in which this assumption, based on the individual experience, is elevated to the level of theory that is suspicious. This kind of un-theorised approach also presents a methodological dilemma, which is frequently present in studies of children's literature. Nuttall (1991:42) describes this kind of methodological trouble as the coupling of two assumptions, namely the idea that the subject provides the unity and the limit of experience on the one hand, with the idea that what we consciously know is the determinant of meaning and history. It is this idea that underpins scores of empirical studies into reading where readers' accounts of the experience of reading are regarded to 'speak for themselves' (Nuttall 1991:41).

Third, the study of fiction for children has always been regarded as an interdisciplinary undertaking that is not lodged in a particular discipline. As such it has remained a fairly disparate and incoherent body of literature. A prominent scholar in the area of children's literature, Peter Hunt, argues that the fragmentation of the field is

problematic for a number of reasons. First, it makes the question of publication and sharing of research difficult. Second, there is a dispute about control or primary affiliation in terms of the disciplines. Various disciplines, including psychology, information and library sciences, education, political science, sociology, and language and literary studies lay claim to the field of study. Third, it has left us with an area of study that is 'rich but unstructured' (Hunt 1990:7) and very wide. At its best, Hunt argues, '[c]ontemporary criticism of children's literature... is eclectic, using new techniques, rereading and remapping old territories, and exploring new ones' (Hunt 1992:11).

Given the multidisciplinary nature of the academic study of children's literature, a wide range of questions animate research in the field. Common among these are the relationship between the popular children's book and the 'good' children's book and the extent to which reading the former negatively impacts on future reading habits; the way in which reading popular children's literature affects the ability of the reader to appreciate texts that are thought to be of a more aesthetic value; and the extent to which reading popular texts forecloses the possibility that the reader will move on to other forms of literature (Greenlee *et al* 1996:216-225). Other popular research questions relate to notions of 'good' literature and encompasses questions about the use of and complexity of the language and structure of the narrative (Dixon 1978a: 57), the extent to which character development takes place in the text and to whether the reader gains access to the way in which characters think and not only to what they do (Greenlee *et al* 1996:217, Dixon 1978a:65). Yet another question is the extent to which different types of children's books meet the different psychological needs of the developing child. It is, for example, argued that formula books, because of their predictable narrative single set of characters, provide the reader with a sense of security. An increasingly popular approach to children's literature is to explore the ideological content of the texts and to identify the 'values' that are 'transmitted' by the text. As is the case with the study of popular fiction, ideological readings of children's books are popular for studying the relationship between literature and phenomena such as nationalism or imperialism and a number of works have been written on these topics, including, for example, the relationship between literature and British colonialism (see Dixon 1978, Macdonald 1994, Richards 1989, etc). Ideological readings of texts entail scrutinising texts for evidence of sexism, racism, and class bias, as the following extract on Enid Blyton's books demonstrate:

First of all, male characters simply appear much more frequently, both in the text and in illustrations, and appear in more leading roles. Also, everything goes to show that, in these books, girls are more restricted than boys in physical activities. Girls tend to hold mummy's hand, to be more attached to the house, to be standing at the bottom of the tree or looking on. Boys range further, with daddy or their friends. They are shown climbing and indulging in interesting and active games. Their clothes are usually less restricting, of course, and people don't bother much so much if they get dirty. As far as attitudes go, girls are usually shown as unimaginative, placid, inward-looking, concerned with trivialities, docile and passive. Girls often just *are*. Boys *do* – they invent, plan, think, about their future careers and are confident, outgoing and give instructions (usually to girls) (Dixon 1978:2).

As is the case with popular fiction, many of these studies take as a point of departure a rather instrumentalist approach, choosing to focus on the 'purpose' of literature for children and the way in which it functions. Many such studies, undertaken in both South Africa and internationally, are characterised by a peculiar understanding of the communication process, implicitly (and at times even explicitly) giving preference to an understanding of children's literature as transmitting information, including ideas and values, in a one-way process to the readers of these literatures. This is exemplified in the following quotation from an article on series books:

[h]istorically, children's literature critics have also paid attention to the explicit or implicit *messages* of the book [my emphasis]' (Greenlee et. al. 1996:217).

What is seldom questioned is the way in which children read. John Mackenzie, in the introduction to *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, states that

[I]t is now recognised that juvenile literature acts as an excellent reflector of the dominant ideas of an age. The values and fantasies of adult authors are dressed up in fictional garb for youthful consumption, and the works thereby become instrumental in the dissemination and perpetuation of particular clusters of ideas, assumptions and ambitions (Richards 1989:vii).

Despite shortcomings in the field, there is a sense among scholars that children's literature as a field of academic study is being consolidated and gaining credibility as a worthwhile academic project (Hannabuss 1999). Recent developments are a new interest in literature for children from the point of view of literary studies as well as the emergence of a literary criticism of youth literature. The latter development is novel as

previously the 'perception that children's literature is not *lesser* but *different*, however, was rarely made' (Hunt 1990:2).

Children's literature as popular fiction: Series and formula books

Greenlee et. al. (1996) contend that series books have always been popular. Already in 1920, a study by Wheeler found that half the number of books read by girls between eleven and fourteen was series books. Previously, Enid Blyton made history with the sales of more than 600 titles of her children's books, including *Famous Five*, *Nancy Drew*, *Secret Seven* and other series. In 1978, Dixon (1978: 56) reported that, among British authors, it was only Agathie Christie and Shakespeare that had been translated more often than Blyton. No doubt, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series will set a new standard. The popularity of the series book can in the first place be ascribed to the fact that the existence of a series makes the selection of a book much easier for the young reader. Since he or she knows that if they enjoyed reading the first book they are likely to enjoy other books in the same series as much, they are likely to choose another title from the same series. In the second place, series books are popular because the contents of these titles are so closely tailored to the dreams, hopes, desires and experiences of children of the particular target group (Greenlee et. al 1996).

A more recent phenomenon is the emergence of the syndicate series book, examples of which are the *Sweet Valley* and *Baby-Sitters Club* series. Local examples of this kind of literature in Afrikaans are *Reënboogrant* and *Grillers*. Syndicate series are similar to popular soap operas on television in the sense that for each of these series there is a central organising structure, which could be a single 'author' or a group of persons that is responsible for drafting plot outlines and keeping track of character development. Many other authors are then employed to write the various titles in the series, following the master structure closely. Syndicate series often comprise of more than one hundred titles, which is sometimes organised into sub-series, corresponding to the age and social development of the target group, so that readers can 'graduate' from one to the next as they grow older and their interests change.¹⁹ Not all best selling multiple title series are, however, syndicate books. In 1996, it was estimated that R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series books had sold more than ninety million copies. Stine reportedly writes two books every month (Greenlee et. al 1996:216).

¹⁹ The local *Reënboogrant* series, for example, is sub-divided in three parts – maats, tieners, and studente.

The school story genre

Literature suggests that the school story is principally a feature of the Anglo Saxon world, originating in Britain, more specifically England, and reaching out to encompass the British colonies and dominions and the United States of America (see Mangan 1989:174, Richards 1989). While Jeffrey Richards's approach to popular fiction raises some methodological questions, given that his position is enormously reductionist and based on the premise that the text can singularly inform the subjectivity of the reader, his account of the history of the school story genre in children's literature is excellent and of relevance for this study. In an article entitled, *The School Story*, he traces the development of this particular genre in children's fiction.

The first and best-known example of the school story is Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, a semi-autobiographical account of the author's schooldays, published in London in 1857. Richards argues that the phenomenon of the school story is closely associated with the ethos of the Victorian public schooling system, with its emphasis on religion and self-restraint. According to Richards, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* exemplified the three pillars of what was to become the image of the public school: 'the socialisation of the schoolboy, the inculcation of manliness and the religious awakening' (Richards 1992:3). *Tom Brown's Schooldays* was strongly influenced by the figure of Dr Thomas Arnold, who was appointed as the headmaster of Rugby in 1828. Under his leadership, the school was transformed and remodelled into a 'respectable institution' of the kind that 'became uniquely among all western educational systems a place to train character' through a Christian education (Richards 1992:3, Mangan 1989:179). Now, the type of public school portrayed in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and the subsequent body of school stories that was to follow, was a sanitized and reformed model of the pre-Arnoldian public school, which Richards describes as 'self-governing boy republics, tribal, turbulent, brutal and often drunken'. While the school portrayed in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* was undoubtedly modelled on Dr Arnold's Rugby and was strongly influenced by the Arnoldian reforms, it also carried the stamp of Hughes' personal preferences and ideas (Richards 1992:2-3). Consequently, the public school portrayed in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, which was to become the prototype on which virtually all other fictitious schools in that genre of literature were to be based, did not so much reflect the 'real' public school as it did create that image of the public school in the minds of generations of readers:

It recalled, recorded and mythified the Rugby of Dr Arnold, creating a selective image of Arnoldianism that was to be highly influential and was to eclipse the somewhat different reality. But onto his image of Arnoldianism, Hughes grafted other ideas dear to himself and not associated with Arnold especially: the ideals of Christian Socialism, Carlylean hero-worship and a strongly marked English nationalism (Richards 1992:3).

The birth of the school story genre cannot be disassociated from Victorian England and the aims of the Evangelical movement to purify and sanitise the urban slums and industrial areas of England. At the same time, the period from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s marked the heyday of the ideology of imperialism. It was the combination of the Evangelical movement and the imperial impetus and ideology that came to define the school story genre. For the promotion of both causes, the evangelical ideal of the Christian education and the imperial notion of chivalry and bravery, called for instruction of the youth and children's literature became the vehicle for this instruction:

The aim of juvenile literature was clearly set for a century. It was both to entertain and to instruct, to inculcate approved value systems, to spread useful knowledge, to provide acceptable role models (Richards 1989:3).

The boy's papers in which many of these school stories were published were set up by the Religious Tract Society to counteract what was known as 'penny dreadfuls', which were cheaply produced and widely circulated newspapers carrying fiction targeting boys and containing adventure and other stories featuring crime and violence. There were many of these boy's papers, including the original *The Boy's Own Paper*, which was launched in 1879. This was followed at the turn of the century by *Chums* and *The Captain*, which in turn were replaced in popularity by *The Magnet* and *The Gem* in the late Edwardian period. In the 1920s *The Wizard* and *The Hotspur* became popular and remained influential until the 1950s (Richards 1989:5).

Richards argues that though these papers were popular at different periods and the popularity of the one usurped the other, what these papers had in common was 'a commitment to gentlemanly ideals and imperial values' (Richards 1989:5). Now, an interesting point made by Richards is that though the contents of the penny dreadfuls and of the publications of the Religious Tract Society were very different, with the latter avoiding unnecessary descriptions of crime and violence, the ideological content of the two types of publications was remarkably similar, the difference being one of style and form, rather than content:

In fact, many of the 'dreadfuls' were suffused with racism, patriotism, and crude imperialism, which will have played their own part in cementing the Empire into youthful consciousness. It was elements like these, toned down and cleaned up, that found their ways into approved boys' books (Richards 1989:4).

Hughes' *Tom Brown* became the canonical text on which other school stories for boys would follow. In the tradition of Hughes, the contributions by Talbot Baines Reed in the weekly *Boy's own paper*, which was launched in 1879 by the Religious Tract Society, gained enormous popularity. In his footsteps followed P.G. Wodehouse and Frank Richards. Richards was a most prolific writer and created more than one hundred fictional schools between 1894 and 1961, including the well-known Greyfriars and St Jim's, in the weekly papers for boys *The Magnet* and *The Gem* (Richards 1992:9). What the stories by all these authors had in common was that a public school setting formed the backdrop against which the narratives unfold.

Richard argues that since nothing much happens at schools, or rather, given that there are strict parameters that determine what is possible within the highly structured and routinised school life, a set of incidents and themes became characteristic of all school stories. Talbot Baines Reed, for example, seems to have used a limited register of events and characters, which were repeated in many of his stories. Isabel Quigley explains this as follows:

The stolen exam paper, the innocent wrongly accused, the suffering, proud loneliness and final triumph, the boating accident, the runaway lost in the storm, rescued by the boy that he had wronged and brought back to the school half dead (Isabel Quigley quoted in Richards 1992:5).

Richards points out that these plots were not only characteristic of the work of Talbot Baines Reed, but also cropped up in the books of the successful school story writer Frank Richards, and many others. The structure of the schoolboy book story seems to be generic:

A boy enters school in some fear and trepidation, but usually with ambitions and schemes; suffers mildly or seriously at first from loneliness, the exactions of fag-masters, the discipline of masters and the regimentation of games; then he makes a few friends and leads for a year or so a joyful irresponsible and sometimes rebellious life, eventually learns duty, self-reliance, responsibility

and loyalty as a prefect, qualities usually used to put down bullying or over-emphasis on athletic prowess; and finally leaves school, with regret for a wide world, stamped with the seal of an institution which he has left and devoted to its welfare (E.C. Mack quoted in Richards 1992:6).

In the end, the school story tends to be very formulaic and the range of events and characters limited. In Richards's own words, school stories are about 'japes and scrapes, soccer and cricket, study teas and practical jokes, and Dickensian Christmas hols...'. Still, these stories proved to be enormously popular. Richards (1992:10-12) offers four explanations as to why this genre of fiction was so popular. First, he argues that the school stories that became so popular had a quality of timelessness inherent to them. He describes the school setting as 'a world of unchanging patterns and eternal verities' (Richards 1992:10). In many of these stories, the characters remained fairly fixed in space and time. Hence, in many of these stories a school term could last indefinitely and stretch over many books, or, in other cases, the lead characters could stay in Form III long enough to cover a few titles. Even in those series where pupils do age and ultimately leave the school, there is usually something about the school and its structures that remains eternal, and, at the same time, outside of time. A second reason advanced for the popularity of the school story genre according to Richards is that the stories featured 'a whole range of rounded and convincing boy portraits'. This is particularly true of the stories by Frank Richards, for example his popular *Greyfriars* series, which profoundly influenced school story writers after him. A third reason is the strong theme that friendship plays in all the books, and, finally, Richards believes that school stories are popular precisely because of their idealisation of school life.

The last point is of interest from the point of view of the class basis of the readership of school stories. Whilst school stories were originally written by the privileged elites themselves having been educated at public schools and the stories ostensibly targeted boys who were about to enter that system, the largest group of readers of the genre was comprised of boys (and girls) who would never go to public schools themselves. This apparent contradiction may in part be explained by one of the characteristic features of the genre:

Studies of sub-genres of children's literature may disclose, for instance, not only the way in which society operates, but the way in which it would *like to be perceived operating* [my emphasis] (Butts 1992:xii).

The genre of public school stories that found such a mass appeal among young readers portrayed an idealised form of school life, which did not correspond to the reality of being at a public school. The contradictions between their own schools and the establishments described in the books were large and looming for boys who were not able to attend public schools. Yet, those born from the upper classes, where it was almost obligatory to attend public school, could not do else but recognise that their experience of being in school did not conform to the experiences of the fictional characters in the stories and that their schools, though showing some resemblance to those fictional schools such as Greyfriars, fail to encapsulate completely the powerful image of fictional public schools. Thus, in principle all readers were reading about schools that they would never attend. Thus, it is not surprising that readers of *The Gem* and *The Magnet* were mostly drawn from the lower middle class and upper working class. The relationship between the fictional world of the text and the realities of growing up in working class slums in Salford is powerfully explained by Robert Roberts and is well worth quoting here at length:

Even before the First World War, many youngsters in the working class had developed an addiction to Frank Richards' school stories. The standards of conduct observed by Harry Wharton and his friends at Greyfriars set social norms to which schoolboys and some young teenagers strove spasmodically to conform. Fights – ideally at least – took place according to Greyfriars rules: no striking of an opponent when he was down, no kicking, in fact, no weapon but the manly fist. Through Old School we learned to admire guts, integrity, tradition; we derided the glutton, the Americans and the French. We looked with contempt upon the sneak and the thief. The Famous Five stood for us as young knights, *sans peur et sans reproche*. With nothing in our school that called for love or allegiance, Greyfriars became for some of us our true Alma Mater, to whom we felt bound by a dreamlike loyalty... Over the years these simple tales conditioned the thought of a whole generation of boys. The public school ethos, distorted into myth, and sold among us weekly in penny numbers, for good or ill, set ideals and standards. This, our tutors, religious and secular, had signally failed to do. In the final estimate, it may well be found that Frank Richards during the first quarter of the twentieth century had more influence on the mind and outlook of young working class England than any other single person (Robert Roberts quoted in Richards 1992:13)

The school story found resonance in the empire and former British territory. Research about the way in which this genre conformed to or departed from the British model - which became the prototype of school stories - is fairly limited. J.A. Mangan (1989) has done some research on the school story in Canada and Australia. Mangan's research

focus is the extent to which the games-playing culture and focus on athletic prowess that underpinned the ethos of the Edwardian and Victorian public school – which found literary expression in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* - had filtered through to schoolboy fiction produced outside Britain. While he is able to show that the school story genre of fiction for boys gained popularity in both Canada and Australia and that local authors attempted to customise and contextualise the school story in the setting of the colonies, he succinctly captures the dilemma facing such authors in the task of replicating the school story. Precisely because of the emphasis on elitism characteristic of boarding school fiction, it was difficult to convince a British readership of the viability of school stories set in the colonies. Likewise, colonial audiences compared localised version of the school story with the British 'prototype'. Hence the perception existed that there was something like an authentic public school story and that this had to bear the stamp of the English public school system. Brenda Niall articulates this dilemma as follows:

Writing Australian public school stories was a difficult balancing act. To keep too close to the British model was to be merely imitative, yet the genre demanded, and its readers expected stylized characters, situations and even language. It was unlikely that British boys would want to read about the tuck-shop at St Virgil's; and Australians too, might well prefer Greyfriars to Geelong as a place of football-filled heroics, or dormitory escapades. The school story needed the genuine 'made in Britain' label (Brenda Niall, *Australia in the Looking Glass*, Melbourne, 1984 p. 152, quoted in Mangan 1989:179).

Public schools after the reforms in the early nineteenth century, which were in part informed by the Evangelical movement, remained fairly static until the end of the Second World War. According to Richards '[t]hey remained institutions which sought to give their pupils moral training, to develop self-restraint, a proper sense of values and preparation of the exercise of power, whether as officers, administrators or statesmen (Richards 1992:14). However, the end of the empire and imperialism as well as the aftermath of World War II rung in changes in the ethos and function of public schools in Britain, which had an impact on schoolboy fiction. Richards (1992:15) contends that the death of Frank Richards also brought an end to the peculiar English public boarding school story, which came to define this genre. Though school continued to play a role in children's fiction, increasingly, writers were concerned with 'the everyday scene and with the experience of the majority of their readers' (Marcus Crouch, quoted in Richards 1992:15). Crouch links this development, at least in part, to the fact that by the end of the 1960s, a change in the class composition of writers of children's literature had taken place, with a new generation of writers emerging who had not attended public

schools themselves. Stories about day schools, as opposed to boarding schools, came to dominate the genre from the second half of the twentieth century in Britain. The day school setting provided infinitely more scope for characters and events, as the setting was no longer limited to the school, but could include family, city life, co-ed schools with the possibilities of romance and sex, and so forth. Richards argues that the increasing ubiquity of television had a further impact on the school story, as television series such as *Grange Hill* became very popular in Britain. Richards contends that these television series, situated as they are in day schools and the thematic that that kind of setting provides, are increasingly taking on the characteristics of popular day time soap operas targeted at adults. Consequently, these television series are rooted in a sense of 'reality' quite different from the enclosed and idealised schools of the earlier fiction.

The study of children's literature in South Africa

Until recently, the output of the short history of academic work in the field of children's literature in South Africa, in particular on Afrikaans children's literature, has been fairly modest. The field is dominated by a small number of academics from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, most prominent among these those from library and information sciences and education. Local debates have focused in the main on discussions about the 'good book' or 'appropriate' books for children and ways in which to encourage children to read (Van der Westhuizen 1999, De Beer 1991, De Villiers & Bester 1992, Steenberg 1982); the role of fiction in the process of socialisation (Machet & Bester 1990, Van Niekerk 1992, Stiebel 1992, Mitchell & Smith 1996); the reading preferences of children (Van Zyl 1990, Snyman 1994, Verwey 1999); the field of children's literature and the debate on children's literature as popular fiction or 'Literature' (Van Zyl 1988, Wybenga 1985, Wiehahn 1991, Gouws 1995); and the appraisal of individual texts (Mitchell & Smith 1996). A fair amount of postgraduate study has been undertaken in this area on a wide range of topics, but not much of this has filtered through to academic journals.

In the last decade, though, it seems that the importance of children's literature as an area of study, in particular the socio-historical dimension of this area of literary studies, is being asserted (see, for example Jenkins, 1994) and that new avenues are being explored. For the first time there is evidence of serious academic engagement with questions around popular fiction for children and the ideological and socio-historical legacies of children's literature in South Africa, specifically in Afrikaans.

An article by Maritha Snyman, published in 1994 in the Afrikaans literary journal *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, gave new momentum to the debate on Afrikaans children's literature. In the article, entitled, 'Afrikaanse jeuglektuur: 'n herbesinning' she argues - against the orthodoxy of the time - that formulaic literature for children, such as popular series books, play a valuable role in children's development and do not discourage young readers from 'graduating' to more serious literature later on their lives. In addition, she advocates the importance of further academic study of popular youth fiction. In her article, she makes reference to a range of well-known Afrikaans series books, including *Maasdorp*, *Keurboslaan*, *Die Uile*, *Trompie*, *Saartjie*, *Soekie*, *Bienkie*, *Fritz Deelman*, and *Jasper*, arguing that these books remain the most popular texts for Afrikaans-speaking young readers. In particular, she argues that these series books should be reprinted for a new generation of young readers. Now, what is of interest about the series books she singles out for their popularity is that virtually all these have been produced before the 1970s.

Snyman's article is important and controversial in a number of ways. First, within the South African context, and more markedly in the domain of Afrikaans literature, her argument about the importance of popular fiction is novel. Second, Snyman provides some empirical evidence to support her argument, though one would have liked to see a more systematic and structured survey. Third, given that Snyman's article was published in 1994, the year of the first democratic elections in South Africa, what is ostensibly missing from Snyman's plea for series books to be reprinted is an acknowledgement or consideration of the social context in which these books have originally been produced, the values they display and their ideological contents. In short, Snyman fails to engage with the question about how texts work and what it is they do apart from the ability of series books to stimulate the habit of reading.

After the historical events of 1994, there appears to be a new interest in youth literature, with more studies devoted to the social-historical aspects of children's literature emerging. Often these studies focus on issues of representation, specifically race. Examples include a study by Greyling (1999), entitled *Die uitbeelding van apartheid in Engelse Suid-Afrikaanse jeugliteratuur*, and Miemie du Plessis's *Rasseverhoudings in Suid-Afrikaanse jeuglektuur sedert 1990* (1999). Gender representation is another angle from which children's books are scrutinized (see, for example De Villiers & Bester 1992). Attempts have been made to render a more comprehensive overview of the system of children's literature production and

dissemination (see Van Vuuren 1994). More recently, Thomas van der Walt has moved into the historical study of children's fiction, a field that seems to display many gaps (Van der Walt 2000 and Fairer-Wessels & Van der Walt 1999), and so has Maritha Snyman, who looks specifically at the history of series books in Afrikaans (Snyman 2001). However, many of these studies are exploratory (see for example Fairer-Wessels & Van der Walt 1999, Snyman 1999, Snyman 1994, Snyman 2001, Verwey 1999) and there is vast scope for more descriptive and explanatory academic work in this area.

Key questions

This brief survey of selected themes in the study of children's literature and popular formula books for children that pertain to this study raises important questions that need to be addressed in this research. These can be summarised as follows: 1) What is the relationship between the *Keurboslaan* series and the British public school story genre?; 2) With regard to children's literature, how can the way in which these texts 'work', that is, the formative qualities of texts, be explained theoretically?; 3) Based on the aforementioned question, what are the ideological contents and socio-historical trajectory of the *Keurboslaan* series and how does this analysis contribute to the debate on the merit of series books for children?; 4) How was the production, circulation and reception of the *Keurboslaan* series interlinked with other social and political developments of the time?; 5) In what fruitful ways can the literature on popular fiction and the literature on children's literature speak to each other? These questions are outlined in greater detail below.

In the first instance, it seems to be important to explore the extent to which the *Keurboslaan* series is modelled on the British public school story, exemplified by *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Such an inquiry will locate the study in a comparative framework, thereby steering the analysis away from the kind of exceptionalism thesis underpinning much scholarship on Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid. In addition, such an investigation could reveal the continuities and discontinuities between colonial rule and apartheid South Africa.

Lack of adequate theorisation of the way in which children's literature produces its attributed formative and educational effects have been identified as a central shortcoming in many studies of children's literature. It is therefore necessary to

problematise the link between children's literature and the effects it produces on society.

Whilst in recent work on popular fiction for children in Afrikaans an argument has been put forward about the positive aspects of popular formulas for children and that older series books in Afrikaans need to be reprinted, no attention has been paid to the discourses circulating in these series books or the conditions in which they have been produced. It is therefore necessary to conduct an analysis of discourses in the *Keurboslaan* series through a symptomatic reading of the texts. Such an analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the way in which discourse functions in the *Keurboslaan* series and the extent to which it can be argued that these discourses have contributed to the creation of a particular kind of subjectivity among its readers.

In his study of the school story genre, Richards shows how the development of this genre of fiction was inserted into larger social processes linked to the Evangelical movement in Britain. In the same vein, it is therefore important to locate the development and circulation of the *Keurboslaan* series within the historical and social context of the period and to explain if and how the production, dissemination and reception of the *Keurboslaan* series were interlinked with other social processes.

Finally, the discussion in this chapter raises a question about the extent to which the historical development of the academic study of children's literature has resulted in it being awarded a 'special status' as a field of academic inquiry that falls outside or in between disciplines and what the effects of this status are. Theorists such as Hunt welcome recent developments that have seen a change in the status of children's literature, which is now generally no longer seen as a lesser literature but as a different kind of literature. Yet, the question raised in the present study is whether it may not be useful to embed a study of children's literature fully in broader debates on literature in general and popular literature specifically when such a study is framed within the discipline of literature, as is the case in the present study. In effect, the implications of such a proposal are that the 'special status' of children's literature is temporarily suspended and that the research approach and methods employed need to comply with the requirements for the study of any literary works, including popular fiction.

Conclusion

The academic field of children's literature is varied and multi-disciplinary. As a result, it is incoherent and represents many different schools of thought and analytical and theoretical approaches addressed to the general thematic. Whereas the same tension between the 'good book' and popular fiction plays itself out in debates on children's literature, children's literature is imbued with a formative significance, which is not generally present in debates on popular fiction for adults. The educational basis for theorisation of the way in which texts socialise the young reader is often lacking in empirical, both current sociological and historical, studies of the phenomenon.

In South Africa, and in particular in with regard to Afrikaans literature, the study of children's literature is still in its infancy. There exists a paucity of research on issues related to the role of children's literature with regard class and identity formation. Moreover, there are very few studies on popular fiction for children in Afrikaans. Given the South African experience of apartheid, it is a pity that no record could be found of scholarly work on popular fiction for children produced by resistance movements, such as *Stanley Bekker en die boikot*. Studies that have been undertaken on the socio-historical development of Afrikaans children's literature are mostly exploratory. Since the field of children's literature in South Africa as elsewhere is fractured and incoherent, the scope and depth of research in this area is highly uneven and some studies, reception studies in particular, present problems of evidence as well as theoretical and methodological problems.

Yet, despite many gaps, there seems to be agreement among scholars in the field that children's literature has come of age and is now widely regarded as a valid field of academic study (Hunt 1994, Nikolajeva 1996, Van der Walt 2000, Lesnik-Oberstein 1994).

The key questions identified in this chapter are addressed in the next few chapters. Chapter Six focuses on the production, circulation and reception of the *Keurboslaan* series, whilst Chapter Five and Chapter Six aim to link the production of the *Keurboslaan* series to the historical context within which it emerges.

Two further areas for inquiry that were raised include the extent to which it is possible to draw from the literature on popular fiction in studies of children's literature and visa versa, and the way in which the relationship between text and society is theorised in

the case of children's literature. It has been argued in the previous chapter that there are a great number of similarities between the *Keurboslaan* series and popular formulas for adults, such as romance and detective novels. Hence, at the very minimum, the method and rigour of analysis applied to the study of children's literature need to be similar to that of studies of popular fiction. It is argued here that the study of children's literature may possibly benefit from being located squarely within the boundaries of the literary domain. As such, the point of departure of the present study is that the theoretical and methodological approaches of literary studies can be applied to the study of children's literature and that considerations of the special attributes of children's literature are temporarily suspended. For a theoretical explanation of the relationship between literature and society, this study draws on the theoretical contributions of Bourdieu, Althusser and De Certeau outlined in the previous chapter to explore the relationship between literature and society – in this case the relationship between the *Keurboslaan* series and the formation of Afrikaner nationalism – with a particular focus on the question of texts and the creation of subjectivity.