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Popular African language art literature(s): cinematic perceptions on Black African middleclassness in South African television series – a myth or reality?

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine South African soap opera narratives as sites for the construction and negotiation of black African middleclass representations in South Africa. The research focuses on South African soap opera texts: *Generations* (1994); *Scandal!* (2008); *The Queen* (2017); *Legacy* (2020). The study draws from these popular television series cinematic perceptions that have been produced to be consumed by the racially black South African community. Moreover, it evaluates, across time, the ways in which black African middleclassness has been portrayed in the soaps. The study examines the constructions of femininity, masculinity and their positionalities as characterizations in the context of South Africa in the post- apartheid dispensation. Arguably, televisual texts presenting black images do not align themselves to key liberal modes that symbolize an African renaissance that is free from the affirmation of underlying racist motives of representation. Where these texts are guarded by white capital supremacist unchanging structural ideologies of imperialism, soap opera narratives, too, assume an important role around black African middleclassness in South African representations, which serves to construct and reinforce questionable black African middleclass stereotypes and prejudices in the 'new' democratic dispensation.

Keywords: Black African middleclassness; characterization; representation; stereotypes; prejudices; 'othered'; otherness; whiteness