

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE REPORT AND ANALYSIS

In tracing the journey of *Hijack Stories* (2000), it is important to consider all the surrounding factors which influenced it, since cultural items do not function independently but circulate “*within a complex network of social relations and significations*” (Huggan 1994). It is this network which, first of all, allowed for the creation and exposure of *Hijack Stories* (2000) and, secondly, adds to its perceived value. In this way, we consider *Hijack Stories* (2000) to be a commodity within the cultural market.

The political, social and financial factors were addressed by delving into the context of South Africa’s film industry. Another important factor to be addressed is the notion of ideology, a notion which has “*a long and complex history, appearing in the writings of many authors and infiltrating nearly every modern discipline in the social sciences and humanities*” (Thompson 1984: 3). In this research it is used to refer to:

the way men live out their roles in class-society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole.

(Eagleton 1976: 16-17)

This quote infers a structuralist understanding in that ideology is understood within social constructs. This research addresses these constructs in its consideration of South Africa’s political past, the film industry, and the circumstances and subjectivities of individuals involved.

Closely linked to ideology is the notion of culture which, for this study, is referred to in its adjectival form: the *cultural*. As discussed earlier, Appadurai (1996: 12–13) argues against the use of the word *culture* in its noun form. In his words, “*...the problem with the noun form has to do with its implication that culture is*

some kind of object, thing, or substance, whether physical or metaphysical" (1996: 12). Instead the alternative, *the cultural*, better reflects the notion of culture as a "*dimension of phenomena, a dimension that attends to situated and embodied difference*" (1996: 13). We gain better insight into *Hijack Stories* (2000) as a cultural commodity by addressing the ideologies of those involved, their impact, as well as a consideration of the cultural.

Commodity theory has become increasingly popular in African literary studies. It is also particularly useful in translation studies when we consider the crucial role that translation plays in facilitating cross-cultural and international communication and relations. Translation "*provides the necessary social interface between similar and dissimilar conceptions*" (Hewson & Martin: 1991: 25). Because the world's population does not speak one language, translation is seen as an essential activity in aiding global interaction on all levels. Given this intrinsic value, translation as a service and as a product can therefore be considered as a commodity.

It is important that we address what is understood by the concept of commodity. In today's financially-oriented world, commodity is most commonly understood as a raw material traded en masse for production and refinement, a prime example being oil. But how is the concept of commodity understood in a literary sense? Firstly, to be a commodity the product in question needs to be perceived as valuable by the market in which it will be exchanged or circulated. This value fuels exchange, which is in turn fuelled by desire, demand and reciprocal sacrifice (Appadurai 1986: 4). On this, Appadurai (1986: 6) writes that a commodity has a "*social potential... distinguishable from 'products', 'objects', 'goods', 'artefacts', and other sorts of things – but only in certain respects and from a certain point of view*".

Secondly, there needs to be some form of refinement carried out on the product in question in order to make it more accessible and user-friendly. Relating to cultural commodities,

all cultural production is dependent on the market, not simply in an economic sense but in the broader sense that it is in principle subordinated to a common standard of value.

(Frow 1995: 19)

The first principle relates to the value attributed to *Hijack Stories* (2000) because of its appeal to foreign audiences which, in this case, constitute the primary market of the film's circulation and distribution. This appeal is the result of the complex network of social, political, economic and ideological factors in which *Hijack Stories* (2000) was created and exists. Viewed from this perspective, *Hijack Stories* (2000) can thus be seen to be "*a product intended principally for exchange, and that such products emerge, by definition, in the institutional, psychological, and economic conditions of capitalism*" (Appadurai 1986: 6).

In relation to the second principle, we can consider what many describe as the simplification and dilution of the film's characters and setting – the way in which they are stereotyped – as a form of refinement. This refinement forms part of Huggan's (1997) definition of the commodifying process, a process through which "*generalised cultural differences are manufactured, disseminated, and consumed*". This last process grants instant access to the foreign target audience, depicting "*...a cultural other that [metropolitan readers] want to believe in and experience, with little regard to factual basis*" thus satisfying "*...the ideological requirements of the dominant culture*" (Huggan 1997)¹.

¹ It is worthwhile pointing out the connection between the conventional understanding of a commodity – a raw material which is refined for bulk trading – and the literary understanding, as understood within the context of this research. Like a raw material, postcolonial "exotic" cultural material undergoes refinement in the form of simplification followed by packaging suitable for the intended market where it is consumed. Huggan (1994: 22; 27) gives an example of this simplification from Salman Rushdie's 1981 novel, *Midnight's Children*, which was a recipient of the 25-year commemorative "Booker of Bookers" award in 1993. Huggan lists certain indicators of

A commodity can be further valued by looking at its demand. This can be done by considering the product's exchange. In the case of *Hijack Stories* (2000), this value component is ascertained by considering film's form of exchange: circulation or distribution. This exchange is crucial to the product's value. Marx (1971: 48 in Appadurai 1986: 8) explains that: "[t]o become a commodity a product must be transferred to another, whom it will serve as a use-value, by means of an exchange". In fact, Appadurai's (1986: 56) central assertion is that "exchange is the source of value and not vice versa". This complements Huggan's assertion that value is not intrinsic – rather it is *contingent*, acquired from the surrounding social network and historical circumstances. The appeal of *Hijack Stories* (2000) lies in the historical circumstances of South Africa: a freshly democratic country which has emerged practically unscathed after years of oppressive minority rule. The world has long been interested in South Africa, which has given currency and value to *South Africanness*. Indeed, the South African playwright, Welcome Msomi², states that "[t]here is a huge potential and all we have to do is ... tap our own uniqueness" (Destiller, 2004: 158).

Hijack Stories (2000) falls under Huggan's title of the postcolonial "exotic". But what is meant by such a title? Firstly, we can consider cultural items originating from South Africa as postcolonial, given the country's history of British and Dutch occupation and rule (in the case of the British). This covers the political and social meaning of postcolonial. Huggan adds another dimension, calling it a "sales tag" (1994: 24). In terms of "exotic", Huggan explains this notion with reference to African and Indian literature in particular which

this novel's exoticism (snakecharmers, genies, fakirs, etc.) which he describes as "wares of Western literary exoticism" and "familiar semiotic markers of Orientalism".

² Welcome Msomi's best known work is a Zulu adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* entitled *uMabatha*, also known as *The Zulu Macbeth*.

...offers a window onto a different and exciting world. This world produces wonder: it rejuvenates the sensibilities of a readership tired of provincial navel-gazing; tired also of a literature that reflects the realities of a society from which they badly need release.

(1994: 24)

Huggan (1997: 24) writes that this appeal is exploited by creators of such postcolonial exotic items who use it as “a convenient device for the merchandising of exotic-culturally ‘othered’ goods” as “exoticism sells” (1994: 26) and there is “commodification through ‘foreignness’” (1994: 28). Huggan also addresses the notion of exchange using an economic understanding and applying it in a literary sense. Huggan (1997) writes that there is a trade of cultural items and that their creators are very often traders operating within the market for cultural commodities: “[p]ostcolonial writers [...] might be seen as culture brokers ‘mediating the international trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery’” (Huggan 1997 quoting Appiah 1992). This implies that creators of postcolonial cultural items are knowingly or unknowingly complicit in this literary form of neo-imperialism in which this “exoticism” is plundered and packaged for cultural consumption by foreign markets as there is “a state of constant vigilance to the neo-colonial ‘regimes of value’” (Huggan 1997). These exotic cultural products are tailor-made for the unfamiliar Western capitalist audience, for what Huggan (1994: 27) refers to as the “*European exoticist imaginary*”.

On this, Peterson (2006) asks: “If you start to tell your stories and make your stories with a foreign consumption as a goal, does that not start to influence the kind of stories that you tell and how you tell them?” Because cultural wares, such as *Hijack Stories* (2000), seem to be involved in some kind of a process of mass production and refinement with unfamiliar foreign audiences in mind, there is less appeal of such items to the audiences of the country of origin.

When discussing the portrayal of South Africans, specifically black South Africans, in both *Hijack Stories* (2000) and, more recently, *Tsotsi* (2005), Motshegwa (2006) feels that, as a black person, she is not at all represented by the characters and that the portrayal of black South Africans in these foreign-oriented South African films is somewhat alienating. This is the case particularly with the portrayal of young black men, who are mostly depicted as menacing and violent. Co-screenwriter for *Hijack Stories* (2000), Lesego Rampolokeng (2006), adds to this: “*I’ve actually never seen a SA film that I was comfortable with, never*”.

However, the decision to market these films with foreign audiences in mind at the risk of alienating local audiences arises out of a financial reality. Given South Africa’s poor movie-going culture and given the exotic appeal of *Hijack Stories*’ (2000) *foreignness* and *South Africanness*, the international co-production team knew that punting the film abroad instead of in South Africa would ultimately be a far better investment. These realities would result in the need to translate *Hijack Stories* (2000), ensuring that this commodity is accessible to audiences outside South Africa. Reviews, such as that of this French viewer, confirm the interest of foreign audiences in *Hijack Stories* (2000):

Far from Hollywood eye candy, this movie has a taste of South African authenticity. [...] I found the characters quite attaching and I felt refreshed after viewing this exotic piece.

(Liotier 2004)

Thus the apparent catering of successful South African films to foreign audiences is perhaps a reflection of an insecure industry, set on pleasing outsiders rather than those closer to home: “*if you want to believe in yourself, why are you so preoccupied with the rest of the world? Why does global validation matter that much?*” (Peterson 2006).

The journey of *Hijack Stories* (2000) is also strongly affected by the forces of globalisation, a phenomenon which dominates the public and academic imaginary, becoming a global buzzword. We define globalisation as “a set of processes leading to the integration of economic, cultural, political, and social systems across geographical boundaries” (HSE Web Depot), but there are many definitions of globalisation in a wide range of fields, reflecting the very nature of globalisation. Globalisation is therefore not a simple phenomenon but one which is seen and felt in many different forms. It is ubiquitous, and its influence is seen and felt everywhere and in many different forms – in politics, language, cuisine, fashion, music, etc. *Hijack Stories* (2000) is no exception. This film is set in South Africa, is directed by a South African of German decent, and financed by France, the United Kingdom and Germany, making it a perfect example of globalisation, marketed for a primarily foreign audience.

A major discontent of globalisation is the issue of cultural hegemony as smaller nations and cultures fear cultural and ideological domination by larger, and mostly Western (read American) influences: “...for polities of smaller scale, there is always fear of cultural absorption by polities of larger scale, especially those that are nearby” (Appadurai 1994: 328). It is noteworthy that a Canadian film critic, Roxane Tracey focussed her review of *Hijack Stories* (2000) on the presence of African American popular culture in the film:

Director Oliver Schmitz's post-apartheid gangster movie is as much a satirical story about the contradictions of democracy as it is a commentary about how African American style has influenced South African society... Scenes throughout the film portray young black South Africa a place where the roots of traditional African have been partially eclipsed in the face of more powerful African American pop culture influences.

(2004)

Tracey continues in this vein, writing that “*Hijack Stories is less an African action movie than an examination of how (African) American action films have impacted on South African youth*”. Although there is substance to the “survival dilemma” of

smaller cultural groupings, it cannot be viewed simplistically as globalisation is deeply complex: “*The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models*” (Appadurai 1994: 328). Moreover, cultural influence from a bigger and more powerful source may not necessarily dominate, as it may be *indigenised* instead: “...as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenised in one or another way...” (1994: 328). *Hijack Stories* (2000) actress Motshegwa concedes this point:

American influences are seen all over the world in terms of youth culture. But what is interesting for me is what is happening in Africa with that transported information. Young people are taking that information that they see in films and on television and then claiming it for themselves and turning it into something else... They have begun to Africanise American culture.

(in Tracey 2004)

The idea of “transported information”, as termed by Motshegwa, ties in well with the notion of the circulation of ideas, as expounded on by Lydia Liu. Liu’s central premise is that:

We intuitively grasp the fact that meanings usually get around and circulate beyond their original point of eruption and that what is said in one context can be taken to mean very different things in different places.

(1999: 2)

This encompasses the occurrence of indigenisation, as is the case of the assimilation of American ideas of culture in the South African youth culture of *Hijack Stories* (2000). This circulation of ideas also works the other way round in that ideas from the periphery may circulate to the centre, although to a lesser degree.

Appadurai (1994: 324-325) also acknowledges globalisation when he states that “...we have entered into an altogether new condition of neighbourliness, even with those most distant from ourselves”, “today’s world involves interactions of a new order and intensity”, and that “it takes only the merest acquaintance with the facts of the modern world to note that it is now an interactive system in a sense which is strikingly new...”. Although globalisation appears to be “strikingly new”, it is the result of the growth and intensification of trans-border and intercultural exchange with “modest precursors” such as religion, war, Western maritime expansion, mass literacy, trade, advances in technology, etc. (1994: 325).

It is important to note that ideas very often differ linguistically, meaning that translation is essential in facilitating their movement from one language to another. Translation is a commoditisation process which allows circulation (Sprott 2003: 8). This assertion is supported by Liu (1999: 3): “...translation has been indispensable to the processes of global circulation of colonial language theories, universal history, scientific discourse, material culture, and international law for the past few hundred years”. This area is discussed in more depth in the next chapter on the language and translation of *Hijack Stories* (2000).

What is the arena of thought in which different ideas play out and travel? This space, known as the *global imaginary*, is an intricate landscape which is “constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe” (Appadurai 1994: 329). This so-called landscape of people’s imaginings is made up of five building blocks or *scapes* which each define a different aspect of global cultural flow. They are ethnoscapescapes, technoscapescapes, finanscapescapes, mediascapescapes, and ideoscapescapes³. Some of these

³ While discussing the stereotypical depiction of young black men in many South African films as violent and menacing (see p. 34), Peterson (2006) suggested that there could be another *scape*: a *bodyscape*. This would apply to the imaginings of what certain bodies – according to age, gender and race – represent. The common negative portrayal of young black South African men in the media would suggest that, to a large extent, the global imaginary does not have a positive perception of these bodies.

scapes – namely, ethnoscaples, mediascapes and ideoscapes - can be understood from the point of *Hijack Stories* (2000) and its journey⁴.

The first *scape* is the ethnoscape (1994: 329) which is a “*landscape of people*” responsible for the world population’s shifting nature. Such people include tourists, immigrants, refugees, and other peoples *on the move*. This movement increases with the intensification of globalisation. Related to ethnoscaples is this notion of *cosmopolitics* which Laura Chrisman (2003: 157) describes as “*a freely created, cosmopolitan cultural identity based on notions of ‘global’ citizenship*”.

It has been stated that part of tracing the journey of *Hijack Stories* (2000) is taking into consideration the ideologies of those involved. Because of this, ethnoscaples relate very closely to ideoscapes. Appadurai explains that ideoscapes have to do with people’s ideological beliefs and describes these dimensions as “*...perspectival constructs inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation states, multinationals, sub-national grouping and movements*” and (1994: 329).

To understand both the ethnoscaples and ideoscapes within the context of *Hijack Stories* (2000) it is necessary to consider the background of its director, Oliver Schmitz - a white South African with a strong German heritage.

What must be taken into account is his experience with South African film starting with his first feature film, *Mapantsula* (1988). According to Motshegwa (2006), Schmitz wrote this script and directed the film while being in close contact with the real-life protagonist. In this way he was able to portray an authentic South Africa with which South Africans were able to identify. Schmitz did not have this kind of exposure into township life when writing and directing *Hijack*

⁴ Although finscapes and technoscapes are applicable here, their relevance is marginal and therefore not worthy of discussion.

Stories (2000) with the result that South Africans may have felt somewhat alienated by it.

Schmitz's German heritage and being a German-speaker certainly worked in his favour when rounding up foreign support for *Hijack Stories* (2000): "...I tell you, this film wouldn't have been financed if I didn't have a German passport" (Schmitz in Worsdale 2000). Appadurai (1994: 329) writes that this group of people on the move in ethnoscapas "*function on a larger scale*". In this way we can consider Schmitz's own social and historical background as being instrumental in the creation and foreign circulation of *Hijack Stories* (2000).

Schmitz has since relocated to Germany, mainly because of the difficulties he has faced in working as a film director in South Africa. Chrisman writes that such movement is a "*worldly sensibility*" which:

may express itself through voluntary exile from one's homeland; it may construe the act of travel itself as a socially emancipatory project: good for the worldly soul, good for the soul of the world.

(2003: 157)

Indeed, Schmitz has found greater success abroad with European television programmes and films such as *Paris, je t'aime* (2006), *Mein Vater der General* (2006), and *Türkisch für Anfänger* (2006). Schmitz can therefore be considered as what Huggan (1994: 29) calls a "*cultural amphibian*" or a "*multicultural*", "*frontierless*" creator who can easily "*switch allegiance*". Huggan refers to this movement of the "*literary migrant*" as a kind of "*cross-pollination*".

Mediascapes simply refers to the movement and distribution of media in all its forms – narrative and images in print, electronic format, digital format, etc – to a growing audience worldwide. These mediascapes "...provide [...] large and complex repertoires, images, narratives and ethnoscapas to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics

are *profoundly mixed*" (Appadurai 1994: 330). What makes mediascapes interesting is the distance between the real event in one part of the world which is being discussed by media, and the conveyance of this information to another part of the world. In this way:

The lines between the realistic and fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that, the further away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds which are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world.

(1994: 330-331)

This relates very strongly to Huggan's argument of the postcolonial exotic and the notions of *voyeurism* and *fetishness* on the part of unfamiliar and metropolitan audiences. This is evident in the exotic appeal that township life, as depicted in *Hijack Stories* (2000), has for foreign audiences, yet is considered by some in South Africa as a stereotyped interpretation. One would think that, given the unifying nature of globalisation (the fact that it seems to make the world smaller), these "*constructed imagined worlds*" would be at least similar. But they are, in fact, all very different from one another – the sameness implied by globalisation disguises difference. And this distance between the real event and the imagined makes the world seem even more *imaginary*. This is because the context and individuality of one person will never be identical to those of another.

The next stop in our journey is an examination of the commercial presentation of the *Hijack Stories*' (2000) DVD releases. A film's period of screening in cinemas is not the only interface between film and viewer. It has a much longer shelf life as once screening in cinemas is over it is commercially packaged and made available to the public on DVD⁵ either through purchase or rental. The distributor is responsible for packaging the film and presenting it in such a way that it

⁵ Today new films are only manufactured as DVDs as the video format has become largely redundant (at least in Western Europe and in North America).

appeals to the potential viewer, whether renting or buying the film. Indeed, Gérard Genette writes that a text, which in this case is *Hijack Stories* (2000), is

rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations. And although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its "reception" and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book.

(1997: 1)⁶

The accompanying productions (illustrations, etc.) described above constitute what Genette terms as a product's *paratext*⁷:

More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*, or [...] a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back.

(1997: 1-2)

The paratext, a "*fringe [...] which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text*" (Philippe Lejeune in Genette 1997: 2), is further described as a *zone of transition* and, more importantly, of *transaction*:

a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, and influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text [...].

(1997: 2)

Hence a product's paratext is a crucial factor in a film's ability to tap into the enormous market of hiring and buying DVD movies. Genette further defines aspects within the paratext, such as the cover, as the publisher's – or, in this

⁶ Translated into English from the 1987 original in French

⁷ The term paratext, meaning *outside the text*, is used by Genette to refer specifically to literary works. However, like a literary work a film is a product intended for consumption. Their presentation is also very similar, consisting of a cover, blurb, illustrations, etc. making Genette's approach applicable to an analysis of the commercial presentation of *Hijack Stories* (2000).

case, the distributor's – *peritext*. What follows is an analysis of three editions of the DVD of *Hijack Stories*: the French (2001), British (2000), and South African (2003) editions.

The first aspect to consider is the title of the film for the non-South African editions. In the United Kingdom, hijacking⁸ is more commonly known as “carjacking” while the French equivalent, *vol de voiture (avec agression du conducteur)*, of course, bears no resemblance to either of the English terms. In fact, translating the title into French would mean a much longer title (*histoires de braquage de voiture*) while changing the title to “Carjack Stories” for British audiences would perhaps create confusion as the term “hijacking” is used throughout the film. By retaining the original South African English title, the potential British or French viewer is immediately alerted to the film's foreignness and any confusion experienced by these two foreign audiences is cleared up by the blurb on the back covers. The blurb of the British editions starts with “*On the mean streets of Soweto, carjacking is a way of life for Zama and his crew*” and the French blurb mentions “*comment braquer une voiture* [how to hijack/break into a car]” as well as explaining the South African English meaning of hijacking: “*le monde violent des hijackers (voleurs de voitures)* [the violent world of hijackers (car thieves)]”.

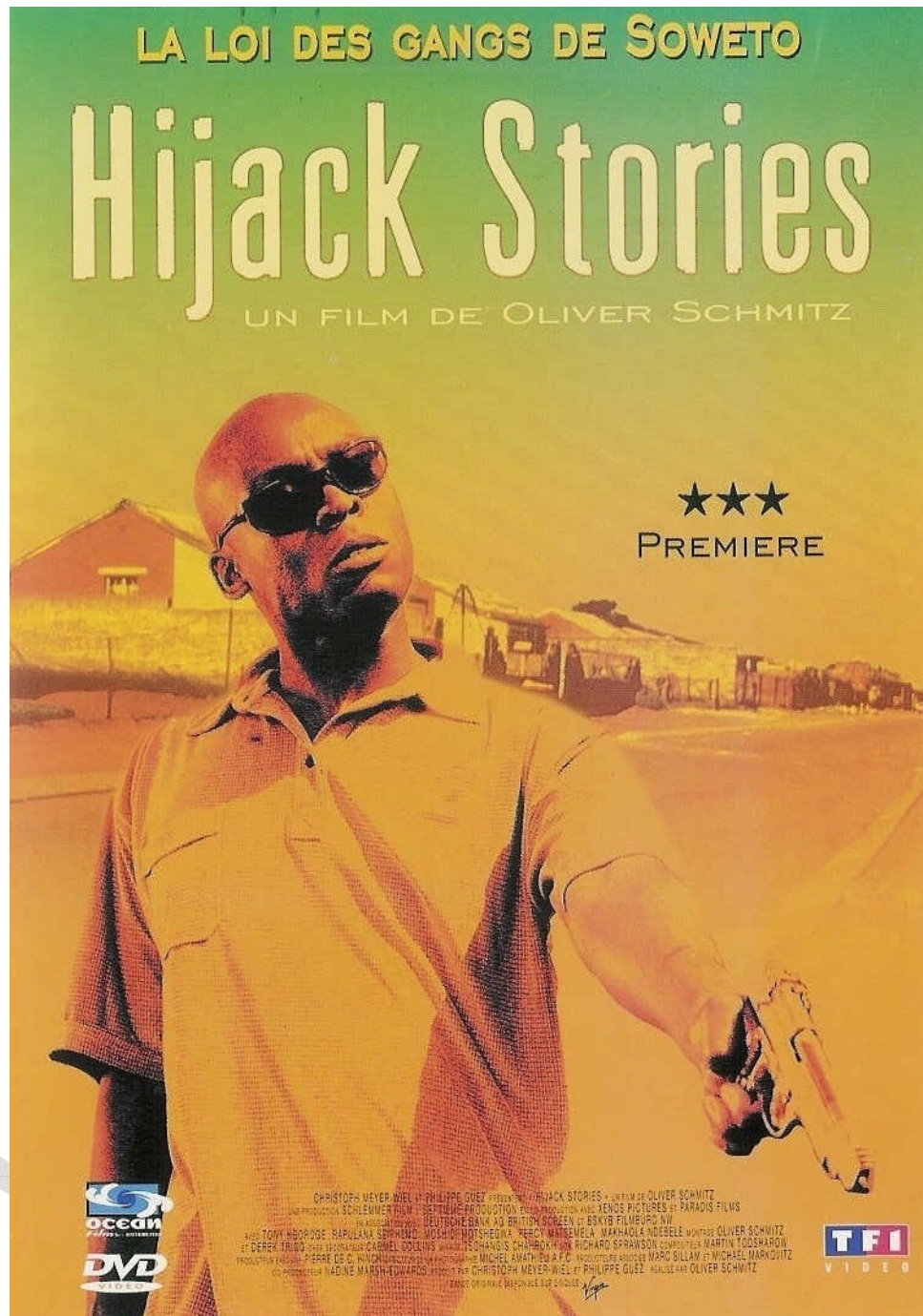
Next to be considered are the covers, of which there are four (1997: 24-25): cover 1 (the front cover); cover 2 (the inside front cover); cover 3 (the inside back cover) and cover 4 (the back cover) as well as the spine of the DVDs. What is crucial to remember is that the covers and the spine are ultimately designed with the intended audience in mind – a factor which is “*very important, if not the most important factor*” (Nord 1991: 51).

⁸ Interestingly, in international English, “hijacking” refers to the forceful takeover of aircraft.

The primary function of cover 1 is to attract attention, which it does to an extent by default by being the very first part of the DVD box seen by the viewer. Cover 1 has several features to grab the potential viewer's attention, such as illustrations or photos, the title of the work and the title of the author.

Starting with the French edition of *Hijack Stories* (2001), the background fades down from green into yellow and title is positioned at the top in a clear typeface in title case. Below the title it is indicated that the film is by Oliver Schmitz. The big eye-catcher of the cover is a photo of the gangster Zama standing on a Sowetan street brandishing a gun, his head tilted up in defiance and his lips parted as if on the verge of making a threat.

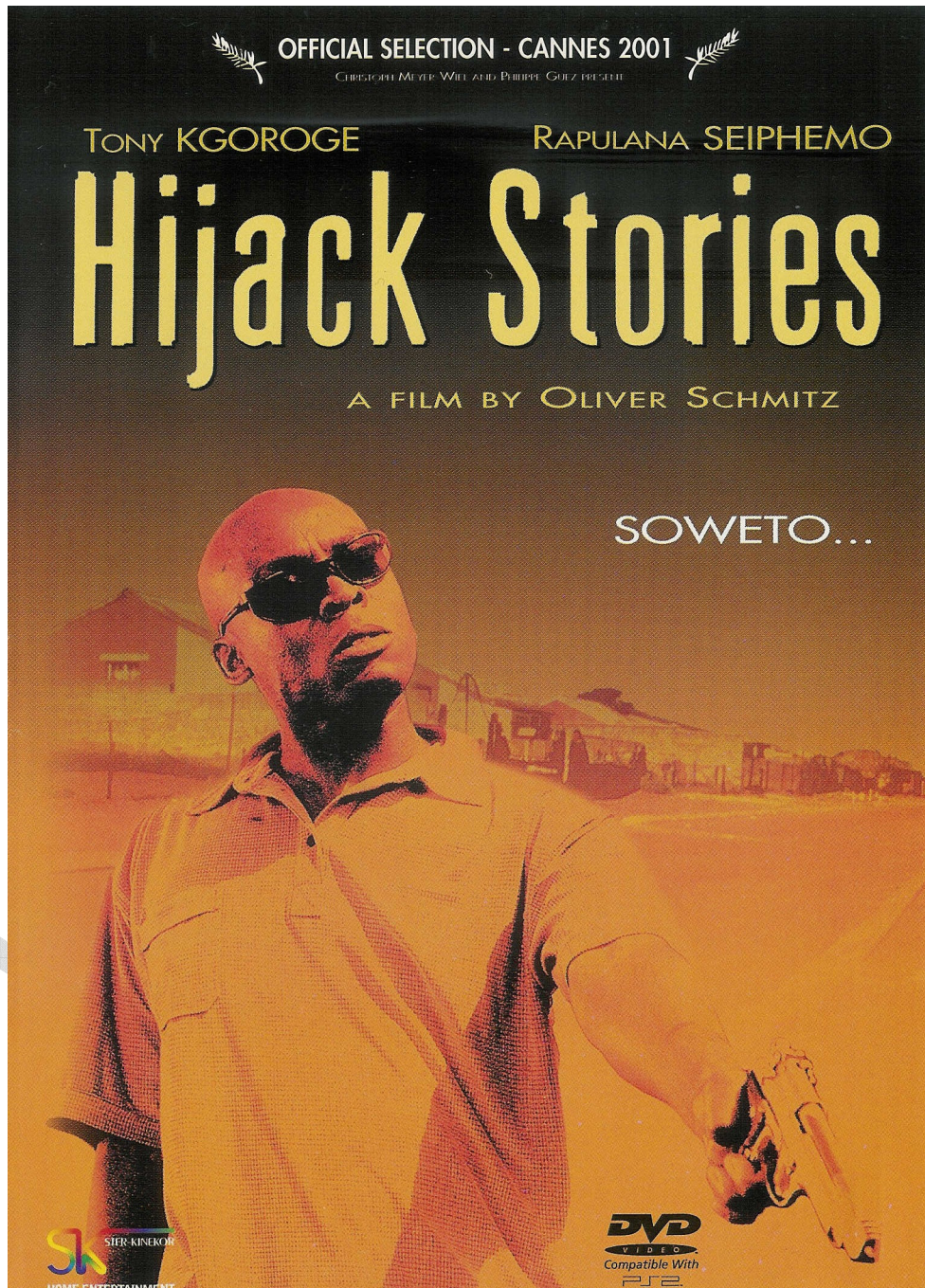
Above the title there is a subtitle - *LA LOI DES GANGS DE SOWETO* (the law of the gangs of Soweto) - albeit above the title. Because French audiences are (mostly) unfamiliar with what Soweto is, it is contextualised and explicated by way of this subtitle, although it is mildly misleading as only one Sowetan gang actually features in the film. This subtitle also functions as what Genette (1997: 25; 56) terms as a "*genre indication*" as it indicates to the viewer that the film is about gangsterism, which in the viewer's mind entails lawlessness, violence and suspense.



COVER 1 – FRENCH DVD

On the right of Zama's face is the word "PREMIERE" followed by three stars. To understand what this means to a French audience, the opinions of a few French people were sought out. Their understanding is that "PREMIERE" is the name of

an international film magazine and the three stars which follow is a rating out of five. This is what Genette (1997: 25) defines as a “*laudatory comment*” which usually appears on cover 4 (back cover), although another laudatory comment does also feature on cover 4. Let us consider cover 1 of the South African DVD:



COVER 1 – SOUTH AFRICAN DVD

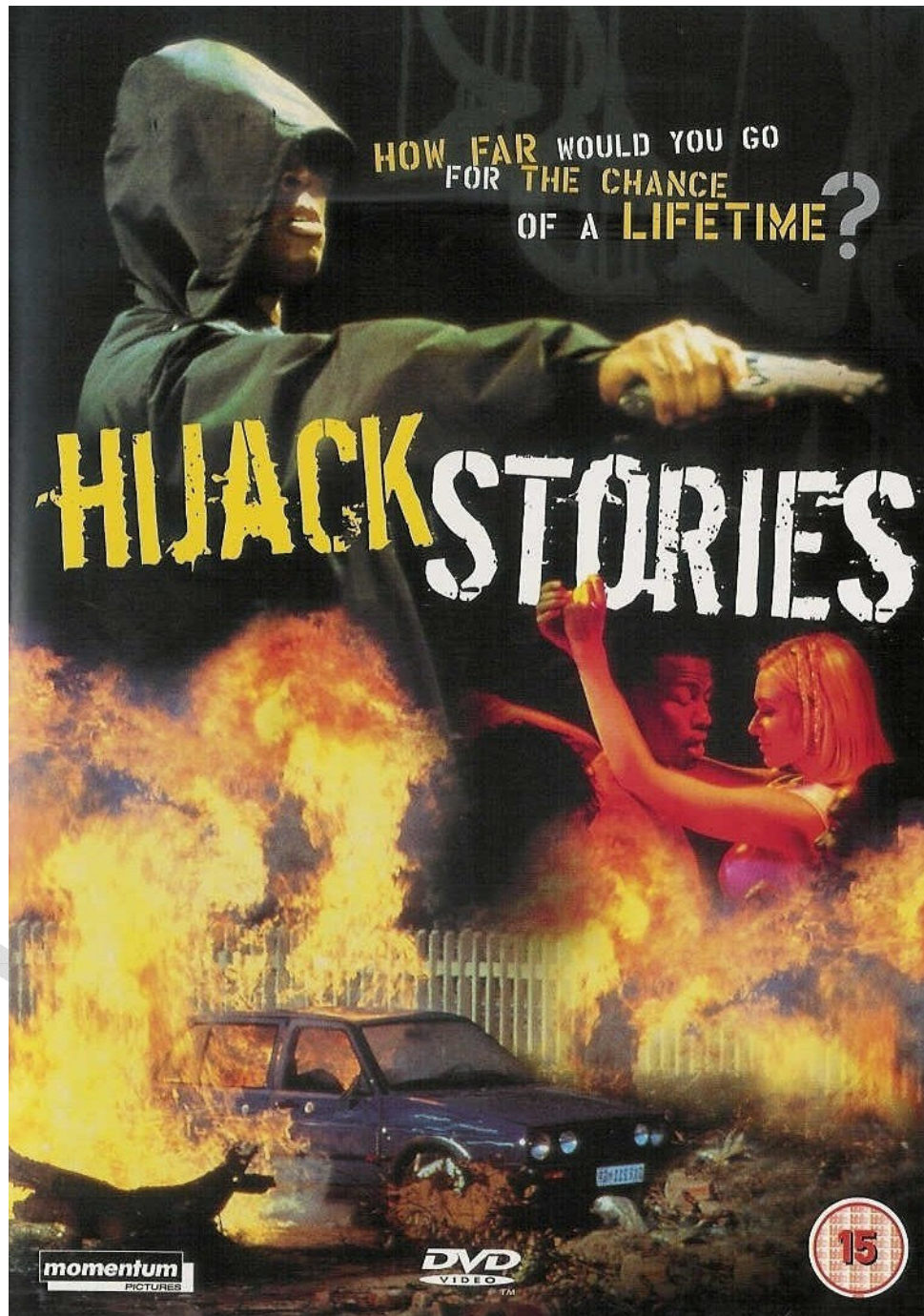
This cover is identical to the French cover 1 in respect to the title, author mention, and illustration. However, this is where the similarities between the two end. The background colour scheme is different in that it fades down from black-brown into yellow as opposed to green into yellow. Also, where the word “PREMIERE” appears on the French cover 1 is the word “SOWETO...”. This ellipsis in the form of three dots at the end has the effect of trailing off “*in an intriguing manner*” (Truss 2003: 177 - 204), inviting the viewer to enter the world of Soweto. The fact that this word is strategically positioned to the right-hand side of the cover, right next to the DVD box’s opening tab, support this theory.

Another major difference lies in the fact that the names of the two lead actors are mentioned. Here it is important to note that both these actors – Tony Kgoroge and Rapulana Seiphemo⁹ – are well-known locally for their roles in a popular South African soap opera *Generations*. For this reason, the South African distributor, Ster Kinekor, added their names as a selling point for local audiences. Including the lead actors’ names on the foreign covers would be inconsequential to viewers in France and in the United Kingdom.

The South African cover also features a laudatory comment boasting the film’s international acclaim (Official Selection – Cannes 2001) which is positioned at the very top of the cover. Having this accolade on the local front cover is a symbol of South African pride and a signal to the local potential viewer that the film is internationally recognised. This can be seen as an attempt to respond to the South African tendency to think that international is better - particularly when it comes to films – and thus tend to overlook locally made films. Also, judging from the hype surrounding *Tsotsi*’s (2005) Oscar win, South Africans love to know that their films are doing well abroad and are attracted by this kind of global validation. Much has been said about the appeal of South African films abroad and that their foreignness is in itself a major selling point. Clearly, a more

⁹ Seiphemo has recently gained more recognition, both locally and internationally, playing a lead role in South Africa’s first Oscar-winning film *Tsotsi* (2005).

vigorous approach was used to for the local version to attract South African viewers, which was done by including the lead actors' names as well *Hijack Stories*' (2000) success in a major international film festival. Following is a discussion on the British cover 1.



COVER 1 – BRITISH DVD

Cover 1 of the British edition is entirely different from its French and South African counterparts. Against a black background is a collage of three different images. On the top of the cover is a gun-wielding thug, his face cast in shadow by his black, hooded jacket. Below that to the left is a blazing fire exploding out of a car. The flames of the second image lick the third image on the right-hand side – a young black man (Sox) in an embrace with a young white woman (his girlfriend, Nicky).

In the typeface of the title, the letters of the words *Hijack Stories* are jagged and chaotic, are not uniform in colour, and are in uppercase. This is in strong contrast to the title typeface of the other two versions, which are both monotone, in a clear font and in title case. Furthermore, the title of the British version is more centred and has the following question, also in a jagged uppercase font, above it: “*How far would you go for the chance of a lifetime?*”

Looking at this subtitle, we can identify a similarity with the South African cover 1. While the latter engages with the potential viewer personally by way of an invitation to Soweto (“SOWETO...”), the British subtitle too communicates directly to the potential viewer by using the second person singular: “*How far would **you** go...*” (author’s emphasis). This is unlike the French cover 1 which uses no such tactic to connect with the potential viewer.

However, the British cover subtitle is rather misleading. Does going far for “*the chance of a lifetime*” mean a life of crime and gangsterism or does it mean entering into an intimate interracial relationship? Either way, the potential viewer’s attention is grabbed by the prospects of violence and love across racial lines, which an international audience may still consider to be taboo in South Africa due to its history of apartheid. In this way, foreign audiences engage in a degree of voyeurism. Although referring to German audiences, when discussing the image of the interracial couple with Rampolokeng (2006), his reaction was perhaps exactly what Momentum Pictures (the British distributor) anticipated the

British viewer's reaction to be: *"Everyone would want to see – wow! You know, this just isn't done [in South Africa]!"*. Judging from the success of the *Hijack Stories* (2000) DVD in the United Kingdom, the cover has done well in appealing to British audiences (see p. 27).

Depending on how the DVD is displayed in a video shop or retail outlet, cover 1 may not be the very first part of the DVD box to grab the potential viewer's attention. Very often DVDs are stacked in such a way that only the spine is visible – *"a narrow site but one with obvious strategic importance"* (Genette 1997: 26). Of course, for all three spines the same title typeface used on cover 1 is again used on the spines. Again, the French and South African versions are similar in that they include an image on the spine, whereas the British version has only the title, an age restriction label, and the distributor's name. The French image is a miniature of cover 1 while the South African version has a close up of the image of Zama also from cover 1. Again, this could very well be to appeal to local audiences who would recognise this well-known actor.



SPINE – FRENCH DVD



SPINE – SOUTH AFRICAN DVD



SPINE – BRITISH DVD

Cover 4 – the back cover – is another *"strategically important spot"* (1997: 24) and includes the blurb or promotional statement. It is interesting to note that the

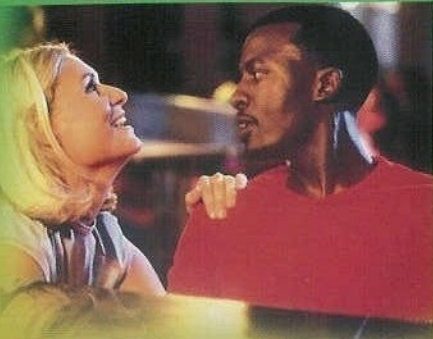
foreign editions sell *Hijack Stories* (2000) with a focus on a variety of extremes. The South African edition also uses contrast, although to a lesser degree. Let us first consider the foreign editions, starting with the French.

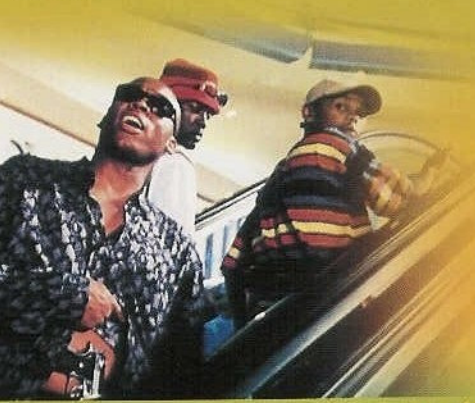
The French edition has focussed on gangsterism and the extremes of black and white, rich and poor. An image of Sox and his white girlfriend, Nicky, is the first image to appear on cover 4. Underneath this image is an image of Zama (dominating the left-hand side of the image) on a Sowetan street pointing a gun at Sox, who appears much smaller on the right-hand side of the image. To the left of this image is Zama and his gang, who is showing off a concealed gun under his shirt, in what appears to be an upmarket shopping mall. Here the story is sold from Sox's point of view: "*Sox, a young black actor who left Soweto for the attractive suburbs of Johannesburg, chokes during an audition for the role of a mythical gangster 'Bra' Biza*"¹⁰. The images on cover 4 show both the affluence of these attractive Johannesburg suburbs as well as the poverty of Soweto.

¹⁰ Translated from French by the author.

Jeune acteur black ayant quitté Soweto pour les beaux quartiers de Johannesburg, Sox est recalé lors d'une audition pour le rôle du mythique gangster "Bra'Biza".

Comprenant qu'il n'a pas le vécu nécessaire pour incarner un bad boy, il décide de retourner dans les townships pour retrouver son identité et faire l'apprentissage des règles de base des jeunes gangsters. Afin de décrocher le rôle, Sox va intégrer un gang pour apprendre, à ses risques et périls, comment braquer une voiture, marcher avec l'attitude cool d'un affranchi, fumer de l'herbe...





UN CERTAIN REGARD
Sélection Officielle Cannes 2001

Hijack Stories nous plonge dans le monde violent des hijackers (voleurs de voitures), avec ses codes et ses valeurs jusqu'à un final surprenant et amoral survenant après une infernale course poursuite entre flics et voyous.

SUPPLÉMENTS
Bande-annonce (2 min) - Interviews de l'équipe du film (42 min)
Affiche et projets - Photos du film - Note de production
Section Rom (fonds d'écran, écran de veille, liens internet)

www.ocean-films.com

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Distributeur : TF1 Vidéo

ACCORD PARENTAL SOUHAITABLE		PAL - Couleur - Durée du film : 90mn env.			
DVD 9		AUDIO	SOUS-TITRES	FORMAT IMAGE	FORMAT ORIGINAL RESPECTÉ
VERSION FRANÇAISE		5.1	FRANÇAIS	16/9 COMPATIBLE 4/3	1.85
VERSION ORIGINALE					

TF1 VIDEO

OCEAN FILMS

DC DOLBY DIGITAL

PAL

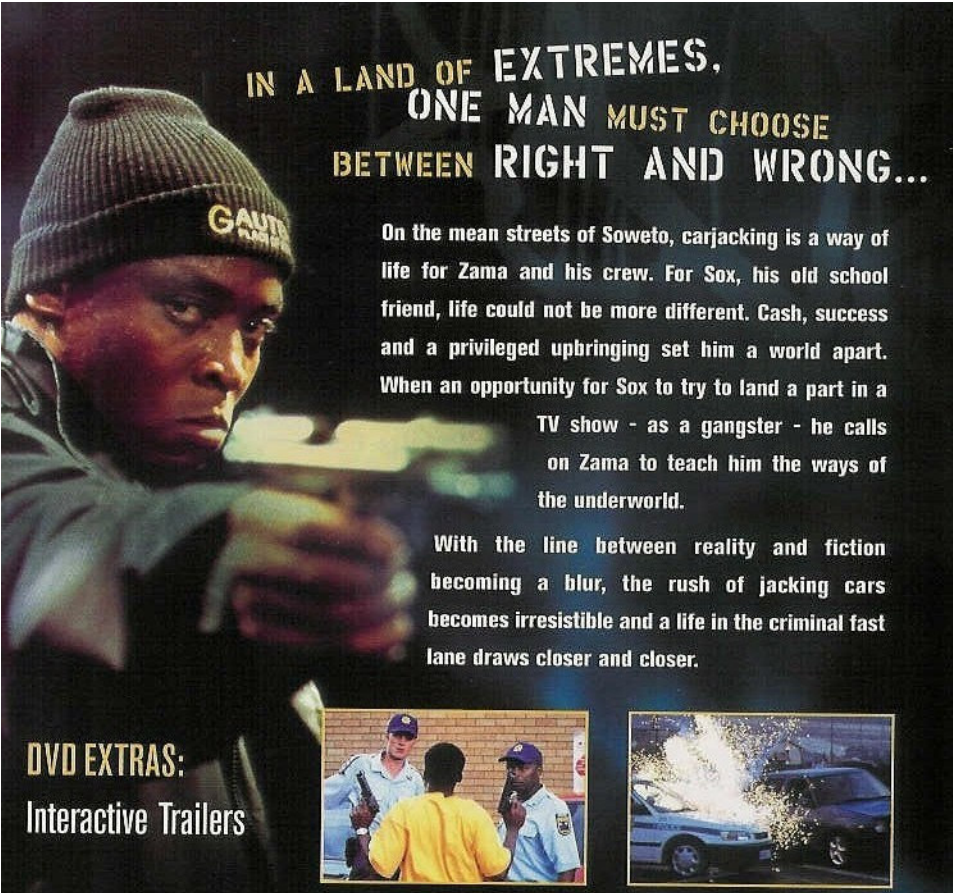
DVD VIDEO

3 138444 210227 12

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COVER 4 – FRENCH DVD

Moving onto the British cover 4, while both the French and South African DVDs mention Soweto on cover 1, it is only on cover 4 of the British edition that Soweto is first mentioned, in the very first sentence of the blurb: "*On the mean streets of Soweto, carjacking is a way of life for Zama and his crew*".



**IN A LAND OF EXTREMES,
ONE MAN MUST CHOOSE
BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG...**

On the mean streets of Soweto, carjacking is a way of life for Zama and his crew. For Sox, his old school friend, life could not be more different. Cash, success and a privileged upbringing set him a world apart. When an opportunity for Sox to try to land a part in a TV show - as a gangster - he calls on Zama to teach him the ways of the underworld.

With the line between reality and fiction becoming a blur, the rush of jacking cars becomes irresistible and a life in the criminal fast lane draws closer and closer.

DVD EXTRAS:
Interactive Trailers



Christoph Meyer-Wiel and Philippe Guez Present A Schlemmer Film - Septième Production
in Co-Production with Xenos Pictures and Paradis Films with the participation of Deutsche Bank
with the participation of British Screen and BSkyB with the participation of Filmbüro NW, Tony Kgoroge,
Rapulana Seiphemo, Moshidi Motshegwa *Hijack Stories* Co-Producer Nadine Marsh-Edwards
Produced by Christoph Meyer-Wiel and Philippe Guez A Film by Oliver Schmitz



5 060049 140247

15 Suitable only for persons of 15 years and over

Not to be supplied to any person below that age

DOLBY DIGITAL 2.0 Aspect ratio 4:3

Subtitles: English
Feature: 90 minutes approx. Colour DVD 5: Single Layer Single Sided Disc

CP COPY PROTECTED **DVD VIDEO** **V2** **PAL** **VPRC** **FA** **©** **momentum** PICTURES

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www.momentumpictures.co.uk

COVER 4 – BRITISH DVD

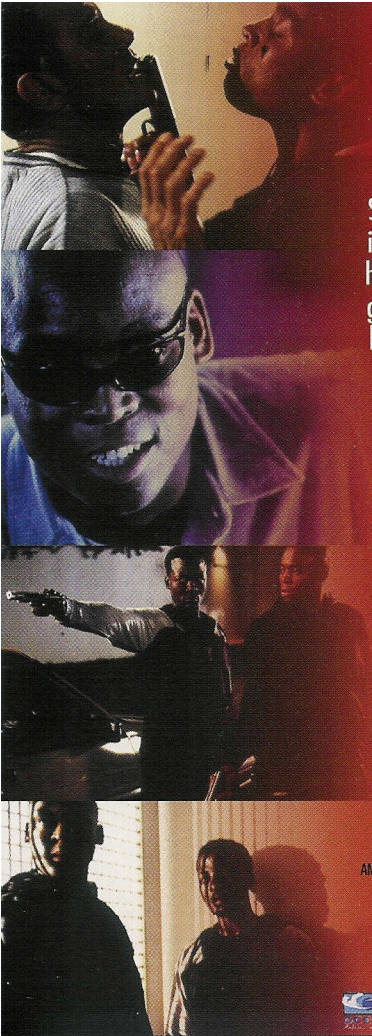
There is also a title to this blurb which reveals the angle chosen to sell *Hijack Stories* (2000) to British audiences: “*In a land of extremes, one man must choose between right and wrong*”. This “*land of extremes*” is further described in the

blurb: “*For Sox [...] life could not be more different. Cash, success and a privileged upbringing set him a world apart*”.

This reality of a youth divided by class was Schmitz’s inspiration for *Hijack Stories* (2000) (Schmitz 2006, see p. 21-22) and is the result of South African’s apartheid past and, going further back, subjugation to British colonialism. British viewers could be subconsciously reminded of their country’s historical relationship with South Africa and the legacy of colonialism which played a part in racial segregation and which spawned the perceived taboo status of interracial relationships in South Africa. It is therefore ironic that these should be major selling points, as Chrisman states in her discussion on the historical relationship between the United Kingdom and South Africa:

It is a crucial irony that the aspects of South Africa that are most threatening for metropolitan subject constitution are also their greatest potential selling points: these are the contemporary movement for political emancipation and the historical relationship between the two countries.
(2003: 110)

Staying with the British edition, like cover 1, cover 4 also features a black background. A picture of Zama – again dressed as a thug, sporting a black beanie and a black jacket and holding a gun – is the central image. There are two inserted images below the blurb, one of a black man holding a gun in each hand standing face to face with two policemen, and the other of what appears to be a high-speed car chase involving a police car and a presumably stolen car, sparks flying between the two vehicles. *Hijack Stories* (2000) is also being sold from the gangster Zama’s point of view, with him as the main image and mention of him before Sox in the blurb. These images of the good guys (policemen) and the bad guys (gun-wielding gangsters) effectively reflect the British edition’s selling angle of “*a land of extremes*”. Last of the back covers to consider is that of the South African edition:



Hijack Stories

Set in South Africa, a young black man tries to land a part in a 'gangsta' movie. But with no knowledge of street life, he's told to find out what that life is really like or he won't get the part. He manages to work his way into a gang and his chances of appearing in the film decline as he commits crimes to be accepted. But for the gang's leader, the burgeoning disaster of his new friend's life suggests a golden opportunity to do something better with his own.

From the director of *Mapantsula* comes an intriguing film with some exciting, tightly directed moments.

SPECIAL FEATURES

TRAILERS: PSX - GHOSTHUNTER, PROMISED LAND, THE HUNTED, EMPIRE, SHANGHAI KNIGHTS, 2 FAST 2 FURIOUS, IDENTITY, BAD BOYS 2

CHRISTOPH MEYER-WIEL AND PHILIPPE GUEZ PRESENT HIJACK STORIES A FILM BY OLIVER SCHMITZ A SCHLEMMER FILM - SEPTIEME PRODUCTION A COPRODUCTION WITH XENOS PICTURES AND PARADIS FILMS IN ASSOCIATION WITH DEUTSCHE BANK AG BRITISH SCREEN AND BSKYB FILM BURD NW WITH TONY KGOROGE RAPULANA SEPHOMO MOSHIDI MOTSEHLE PERCY MATSEMALA MAKHAOLA NDEBELE EDITING OLIVER SCHMITZ AND DEREK TRIGG PRODUCTION DESIGNER CARMEL COLLINS SOUND MIXER TSCHANGIS CHAHROKH WITH RICHARD SPRAWSON COMPOSER MARTIN TODSHAROW EXECUTIVE PRODUCER PIEDRE DE C. HINCH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MICHEL AMATHIEU A.F.C. ASSOCIATED PRODUCERS MARC SILLAN AND MICHAEL MARKOVITZ CO-PRODUCER NADINE MARSH-EDWARDS PRODUCED BY CHRISTOPH MEYER-WIEL AND PHILIPPE GUEZ DIRECTED BY OLIVER SCHMITZ

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE FROM 

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH				
	Enhanced for a 16x9 FULL FRAME SCREEN			
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STER-KINEKOR HOME ENTERTAINMENT (PTY) LTD. P.O. BOX 76378, WENDYWOOD, 2144 SOUTH AFRICA TEL: +27 11 445-7900 FAX: +27 11 444-2062			Cert. No. G/2003/1739(DVD) Running Time: 90 Min.	

COVER 4 – SOUTH AFRICAN DVD

For South African audiences there is much less appeal in the extremes of cop versus robber, rich versus poor and black versus white which have been marketed for foreign audiences. It is for this reason that the South African edition

has a much closer angle, focussing on the lives of Sox and Zama and their relationship and including four images of these two characters.

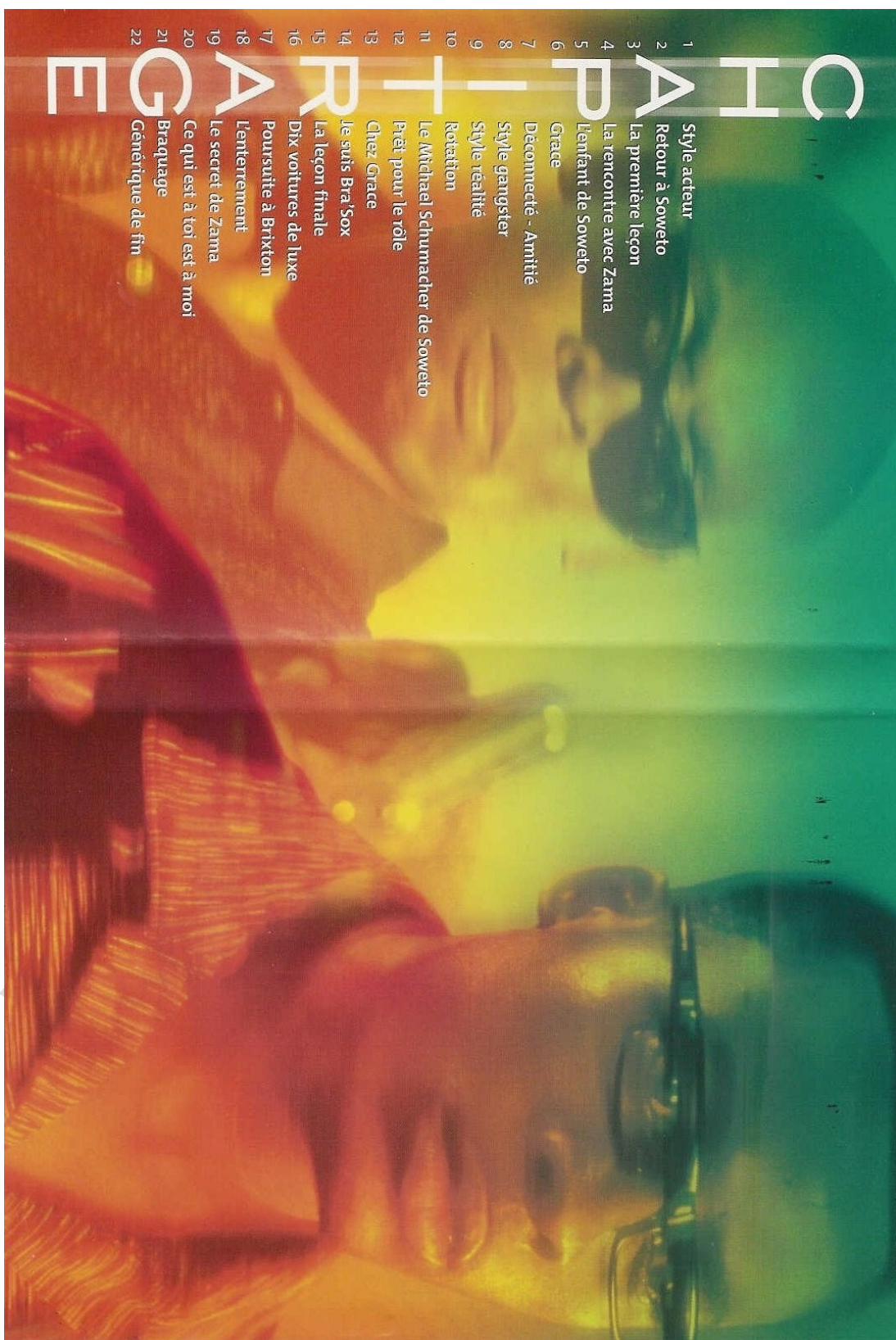
... a young black man tries to land a part in a 'gangsta' movie. But with no knowledge of street life, he's told to find out what life is really like or he won't get the part. He manages to work his way into a gang and his chances of appearing in the film decline as he commits crimes to be accepted. But for the gang's leader, the burgeoning disaster of his new friend's life suggests a golden opportunity to do something better with his own.

(Cover 4, *Hijack Stories* South African hire release, 2003)

Another feature listed on Genette's itinerary of features for cover 4 is mention of the author's earlier works. The South African edition mentions that Schmitz is the director of *Mapantsula* (1988) – another tactic used to appeal to the potential South African viewer.

Covers 2 and 3¹¹ (the inside front and back covers) have less importance, particularly in the case of DVDs, and are generally “mute” (1997: 25). For covers 2 and 3 of the French edition, the colour scheme of the outside of the DVD box is used on the inside. Cover 2 has an image of Zama, wearing sunglasses, pointing a gun across at a bespectacled Sox printed on the DVD on cover 3. Zama wearing sunglasses and Sox wearing reading glasses can also be interpreted as symbolic of class difference – sunglasses being part of the image of a cool gangster, concealing his eyes just as he conceals his gun, while reading glasses can be interpreted as an index of education, their transparency showing someone eager to learn.

¹¹ Only the French and British edition will be discussed in terms of their inside covers as the South African hire release does not have these.



COVERS 2 & 3 – FRENCH DVD



COVER 2 & 3 – BRITISH DVD

For the British edition, the covers 2 and 3 (see the following page) are again black and have an image of police cars on a Sowetan street at night on cover 2 and another image of the menacing hooded gun-wielding thug printed on the DVD on cover 3, continuing the theme of good versus bad.

WITSELD