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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background, aims and a demarcation of the field of study

The purpose of the study is to make a theoretical contribution to the field of semiotic mythology,[1] and mythology as practised within the discipline of media studies, by theorising the operation of counter myth (chapters 2, 3 and 4) and demonstrating how this theory of counter myth may be practically applied when examining mass media texts (chapter 6). The study develops a theoretical framework (chapter 5) which may be used for the analysis of mythical and counter mythical representations in a variety of visual and media texts. The emphasis in this study, however, is on film (as an example of mediated text(s)). Therefore, to serve as an illustrative example of how the theoretical framework for myth and counter myth analysis may be practically applied to mass media texts, a purposive sample of post-apartheid South African films are described (chapter 6) in accordance with the theory developed in the study. The description of film in the study is then secondary and illustrative of the main purpose of the study, which is to contribute to the academic field of enquiry of semiotic and media studies myth theory.

Although the study may draw from assumptions in the fields of visual communication studies and film studies, it must be emphasised, as can be ascertained from the above paragraph, that the study is primarily in the domain of media studies and more specifically in the field of media theory related to media and the production of meaning. The primary purpose of the study is to contribute to media theory, by theorising counter

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[1] The terms semiotic mythology, and semiotic myth theory, are used by the study to delineate to body of myth theory/literature to which this study aims to contribute, and on which the study finds its theoretical foundation. The study of myth, otherwise known as mythology, is a theoretical practice which occurs across multiple academic disciplines (as is discussed in 4.1.3), including art history political science, archaeology, history, religious studies and theology and sociology. Each one of the various fields which investigate myth operate according to a set of assumptions about myth which are particular to the field in question. The semiotic understanding of myth, which has informed how myth is examined in the field of media studies, originates with the theorists Claude Lévi-Strauss (1955; 1978) and Roland Barthes (1972 & 1977). The latter is of particular importance to the study, because Barthes (1972) formulated a technical framework for the semiotic functioning of myth, according to the signifier and signified, as elements of the text, and in keeping with the semiotic understanding of the working of the sign.

myth (chapters 2, 3 & 4) and formulating a model for the analysis of the representation of myth and counter myth in media texts (chapter 5). The model developed by the study is demonstrated by means of a case study (chapter 6) of post-apartheid South African new history film. Although the medium of film is selected for the case study, this does not indicate that this study is situated primarily within the field of film studies.

The assumptions of myth according to which media theory and media studies operate, originated within the field of semiotics, largely with the theorist Roland Barthes (1972). Therefore, although this study does not aim to perform strictly a semiotic analysis, Barthes theories of myth are by necessity revisited: this is done because the aim of the study is to make a new contribution to the body of media studies myth theory. The foundational assumptions of myth, originally theorised within semiotics by Barthes, and now established within media studies, are therefore discussed and expanded upon. Media studies, as a discipline, places emphasis on the social aspect or value of myth, and how myth is disseminated through the media (as mediated communication) to reach the audience. This study examines how post-apartheid social identity myths and counter myths are disseminated to audiences via the medium of film.

The object of analysis of the study is myth, but myth has been/is examined by a variety of disciplines within the social sciences and each of these disciplines approach the study of myth according to the assumptions of the respective field of enquiry (Segal 1996:vii). For example, the analysis of mythical representations within the field of visual studies is often characterised by a semiotic analysis of the visual codes involved in representation. As mentioned above, this study does engage with semiotics at a theoretical level, due to how the assumptions of myth practiced by the discipline of media studies, originate within the field of semiotics. Formulated differently, the analysis of myth by this study and practically demonstrated in chapter six does not constitute a pure or authentic semiotic analysis (meaning a semiotic analysis by, for example, the structural-formalist tradition). Rather, semiotics as dealt with and used in this study should be seen as the philosophical foundation (semiotics as a philosophy) of the

study's theorising of myth (Naugle 2002:319-323). The examination of myth and counter myth performed in chapter six consists of a description of a selection of myths, how they are disseminated through the medium of film, a description of their narrative as well as their iconographic (semiotic) content and a projection of their social significance or social value. The value of adopting the media studies approach to myth with its foundation in semiotics as a philosophy (as opposed to a purely semiotic (structural-formalist) approach) to myth, lies in that the study also considers the socio-political context in which the myths and counter myths selected for description are produced, and how the myths may inform developments in the social environment of that context (post-apartheid South Africa) – be it strictly from a theoretical and not an empirical approach.

This study operates according to the understanding of myth held by the media studies discipline and theorised by the semiotician Roland Barthes (1972). Throughout this study the term 'myth' is used to indicate what can also be called dominant myths, which are modes of speech practiced from a particular position of social and/or political power, which function to justify or naturalise an ideological message. The process of 'naturalisation' in semiotics, it understood to describe how a representation, particularly one with mythical content, encourages the belief that the worldview of a particular ideology is appropriate, natural and the way things ought to be. Thus should the naturalisation of a message within a representation be successful, readers decoding such messages will be unlikely to question the position of the ideology which informed the text.

The term 'myth' is preferred by the study, instead of 'dominant' myth, since this is consistent with the majority of myth theory literature. The term 'counter myth' refers to myths which in their content, actively oppose the content of a (dominant) myth, or which attempt to supplant the dominant myth discourse with an alternative meaning and one which is decidedly different to that of the dominant myth. While dominant myths are

often well established within the popular discourse of a society, counter myths offer messages of opposition.

The key characteristic of counter myth is that it appears as a conscious action of myth production because it stems from a producer who acts on behalf of a social group who are at ideological odds with the mythologisations of a more dominant ideology. While (dominant) myth functions to supply myth readers with a naturalised view of the world (a certain version or viewpoint of reality), counter myth functions to de-naturalise the dominant myth's representations, and replace these with an alternate view of the world. Importantly, while dominant myth often functions to maintain social frameworks, counter myth works to change them and functions to encourage the recognition for the need for social change. Because counter myth often functions as a catalyst for social change it is often recognised as political in its content. While counter myths are inspired by a feeling of discord for the content of a dominant myth, counter myths attempt to re-translate the discourse of the dominant myth to one which displays more symmetry with the ideological positioning of the counter myth.

In accordance with the discipline of media studies, concerns of narrative are of significant importance to this study: the manner in which the narrative content of a selection of films construct mythologisations of social identity is described in chapter six. If a purely semiotic mode of analysis is adopted for the examination of myth, then the vital role which narrative plays in the construction of mythic meanings is excluded from investigation. The medium of film is one which is heavy in narrative content, and narrative often performs much of the work of infusing a film with mythical meaning. Since film is selected as the medium of examination in the case study, the media studies approach to myth is therefore considered most appropriate for the study, as opposed to a purely semiotic approach.

Although the theoretical framework for counter myth analysis and description developed in the study is applied to post-apartheid South African films, this study suggests that this framework may be applied, in an adapted format, to any number of media representations including the news media, advertising and television programming. Formulated differently, the myths and counter myths, contained in South African films and which are analysed according to the theoretical framework for counter myth analysis and description in this study, do not find exclusive representation in film, but in numerous media formats. Therefore, the orientation of the theoretical framework is not bound to a specific medium, but rather emphasises the extraction and critical analysis of myth from a media representation in a wider sense.

In order to create an effective theoretical framework for the description of myth and counter myth, the current theoretical understanding of myth is first be explored. The most recent and widely held theories of myth from a wide array of myth literature are critically investigated, and potential gaps in the theories highlighted. A technical framework for the construction of counter myth is offered, as this is of specific relevance to the various counter myths which currently find representation in the post-apartheid South African visual media, including film.

The problematics surrounding the definition of myth are addressed by separating the categories of myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object for the purposes of examining how these two separate forms of myth contribute to the mythical content of the film. Once these philosophical and theoretical aspects and concerns with myth have been discussed, a theoretical model for the description of myth in film is presented, after which it is applied to a selection of post-apartheid South African films. It is the intention of the study, that once this application has been performed, it will become clear that counter myth, political myth, myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object are all contributing extensively to the re-formulation of South African filmic and mythic identities of whiteness. An analysis reveals evidence of a re-mythologisation of the South African

national visual landscape, and in particular a socio-political counter mythical reconstruction of the racial identity of whiteness.

Additionally, the category of the new history film is discussed, as theorised by Robert Rosenstone (1995 & 2000), in order to contextualise the genre of post-apartheid South African new history film, since this is the site for the case study description of the study. As discussed in section 6.1 the term 'new history film' is utilised by this study in a different manner to the manner is which it is theorised by Rosenstone (1995). Rosenstone's (1995) understanding of the term, new history film, is acknowledged and discussed by the study (see 6.1). However, the term 'new history film' is utilised by this study only in connection with the genre of film which forms the case study, that of post-apartheid South African new history film (see chapter 6). The term 'new history film' is additionally employed by the study to indicate that the genre of film described in the case study performs the counter mythologisation of a portion of South African history, as per one of the social functions of counter myth, identified in section 2.5.

While films mediate a great deal of the collective understanding of history, the myth content of such films is important because it results in the mythologisation of the past, resulting in specific formulations of identity and the collective sense of community in the present. Importantly, the production of various recent South African post-apartheid films may constitute the development of a new genre of South African history films: the importance of this genre, and the mythological work which it performs, should not be ignored because of its positioning and ability to inform the collective community's idea of the past and understanding of the political present. In particular, the study emphasises the attention which such films give to the representation of white characters or protagonists, whites as the collective group and whiteness as a construction of identity. The theoretical model for the analysis of myth and counter myth developed in chapter five is utilised to examine how post-apartheid South African new history films have in recent years worked to re-mythologise, in a counter mythical manner, the constructed identities of the South African white. It is argued that this is done in manners that are in contrast to the apartheid era mythologisations of whiteness and seek to be in keeping

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with newer ideological understandings of a democratic South Africa and the idea of national reconciliation after a traumatic past.

Since the advent of democracy in South Africa from 1994 a remarkable change has occurred in the visual media landscape produced in South Africa, including within the sphere of film. The South African visual media is, in a climate of democracy, rapidly reformulating and reinterpreting the national identities which were previously legally prescribed by an apartheid government. In effect, the representations of South African-ness, the various cultural ethnicities, and the cultural landscape or physical spaces in South Africa are undergoing a re-semiotisation as the semiotics of apartheid are no longer felt to be relevant or appropriate within the popular and political discourse of a democratic era. Accordingly, something relatively unique and semiotically rare is occurring within the South African visual landscape: new mythologies are coming to the fore. These are ones which are tasked with assisting South Africans to recognise their identities within a democratic framework, and to, it can be argued, come to terms with a painful past and a better more humane future. The visual evidence of these mythical trends is especially dominant in mediums such as advertising, documentaries, television programming, such as soap operas and situation comedies, and film. South Africans finds themselves in a unique position: rarely is a country afforded the opportunity to reshape almost its entire visual mythology, and the study aims to explore how this process has in recent years been enacted on the medium of film.

These important developments in the South African media should be researched and documented for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is important to analyse the ideological workings of the media where, as the country converted to democracy, a large part of the media effectively had to change its ideological position. These changes in hegemonic production must not go unnoticed. Questions regarding the transformation of ownership and staffing within the South African media production industry arise here.[2] Secondly,

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[2] With particular regard to film production in South Africa, Astrid Treffry-Goatley (2010) performed a political-economic analysis of the South African film industry after apartheid. This research indicates that

the media perform a crucial role in the reformulation of personal and national identities. There is much cultural work which needs to be done here, since the apartheid government's emphasis on the assignment of identity according to race only has done much harm, with regard to the heightened emphasis on differences and seperation between peoples according to markers such as race. Thirdly, while it is evident that the media are busily reformulating mythological identities for South Africans, it is important to critically analyse the content of these new mythologies for the purpose of both developing and sustaining a healthy democracy. The academic challenge is to assess whether these mythologies are ethical in nature, that is to say, whether they are not harmful in their content or indeed, do not indicate hatred or derogatory speech, unconstitutional, and how they intend to assist South Africans in reformulating their own identities, and that of their people.

The study suggests that the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth developed in this study may be useful with regard to monitoring and analysing such ideological shifts within society. The framework for mythic and counter mythic analysis offered here may also prove valuable in a South African context since this country has in recent history experienced a massive social upheaval and shift of power, and the presence of counter myth(s) within South Africa is currently rife.

To summarise within the above contextual background, the study seeks to (i) provide a contribution to the larger body of semiotic myth literature and theory and (ii) provide a method for the description of the mythical shifts which are currently occurring within South African visual culture society. The purpose is to contribute to an understanding of how such a reading of myth(s) and counter myth(s) could provide insight into how South Africans, as a nation or collective, are reconstructing their understanding(s) of their sense of self and their views of one another.

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despite various efforts since 1994 to grow the local South African film industry, the nature of the commercial environment means that the voices of the historically oppressed black majority do not yet enjoy much creative freedom, and in fact experience a degree of commercial censorship.

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1.2 Methodology and theoretical approach

This study comprises a literature study and a case study. The first part of the study is a literature study and focuses on the theorisation of myth by prominent mythologists, as well as the theorisation of counter myth performed by the author. The latter part of the study comprises an application of the theoretical principles to a case study description of post-apartheid South African new history film.

The author recognises the inherent weakness of the case study approach in that the conclusions established by such an approach may only be applicable to the specific case study which is being examined, and are not necessarily universally relevant. Nonetheless, the author wishes to illustrate that the importance of the case study here is twofold: first, the case study serves as a scenario in which the newly developed theoretical framework for the analysis of counter myth may be tested and second, the mythological representations with which the case study deals are of ideological, sociological, political and visual significance to South African society. The case study approach is of value to this study because it provides a platform on which the theoretical concepts developed during the literature review section of the study can be enacted.

The conclusions drawn in the study are based on assumptions that are qualified and investigated as far as possible. The interpretative and descriptive nature of the study situates it as qualitative research. All assumptions are critically examined in as much detail and as objectively as possible. The study is situated within the field of media studies, with a particular concern for media theory, and draws on the theoretical assumptions of semiotics. The interdisciplinary nature of media studies (and visual communication) means that it is possible to draw on the theories from a number of philosophical discourses, such as postmodernism and post colonialism, and film studies. Nonetheless, the study is situated within the sphere of media studies and

media theory, and is not primarily situated within visual studies or film studies, although the latter two crucial fields of enquiry are referred to within the study.

This research is qualitative and analytical in nature, does not involve any field work, and relies on the application of the framework developed by the author in chapter five to the sample of films described with regard to their myth and counter myth content in chapter six performed by the author.

1.3   The literature study

Chapter two, chapter three and chapter four of the study are a literature study, which examine a wide array of semiotic and myth theory relevant to this study. The thesis thus employs the literature study as a research method. This is done because it is in keeping with the main purpose and aim of the study, which is to make a contribution to the body of literature on the semiotic study of myth, by theorising the workings, characteristics and technical framework of counter myth. The author performs the theorisation of counter myth in relation to already existing literature on (dominant) myth, and this myth literature is frequently referred to. The literature study as method in chapter two, chapter three and chapter four is therefore considered appropriate for the study.

The literature study is primarily concerned with myth theorising as a research method. The theorisation of myth as a method has historically varied greatly across the spectrum of disciplines which have studied myth, as has the theoretical understanding(s) of myth metamorphosised over time.

For example: there is a distinct difference in the understanding of myth between nineteenth-century and twentieth-century myth theorists. In both cases, but particularly by the nineteenth-century theorists, myth is viewed largely in relation to science. The

nineteenth-century theorists considered the origin and function of myth to be either a symbolic description or literal explanation of the physical world (the subject matter). Therefore, while science is also concerned with the physical world, it is considered modern, and myth is considered to be its primitive counterpart. As a contrast, twentieth-century theorists do not consider myth to be an outdated or primitive counterpart to science, and according to these theorists (who see myth as almost anything), myths can be and are retained alongside science (Segal 2007:3).

Segal (2007:2) considers how various different theoretical disciplines view myth, and states that despite the natural variances which arise, three main questions remain constant. These questions are concerned with the origin, function and subject matter of the myth. The question of 'origin' takes into account how the myth arises. By 'function' is meant why and how the myth survives and endures. The answer to both of these questions is usually a need of some kind, which myth originally arises to meet, and survives by continuing to fulfil. The subject matter of the myth points to its referent, which may reveal to us what need the myth is constructed to fulfil (although this may vary across disciplines) (Segal 2007:2).

Significantly, theories of myth are almost always impregnated with the concerns of the theoretical fields from which they originate. None of the theoretical disciplines which have considered myth, have been able to develop a single, widely applicable, unified theory of myth (Segal 1996:vii).

The study of myth in the fields of semiotics originated mostly with two theorists: Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. In the 1950s the anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss began his work on myth. His structuralist position stressed the structure of the myth, as Lévi-Strauss applied structuralist principles from linguistics to the analysis of myth. Unlike the folklorists, religious theorists or literary critics who were the main analysers of myth before him, Lévi-Strauss found the structure of the myth of primary importance,

while the content of the myth, secondary, and he dismissed the content as superficial (Lévi-Strauss 1978, Segal 1996:xiii). The structure of myth, according to Lévi-Strauss, involves a series of restatements of the key elements in a myth. The dialectical nature of myth means that myth is able to engage in a number of reattempts to resolve certain contradictions in experience within society. According to Lévi-Strauss, myth does not always completely resolve these tensions, but it does provide acceptable ways of dealing with them (Lévi-Strauss 1978, Segal 1996:xiii).

Roland Barthes technical theorisation of myth, as explained in *Myth Today* (*Mythologies* 1972:109-159) as a second order semiological system is a foundational principle to the study. When Barthes (1972:109) recorded the idea of myth as a type of speech, he provided the possibility for the representation of myth to be critically deconstructed using semiotics as a mode of analysis. Barthes' (1972:109) description of myth as type of speech and "a mode of signification, a form", provides the basis of the semiotic understanding of myth and how it operates through signification. Because Barthes' theory of myth is so fundamental to the study, and forms the main assumption of the semiotic model of counter myth developed by the study, Barthes' theory of myth is examined in detail in subsection 2.2. The study recognises how Barthes understanding of myth varies greatly from those of many other mythologists, particularly those from fields other than semiotics, but also concerned with mythology, such as theology, literature studies, philosophy, history and sociology (many of whom view myth to be narrative only, and not an act of speech). The study also recognises the possible oversimplification of the workings of myth, which Barthes (1972:115) diagrammatic model of myth suggests. However, in subsection 2.2 of the study Barthes (1972:115) diagram is used as the basis for a newly formulated diagram which illustrates the workings of counter myth. This diagram reveals that whereas Barthes described myth as a second order semiological system, counter myth is indeed a multi-layered and multi-dimensional act of speech, meaning that the technical construction of myth and counter myth is more complex than semioticians following Barthes originally thought.

The study recognises the significant contribution which Barthes' theory of myth has made to the field of semiotics. By stating that mythic speech is not confined to oral or written speech in the traditional sense, but may consist of various forms or writing or representations, including photography, cinema, and other media, Barthes (1972:110) made it possible for semioticians to effectively, become mythologists, and examine the mythical content of texts which previously escaped such analysis.

The study furthermore recognises that Roland Barthes laid out his theory of the construction of myth some decades ago and that this is now a traditional or conservative understanding of myth. Nevertheless his conception of the construction of myth as a second order semiological system, although criticised, has not been largely changed within the field of semiotics since 1972, and it is therefore accepted valid and valuable.[3]

With regard to the discussion, theoretical definition and development of a technical framework of counter myth, and an analysis of political myth, the study also deals with the writings of Barthes (1972), John Fiske (1982), Sheridan-Rabideau (2001), Bottici and Challand (2006), Flood (1996), and Tudor (1972), all of which are examined in chapter two and chapter three. Schöpflin's (1997:205-220) taxonomy of myths is utilised in order to establish a list of the functions of counter myth, which forms part of the theorisation of counter myth that is the main purpose of this study (see 2.5), which is to contribute the larger body of semiotic myth theory.

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[3] Notable criticism of Barthes' (1972) theorisation of myth, and of relevance to this study, eminates from the field of Social Semiotics. Theo van Leeuwen's (2001:92) criticism for Barthes' (1972) myth theory includes that Barthean visual semiotics remains limited to textual arguments, whilst too often ignoring the context of the text in question. Additionally, Barthean semiotics is accused of treating cultural meanings as a kind of 'given currency' which is shared by all readers (van Leeuwen 2001:92 & 117). As a solution to this theoretical shortfall, van Leeuwen (2001:92-101) suggests the incorporation of iconography, which "pays critical attention to the context in which the image is produced and circulated, and to how and why cultural meanings and their visual expressions come about historically". In order to navigate the shortcomings of Barthean semiotic myth analysis, the study employs the social semiotic tactic of incorporating a consideration for iconography (see 4.3.2).

While examining the separation in classification of the myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object this study demonstrates the difficulties surrounding this issue by summarising the definitions of myth by various nineteenth and twentieth-century myth theorists, including Lévi-Strauss' (1955) structuralist position, Dundes (1984), Ricoeur (1969), Schöpflin (1997), Oden (1992), Segal (2007), Coupe (1997), Cohen (1969) and various others.

Theo van Leeuwen's (2005) work in the field of social semiotics will also be employed, especially with regard to formulating a semiotic inventory as part of the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth in film(s) (see 4.3). Inventorying (or the drawing up of inventories) is another method employed by the study. Inventorying is utilised as a social semiotic method, firstly as a solution to the task of the generic[4] classification of myth and counter myth (see 4.3.3). Additionally inventories are employed as a technique for the analysis of myth as a tactic for the classification of a body of representations as myth, since a defining criterion of myth is repeated representation (Barthes 1972:120). With regard to the case study, an inventory of the representation of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator as represented in a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films is offered in subsection 6.3.4, for the purpose of the orderly description of these two counter myths.

1.4 The case study

The final section of the study (chapter six) is a case study which investigates South African films that have been produced during this country's postcolonial and post-apartheid period, by utilising the theoretical framework for analysis developed in chapter five. The case study method is employed by the study in order to practically demonstrate the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth on

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[4] Throughout this study the term 'generic' is used with reference to the term 'genre', especially when speaking of the generic classification of myths, whereby the author suggests that myths can be categorised according to genre.

film, theorised in chapters two, three and four, and developed in chapter five. The case study method is considered appropriate for the study because it provides an opportunity to demonstrate the application of the various myth theories discussed, described and developed in the preceding literature study.

The most important material in this regard is Martin Botha's (editor) influential book *Marginal Lives and Painful Pasts* (2007). Part Four of this book comprises six chapters by various South African film scholars who describe various aspects of recent South African themed films that confront issues of racism, trauma, amnesia and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (hereafter referred to as the TRC).[5] The study analyses recent post-apartheid South African films in a similar vein to Botha's (2007) book, but with the added concern of the operation of counter myth within these films. Additionally, while Botha's book was published in 2007, this study includes the description of films which were released up to and including the year 2010, rendering this study up-to-date at the time of writing. Moreover, filmic trends which have begun to emerge in post-apartheid South African history films in the year 2010 are addressed in this study (see 6.3.4.4), which have not been addressed in Botha's (2007) book.

Maingard's (2007a) book entitled *South African National Cinema* is an important source for the analysis of South African film because it traces the chronological history of film production and film legislation in South Africa, and in particular the effects apartheid era state sponsored hegemonic influence on film and the effects of South Africa's transition to democracy on film. More important to the study is Maingard's (2007a) notion of national cinema: films which invoke a sense of the national or nationhood: all of the films selected for description in the case study section of the study (see 6.3) can be

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[5] While Botha's (2007) book *Marginal Lives & Painful Pasts*, is an important text, the study does acknowledge that this book has not been without its criticisms. For example, Crous (2008:202) reviews part four of Botha's (2007) book by saying that the six chapters in this section spend too much time on analysing source material (real life and literary sources) and too little attention if given to the analysis of how these sources are represented on film. In particular, Crous (2008:202) does not seem to favour Ian Rijsdijk's unlikely comparison of *Stander* (2003) to the *Last Samurai* (2003). The author notes such criticisms of Botha's (2007) book, and this study draws only on the pieces of writing from *Marginal Lives & Painful Pasts*, which are of relevance to this study.

ascribed in one way or another, as part of the sphere of South African national cinema according to Maingard's (2007a) distinction thereof.

Because the films which have been selected for analysis refer to South Africa's past, the relationship between the film and history must be considered. This is done in a lateral way by taking myth's relationship to history in account, during the discussion of the new history film (see 6.1). If films are so pivotal in formulating the collective's idea of its own historical past, and myths are prevalent in film, then myths are responsible for the filmic re-mythologisation of history.

The work of Robert Rosenstone (1995 & 2006) is referred to when discussing post-apartheid South African film as history or counter history film genre, and the role of myth in the new history film. Rosenstone (1995 & 2006) advocates a method of analysis for the history film genre which does not measure the historical accuracy of the history film to that of written history as its main criterion. Rather, the history film genre should be analysed with a recognition of the codes of representation which are inherent in the filmic medium. Historical films, or films set in history, offer a new version of history and sometimes this view counters the view which was represented in the past. This is most certainly the case with post-apartheid South African new history films, which have become a fertile site for counter myth creation and operation: the counter myths revealed in these new history films not only offer a very different view of the history of South Africa's apartheid past than the view offered by apartheid era representations, but they also work to construct counter-identities which are contrary to the racial identities prescribed by apartheid legislation. With regard to these identity politics, Wasserman and Jacobs' (2003) book *Shifting selves. Post-apartheid essays on mass media, culture and identity* includes a number of essays which offers insights into how social and cultural identities in South Africa are being reformulated within various visual media representations and is referred to in chapter six.

As already stated, chapters two, three and four of the study are a detailed literature study, which examine a wide array of semiotic and myth theory relevant to the study, and therefore this literature will not be discussed at length in this subsection (1.3). The literature which supplements the performance of the case study in chapter six is discussed in an integrated fashion in chapter six, and so will also not be dwelt on at length in subsection 1.3. Chapter five of the study constitutes the theoretical framework developed by the author for the study for the systematic description of counter myth: the literature relevant to the development of this theoretical framework is discussed at length in the three preceding chapters (see chapters 2, 3 and 4).

1.5 Summary of the chapters of the study

Chapter two explores the traditional semiotic Barthean understanding of myth in order to create in Chapter Five a diagrammatic and theoretical framework of counter myth. A distinction is made between myth (or dominant myth) and counter myth, and the characteristics associated with counter myth are identified and described with regard to their differences to (dominant) myth. The most striking characteristic of counter myth is that it constitutes a conscious action of myth production because it stems from a producer who acts on behalf of a social group who are at ideological odds with the mythologisations of a more dominant ideology (see 2.1) The semiotics of counter myth are further developed in subsection 2.2 and 2.4, and the influence and transposition of ideology on and of counter myth is discussed. The relationship between counter myth and media framing is outlined in subsection 2.3. The social functions of both myth and counter myth are then discussed (see 2.5): this is done to illustrate that the social functions of myth and counter myth are in fact often remarkably different in inherent ways.

The relationship between counter myth and political myth is discussed in chapter two and chapter three (see 2.6 and 3.1): although political myths and counter myths are not

equivalents, counter myths are quite often characteristically political in nature. Additionally, the counter mythical constructions of collective white identity as represented in post-apartheid South African new history film discussed in the case study of the study (see chapter 6) are inherently political, which renders a discussion of the nature of political myth valuable. The discursive work of counter myth building is examined in subsection 2.7. Here the inter-animation which occurs between dominant myth and counter myth is explained: although the counter myth functions to denaturalise the dominant myth, the discourse of the counter myth must inevitably draw on the discourse of the dominant myth, since this is the counter myth's semiotic point of departure (see 2.1).

Chapter two and subsections 2.1 to 2.7 are for the most part, purely theoretical and philosophical in nature. Chapter three therefore addresses the question of the importance of counter myth research, and seeks to explain why the theorising of counter myth is a valuable exercise with regard to developing a critical tool for the analysis of influential social trends and political movements. The role of political myths in the construction of collective national identity is examined with a particular to view how counter myths operate within a post colonial environment in order to reformulate national identities that are in opposition to colonial era national identity myths (see 3.1). The study of post colonial political counter myths of identity (such as the study performed in chapter 6) has the potential to yield insight into how various previously colonised societies have come to terms with the complex post-independence environment (see 3.2). Myths and counter myths set limits on collective cognition, play an active role in the shaping of collective perception and beliefs, while sometimes inspiring social action (see 3.3). As an illustration of the potential power of counter myth to effect the trajectory of society, subsection 3.4 discusses some historical examples of how counter mythical thinking brought about massive social and/or political change. The manner in which stereotypes may result in the representation of a negative view of a collective group, and role of counter myth in this occurrence is examined in subsection 3.5.

A discussion is delivered on the widely held position within mythology theory regarding the relationship of myth and narrative (see 4.1). While semioticians of the Barthean tradition accept the assumption of myth as an act of speech which is capable of operating in non-narrative texts, many mythologists from other academic fields understand myth to work as a narrative only. The theoretical problematics of the latter position are examined (see 4.1.1 and 4.1.2) and in doing so, the definitions of myth as formulated by a number of prominent myth theorists are critically discussed. The Barthean position is then reconsidered within the context of this debate in order to assess and justify its validity, and the concept of the myth-as-object is introduced and qualified (see 4.1.2 and 4.1.3). Equally problematic within the sphere of myth theory are the disparate and often vague definitions of myth. For clarity, the problematics surrounding the understanding of myth is discussed in subsection 4.1.3. The importance of the recognition of the myth-as-object, especially with regard to film analysis, is highlighted (see 4.2): the myth-as-object is revealed as a mechanism of signification which is often employed for the advancement of the myth-as-narrative within the filmic text. This portion of theory is then demonstrated practically in chapter six (see 6.3.4).

The usefulness of some of the assumptions of social semiotics (and in particular, those of Theo Van Leeuwen 2005) in the analysis of myth is explored (see 4.3). Firstly, the possibility of the generic classification of myth, or categorising myths according to genres (myth genres) is discussed. Iconography is investigated as a site for the establishment of generic myth categories (see 4.3.2). The social semiotic notion of creating semiotic inventories is employed to suggest the utilisation of semiotic myth inventories in order to assist with myth identification and generic classification (see 4.3.3).

Chapter five offers a theoretical model for the description of myth and counter myth in film. In keeping with the theoretical discussions and insights included in chapters two, three, and four, chapter five identifies six key factors which could be investigated by the

mythologist when conducting a study of either myth or counter myth, and the myth-as-narrative and/or myth-as-object. A discussion of the myth's identity involves situating the myth or counter myth which occupies the mythologist's attention, with regard to its historical, social, cultural and geographical context (see 5.1). The medium(s) by which the myth in question is represented should be identified and a myth inventory could be used to illustrate the frequency of the myth's representation (see 5.2). Whether the myth in question operates as a dominant myth or as a counter myth (myth type) must be established because this will have implications on how the myth operates and which societal functions it aims to fulfil (see 5.3). The myth format should be addressed, which details whether the myth functions as the myth-as-narrative, or the myth-as-object, or both (see 5.4) in order to clearly analyse the semiotic workings of the myth. A semiotic inventory could also be used for the establishment of the categories of the myth genre and myth sub-genre in which the myth in question may be placed, if generic classification of the myth is possible (see 5.5). An in-depth analysis of the mythic iconography of the myth in question may reveal significant markers which ease the generic categorisation of the myth (see 5.6).

Chapter six consists of a case study, which is performed to purposefully demonstrate the application of the theoretical framework for counter mythic analysis, theorised in chapters two, three, and four, and described in chapter five. Film is selected as a mass communication medium for myth analysis in this case study, and the particular genre of film which has been selected is that of post-apartheid South African new history film. Therefore, and in order to contextualise the case study, a description and discussion of the genre of history film and national cinema with particular reference to the contemporary South African filmic landscape is provided (see 6.1).

In subsection 6.2 the framework for mythical analysis developed in chapter five is applied and put into practice. The two counter myths selected for this case study description are the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator. These myths are contextualised in a discussion detailing the identity politics

surrounding the representation of newly mythologised visual (re)constructions of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa where the collective understanding of whiteness has necessarily changed after the apartheid era (see 6.3.1). A detailed tabular film inventory of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator in post-apartheid South African new history film is presented to demonstrate the high frequency of the representation of the two above mentioned myths within recently produced South African films (see 6.3.2). The counter mythic status of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator is described with reference to the social functions of these two particular myths, which amongst other functions, offer an alternate view of history to the representations of history inscribed in apartheid era media texts (see 6.3.3).

Subsection 6.3.4 then offers a description of the counter mythical representation in a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films. The myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-object, as they appear in the selected films, are described, as well as the myth iconography. This film description includes a discussion of the representation of bad whites and good whites in film (see 6.3.4.1), the collective mythologisation of bad whites (see 6.3.4.2), the representation of how certain bad whites metamorphosise into good whites (see 6.3.4.3) and the representation of a more complex and multifaceted white figure (the new white) (see 6.3.4.4). A myth genre inventory of racial mythologies of whiteness in a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films is provided in subsection 6.3.5.

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter of the study, where the conclusions and implications of the study are explained (see 7.1). The contribution of the study to the field of semiotic mythology is emphasised and the limitations of the study are acknowledged (see 7.1). Suggestions for the further research in the workings of counter myth within society and mass communication media are proposed (see 7.2).

In summary then, the purpose of the study is to expand the general body of literature of semiotic mythology, by formulating theory which outlines the semiotic framework and workings of counter myth, and to develop a theoretical framework for the study of counter myth in mass mediated texts. A secondary aim of the study is to demonstrate the utility of this theoretical framework by application in the description of the myths of the good and bad white perpetrator in a purposive selection of post apartheid South African new history films.

CHAPTER TWO: MYTH THEORY I: COUNTER MYTH

This chapter begins by introducing and elaborating on a technical structure of counter myth. Firstly, the diagrammatic technical framework of counter myth is described in accordance with Barthean myth theory. The importance and role of ideology in the working of counter myth is discussed as well as the numerous technical variances between counter myth, and myth as it is traditionally thought of in popular culture theory and semiotics. This is followed by a discussion of political myth. Political myth is important both because of its close relationship to counter myth, and because the representations of myths in South African films which are of primary importance to this study, are political in nature. (A selection of South African films is discussed according to their mythical content in chapter six. These films are selected for study because their narrative content involves mythic meanings of racial representation which are political in nature). As political myths are often socially constructed as mechanisms for the (re)establishment of national identity, nationhood and cultural identity, they are of special relevance in the post-colonial post-apartheid South African media environment. To further a holistic theoretical understanding of counter myth, this chapter then discusses counter myth with regard to discourse, naming some of the difficulties which plague the counter myth, and this is followed by a discussion of articulation, where counter myth is understood as a type of re-articulation.

Within the scope of this study, the theoretical content of this chapter is important with regard to its practical application to political-counter mythical filmic texts in chapter six. From a broader perspective, this theory is also important because it provides a mode of analysis which may be employed in order to understand how new mythologies are informed and represented within previously colonised societies within the post-colonial environment. Additionally it may explicate how both political and counter myths are used, and may still be used, socially to re-establish a people's sense of national and cultural identity, and even act as a coping mechanism for societies coming to terms with

the difficulties of their colonial past. This kind of mythic activity is practically demonstrated in chapter six, where a description of how particular counter and political myths have been represented in post-apartheid South African films which function to encourage the positive reconstruction of a South African national identity is performed. The main aim of this thesis is to describe the development of the theorisation of a model for the analysis of counter myth, and the selection of South African films which are discussed in chapter six are included as a case study to further illustrate the functioning of the model for counter myth analysis developed here.

2.1 Counter myth: a theoretical framework

> The critical study of myth is not just the denunciation of particular ideological positions, but the analysis of how their messages are constituted, how they come to persuade. Form is essential to myth…

> (Moriarty 1991:268).

Mythological representations may transmit a 'moral' message as an indication to readers of what is right and wrong, bearing in mind that these notions of right and wrong are prescribed according to the expectations of a specific ideological discourse. However, when some readers, or members of a certain group do not agree with the content of the dominant myth discourse, and have an alternative idea of what is considered good and bad[1]. Such groups may begin to produce their own mythical

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[1] Stuart Hall's (1980) essay entitled *Encoding/decoding**, offers a useful theoretical framework to understand the phenomenon of the decoded meanings produced by readers after performing a reading of a particular text. This theory of preferred readings, suggests three possible reading types, which may be formulated by the reader. The dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings vary with regard to their symmetry to the meaning intended by the producer of the message or text. Where the reader's ideological view is similar to that of the producer, there is likely to be a symmetrical resemblance between the producer's intended meaning and the meaning produced by the reader after decoding. Where the ideological view of the producer and the reader differs greatly, this symmetry is not likely to exist, and the reader may then misinterpret the intended meaning of the text, or produce a meaning which is in direct

representations to inspire behaviour, which are in opposition to the content of the dominant myth discourse. This is a decision of a semiotic nature, it is a conscious action and also motivated by the desire for the improvement of the social situation of a particular group[2]. In short, the catalysing force for the initial formation of the counter myth representation, or the reformulation of the dominant myth discourse, is political one.

Importantly then, before embarking on the theorisation of counter myth, it is vital to establish a workable definition of that which counter myth actually counters: the dominant myth. This can only be done by understanding the position of the dominant myth producer(s) and in effect, whose interests the dominant myth actually serves. At this stage in the history of myth theory, this question is widely agreed upon by most myth theorists. Barthes (1972) claimed in *Mythologies* that myth is almost solely the property of the bourgeoisie, and while counter mythologies are possible, they are rare and rarely effective (Moriarty 1991:274). Various myth theorists, including Lincoln (1989), to some extent agree that the dominant myth is the ideological property of the dominant section of society (that portion of society which maintains social and political power over the rest). This accounts for a major element of myth theory to date: that of the naturalisation function of (dominant) myth. The manner in which myth justifies social frameworks of power has received much attention in myth theory, because this is the purpose of the dominant myth discourse. Nonetheless, we can safely conclude that the

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opposition to the intended meaning of the producer (oppositional reading). Although counter myth concerns the production of oppositional texts, one must bear in mind that counter myths are likely to be produced by readers who have regularly made oppositional readings after decoding representations which were produced according to the ideological position of a particular dominant myth discourse.

[2] A conscious action to communicate disagreement with a particular dominant myth discourse is not the sole catalysing force for counter myth. This study identifies a second catalysing force for counter myth which is identified and discussed in chapters six and seven: the necessary formulation of new mythical discourses in the wake of a dominant myth discourses loss of social and political power. This study acknowledges that there may be more catalysing social conditions for the emergence of counter myth, but these are not mentioned in the literature reviewed for this study and have not been identified within the scope of this study. They may be discovered in further counter myth research, as suggested in chapter seven.

dominant myth discourse is that one which most often operates in the service of the dominant or socially powerful group(s) within a society by working to justify and naturalise those structures which maintain the dominant group's position of privilege. Lincoln (1989:49-50) asserts that, "[I]t seems best to observe that the dominant discourse – including mythic discourse – in any age is the discourse of the dominant class. This does not mean that other groups are without their discourses and without their myths, nor that they are incapable of appropriating the myths and discourse of the dominant class, which they may also refashion and employ to telling advantage".

The activities of counter myth, however, within the history of myth theory, have been either ignored or wholly under theorised. As a result, what we now understand to be what can be termed 'dominant myth' has historically been referred to only as 'myth'. In order to achieve some level of consistency with the large body of myth theory literature, this study will continue this tradition and refer to 'dominant myth' as 'myth', and 'counter myth' as such. While the evaluation of dominant type myths have occupied the largest part of critical attention in myth theory, it would be nonsensical to suggest that the existence of counter myth and its activities need any great justification. Indeed, the acknowledgement of counter myth and its widespread implications on society has already been firmly established in myth theory. According to Lincoln (1989:49), "there are sufficiently compelling counter-examples that may be cited to discredit any neat and simplistic formulation that would reduce myth to a tool of the right and the right only".

According to Barthean (1972) type analysis, the scrutiny of myth has concentrated largely on first level myths which take as their point of departure the language level signifier: these myths operate largely as naturalisations of a mythologised reality, sometimes connected to an underlying ideological motivation. They have been thought of as the second level of meaning, where the denotative meaning is the first, and apart from investigating the third ideological level, semiotic mythical analysis has usually not extended beyond these three structural levels. Significantly, this study suggests that the

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structural formation of myth may operate in a more complexly layered manner, which deserves analysis and requires a more lateral type of description. This can be demonstrated through the consideration of what has been called the *counter myth* (Barthes 1972:135, Fiske 1982:88, Sheridan-Rabideau 2001:441-454), which takes its signifier, or its mythic point of departure, not from the first level of meaning (language) but from the second mythic, and perhaps even the third ideological level(s). This has significant semiotic consequences to the production of meaning, both in terms of how this type of mythic representation is produced and how it is received. Taking note of this, however, raises some added complexities regarding how the reader's individual intellectual and mental discourse effects the reading and decoding of both the myth and counter myth. The purpose of the semiotic discussion in this chapter is to lay the foundation of the theoretical framework for counter myth analysis which is applied in chapter six. The framework of counter myths suggested here is practically applied in a visual description of a selection of South African films.

From a historical perspective Barthes (1972) was perhaps the first myth theorist to mention counter myths, and he did so very briefly in *Mythologies*. This was followed by John Fiske's (1982) explanation of counter myth. It must be noted that Fiske was summarising Barthes when he offered this explanation, but he did, at least, supply some practical examples of counter myth. Fiske (1982:90) states that "[n]o myths are universal in a culture", and that "[t]here are a dominant myths, but there are also counter-myths". When first mentioning counter myths, Fiske (1982:90) includes subcultures as examples of counter myths. Bruce Lincoln's (1989) work, *Discourse and the construction of society*, suggests that the study of societal discourse must concern three key elements: myth, ritual and classification. One of Lincoln's (1989) main concerns is the mythic inversion of dominant myth discourses, by counter myth discourses and its effects on society. Like Barthes opinion that myth works in the service of the powerful bourgeoisie, Lincoln (1989) admits that dominant discourses work to naturalise and justify the position of the powerful section of society. Significantly, Lincoln (1989:7) expands on this by stating that even though this may be the case,

various mythic discourses may operate outside of the boundaries of the dominant discourse. Lincoln (1989:7) asserts,

> "[t]o hold that thought is socially determined does not mean that all thought reflects, encodes, re-presents, or helps replicate the *established structures* of society, for society is far broader and more complex than its official structures and institutions alone… Change comes not when groups or individuals use "knowledge" to challenge ideological mystification, but rather when they employ thought and discourse, including even such modes as myth and ritual, as effective instruments of struggle".

Sheridan-Rabideau's (2001) article on the counter mythic activity involved in the sociological project *GirlZone*, is perhaps one of the more detailed theoretical studies of counter myth to date. Taking the history of the modern theoretical study of (dominant) myth into account, the attention and study of counter myth in particular is miniscule in comparison. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries countless theorists from various disciplines such as theology, history, political science, anthropology, and literature have devoted much attention to myth (Segal 2007) but very few have theorised either the deep structures (as the structuralists would refer) or the concept and content of counter myth. The study aims to do just that, by expanding the body of literature on the theoretical functioning of counter myth.

To begin this task, the work of Sheridan-Rabideau (2001) may serve as a starting point. Sheridan-Rabideau (2001) examines the concept of counter myth and expands on how such (counter) myths operate. Building on the ideas developed by these two women, it may be important to expand, on how counter myths may be understood to operate, both ideologically and technically. Sheridan-Rabideau 2001:441, describes counter myth as a social action of criticism against competing, mainly dominant, myths and the attempt

to establish new myths. The counter myth is then doubly tasked with the uncovering of established power relations and the responsibility of building alternative meanings. This is in essence a semiotic activity which also amounts to social action, inspired perhaps by a feeling of dissent with traditional encodings of power or meaning (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001:441).

To begin with a discussion on the characteristics of counter myth: the first significant characteristic of counter myth is that, as a social action it is also a conscious action. The producer of the counter myth *decides* on the nature of the myth message based on the feeling of dissent inspired by a more dominant myth. To take another momentary step back, we can discover that the condition for the production of the counter myth is a feeling of opposition for a discourse of more dominant myths by a certain group. Once this dissent has reached a certain heightened level, counter myths are consciously constructed which are tasked with uncovering the perceived social injustice contained within the mythic discourse of a certain ideology, and attempt to offer alternative, or perhaps opposite, or even binary meanings (This, in itself, is however complicated as will be discussed later with regard to Lévi-Strauss' conception of myths as mechanisms for the resolution of binary contradictions). Concluding this first step simply then, the catalysing characteristics of the counter myth is first, that there exists a feeling of collective (though not universal) social discord among a certain group within a certain social environment towards a certain more dominant mythic discourse, and second, that myth producers within this group consciously decide to take opposing mythical action. The latter point is significant because, in myth production at least, it would be expected that this would be seen as rare. Theoretically myths have long been understood as something which is both produced and received largely in the unconscious.

Because myth is so central in governing the way society behaves and what we believe, it is impossible to consign myth as something which is not real, since its effects are indeed, very real (Losev 1930:7). Losev (1930:8) goes so far as to call myth "*the*

authentic and maximally concrete reality". Ultimately, myth is an undeniably necessary category of thought but, according to Losev, it is also, to the myth adherent at least, undeniably real (Although this is not always case as myths may be believed while the adherent is fully aware of the inaccurate or even fictional content of the myth). While myth governs what the collective believes to be real and natural, behaviour and thought within the confines and boundaries of any particular myth discourse occur largely unconsciously.

According to Losev (1930:12) myth is also not some type of ideal being, or a type of fantasy of the 'way things ought to be', because it is, to the myth adherent, a reality or the way things are. Myth then, is not a concept of the ideal or perfect world (according to a certain worldview), because it is the world in that from a mythical perspective, it is life itself. Losev, however, is regarding myth in terms of that dominant myth discourse, and also in absolute terms. Although the dominant myth does not present itself as ideal being, counter myth exposes that which it considers less than ideal within the dominant myth discourse, and suggests an alternative. Here one realises the differences between the dominant and the counter myth: where the dominant myth denies the representation of the ideal being, the counter myth exposes the variance between reality and the ideal, and suggests a method for the attainment of the ideal. This, again, must be done consciously by the counter myth producer.

Lincoln (1989:49) states, "[t]hat myth has been used more often and more effectively by those who seek to mystify and preserve exploitative patterns of social relations than it has by those who would reform or radically restructure such relations…". Evidently, counter mythical action does not operate as a kind of social norm, and is not involved in the maintenance of social and cultural structures, frameworks or institutions in the manner that dominant myth is. Consequently, where dominant myths are reproduced in representation on a near constant basis and form part of daily life, counter myths appear only at key moments in time and last for as long as they take to either fail, or

achieve a level of the restructure which they intend. In the latter case, their continued representation may endure, if the counter myth is successful and then becomes part of a dominant myth discourse (after having de-naturalised the previous or existing dominant myth discourse) but then requires persistent representation for the continuance of such dominance. Nonetheless, at this point the counter myth is no longer 'counter' in nature. Thus, the counter myth, in its format as a counter-message, does not endure for the type of time scale which dominant myths do.

This does not mean to say that the conscious production of counter myths has not occurred as numerous intervals throughout human history. History, in fact, supplies us with innumerable examples of groups of peoples in dissent with their social situation, and the subsequent cultural artefacts and representation which were produced in these social climates are filled with counter mythical discourse. It would be folly to suggest that all of these peoples consciously decided to create carefully constructed third and fourth level counter myth(s) tasked with the annihilation of the offensive dominant myth in question. Certainly such groups of people were inspired by their dissent to consciously produce representations that visually portrayed their dissent and which therefore symptomatically bore mythic evidence of their feelings about their social situations which, perhaps unbeknownst to them, did qualify semiotically as counter myths. Nonetheless, this study argues that the action of counter myth reproduction, representation and dissemination is certainly, on some level, a conscious one and often more conscious than the representation of the well established or dominant myth.

This characteristic of counter myth can perhaps be referred to as mythopoeic. Bullock and Trombley (1999:556) describe mythopoeia as an action of

> "[d]eliberate and conscious myth-making… Some artists, reacting
> against the sophistications of deism, rationalism and atheism, have set
> out to re-mythologize the material of their experience, to rediscover
> 'belief', but in personal and diverse ways. Thus, Blake's mythopoeic

system is a response to the thinking of the Enlightenment, Yeats's to the loss of Christian faith; all contemporary mythopoeic activities may be described as responses to the sense of existential disappointment…".

Taking this particular definition of mythopoeia into account, there are two reasons why counter mythic activity can be called mythopoeic. Firstly, both counter myth and mythopoeia are considered to be deliberate and consciously decided upon acts of myth making.[3] Of second interest is mythopoeia's reactive action. That mythopoeia's response is inspired by "existential disappointment" may be debated, but it would not be relevant to do so here. Counter myth is also understood to be responsive in nature, where the counter myth producer(s) is motivated to respond in opposition to some form of perceived social injustice. Because counter myth is responsive in this way, and because it is also a conscious act of myth making, one can refer to counter myth as *mythopoeic*.

Counter myths are an important site for mythic study because of their ability to bring about massive social change. Although not necessarily referring to 'counter myths' by this particular term, Lincoln (1989) discusses the possibilities which arise when myths are used in invert the social formations and norms prescribed by the dominant societal discourse. Lincoln (1989:25-26) lists some of the ways in which the proponents of counter myth can utilise mythical action to agitate for social change. Firstly, counter myths can openly contest the credibility of a traditionally dominant myth, calling its status as 'naturalised' into question and casting doubt on its version of history. After this has taken place the dominant myth may find it more difficult to continually reconstruct

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[3] The study acknowledges that the action of myth making, and in particular, counter myth making, may vary considerably between different types of myth, such as political myth, religious myth, social myth, identity myth, symbolic myth or myths of nationalism. The study argues that the difference between types of myth could be dealt with by means of generic classification (see 4.3.1) and further by constructing semiotic myth inventories (see 4.3.3). The sixth chapter of the study demonstrates how this can be done, according to the content of the case study supplied in chapter six (see 6.3.5).

social norms according to its now denaturalised world-view. Secondly, counter myth producers can construct and disseminate the counter myth itself within various representations, while specifically constructing the counter myth as a mechanism for the establishment of new social forms (and later norms). Thirdly, and more subtly, counter mythical thinking can encourage more dominant or established myths to be interpreted in new ways, or the representation of such myths can undergo slight readjustment encouraging an alternative reading of the myth. Importantly, Lincoln (1989:26) states that any of these three strategies may be used in combination or all at once, and if they are successful, "the consequences are major and can amount to nothing less than the deconstruction of established social forms and the emergence of new formations".

2.2 The semiotic structure of counter myth

Before we investigate the difficulties of production and reception which plague the counter myth, however, it is valuable to first establish the technical formulation of the counter myth. In other words, how can such myths be described and understood in semiotic theory, if at all? One's first assumption may be that counter myths can be technically thought of in much the same way as other myths, differing only in their content but not in their structure, but there are important elemental differences. The first has already been described: while myths are largely understood to function to maintain the social order, counter myths are inspired by a general feeling of dissent amongst a certain group with the social situation. Because a dominant myth discourse may be so well established within a society its representation and reception often occurs unconsciously, while this is not the case with counter myth.

Additionally, where the main task of myth is to manipulate the meaning while naturalising the history of the first level sign, the task of the counter myth is to abolish the legitimacy and de-naturalise the first myth. Where the myth takes the (language)

sign as its point of departure, the counter myth begins its work at the level of signification, which is myth. This is a key difference. Before expanding on this technical difference it is important to notice that while counter myth is primarily inspired by a feeling of dissent with dominant myth discourse, this does not mean that counter myth necessarily or successfully aims to return to a more 'accurate' description of reality. The myth manipulates the (version of) history it appropriates, and replaces it with a conjured naturalisation, but the aim of the counter myth is not necessarily to undo this original mythic work. It may oppose the selected version of the original mythic naturalisation, and instead of reintroducing some of the history which was lost in the first 'emptying out' of the signifier, it replaces the first naturalisation with a second. The eventual second level concept of the first myth is thus emptied out by the second (counter) myth in a similar fashion to how the first myth emptied out the history of the sign. Where the dominant myth offers a certain view of reality or a particular way of reading the world, the counter myth too constitutes a particular, albeit different, view of the social world. Counter myth, therefore, is not an attempt to search for the truth; it is a certain view of the truth which is not the same view as that of the dominant myth. To expand upon this point the technical understanding of the myth, as established by Barthes (1972), must be briefly revisited in order to contextualise the newly formulated technical framework of the counter myth.

We are now, in semiotics at least, very familiar with Barthes (1972:114-115) tri-dimensional conception of the technical formation of myth, which he laid out diagrammatically in *Mythologies.* Therefore, it will be only briefly summarised here. The first order semiological system, that of language, consists of the combination of the signifier and signified, which culminates in the sign. In the second order semiological system, myth takes as its signifier, the sign, and Barthes (1972:117) calls this *form,* on the level of myth. With a mythic signifier in place, myth adds its own additional signified, or *concept.* This results in the creation of the myth, and this third term of myth Barthes (1972:117) calls *signification.* Signification is the combination of form and content, on the second level of myth. It is the only aspect of the myth which is actually consumed or

viewed in a complete way. Signification is the myth itself, just as the sign is the final unit of the first level signifier and signified (Barthes 1972:121).

In the first level sign, meaning (which is the signifier on the first level of language) is well established and could function on its own: but myth intervenes and parasitically empties out the sign. Barthes (1972:117) sees this as a kind of regression: as the sign becomes form, history is destroyed and the sign seems to lose a great deal of its richness, to be replaced with an abnormal signification. Meaning in the linguistic signifier is emptied out to be replaced by form in the mythical signifier. Meaning loses its value because myth draws its life force from it and although meaning does not wholly disappear but is held at a distance and becomes of secondary importance. Meaning is not suppressed but it is impoverished, because myth selectively disregards many of the nuances or complexities of meaning and retains only selected portions of meaning which are simplified and closed to contradictions. Meaning forms an instantaneous history bank from which the form can draw whatever it requires, so it does anchor the form but also gives it a mechanism of disguise (Barthes 1972:118). Motivation always occurs in myth but is sometimes fragmented. When drawing on history, the form of the myth retains certain analogies and selectively drops others, so the motivation of the myth is only partial in historical accuracy, and never complete (Barthes 1972:126-127). The concept of a myth, although it does draw on history for its content, serves as a reaction to history, and not as an accurate portrayal of history (Moriarty 1991:270).

The history which is drained out of the meaning by the form is absorbed by the concept and reconstituted as a new history. The concept is not abstract because its action is motivated by specific intentions, which amounts in the formulation of the myth. What results is not reality but "a certain knowledge of reality" (Barthes 1972:119). When meaning is emptied out by form, space is made to create a new knowledge in the concept. This knowledge, though not abstract, may be confused and formless (perhaps because it is now so far removed from reality), but communicatively the concept

possesses a necessary coherence in order to function (Barthes 1972:119). In myth, the meaning (first level signifier) is distorted by the concept and so the relationship between meaning and the concept is one of distortion. This distortion does not amount to destruction or disappearance. The concept relies on the meaning and feeds off of it so cannot destroy it, but can and does reform it, depriving it of history and memory (Barthes 1972:122). Characteristic of myth is its action to translate meaning into form, something which Barthes (1972:131) calls "language-robbery". Myth works by seizing a certain sign, but it does so for its own purposes. The myth will shelter behind the literal meaning of the sign, while fronting its own intended meaning (Moriarty 1991:270).

The fundamental principle of myth is that when it is being received it transforms the pieces of history which it has selected into nature: it naturalises the concept (Barthes 1972:129). According to Barthes (1972:131), "[t]his is why myth is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intensions are hidden – if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious – but because they are naturalized". Because myth leeches itself to the literal meaning of the sign, it works to portray its own meaning as natural: myth is then able to portray political and historical situations as well as their ideological alignment as natural. Thus, myth turns history into essence, and culture into nature (Moriarty 1991:270-274).

In semiotics theorists are able to uncover that myth is tasked with appropriating historical intention, and supplies it with a natural justification while making this new appearance seem eternal. Barthes (1972:142) states: "[w]hat the world supplies to myth is an historical reality… and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality". So myth empties the sign of history and replaces it with nature, while its main function is to empty out reality. But it must be remembered that myth does not attempt to hide anything, but it makes them appear natural and therefore, innocent. Barthes (1972:143) refers to this by saying that "*myth is depoliticized speech*". Myth presents things in such

a way so as not to provide an explanation of reality, but it puts things as a statement of fact.

Myth then acts to simplify the collective's understanding of the world, by offering an array of meanings devoid of contradictions. Things have meaning on their own, those meanings seem to be the natural state of how things are meant to be, and meaning about the world does not need to be struggled for (Barthes 1972:143). Myth is an utterance of speech which has first been stolen and then restored, but in a new format. When this speech is restored it is slightly changed, and does not exactly resemble that which it originally did (Barthes 1972:125).[4]

With regard to counter myth now, it is very difficult if not impossible to extract myth once it has attached itself to a meaning so (a dominant) myth cannot be combated in this way. It would be virtually impossible to erase the mythical meaning which had embedded itself into a sign, and return the sign to its original first level meaning, as the connotative meanings, in the mind of the receiver at least, would surely persist. Myths and their mythic discourses which may be regarded disagreeable by some, cannot be simply erased from the representational environment for reasons of simple practical impossibility. Instead, Barthes (1972:135) suggests the possibility of imposing a third semiological chain, to mythify the original myth, and create an additional artificial myth. Barthes (1972:135) states: "[s]ince myth robs language of something, why not rob myth?". Here the second order myth becomes the departure point for a third

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[4] The study acknowledges that Barthes model of myth as a second order signification, first written in 1957 and translated into English in 1972, is a dated source and has been criticised within post modern theory (as is acknowledged in chapter one of the study). Nonetheless, the study utilises Barthes model as a foundation on which to construct a semiotic model for the technical workings of counter myth (see figure 2.1), for two reasons. First, because Barthes (1972) theory of myth outlined in *Mythologies* has been so widely influential, not only within the field of visual and media studies, but throughout various disciplines within the social sciences. Second, no other such framework for the technical functioning of myth from a semiotic point of view has yet been developed since Barthes' model, least of all, one that has been so influential. Moreover, Barthes apparent disregard for the social context in which myths are made and disseminated is addressed by the study, which can be most notably witnessed in the case study in chapter five.

semiological level, and for a second, consciously constructed myth in the chain (Barthes 1972:135). ('The consciously constructed' myth refers to a myth which has been motivated by a conscious recognition of dissent with the discourse of the first myth in the semiological system). Barthes (1972:135-136) only briefly describes this idea and does not lay it out diagrammatically as he does with the first and second levels of mythic formation, but significantly he does refer to it as "counter-mythical". If one follows his theoretical instruction then we can assume that the insertion of the counter myth can be illustrated as follows:

	1. Signifier	2. Signified		
Language	3. Sign			
	I Signifier (FORM)	II Signified (CONCEPT)		
1st Myth	III Sign / signification (1st myth)			
	1. SIGNIFIER (Form of 2nd myth)	**2. SIGNIFIED (Concept of 2nd myth)**		
2nd Myth	**3. SIGNIFICATION (COUNTER MYTH)**			
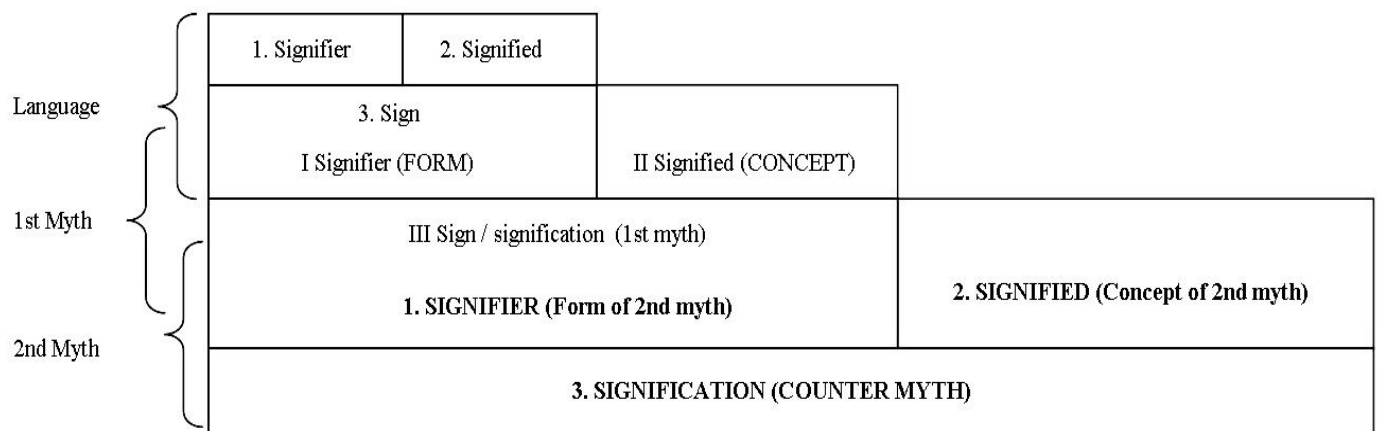
Figure 2.1: Adaptation of Barthes' (1972:115) diagram of the structure of myth, which now includes the insertion of counter myth

In language, including visual language, the sign is arbitrary: words and certain visual texts do not visually resemble that to which they refer. Nevertheless, the mythical signification is never arbitrary and is always partly motivated, containing some analogy. There is an analogy between meaning and form, the form is then motivated and myth relies on this motivated form (Barthes 1972:126). This is also important in terms of the second myth, but here the mythic signification finds its motivation in the analogous relationship to the first myth. Technically then, the counter myth is twice removed from the original language level signification of reality.

But to start at the beginning of the counter myth process: once the first myth is formed it is received as signification, the combination of the form and content. The history of the original sign has been emptied out, simplified and reformed. This history has now been translated into a naturalisation, or a specific way of looking at reality. The original language level sign is not lost, but its language level meaning almost pales into insignificance compared to the heavy mythic meaning now imbued in the sign. With counter myth, however, the signification of the first myth is now taken as signifier, and the process begins again. Where the original myth anchored itself in the history contained in the sign, while transforming and 'robbing' the language of numerous complex or possible meanings, the counter myth must now do the same. The process is now complicated because where the first myth works to empty out the history of the language level sign, the counter myth must work to empty what has been instituted in the place of history, which is the naturalisation or concept of the first myth. Myth works on history, counter myth works on nature and in doing so robs nature of meaning and legitimacy. The first function of the counter myth is to de-naturalise that concept which the first myth has worked to naturalise. This nature must then be replaced, as the space of concept cannot be left as a void.

What follows is the second function of counter myth: to re-invent a naturalised view of the world and to offer an alternative view of reality to the one which was expressed in the first myth. This second function, however, involves a difficult paradox for the motivation of the counter myth, which serves again to highlight the characteristic differences between the first and counter myths. Now it becomes important to remember that counter myths are conscious semiotic actions which are motivated by dissent for a particular myth discourse. The first myth possesses no such concern. The first myth can create a naturalisation, or a particular version of reality, freely because it is not concerned with the process of de-naturalisation or de-legitimisation. The first myth is not necessarily at ideological odds with anything and so it can say whatever it chooses about reality. The counter myth, however, is limited by its motivation to

reconstitute the first myth: it must produce a meaning which is ideologically opposed (though not necessarily in a binary fashion) in some way to the content of the first myth, and its meaning must be limited to this function or the counter myth will not have fulfilled its purpose. So, the counter myth, unlike the first myth, is not open to the production of just any meaning or naturalisation.

To further complicate matters for the counter myth, it must engineer a meaning of opposition to the discourse of the first myth, but it must still appropriate the first myth's signification as its signifier. It then inherits from the first myth all of the meaning to which it is supposedly opposed. The first myth, on the other hand, draws its concept from history, which contains an innumerable amount of conceptual possibilities from which the first myth can choose. The first myth eliminates many of the conceptual elements contained within the possibilities offered up by history by selecting only a small and limited portion of history, before translating this into a mythic version of nature. When the counter myth begins to operate, it then must establish its mythic signification by working on a concept which has already been seriously limited by the initial workings of the first myth. Counter myth can do nothing about this, and can only proceed to work with the selections and robbery enforced by the first myth. The first myth has already emptied out the original sign of history, and replaced this with a naturalisation. If the counter myth operates in a similar fashion, then what it empties is not history, but this naturalised view offered by the original myth. So it empties the first myth's concept, but what it is replaced with is significant. It cannot go back to history, and reinstate history, as this has already been lost from the framework of myth. So it offers a new naturalisation, linked to and in opposition with the nature offered by the first myth.

Additionally, because the naturalisations it appropriates as its concept are the naturalisations established by the first myth, it may be difficult for the counter myth to re-constitute an alternative mythic meaning. Herein lies the paradox of the counter myth. Although its main motivation is one of opposition to the first myth, it nonetheless must

incorporate the concept and form of the first myth into its own signification if it is to function at all. This incorporation threatens the mis-reading of the counter myth, as the ideology of the first myth discourse now determines the ideological point of departure of the counter myth and the two may become intertwined or confused at the moment of reception.

Sheridan-Rabideau (2001:441-442) warns against the simple binary categorisation of myths and their counter myths. Although they seem to occupy the space on two extreme ends of an ideological pole, these categories do "interanimate each other" (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001:442). To further complicate matters, while the dominant myth and its counter myths may overlap, the counter myths may also overlap or contradict one another. Simply said, not everyone agrees on how a dominant myth (or ideology) should be combated, and resultant counter myths may seem at ideological odds with one another. According to Sheridan-Rabideau (2001:442) "[t]he contradictions between these myths problematize a coherent counter myth category, for the myths posit fundamentally different goals while defining themselves in opposition to dominant myths". In light of this it becomes clear that while the more well established and time tested discourse of the dominant myth is coherent in the various moments of its representation, the different representations of the discourse of the counter myth(s) may not be conceptually coherent with one another at all. This may adversely affect the counter myth(s) as a lack of coherence in ideological argument makes the counter myth more difficult to understand. Furthermore, the dominant myth discourse already has widespread representation, but the counter myth may not. If the counter myth discourse is incoherent due to differences of ideological viewpoints, then the resulting variant myths occupy the representational space which could have instead been occupied by a singular counter myth, quite literally giving the latter counter myth a better chance at offering opposition to the dominant myth. The fragmented nature of counter myth discourse is another difficulty faced by counter myth activity.

At this point it may be useful to envision the variances in the relationship between the first myth and the counter myth in a tabular format as follows (this table serves only as a generalisation as there may always be exceptions):

Table 2.1: Table of characteristic differences between myth

and counter myth

Myth	Counter myth
Discourse is well established within society Widely accepted Widely represented	Content of discourse is potentially not well established within society Potentially not widely accepted Originally only scarce representation (though if the counter myth discourse is successful this may change over time)
May or may not be consciously produced Largely unconsciously received Easily received (content is recognisable and therefore easily understood / accepted)	Consciously produced May or may not be consciously received Potential difficulty in reception (content may not be widely recognisable)
Recognisable to large audience Accepted by dominant group	May be recognised by large audience (where the majority are in dissent with the social order) OR May only be recognisable to small audience (where a minority group are in dissent with social order) Not accepted by dominant group where content denaturalises position of dominant myth discourse
Function to maintain current social order / naturalise social order	Functions to uncover injustice of current social order / denaturalise social order
First level sign is taken as second level signifier (form of first myth) Empties history of language level sign, and replaces it with nature	Third level sign (first myth) is taken as fourth level signifier (form of second myth) Empties nature of second level myth, and replaces it with a reformulated naturalisation
Motivated by particular ideology	Motivated by dissent with particular ideology
Various individual myths and mythic representations form a mostly coherent myth discourse Resulting representations form a coherent body	Various counter myths may not be coherent with one another, stemming from disagreement with how to reconstitute the dominant myth discourse Representations may not be conceptually coherent with one another
Encourages social harmony and unity, encourages satisfaction with the status quo	Encourages tension and conflict, encourages dissatisfaction with the status quo and is often a call for change

When considering the relationship between myth and counter myth as laid out in the table above, it becomes clear that it is not possible to operationally analyse the representations of myths or counter myths in precisely the same way. It must be noted, however, that the differences laid out in the table only refer to relatively new or recently formed counter myths as once counter myths have proved successful and reached

maturity, they may resemble a deep structure similar to dominant myths: that is after they have become part of widely socially acceptable mythic discourse and have widespread and repeated representation.

Counter myths should not be mistaken for myths that are of differing ideological orientation or allegiance. The latter are myths which may or may not take their second order form from the same first order sign, but replace its history in different ways when inserting content due to differing ideological intentions. Such myths operate separately from one another, each possessing their own separate first and second order semiological systems. Counter myth, instead, concerns itself with a particular myth, or more accurately, with a myth discourse, which it then attempts to re-mythologise and which may take place on the same semiological system as the first myth. This is mostly a conscious action which must be examined from the perspective of the producer of the myth first, before considering how such myths are received, because it is the deciding action of the producer which initiates the counter myth(s).

2.3 Counter myth and media framing

Because the study is concerned with those myths and counter myths which are disseminated and reproduced in the media, and within film in particular, it is important to examine counter myth as an action of media framing. Media framing theory is not the focus of the study, and therefore will not be dealt with in depth, but is employed here for its relevance to the functioning of counter myth.

While the producer of the text which contains counter myth discourse is mandated to produce messaging which speaks to the counter myth's ideological orientation, a process of framing inevitably takes place. The concept of framing is most often

connected to news journalism, where questions of salience[5] and selection arise, but with regard to mythic activity, framing can also be evidenced in other media texts such as film. While analysing the definition of media framing, it becomes clear that framing is an important part of the counter mythic venture. Entman (2002:391) defines framing as follows: "[t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described".

Counter myth activity performs framing in a similar manner, only media messages are framed according to the particular counter mythic project. This means that while the counter myth discourse is spurred by a discontent with the current order, a desire for change, and/or dissatisfaction with the dominant myth discourse, media messages are selected, framed and made salient which are in keeping with this position. Framing and counter myth are then inextricably connected: framing (when employed in counter mythic messages) is catalysed and guided by the counter myth discourse, in order to contribute to counter myth representation.

Salience is both central to framing and to counter myth. Framing occurs when information is selected for representation in a media message that is of high salience so that readers are likely to recognise and process the message (Entman 2002:392). If a counter myth is to succeed in its mythic project, reach mythic maturity and gain large enough acceptance and support to successfully denaturalise the dominant myth discourse, it must imbue its messages with enough salience to be not only noticeable to readers, but to convince readers of the texts mythic message (see 2.7).

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[5] Salience is defined by Entman (2002:392) as the action of "making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. An increase in salience enhances the probability that receivers will perceive the information, discern meaning and thus process it, and store it in memory".

Dietram Scheufele (1999:103-122) developed a process model of framing research. Scheufele's (1999:115) model will not be employed by the study because its emphasis is on framing as a theory of media effects, while the study comprises a content analysis and not an audience study. However, some of Scheufele's (1999:106-110) insights on framing theory bear relevance to counter myth theory. For example, media frames work by organizing an idea or an unfolding sequence of events to present information to the audience in a manner in which an otherwise confusing and complex issue, makes coherent sense (Scheufele 1999:106). Many frames can be defined by what they choose to omit, as well as the information which they include, and such omissions may be critical in guiding the audience's understanding of an issue (Entman 2002:393). Framing then, is a process of mediation, categorisation and simplification of a complex reality.

Myth, counter myth and political myth in particular, operate in a similar way: the myth assists the myth reader to reconcile otherwise irreconcilable conflicts (Lévi-Strauss 1955, 1978) and serves to explain to the audience much of the current lived reality. While myth employs history (Barthes 1972:117) it explains how a society arrived at its current situation or predicament (Tudor 1972:139), while it may also tell the collective more about its own identity and the identity of the Other (Schöpflin 1997:208). In the case of counter myth, the salient issue of what it is that plagues society with regard to the dominant myth power relations, is framed in such a way that the counter myth discourse makes sense to the reader.

Scheufele (1999:110) also points out that framing sometimes occurs due to the intentional considerations of certain societal groups: "[t]hese groups use mass media to construct opinions and reality, and their societal influence to establish certain frames of reference". The study accepts the assumption that counter myth is catalysed by a conscious decision by a certain group, for a call for action against an often more dominant myth discourse, in order to redress some perceived societal injustice,

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wrongdoing or dissatisfaction with a current order. If this is the case, then media framing and counter myth are decidedly interlinked. Counter myth discourses, and the information and issues related to these discourses, are intentionally framed by certain societal groups and media messages are transmitted which have been subject to this kind of framing.

Noteworthy examples of this are evidenced in the media messages of civil society groups, who often operate as a counter-action, and according to a counter myth discourse. Another example already mentioned is the *GirlZone* project, discussed by Sheridan-Rabideau (2001) in her assessment of the counter mythic activity involved in the sociological local community project which was envisaged to provide teenage girls with exposure to activities which were previously exclusive to boys, in an attempt to counter traditional patriarchal gender roles. Various examples of counter myth is offered later in the next chapter (see 3.4) and therefore examples of counter myth inspired framing will not be dwelt on here. Nonetheless, it is sufficient to note that both framing and counter myth often involve the deliberate considerations of a certain social group to delimit the audiences understanding of a particular issue, to a particular point of view.

2.4 Counter myth and the first level signifier

The transposition of the counter myth into/onto Barthes (1972:114-115) diagrammatic illustration of the workings of myth does serve to assist in the understanding of counter myth, but requires further theorisation. Turning analysis to the very first block of the diagram, the signifier at the level of language, it becomes apparent that this model assumes that the counter myth becomes apparent to the receiver via the same initial signifier as the first myth. Indeed, this may be the case on occasion. The counter myth, however, may also select first level signifiers of its own choosing or production, and when this happens our model is no longer adequate. The first level signifier of the

dominant myth and the first level signifier of the counter myth are not always the same. Indeed, because we know that the production of counter myth is a conscious action we can also assume that the production of counter myth representation happens consciously, and resultantly new signifiers are produced which are engineered specifically for the representation of the counter myth.

It is now tempting to say that at this point one can return to Barthes' (1972:114-115) original model of the workings of myth, and start afresh because of the imposition of a new first level signifier. If this were so, we would also need to say that counter myth has metamorphosised into a kind of mythic maturity, and become a dominant myth in its own right. This may be the case, but there remain some fundamental characteristics of counter myth which have already been discussed, that limit the theorist from drawing an overly convenient conclusion.

Most importantly, it must be remembered that counter myth is a conscious and deliberate semiotic action, motivated by the collective dissent of a particular group for a dominant myth discourse. Technically then, the dominant myth discourse, and the ideology which it naturalises, become the catalyst for the eventual representation of the counter myth. This leads again to another fundamental element of counter myth: that it begins its mythic work not by emptying out the history of the sign as in the case of myth, but rather that it works on the concept of the myth and the naturalisation which is offered there. In the case where counter myth takes its own language level signifier, it must then appropriate the concept at least part of the dominant myth discourse, if it is going to have something on which to work. It cannot, like myth, rely on the history of the language level signified alone, because it does not have the same motivation as myth. Counter myth must work to denaturalise the dominant myth discourse or it will have failed in its purpose, but in order to do so it must still appropriate some of the dominant myth discourse into its own structure if it chooses a new first level signifier, in order for it to begin the denaturalisation process within its own concept.

While summarising Barthes' original diagram of the structure of myth as a second order semiological system, Fiske (1982:88) offers his own, rather simplified diagrammatic version of the technical activity of myth. Fiske (1982:88) explains,"[i]f connotation is the second-order meaning of the signifier, myth is the second-order meaning of the signified" (Fiske 1982:88). On the second level of the semiological system, connotation provides the form (signifier) of the message, while myth provides the content (signified).
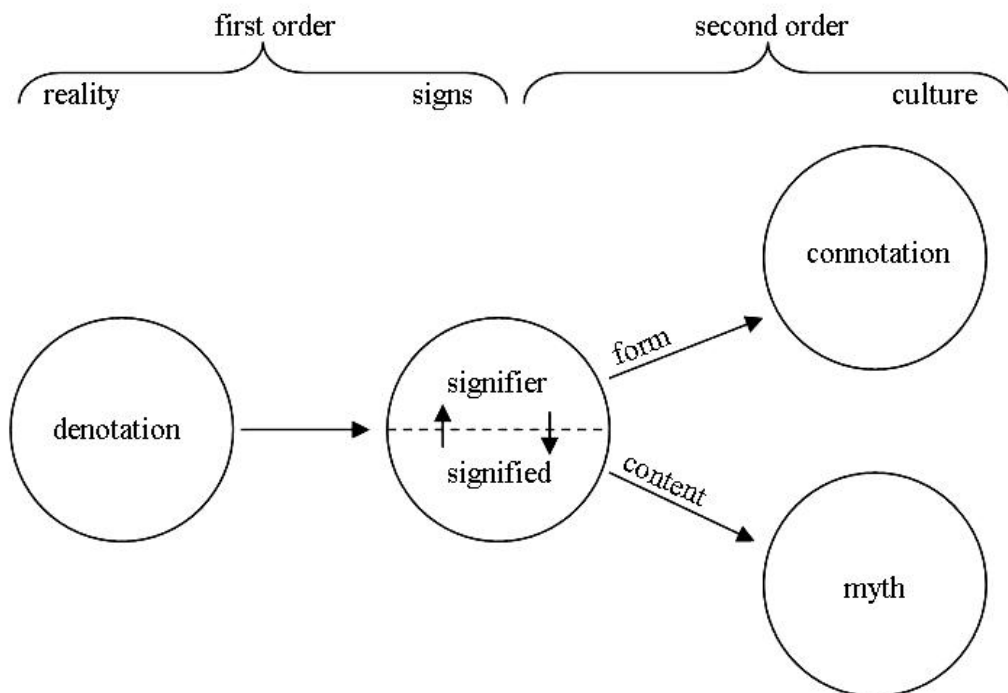
Figure 2.2: Fiske's (1982:88) visualisation of Barthes' second order meaning:
Barthes' two orders of signification. In the second order, the sign system of the first is inserted into the value system of culture.

If one follows Fiske's (1982:88) line of thinking in the diagram above, then the appearance of counter mythic activity can be demonstrated by the diagram below, as counter myth adopts and begins to re-translate the concept of the first myth. What is important to notice in this new diagram, is that while the counter myth's main concern is

with the concept (signified) of the first myth, the connotation or form (signifier) of the first myth is less important. This is because if the connotative value and form of the first myth are not ideally suitable or compatible to the ideological orientation of the counter myth, the counter myth will select a different form or connotative value which is more appropriate to the discourse of the counter myth. The concept of the first myth is of primary importance to the counter myth, and is indeed a vital element of the counter myth, without which it could not survive. The form of the first myth is of secondary importance to the counter myth.

reality | first order | signs | second order | culture | third order | counter myth

denotation

signifier / signified

form

connotation

content

1st myth: conceptual catalyst for counter myth

form

content

Form adopted from first myth

OR

New form, constructed according to the ideological orientation of counter myth

2nd myth: counter myth

The connotative value of any myth is decided by the form. Counter myth will either adopt the same form as the original myth, and imbue it with new connotative values, or it will select its own, entirely different form, in which case it adopts only the concept of the first myth, while ignoring the form and connotative value of the first myth.

The counter myth adopts the content of the first myth, and re-translates this content so that it is orientated towards a new/ different ideological position.

Figure 2.3: Adaptation of Fiske's (1982:88) visualisation of Barthes' second order meaning, but including the insertion of counter myth

When a new first level signifier is selected and produced for counter myth then a mechanism for the appropriation and insertion of dominant myth discourse into the technical structure of counter myth is required. What is it that allows this transposition of concept from one mythic signification to the other? The answer is ideology.

Ideology is intrinsically important to both myth and counter myth, and not only with regard to the content (signified) of the myth. The content of the myth is determined by ideology because it is drawn from history, but there is more to myth than its content. Myth is also a product of its form, and there is a history of forms and well as of contents. Consequently, ideology plays a role in the form of the myth as well as the content (Moriarty 1991:268). According to Moriarty (1991:268) semiotic analysis gives us the mechanism for formal analysis of the form of the myth.

Ideology facilitates the transmission of the concept between representations within the same myth discourse, but also across mythic discourse, from myth to counter myth. It is required therefore, to find a way to include the insertion of ideology into the technical framework of myth, and counter myth. This process could potentially be visualised as follows:

	IDEOLOGY	
	Concept of dominant myth discourse	
1. Signifier	2. Signified	
3. Sign	II Signified (CONCEPT)
I Signifier (FORM)	**Concept of counter myth discourse**
III Sign / signification (counter myth)	
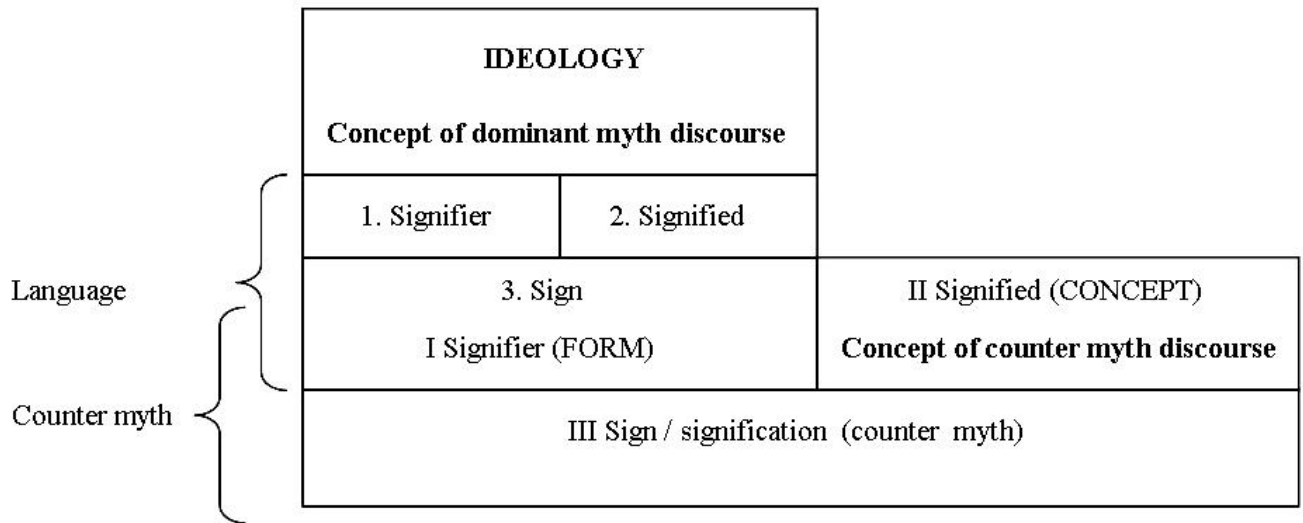
**Figure 2.4: Adaptation of Barthes' (1972:115) diagram of
the structure of myth, including the insertion of counter
myth and demonstrating the catalyst of ideology**

Ideology now receives double credit with regard to its facilitation of counter myth. It serves both as the catalysing force for the deliberate semiotic action of counter myth, and as the vehicle of myth discourse appropriation by the counter myth. For its part counter myth may or may not appropriate the first level signifier from a dominant myth, but what it must appropriate is a portion of the dominant myth discourse if it is to fulfil the requirement of the denaturalisation of the dominant myth. This is why one cannot understand counter myth in precisely the same way as dominant myth, because dominant myth is required to fulfil no such criteria.

Moreover, the traditional semiotic understanding of the levels of meaning may now require slight readjustment, at least with regard to counter myth. (The first level of meaning is denotative in nature, the second level connotative and mythical and the third is ideological). Instead of revealing itself only on the third and last level of meaning, ideology is now placed at the beginning and at the end of this process, but significantly

the first ideological meaning is not the same as the last. This should not be unexpected because this is precisely what counter myth, if it is successful, aims to do. It operates now as a kind of translator of ideology, transforming selected ideological meanings into new ones.

As mentioned earlier, questions of framing arise (see 2.3): certain issues or information which are relevant to the counter myth discourse are made salient and are framed in order to assist with the progress of the counter mythic project. Framing operates as a cognitive device, since audiences are able to frame media messages according to pre-existing frames or categorisations whilst decoding (Scheufele 1999:107). The pre-existing individual cognitive frames and frameworks are internal structures of the mind (Scheufele 1999:106) which to a large extent are constructed by both the ideology of the producer (Scheufele 1999:109) and that of the individual reader. When taking such cognitive theories into account then, it is important that counter myth appropriates the dominant ideology or myth discourse as a technical point of departure, because it then increases its own potential to be understood by the reader. Since it has partially adopted the frame of the dominant ideology, the counter myth can possibly find a framed symmetry within the cognitive mental devices possessed by the individual reader, meaning that counter myth's initial adoption of ideology allows the counter myth to be more popularly understood.

All of this theory about counter myth may at first seem very philosophical, but theories about counter myth have already been tested, at least within controlled or engineered environments. Sheridan-Rabideau (2001) describes the project called *GirlZone* in Champaign-Urbana, central Illinois, which is a community-based organisation where young girls aged six to fifteen are encouraged to partake in hands-on activities which they would otherwise (according to the project) be frequently denied due to their gender. The decidedly feminist orientation of the *GirlZone* project means that activities are designed to assist girls in developing their individual abilities without the hindrance of

sexual biases and "workshops range across Web page design, weightlifting, entrepreneurship, and cooking. The two founding organizers developed *GirlZone* in large part to counter dominant myths about pre-adolescent girls. At the most basic level, these dominant myths represent girls as passive, contained, or valued for their appearance, whereas counter myths represent a greater range of options" (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001:441). The successes or failures of the *GirlZone* project are not relevant to this discussion. This project is an example of how counter mythic activity can operate as a consciously decided upon social action, and while not all counter mythic activity takes place in such carefully constructed and enclosed environments, it should be understood that the possibility that counter myths can penetrate the social arena of the global mass media may have widespread social effect.

2.5   The functions of myth and counter myth

Myths, whether dominant, political, or counter, are a crucial way for a culture to articulate its shared beliefs among its members, but also to the rest of the world. All cultures make use of myths, but they do not all make use of them to project or protect the same values. The result is that a clash of mythic content can sometimes appear (Brown 2004:275). This may occur spontaneously or simultaneously, where the cultural content of a set of myths or the value system of two different cultures is different. When a clash of myth content from two different cultural origins is inspired by one cultural group mythically protesting the beliefs and values of another, an instance of counter myth may be recorded.

Brown (2004:277) outlines four main strategies of myth, which are the four primary ways in which myths function. Firstly, myths function to reinforce beliefs and values. According to Brown (2004:277), "[s]peakers who use myths are not asking the audience to change their beliefs; they are eliciting beliefs that are already held by the audience".

The second function of myth according to Brown (2004:277) is that it works as a means to escape reality, and offers the myth reader a romanticised setting somewhere far removed from everyday life. Some aspects of life may be emphasised while others are ignored. (This may be most easily demonstrated by the myth-as-narrative type myth, discussed in subsection 4.1).

The third function of myth is to unify audiences by inspiring, at times, feelings of patriotism, nationalism or collectivism. Myth is a form of self-definition, for those who accept a myth which encodes the identity of a certain group and of the norms or rules which are attributed to the membership of that group. Myth then also defines the boundaries of that group, while indicating its distinctiveness and its difference from other groups (Schöpflin 1997:208). This can be applied on a national level, where citizens of one country recognise their sameness to one another, as well as their difference from the citizens of another country, therefore resulting in a collective feeling of patriotism. The fourth function of myth is that myth continues to behave as the basic model of a culture, making it easier for us to interpret reality, know how to behave and how to function within the various social, economic and political institutions maintained by society (Brown 2004:277).

Brown's (2004:277) model of the four functions of myth is important here not because it necessarily tells us something that theorists did not already know about myth, but instead quite the opposite. The four functions of myth highlighted above are a fairly good summary of much of the literature which has dealt with myth before. Indeed, Brown (2004:277) begins his description of this model by suggesting that it points to an array of prior myth literature. It is safe to assume that these four functions of myth, and possibly a few others, are among the main social activities performed by myth, and what is more, we can say that most theorists would agreed on this point.

So Brown's model (2004:277) is not particularly groundbreaking in terms of myth theory but serves as a useful summary. What is interesting, however, are the implications of considering the function of counter myth in terms of Brown's model (2004:277). The first and second functions of myth are effected, and even changed. Firstly, one cannot say that the function of counter myth does not involve a request for the audience to change their beliefs, because this is the very purpose of the counter myth. Secondly, a counter myth will characteristically and purposefully reveal what is perceived to be wrong with society, instead of offering a romanticised view of society. Technically, the counter myth will still operate in the same way as myth in this regard, by emphasising some aspects of culture while ignoring others. The nature of the content of the myth is decidedly different, as the counter myth tries to expose the 'evils' of society in an attempt to provide a motivation for social change.

With regard to Brown's (2004:277) third function of myth: counter myth does not necessarily inspire social cohesion or unity. Its purpose is to encourage a type of opposition or ideological conflict. Further, if the mythic discourse which the counter myth is opposed to is in any way linked to ideas of the state, the counter myth may do the opposite of inspiring patriotism, or at least, it may not work in favour of the state's hegemonically facilitated version of patriotism. Brown's (2004:277) fourth function of myth is where the counter myth with little representation may sometimes run into technical difficulty. While myths make reality easier for us to interpret, they do so because they are familiar to us. A newly found counter myth may not be instantly recognisable to the audience because its representation is not as widespread as other more dominant myths. Counter myths then may find this function more difficult to fulfil. Nonetheless, the fourth function of myth is still in further question where myths instruct myth readers on how to behave correctly within the institutions of a society. Should one or some of these social institutions be understood to work as ideological apparatuses of the myth discourse to which the counter myth is opposed, then counter myth readers may be encouraged to behave in a manners within these institutions which is not the

more widely accepted mode of behaviour as encouraged by the dominant myth discourse.

Consequently Brown's (2004:277) theory has assisted us in discovering, once again, that the technical structure of counter myth, as well as its social functions, are decidedly different to that of myth. Until now theorists have assumed and maintained that all myths, no matter what their subject matter, function in technically much the same way (Tudor 1972:17). It is now clear that this is not necessarily the case. The technical structure and functioning of myth is more nuanced and complex than originally thought. Counter myth cannot be thought of as a 'new' *type* of myth, such as sacred myth or political myth. Counter myth is an entirely different *species* of myth.

But if the structure of counter myth is different from that of myth, and we can then assume that the function of counter myth is also different, then we are led to ask: what is the social function of counter myth? To begin with, we might start with how the structuralist position envisioned the social function of myth. It is clear that the tradition of the structuralist position, particularly that of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1955, 1978) has been useful to this study in terms of investigating the deep structures and technical formats and similarities (and differences) of various types of myths. Clearly, the deep structures of myth and counter myth are markedly different from one another. Although this study owes a great deal to Lévi-Strauss' structuralist line of thinking, it must be acknowledged that this study does not conceive of myth in the purely structuralist form which Lévi-Strauss and his followers did. Firstly, Lévi-Strauss' many large contributions to myth literature consider the deep structures which appear similarly across various cross-cultural myths to be of primary importance, but the content of these myths Lévi-Strauss (1955, 1978) felt to be of secondary importance and almost immaterial. The analysis of myth should indeed consider, in detail and at length, the structure of the myth in question. Such an analysis will reveal a great deal about the myth, including whether the myth is a dominant myth or a counter myth. A semiotic analysis of any particular

myth or group of myths, however, cannot be complete if it has not also considered the content of the myth(s). This is because it is through an analysis of the content of the myth that we may most easily arrive at the realm of ideology. It is true that ideology may also be present in the form and structure of the myth. While ideology occupies all aspects of the myth (form or structure, and content) then all aspects of the myth should be considered important for analysis.

Secondly, and to raise a point for which Lévi-Strauss has already received much criticism, it has been clearly demonstrated in this section of this study alone that myths perform many different societal functions. More of these functions are be introduced later in this chapter. Claude Lévi-Strauss and the structuralist view of myth reduce myth to a mechanism for resolution and mediation between oppositions and contradictions within society and culture, as well as the dichotomy between nature and culture. Puhvel (1987:101) however, expresses displeasure at this tendency to view myth as collections of binary oppositions and their resolutions. Therefore, it may not be enough to reduce myth, as Lévi-Strauss did, to a collection of resolutions and reconciliations for the contradictions in social life. Indeed, myth can do more than that.

To return to the functions of counter myth in particular: included in Robert Segal's (2007) impressive volume of essays on myth, is Schöpflin's (1997) work *The functions of myth and a taxonomy of myths*. In this piece of work Schöpflin presents a detailed and useful list of nine key social functions of (dominant) myth. In this same vein, and according to a similar theoretical format, the author of this study will now present a list of the social functions of *counter* myth, in particular. It must be stressed that this study does not attest that these are the only social functions of counter myth. Indeed, there may be many more, and hopefully these will be revealed in coming results of future counter myth research. While the research which has been devoted to counter myth so far is so slim and sparse, these are the functions which are now theoretically identifiable.

(a) There are virtually infinite possibilities for individuals and groups to symbolically distinguish themselves from others, based on perceptions of similarity or dissimilarity. The borders of a society are an immensely complex matter (Lincoln 1989:10). Mythical discourse is a vital mechanism for the delineation of perceived social borders, differences and classifications. It is according to these borders that individuals may define themselves. Like myth, counter myth is a form of self-definition, but unlike myth it is for those who, firstly, reject the identity offered by a particular dominant myth and secondly, accept the counter myth which encodes the identity of a certain group in a way which distinguishes it from the dominant myth discourse. The hierarchies and inequities established by the dominant myth discourse are always open to contestation by the counter myth (Lincoln 1989:173). The counter myth then informs the norms or rules which are attributed to the membership of the counter discourse group. Counter myth also defines the boundaries of that group, while indicating its distinctiveness and its difference from other dominant discourse groups, as well as other counter myth discourse groups.

(b) Schöpflin (1997:208) mentions how myths operate as a mechanism for the transference of identity and states that "[i]t enables a new identity to be superimposed on an older one, so that the collectivity sustains itself by creating an identity homogenous enough to let it live with, say, a major social upheaval". In this myth is similar to counter myth, which may do the same. The only variance in the mythic transference from the older identity to the new one, between myth and counter myth, is the motivation. Myth may facilitate identity transference or renewal because older myths have become outdated, unfashionable or no are longer appropriate within contemporary political and social climates. Dominant myths perform this function to survive. Counter myths facilitate identity transference because of a collective dissent towards the identity offered by the dominant myth, and the need for an alternative.

(c) Myth is a mechanism for providing certain cognitive limits, which simplifies the reality. It standardizes the understanding and the coherence of the collective (Schöpflin 1997:208-209). Counter myth simplifies the ideological conflicts and contradictions which one myth discourse may have with another, simplifying the reasons for dissent and the failings of the dominant myth discourse in question, in order to both justify the position of the counter myth discourse and to make it more understandable. This can be dangerous, however, when understanding provided by the counter myth has variances which are too great when compared to the reality, or if the counter myth exaggerates the extent of the failings of the dominant myth discourse. If a group of people should respond to such a counter myth, then they are a resultantly responding in a way which is not responsibly informed. This kind of damaging outcome, however, is not always the case for the counter myth. Counter mythical action has provided the kind of catalyst in general thinking which has allowed societies to recognise the failings of a current situation, and inspired the social momentum which has moved such societies to change. Counter myth works by encouraging latent sentiments of dissent to become forces of social action, by disrupting the discourses of previously believable modes of legitimation. When this happens, counter myth becomes one of "the most powerful instruments of social change" (Lincoln 1989:173). An example would be the abolition of the slave trade in Britain. Another would be the counter myth discourses which led various countries throughout the twentieth century to adopt a democratic form of government and electoral system (admittedly with varying degrees of success), South Africa being a recent example. Counter myth then functions to encourage the recognition for the need for social change. This is perhaps the most important function of counter myth.

(d) Although hardly ever recognised as such, myth plays a large and important role in politics. Firstly, since myths act as a mechanism of communication they become tools which politicians and rulers can use to communicate certain beliefs or messages to the peoples whom they address. Secondly, political rulers can manipulate the cohesive properties of myth in binding a community to a certain set of beliefs. In societies of

social and ethnic division, myths can either serve to encourage division, or they can serve to unite such a community. The latter case is however, quite rare. It is much easier to use myths as a signifier for difference, and describe a certain group of people as the negative other (Schöpflin 1997:210). Schöpflin (1997:210) explains that "[t]his process is usually dynamic and to some extent imitative. If one group feels that it has to rely more and more heavily on myths of collective existence, its demonized other – it's *Doppelgänger* - will generally do likewise". Thus, counter myths can act as mechanisms of mythical self-defence. When one group disseminates a myth of negative content about another group, the mythically demonised group may respond by countering such myths, both with counter myths of its own identity and that of its mythical attacker.

(e) Myths work to explain to a community how it arrived at a certain position (Tudor 1972:139, Schöpflin 1997:210). Myth accounts for any past failures and can also suggest a future destination. As Barthes (1972) reminds us, myth does not offer a factually accurate representation of history, but a particular view of history. Counter mythical thinking occurs when the dominant myth discourse offers an explanation or version of history which is not universally agreeable. Dominant myth offers one view of history, and counter myth an opposing view. Examples of this are plentiful in postcolonial situations: previously dominant colonial powers offered myth discourses during and sometimes after colonial periods which explained colonial history in very different ways to the history myths of the now independent but previously colonised peoples themselves. One must be careful, however, not to assume that historical accuracy belongs in greater degree to either myth or counter myth as this is never consistent. For example, the counter myth of Holocaust denialism and the counter myth of HIV/Aids denialism directly reject dominantly accepted notions of history and science, to the point where they are widely believed to enter the abandonment of logic and reason.

Myth plays a role in the functioning of collective memory. While myth can emphasise certain parts of a community's past, it can also function to eliminate or erase other parts of history effectively excluding these parts from the collective memory (Schöpflin 1997:211). Counter myth can work by reminding a society of a part of its history which some members of the community may prefer to forget. Such communities have often suffered a collective oppression or trauma of some kind, and different sections of the collective may experience the aftermath of this trauma very differently. Most often, these experiences are divided along ethnic lines. Those belonging to the ethnic group historically placed as the perpetrators or the oppressors may produce myths which reflect account of the past which effectively lessens their collective guilt by selectively excluding inconvenient historical elements. Counter myths may subsequently be produced from the ranks of the group of the historically oppressed, which literally expose the selective 'amnesia' of the dominant myth discourse. Counter myth can then function as a historical interrogator, calling to the fore versions and explanations of history which could otherwise be forgotten.

The five functions of counter myth identified here can then be summarised in shorthand as follows:

Counter myth functions as a form of,

> (a) self-definition

> (b) alternative identity

> (c) recognition of the need for social change or a reversion to some prior state

> (d) mythical self-defence

> (e) a counter view of history.

2.6 Counter myth and political myth

According to Tudor (1972:17) the political myth does not differ in its technical format or mode of operation to other myths, dominant or otherwise. The key characteristic of the political myth lies in its content, often involving the mythologisation of politics. This does not only mean the mythic representations of politicians and their various activities presented to us in the most part by the news media, but also the politically inspired aspirations of social groups of every day lived reality: groups of peoples who collectively hold a similar view of the state of society and social circumstances. A political myth is one that tells a story of a political society. Sometimes, this involves a society which existed in the past at one time, and which must be restored, preserved or re-created. At other times the political myth involves a society which has not yet come into being, but the myth encourages the quickened arrival of this society (Tudor 1972:138). For this reason political myths are often linked to questions of national identity.

One would be mistaken to assume that political myths involve and speak of governmental type politics only. The definition of political myths must be extended to those myths which entail a kind of mythical political type thinking: myths which are concerned with a discussion of a specific and particular aspect of the social system within a particular society, which may or may not be directly linked to the institution of government. For example, the project at *GirlZone* (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001) mentioned in subsection 2.1 can be understood to be political in nature. The ideas encouraged by this project were counter mythical in terms of traditional social and patriarchal type ideas about the role of women in Western society, and were not involved with governmental politics. That said, the use of mythic communication often rears its head in the political (state or governmental) arena.

Each political action is inspired by, and connected to or embedded in the wider cultural context. On the surface level cultural values and presuppositions are not usually understood to directly influence political action, and symbolic action is not seen as the communicative norm between the political elites and the public. However, this is the case, and myth provides the structure in which this happens. (Schöpflin 1997:212). Mythic discourses are put into action to justifying and legitimise a certain position of power. Myths are the primary means which political leaders use to rouse emotions amongst the public, and are also the primary means which people used to comprehend politics (Schöpflin 1997:212).

The counter myth is undoubtedly political in nature because its primary intention is to react against or oppose a selected dominant myth discourse and this type of action is indeed political. It may be valuable then, to discuss some of the characteristics of political myth if this can shed some more light on the workings of counter myth. The discussion of political myth here is also important in its own right and not because of its value with regard to the theorising of counter myth. Many of the myths which are described in the selection of recent post-apartheid South African films in chapter six are political in nature.

From the outset it must be emphasised that political myth and counter myth are not equivalent: a political myth is not necessarily a counter myth, but a counter myth may be considered characteristically political in nature (although even here one must hesitant and aware that there will be mythical exceptions). According to Bottici and Challand (2006) what makes a myth political is its particularistic nature: this type of myth is determined by a particular set of social circumstances and although it may offer a representation which is specifically linked to those circumstances, the political myth does not necessarily aim to respond in opposition to a dominant myth discourse. In fact, a political myth may work in the service of a dominant myth discourse or ideology, while maintaining content that is determined by a particular social situation, at a particular

geographical position at a particular point in time. Bottici & Challand (2006:317) assert that "... political myths have an intrinsic particularistic nature, which links them to the particular circumstances in which they operate". The same can be said for counter myth, which is also highly particularistic in nature, if according to slightly different orientations.

Firstly, the counter myth, as discussed, is inspired by the general feeling of dissent by a certain group for a particular dominant myth discourse at a particular point in history and at a specified geography. Not only is the counter myth particularistic in a similar way to the political myth, it is fundamentally political in nature. Its concern is with the social situation or environment of a particular group and its action is motivated by this concern. The objective of the counter myth is even more radical than that of the (dominant) political myth which operates to naturalise a dominant myth discourse, because it semiotically acts to encourage a change in the social order and in opposition to the dominant political myth discourse. Nonetheless, the centeredness of the counter myth on concerns of social health, render the counter myth political. A political myth is defined by the fact that it is both shared by a particular group and that it addresses the particular political conditions of that group (Bottici & Challand 2006:320). Evidently, political myth shares this concern with counter myth.

Furthermore, what suggests that a myth is political is not its content, but rather the manner in which the myth represents its content, or the way it which it represents the political interests of a particular group (Bottici & Challand 2006:317). Counter myth always speaks in terms of opposition to a dominant myth discourse, and this manner of speaking also renders it political.

As discussed, myth does not operate as a single instance, should not be thought of as such and political myth is no exception. Instead it is a process of continuous semiotic

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work, operating on the same basic mythic pattern, and incorporating representation of many kinds (Bottici & Challand 2006:318). According to Bottici & Challand (2006:320), political myths, like other myths, are not "learned once and for all", but encountered over time through continuous and cumulative exposure to them. It is this collection of regular encounters with a particular myth that constitutes a myth discourse. Any myth finds representation in numerous mythical accounts, and cannot be represented in its mythical entirety in any single representation. When an individual myth producer makes use of a myth, he represents not the myth, but a particular version of the myth. The myth producer will automatically adjust the myth content according to the particular circumstances in which the act of myth representation is taking place. The myth is elaborated and modified to suit the specific needs of the moment. A myth can be understood as a large collection of thematically similar arguments. Accordingly, when examining myths one must explore numerous and various instances of myth representation before one can establish what the myths of a particular society are (Tudor 1972:47). The myth discourse of a political myth may or may not be expansive, depending on whether it is also a counter myth, or a counter myth of relatively recent initiation. While the dominant political myth may often have a well established and widely represented myth discourse, its corresponding counter political myth(s), if it has any, needs to work to expand the representation of the counter political myth discourse.

Bottici and Challand (2006:320) state that "[a]s a consequence of the mediatization of politics, of the increased role of the media in our everyday life, as well as of our continued exposure to the advertising industry,… political myth has been given unprecedented opportunities to be pervasive". Because of continuous representational exposure to the images and icons or symbols which convey political myths, these myths can eventually become embedded in the collective unconsciousness, and have a deciding effect on how individuals perceive the world. Hiding in the collective unconscious of a social group, political myths can also often escape critical scrutiny, because they appear to be nothing more than perceptions of reality (Bottici & Challand 2006:320-321).

As already mentioned at the start of this subsection, myths also work to explain to a community how it arrived at a certain position. Myth accounts for any past failures and can also suggest a future destination. It can be used to make sense of things that are logically inexplicable. Myths can be a solidifying force to a group by providing an explanation of the group's predicament in the form of a collective enemy or negative influence, which satisfies the community's need to understand its negative position. This negative influence does not necessarily need to conform to logic, and does not even need to exist in reality.

This use of myth is problematic because it can result in the refusal of a community to accept collective responsibility or to admit error. There have been instances where it appears that a society lacks the cognitive instruments to question the validity of a myth and will accept the substance of a myth as the reliable cause for a certain situation (Schöpflin 1997:210). The recent (2008) conflict in South Africa which culminated in violent xenophobic attacks can serve as an example.

Political myths, provide a social map for the world, reducing the complexities associated with human actions and experiences and becoming a vehicle to make a multifaceted world more easily understandable (Bottici & Challand 2006:321). They can do this because they are, essentially, myths, and function by empting out the signs which they appropriate of history (and unwanted complexities).

In light of this one must ask, in a political sense a least, who is in control of the myth and who controls the messaging system to the people which can have such effects. The most obvious answer is the political and intellectual elites within the society, who control the technical arena of public communication. The influence and power of the mass-media and especially television should not be overlooked in this regard (Schöpflin

1997:211). This is in keeping with Barthes' (1972) opinion that myth works in the service of the *bourgeoisie*. The powerful intellectual elites who occupy positions of political power may, perhaps be the largest groups of mass mediated myth producers, and historically myth theory does not lead us to believe otherwise. Practically it must be remembered that this is not the realm of the counter myth, which is most often (though not always) not produced by the politically powerful elite. The counter myth may stem from a dissident group at ideological odds with the dominant myth producers. The first decade of the twenty-first century has been dogged by the global threat of fundamentalist terrorism: a movement inspired by a political mythology not (necessarily) stemming from the echelons of any *bourgeoisie*. There are, however, instances when in a time of uncertainty or when faced by large scale criticism the political elite (especially governmental politicians or rulers) may consciously and specifically invent powerful counter myths as an explanation for a current situation and as a diversion from its own failings. Such counter myths are particularly damaging, especially when they involve the negative mythologisation of a particular group of peoples, demonising them, and holding them responsible for all of society's ills. Examples of these myths are numerous. The point here is, however, that politically, the production of myths and counter myths is not solely the activity of the powerful intellectual and political elite.

Since myths act as a mechanism of communication they become a tool which politicians and rulers can use to communicate certain beliefs or messages to the peoples whom they address. Secondly, political rulers can manipulate the cohesive properties of myth in binding a community to a certain set of beliefs. In societies of social and ethnic division, myths can either serve to encourage division, or they can serve to unite such a community. The latter case is however, sadly quite rare. It is much easier to use myths as a signifier for difference, and described a certain group of people as the negative other. Schöpflin (1997:210) states, "[t]his process is usually dynamic and to some extent imitative. If one group feels that it has to rely more and more heavily on myths of collective existence, its demonized other – is *Doppelgänger* - will generally do likewise". While this is the case, the potential for counter and particularly political-counter, mythic activity is clearly heightened.

Although Tudor (1972), Schopflin (1997), Flood (2002), Bottici and Challand (2006) and other myth theorists do provide a great deal of detailed description of the characteristics of political myth, they do so only for the dominant political myth and not the counter political myth, which may not share many of these characteristics, at least not directly after the conscious decision to take semiotic counter mythic action and for some time thereafter. An understanding of political myth is still useful for the consideration of counter myth, if only for two reasons: both are decidedly particularistic in nature, being bound in content to a particular social environment, and both are politically motivated, whether motivated to apply change to that social environment or naturalise the social circumstances in question in order to keep things as they are.

2.7 Counter myth and discourse

> [M]yth – whatever its temporal point of reference – is a mode of discourse…

> (Lincoln 1989:49).

Counter myth building is a discursive[6] work, that is semiotic in nature and which involves having to ensure that these new myths can be recognised as viable and believable. The latter point highlights one of the key problems facing counter myth. While the producer might go to great lengths to build and materially produce a counter myth, the reader of the represented myth may not recognise its meaning, or its status as myth (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001:447). The reasons for this lack of meaning making symmetry may be varied.

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[6] The term 'discourse' is used in this study in the Foucauldian sense, with regard social relations of power and the battles of hegemony which exist between them.

Firstly, the counter myth is inspired by the desire for social change. The reader of the newly produced counter myth may, however, not be in favour of the proposed change, or may have never even have thought about it. Although a simplistic model, Hall's (1980) theory of preferred reading could be used to explain and understand this point. Additionally, Moriarty (1991:274) examines Barthes (1972) criticism of the bourgeois control of myths: mythical rhetoric seems to be structured in a way that is most likely to successfully transmit only the bourgeois world-view. It is possible that some myths of the left (including counter myths), may be successfully portrayed, but such myths are not likely to enter daily social life to the extent of their bourgeois counterparts. If it is true that the a bourgeois group controls the majority of myth production, or at least the mass mediated representation of myths, then it can be understood how those myths which naturalise a bourgeois world-view are entrenched in the collective mentality of a society. Even while this particular position does not serve the interests of a great many, a great many myth recipients may be unwilling to question the particular world-view which is presented because it is so familiar to them that it may seem un-natural or unethical to call it into question. Importantly then, for a counter mythic discourse to be successful in effectively bringing about social change, it must first gain a following, which can be intensely difficult to do, since individuals must be ideologically swayed from the naturalised dominant discourse norms of social life (Lincoln 1989:8).

For a myth or a counter myth to be effective, however, it must resonate with the people, meaning that it must address an urgently pressing social need. If the myth fails to gain a response it has either not been recognised by the people or it has been used at the wrong time. Related to this is how myth plays a role in the functioning of collective memory. While myth can emphasise certain parts of a community's past, it can also function to eliminate or erase other parts of history effectively excluding these parts from the collective memory (Schöpflin 1997:211). This may pose difficulty to a counter myth which calls to the fore a particular part of a group's history which many, who adhere to the dominant myth discourse, may rather prefer to forget (see 2.5). Conflicts arising

from the mythical remembrance or amnesia of certain portions of history are particularly apparent in postcolonial situations, where the previous colonising powers often have a very different view, as the previous dominant myth producers, of the history of the colonialist actions within any particular now independent country, to the mythical views of history held by the people who were colonised. Here, counter myth, and with important relevance to the postcolonial era, may again run into some difficulty: where one view of history has been mythically represented for a very long time, it may be difficult to present an opposing view of history. But not always. Post-apartheid South Africa serves as an example where counter myth production has served to virtually reconstruct the collective memory of an entire country. More on this later (see chapter 6).

Secondly, traditional or dominant myths which have operated within the social framework for some time have had the chance to entirely integrate with the representative network of a society. Dominant myths are therefore read repetitively, and over long periods of time, perhaps for entire lifetimes. 'New' or counter myths cannot compete with this type of ideological and representational advantage. Also, when read for the first time, the individual viewer may not recognise the counter myth because it is entirely different from anything that has been viewed before, meaning that there is no frame of reference to which to connect the meaning of the myth, and the meaning is then lost. Dominant myths are recognisable and easy to understand because they are familiar. Sheridan-Rabideau (2001:454) asserts that "[m]yths… require extensive discursive and material work to normalize which options people recognize". Lincoln (1989:8) states that one of the largest difficulties facing a "disruptive discourse" such as counter myth, is whether or not it can quickly and effectively gain a hearing, bearing in mind that the propagators of the counter myth may not have access to the mass communicative channels of the dominant discourse. The proponents of the counter myth discourse, in order to be successful, need to demonstrate the ability to gain and exploit varied channels of communication (Lincoln 1989:8).

The Russian philosopher, Aleksei Losev (1930:7) conceived of myth as something that is unequivocally true and real for those who adhere to the discourse presented by the myth. Additionally, Losev (1930:7) suggests that, instead of regarding myth from one of the various theoretical disciplines which has concerned itself with myth, myth should rather be considered from the view of myth itself.

> We have agreed, however, to regard myth not from the scientific, religious, artistic, social, and other standpoints, but exclusively from the perspective of *myth itself* as seen through the eyes of myth, through mythical eyes. It is precisely this mythical view that interests us here. *And from the point of view of mythical consciousness one can by no means say that myth is fiction and the play of fantasy…* It is not fiction but *the most vivid and authentic reality*. It is *an absolutely necessary category of thought and life*, far removed from any contingency and arbitrariness
>
> (Losev 1930:7).

Because myth is so central in governing the way society behaves and what individuals believe, it is impossible to consign myth as something which is not real, since its effects are indeed, very real (Losev 1930:7). Losev (1930:8) goes so far as to call myth "*the authentic and maximally concrete reality*". Ultimately, myth is an undeniably necessary category of thought. Although philosophical, Losev's proclamation stresses that myth is so successful in its action to naturalise, that myth, or dominant myth at least, can appear as reality. Counter myth is then faced with a colossal task, which is to literally denaturalise that which seems the most true to the largest number of people.

Evidently, counter myth is required then to act as a massive force of persuasion. According to Lincoln (1989:8) the success of this act of persuasion lies only partially

within the content of the counter myth itself. For the discourse of inversion, including the counter myth, to have any effect, the measure of the audience's reaction to it must be profound. This occurrence relies on a number of factors, including the performance or the representation of the counter myth, as well as its timing. The counter myth must relate to and account for the contemporary socio-political climate of the audience, or it will be read as inappropriate and be widely ignored. Indeed, some of the most successful counter mythic discourses in history, many of which are mentioned as examples in this study, were successful in inspiring massive social change because of their direct opposition toward the socio-political conditions of the time.

The third reason why certain counter myths may prove unsuccessful is one that is briefly examined by Sheridan-Rabideau (2001:447-448). The difficulty of producing counter myths as viable and recognisable is complicated by how dominant myths shape counter myths in a manner which seems impossible to avoid. Although reading a counter myth, the moment of decoding may be effected by remembrances of the dominant myth. Counter myth building as social action must constantly be aware that dominant myths often effect the reading of counter myths in unintentional ways. Even within the seeming absence of dominant myths, counter myths may be read within the framework of dominant myths and thus intended meanings are eschewed. This problem can be understood theoretically when considering how, as discussed in subsection 2.4, the ideology of the dominant myth discourse is adopted as the catalyst of the counter myth. Accordingly, the dominant myth discourse and the counter myth discourse will naturally inter-animate one another, meaning that the dominant myth discourse may, at times, effect the reading of the counter myth in ways which the counter myth producer did not intend.

As myth readers we cannot reach an understanding of the myth outside of the discourse surrounding the myth. Therefore, at the moment of decoding, in order to formulate meaning, the viewer relies not only on what is presented in the representation which

currently offering a meaning(s), but in formulating a meaning the viewer taps into a mental bank of intertextual references, ideological ideas, knowledge of language and so forth. In this intellectual context, the reader formulates the meaning of the singular representation, and thus this meaning cannot be understood to be generated by the singular representation alone: the sign is only a catalyst in the meaning making process. The meaning must be understood in terms of how the reader situates the representation within a social discourse, but also within the reader's own internal personal discourse.

This is why the third point about the difficulties encountered in the production of counter myth is important: because when the reader is confronted with the representation of the counter myth, it is immediately situated within a mental discourse in order for the reader to understand. Without this mental placement into a discourse, the reader is powerless to create meaning. It is then the condition of the dominant discourse within the reader's mind which will determine the meaning of the represented counter myth, and possibly render the counter myth semiotically invalid. As explained in the second point, if no trace of the social discourse which surrounds the counter myth exists in the mind of the viewer, the viewer may not understand the singular representation, and the intended meaning of the counter myth will be lost. With regard again, to the third point: the counter myth is absorbed by a reader who mentally places the counter myth into the dominant ideological discourse which already exists internally in the mind of the reader. The counter myth is now in hostile territory. The reader decodes the myth (perhaps mistakenly) according to the dominant myth discourse, and projects any number of dominant type meanings onto the representation of the counter myth. The reader is hardly to blame: in an attempt to make meaning the reader relies on the ability to decode the myth within an intellectual discourse, regardless of whether a myth is presented to him or her which is not compatible with an already well established mental discourse and history. In the event that the reader does recognise the intended meaning of the counter myth representation, and therefore recognises that the meaning is in opposition to a more widely held dominant myth discourse, the reader may produced a

vehemently oppositional reading to the counter myth, if the reader is unwilling to waver in support of the more familiar dominant myth.

Bearing this in mind, counter myths as social action face a semiotically difficult task. Potential success and hope still persists for the counter myth in something which may have been overlooked in the first point. Counter myth, at its most basic level, springs up because of a perceived need for social change. This would imply that at least some segments of society believe that there is something wrong with society. That myth production inspired by this 'dissent' takes place at all, already indicates that a discourse exists which surrounds and supports the counter myth, although this discourse may not be as old, well established or well represented as the dominant discourse. As long as a discourse has developed which pays attention to the concerns which prompts the counter myth, then it can be assured that at least some readers of the counter myth, on decoding the myth, will situate it within their mental version of this discourse (friendly territory). Regardless now of whether the individual produces a dominant or oppositional reading, whether the individual agrees or disagrees with the content of the counter myth, the meaning of the counter myth can at least be clearly understood, because it finds some symmetry with the discourse which the reader draws upon during the meaning making action of decoding.

In examining examples of how recent South African films have constructed counter myths one discovers how these films offer ideas of racial reconciliation by drawing on and re-articulating the older myth discourse of apartheid. Examples of such films are the collection of films which represent narrative surrounding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)[7] and related events. In such films the older discourse of apartheid is

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[7] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by the South African government of National Unity to address the gross human rights violations which occurred during apartheid and chart a way forward with regard to achieving a sense of national reconciliation. As part of the fulfilment of this mandate, the TRC held a number of public hearings around South Africa, where victims of human rights abuses during period 1960-1994 could narrate what happened to them during apartheid. The Amnesty Committee (AC) of the TRC received applications from persons who committed human rights violations

employed by counter myth, but from a countered view, to create a new way of looking that is in direct opposition to the original dominant discourse. It is still important to realise that this new view could not be possible, nor necessary, if it did not make use of the discourse of apartheid as a starting point, or if the original discourse had never existed.

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during the period 1 March 1960 – 6 December 1993. If granted amnesty by the AC, such persons would not be prosecuted for their transgressions on the condition that they provided full disclosure of their actions during apartheid to the TRC, and provided that it could be established that those actions were politically motivated (*Welcome to the*...). Although of symbolic significance, the TRC was severely criticised: although it was supposed to have functioned without bias, most of the commissioners were ardent African National Congress (ANC) senior party members. The TRC was arguably not representative of the various victims of apartheid. For example, commentators noted that in KwaZulu-Natal, where fierce and often violent conflict had occurred between the ANC and the IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party) the TRC received an unreasonably low number of testimonies from IFP members, and then concluded that the IFP had killed three times more people than the ANC had in the conflict, while this conclusion was deeply questionable. The TRC did not address many alleged human rights violations committed by the ANC's armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). The TRC's five-volume report, which was meant to only be an interim report, became its final report since the TRC ignored its commission to prepare a corrected final report. Only 8% of amnesty applications had been heard when the interim report was written (Johnson 2009: 222-271). The TRC is mentioned in chapter six (see 6.3.4), since a collection of post-apartheid South African films take the TRC hearings as their setting, and/or are themed according to the message of forgiveness and reconciliation espoused by the TRC.

CHAPTER THREE: MYTH THEORY II: POLITICAL MYTH AND COUNTER MYTH

> In telling a myth, the myth-maker not only intends his audience to understand the message he has in mind; he also intends to make them behave in a certain way
>
> (Tudor 1972:48).

This chapter aims to identify the importance of political and counter myth research, the social value and dangers of counter myth, and their relationship to the establishment of mythic national identify. To establish the importance of counter myth research is also to question the importance of the study of any myth. To begin with, it has been established that myth executes a pivotal social function in that it provides a kind of symbolic reference which links present myth readers to past audiences. With regard to this, Tudor (1972:140) describes myths as "historical phenomena", even though, as we already know from Barthes (1972) myth is not capable of offering a factually accurate connection to a historical past, but what it does offer is a particular view or naturalisation of that past. Thus, myth is fundamentally important in the establishment of a social group's historical sense of identity. After the elimination of historical and social complexities from its representations, myth offers its audience a kind of intellectual comfort as it works as an orientating force supplying readers with a sense of their individual place in history. With the selective exclusion of historical nuances, myth transcends the personal and particular, thereby representing a type of universal message which can portray the experience of an entire group or culture.

3.1 Political myths and national identity

For their part, political myths serve to mythologise a group, not an individual figure (Tudor 1972:139). When represented through a medium heavy in narrative, such as

film, the political myth hero figure or protagonist can not only be understood as an individual, but as representative of the entire group (Tudor 1972:139). A certain political myth discourse may even function to serve national identity, where a national identity is a collection of ideas, narratives and myths which constantly work to imbue a people with a collective sense of nationhood (Price 1995:40). Myths then act as the expressions of entire peoples, facilitating cohesion in society and culture. Myths are based on cultural values and therefore they can determine, or at least, influence how people behave within the cultural group. Myths can then be personal and unique to an individual, but they can also be cultural and national (Brown 2004:276). It is the latter type of myth which is of main concern to this study.

Myth then also operates to facilitate cultural reproduction. According to Schöpflin (1997:206) myth "... acts as a means of standardization and of storage of information. It provides the means for the members of a community to recognize that, broadly, they share a mind set, they are in much the same thought-world". Thus comes the recognition that myth plays a vital role in their establishment of coherence within society, and in the maintenance of discourses which makes sense of the world for the community.

Such concerns are of particular importance when considering the functioning of political and counter myth in contemporary South African mass media. More to the point, political counter myths in recent South African films have employed myths in manners which may be seen to encourage ideas of reconciliation and a new national identity. Post-apartheid South African films then become an interesting example with regard to the myth theory which has been laid out thus far. Not only are the myths in these texts political in nature, they are indeed counter mythical as they are ardently in opposition to the previously dominant myths of apartheid type oppression and social separation. Added to that, these mythic expressions are of social importance because of their value

in terms of their contribution to the establishment of a counter or new national sense of identity (see chapter 6).

A political myth, similar to all myth, works to counteract social contradictions within a society, making certain beliefs seem more coherent. It also serves to explain the circumstances which a people may find themselves in. This is done by orientating the present situation within a narrative so that the current state of affairs can be viewed "as an episode in an on-going drama" (Tudor 1972:139). A political myth offers a number of important functions which assist the individual in understanding society. These include how the political myth explains how the group came into being, how it arrived at the present state of affairs, and how and why it got itself into its present predicament. Importantly, the political myth also identifies the enemies and threats to the group, as well as offering a picture of future victory (Tudor 1972:139). With regard to content and form, modern political myths are social mechanisms which explain and make sense of past and present political events for their audiences (Flood 1996:41). In post-apartheid South African film, apartheid itself, and apartheid era perpetrators are mythologised in an attempt to make sense of the collective South African history of violence and trauma. Here political myths are being used almost as a collective psychological mechanism for social healing. Furthermore, more positive future-myths are also represented both in post-apartheid South African film and other media, which mythologise the idea of an optimistic future for the country after the trauma of apartheid. These include myths of reconciliation (most poignantly evident in the films dealing with the TRC), the buddy myth (a black person and white person become friends despite of their colour or race) and the myth of the Rainbow Nation. Hence political and counter myths currently describe both how South Africa(ns) arrived at the present point in history by mythologising a traumatic past, but also offer bright future alternatives.

In keeping with this (Tudor 1972:139) offers the following observation: "[a] political myth may, for instance, establish the claim of a certain group to hegemony, sovereign

independence or an extension of territory; it may help to strengthen the solidarity of the group in the face of a major challenge; it may serve to encourage the resistance of an oppressed minority; or it may supply compelling arguments for the abolition of undesirable institutions. And, where the myth is the story of a political society already in existence, it may sanctify the constitution of that society, inspire its members with confidence in their destiny and glorify their achievements".

It becomes evident that a political myth often works in the service of the maintenance of a collective and social sense of nationhood or national identity. In totalitarian societies, political myths and political rituals function in conjunction with one another. A sudden disintegration of the established order due to economic reasons or due to the playing out of a revolution, sees the need for people within society to establish a new understanding of their place in the world. This need can only be satisfied by the construction of new myths. Now the nation's past is mythologically dramatised in such a manner that its future and present state become apparent (Tudor 1972:30). Within a current post-apartheid South African context, but also the wider African and global post-colonial arena, the importance of the study of political myth thence cannot be stressed enough. Many previously colonised countries have in recent decades and still continue to struggle to (re)establish a sense of nationhood, national identity and national pride in a complicated post-independence environment. The study of political myth, and the manner in which political myths have been or may still be utilised by previously colonised societies, is of utmost importance to post-colonial studies and social scientists alike, if one is to understand some of how previously colonised peoples have dealt and are to deal with their current condition.

Political myths have a functional responsibility to the ideological discourse to which they are inevitably connected. Political myths are vehicles of ideological beliefs and act as naturalisations or justifications for ideological arguments. Consequently, many political myths are in competition with one another due to the fact that they represent conflicting

ideologies. A political myth is therefore an ideologically marked representation "of past, present, or predicted political events. The political myth can be described as ideologically marked because it represents the assumptions and is identifiably imprinted with the beliefs of a certain ideology" (Flood 1996:42).

3.2 Myth and postcolonial collective identity

But most of this, theorists have known about myth for some time. What is of particular importance in this study is how myth, and in particular counter and political myth, operate practically to inform the new mythologies of previously colonised societies (with particular reference to South Africa) within a post colonial and post-apartheid environment, and also how counter myths are functioning to (re)establish these people's social and political identities.

Myths operate as a mechanism for the transference of identity. Schöpflin (1997:208) maintains that myth "... enables a new identity to be superimposed on an older one, so that the collectivity sustains itself by creating an identity homogenous enough to let it live with, say, a major social upheaval". This is particularly applicable to many postcolonial situations, where previously colonised societies necessarily need to re-establish new collective identities by re-formulating older colonial-era identities, prior to the various upheavals which have accompanied the post-independence era, particularly in Africa.

It is important to understand that the objective of counter myth is not necessarily to disrupt the societal cohesion made possible largely by dominant myth as described above. Counter myth is not (or at least is very rarely) motivated by a desire for social chaos and anarchy, but rather by a perceived desire for a better social world, spurred

on by the idea that a particular group within society suffers some kind of social injustice which should be rectified. It is an ethical action, even though the ethics inscribed in the counter myth may be a subjective matter of opinion. Nonetheless, the counter myths which are (and were) consciously enacted in the past and are still finding motivation in representational practice by previously colonised peoples in reaction to the dominant political myth discourses of the colonial powers, deserve critical attention if we are to ever understand how new post colonial identities are to be, and are being (re)established.

But more than that, an understanding of counter myth empowers us with the opportunity to develop strategies of resistance to socially damaging dominant myths and their discourses. These strategies are already taking root, as visual evidence of counter myth of African origin is revealing itself in recent film. An example is the film *Tsotsi* (2006): this film highlights the ideological complexities and difficulties faced by postcolonial counter myths, as while *Tsotsi* (2006) still employs an Africanism[1] type aesthetic in depicting the misery of the Johannesburg townships, it also establishes a mythic racial dynamic in which traditional black and white tensions are finally laid to rest. This representation of a South African social situation which does not depend on black versus white racial conflict, is uncommon in contemporary South African film, and *Tsotsi's* (2006) success in its counter mythic programme, is that it represents South Africa as more than a country which is exclusively governed by the legacy of racism and apartheid. *Tsotsi* (2006), however, because it does not wholly shed the mythic representation of Africanism, does serve to illustrate how dominant myth and counter myth can often inter-animate one another within the same representation. The more recently produced *Jerusalema* (2008) follows a similar mythic formula to *Tsotsi* (2006), in that whilst the aesthetic and iconography of Africanism persist, the main theme(s) of the film involve more than the simple racial binary between black and white.

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[1] The term Africanism as used in this study, stems from and is similar to Said's (1978) term *Orientalism*, Africanism connotes a traditional Western attitude of superiority over Africa(ns), while maintaining fascination with the idea of exotic and savage Africa.

At times myth can be mechanism for mobilising a community in a standardised way to respond to a crisis, or to recover from trauma. Evidently, the community's response would not have much effect if not organised, and this organisation of action is inspired by myth (Schöpflin 1997:208-209). In a postcolonial environment, this social function of myth is particularly important.

3.3 Shaping perceptions, beliefs and social action

Bottici and Challand (2006), albeit with reference to dominant political myth discourse, point out that, political myths (and counter political myths) have the capacity to effect the perceptions of people to such an extent that the future political actions of a certain group within society may be determined by them. The importance of studying political and counter myths comes in that these myths do not act to intellectually organise society, but also function as a call to act: "a political myth is not simply a prophecy, but it tends rather to become a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Bottici & Challand 2006:329). Myth is a mechanism for providing certain cognitive limits, which simplifies the reality. It standardizes the understanding and the coherence of the collective. This can be dangerous, however, when understanding provided by the myth has variances which are too great when compared to the reality. If an entire people or collective should respond to such a myth, then they are a resultantly responding in a way which is not responsibly informed. Examples of this could be numerous ethnic conflicts which have taken place throughout history, and which have occurred in great measure on the African continent during the last five decades of African independence in various countries including Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia amongst others (Schöpflin 1997:208-209 & Dowden 2008).

Because myth sets limits on collective cognition, it can have a potentially negative effect on the understanding of social change. Political leaders can use this in one of two ways. They can encourage myths which elicit a widespread emotional response, in order to block reform or to soften the blow which accompanies great social change. Political leaders can also deploy myths to preserve power, by setting certain barriers to collective understanding or comprehension by stressing a myth which encourages us not challenge those in the position of power. Schöpflin (1997:212) asserts that "[t]he very language of contest is made to seem unavailable as words acquire the very particular, constricted meanings with which myth invests them, and the range of understanding is greatly narrowed".

While myths have the ability to shape perception and belief, it cannot be unexpected that eventually people may act on the beliefs that they receive from mythical discourse. This may be even more so with regard to counter myths. These myths have the capacity to not only determine how certain groups perceive the world, but are also inspired by a call to social action, and the importance of studying counter political myth therefore becomes paramount. Lincoln (1989:4) observes how ideological persuasion is facilitated by discourse (mythic or otherwise) and is usually strategically employed to "mystify the inevitable inequities of any social order and to win the consent of those over whom power is exercised". Discoursal action can, however, also serve the interests of those who aim to demystify, denaturalise and deconstruct the traditionally established discourses, norms and legalities which govern social life (Lincoln 1989:5). This arena of inspired social change is the ground of counter myth.

There are obviously innumerable examples throughout history of how the perceptions represented in a particular type of myth discourse may have directly determined how groups of peoples reacted to or initiated social events. Bottici and Challand (2006) examine one such example of myth inspired action by examining the myth which they call 'the clash of civilisations'. According to Bottici and Challand (2006) much of the perceived and media represented antagonism between the West (mostly American) and

the Middle East or Muslim world originated some time before the *War on Terror* and the September 11, 2001 events in the mythical idea that these two seemingly opposing forces were somehow at odds with one another. Bottici and Challand (2006:329) suggest that current international and political events may have been the result of a working out of these mythical ideas, or the direct manifestation of "a self-fulfilling prophecy".

Political leaders can sometimes, knowingly or accidentally, encourage mythic messages which lead to this type of situation. This involves the performance of mythic activity which constructs myths of collective enemies whom through some conspiracy are trying to destroy the social order. If this myth is pursued for long enough and with enough emphasis, it can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

> The danger against which the myth is used does not actually exist,
> but it is painted in order to deflect attention from something else.
> But, after repeated reference to the danger, those stigmatized as
> hostile begin to accept the demonic role assigned to them and
> behave in accordance with it. Of course, this pattern of abuse of
> cannot last forever, reality will break through, but the way in which
> it breaks through and how it is then decoded will certainly be
> conditioned by the mythicized experience

(Schöpflin 1997:212).

Political rulers can manipulate the cohesive properties of myth in binding a community to a certain set of beliefs. In societies of social and ethnic division, myths can either serve to encourage division, or they can serve to unite such a community. The latter case is however, sadly quite rare. It is much easier to use myths as a signifier for difference, and described a certain group of people as the negative other. This is

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important because it allows us to realise the massive importance of studying these types of myths and their counter myths: if a group are unjustly negatively mythologised in one way by another group, they may indeed begin to live according to that mythologised categorisation, instead of rejecting it outright. This may have dangerous social consequences for both groups, depending on the social activity inspired by the mythical classification.

3.4 Examples of counter myth

Instances of counter mythical thinking and representation have in recent decades sometimes been shrouded in the aura of post colonial political correctness, and this is not unique to Africa. Brown (2004:274) describes how African Americans have been questioning the long held and traditional myths associated with America's founding fathers, and how these myths have exaggerated the effect which slavery had on the African American community situating them in a disadvantaged economic and social position. Similarly, disability advocacy groups in America have mounted praise on the new FDR Memorial which depicts the former president in his wheel chair, which supposedly represents an unveiling of the shame and embarrassment which has clouded the image of the disabled (Brown 2004:274).

John Fiske (1982:89-90) supplies the following example of how mythical thinking was able to entirely alter the format of the social structure of almost all of Western industrialised modern society. It is worth noting that at the time when this myth was first disseminated, it was relatively counter mythical in nature. That this myth has become so widely accepted so as to seem 'second nature' in modern Western society is a testament to the original success of the myth. What is also important to this discussion is that this extract from Fiske serves as a powerful example of how pervasive,

persuasive and powerful mythical thinking can be, and to what extent its effects can be felt and seen in social action.

> There is a myth that women are 'naturally' more nurturing and caring than men, and thus their natural place is in the home raising the children and looking after the husband, while he, equally 'naturally', of course, plays the role of breadwinner. This is also then the structure the most 'natural' social unit of all - the family. By presenting these meanings as part of nature, myth disguises their historical origin, which universalizes them and makes them appear not only as unchangeable but also fair: it makes them appear to serve the interests of men and women equally and thus hides their political effect.
>
> The history that these myths turn into nature tells a very different story. These meanings of masculinity and femininity were developed to serve interests of bourgeois men in capitalism - they grew to make a particular sense of the social conditions produced by nineteenth-century industrialization. This required working people to leave their traditional rural communities and to move to the new cities, where they lived in houses and streets designed to accommodate as many people as cheaply as possible. The extended family and community relationships of the traditional village were left behind and the new nuclear family of husband, wife, and children was created. The conditions of factory work meant that children could not accompany their parents, as they could in agricultural work, coupled with the absence of the extended family, meant that the women had to stay in the home while the men did the 'real' work and earned the money. These chains of concepts that constituted the related myths of masculinity, femininity, and the family proliferated, but not randomly or naturally: they always served the interests of the economic system and the class which it advantaged - middle-class men. This system required the new nuclear family to be the 'natural' basic social unit; it required femininity to acquire the 'natural' meanings of nurturing, domesticity, sensitivity, of the need for protection, whereas masculinity was given the meanings of strength, assertiveness, independence, and the ability to operate in public. So it seems natural, but is, in fact, historical, that men occupy an enormously disproportionate number of public positions in our society [2]

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[2] The study acknowledges that this is but one reading of many possible readings with regard to myths and power relations of femininity and masculinity, but it serves here as a brief example only. Myths of femininity and masculinity are not the focus of this study, and therefore a detailed discussion of gender

Fiske (1982:90-91) claims that science is a good example of counter-myth. We are a scientifically driven society, and the dominant myth of science presents it as something which has been to the benefit of the human kind. Through science, we have adapted our environment and are able to celebrate phenomenal achievement. Conversely the counter-myth of science portrays science as evil. Science is seen as evidence that we lack a proper understanding of nature, that we pursue our own material interests first, and in doing so often damage or destroy parts of our natural world. Both of these myths are regularly represented in the media: the dominant myth of science is told in various documentaries or current affairs programmes, while the counter myth of science is represented in a number of fictional formats such as feature films. Such fictional portrayals have even spawned the character archetype of the evil scientist.

Lincoln (1989:32-37) examines the use of myth and counter myth in the political spectrum before and during the Iranian revolution of 1977-1979. According to Lincoln (1989:32) two opposing and ardently antagonistic segments of society both invoked sacred narrative or origin type myths to gain ideological ground. Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi sought to justify his position of power by invoking a section of Iran's national (mythical) past and referred to Achaemenian Empire of Cyrus the Great, Darius I and Xerxes I in the hopes of establishing an imperial empire of his own in the present. According to Lincoln (1989:32), "[i]n a series of highly publicized gestures, however, the shah made plain his intention to pattern himself and his realm on the Achaemenians, thereby attempting to elevate them from the level of history to that of myth". The shah often performed these gestures during moments of key national ritual: his coronation was modelled on Achaemenian symbolism, and in 1971 he organised an extravaganza to commemorate the founding of the Achaemenian Empire by Cyrus the Great.

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myth discourse will not be entered into here. The myth described by Fiske (1982:89-90) and quoted here most certainly pre-dates the modern period, and many mythologists have argued that the origin of a myth is often impossible to determine, but Fiske's example serves to highly how myths can drastically change their content according to the particular ideological requirements at a given time.

The shah had an antagonistic relationship with Islam, which enjoyed a privileged position in Iran, attacking Islamic religious groups openly by denying them funding and sending some of their leaders into exile. Facing extreme government censorship and restrictions the shah's opponents had difficulty in rousing widespread dissent against the shah, and thus relied on mythical action, and on one myth in particular: the sacred narrative of Karbala. This myth is complex, and features many characters, but its basic premise is that it concerns the rightful ascension of Muhammad's successor to the office of caliph. After the fourth caliph died, Mu'awiyah (Muhammad's brother-in-law) assumed the office and set about trying to transform the caliphate elective into a dynasty office, so that it would be inherited by his son, Yazid. This succession was challenged by Husayn, Muhammad's grandson, who felt himself to be the rightful heir to the office of caliph. Husayn and his followers met Yazid and his superior forces at Karbala, where Husayn lost the battle and was martyred. The section of Islamic followers who maintain that the office of caliph should have rightly passed to Husayn became known as the Shi'a. The followers of the Yazid dynasty and the majority faction, are called the Sunni. The reason all of this became important in Iran in the latter half of the twentieth century was because the myth of Karbala was a key element in Iranian national collective identity, where most Islamic Arabs were Shi'as. According to Lincoln (1989:35-36), "many scholars have recognized, in the middle and late 1970s, the embattled Iranian 'ulama gave a radical new twist to the story as they identified the shah – guardedly at first, then ever-more openly – with the quasi-demonic assassin and usurper Yazid. Thus interpreted, the Karbala myth no longer served primarily as the ancestral invocation through which Shi'a Iranians could define themselves in contradistinction to Sunni Arabs, but more important it became the revolutionary slogan through which the emerging movement of opposition to the shah was mobilized".

Not only did the Karbala myth encourage direct opposition of the shah and his imperialist motives, but it also served to unify his opponents into a coherent body where they had been previously operating separately due to their varying sites of interest for

the defiance of the shah (religious, political, economic). Additionally, during the revolution the myth of Karbala was expanded by Islamic religious leaders to include messages of self-sacrifice and the need to take up military arms against oppression and tyranny. Thus the counter myth of Karbala became the justification behind the revolution.

The myth of the Achaemenians employed by the shah did not work because it was inappropriate to the recipients of the myth at the time, and did not resonate with its audience: many Iranians did not feel any deep connection to their ancient ancestors, at least not in the way the shah envisioned. The shah's dream to establish an imperial Iran came to an end in 1978 when after growing dissent, criticism and mass riots he was forced to abdicate. The dream of establishing an Islamic republic was drawing closer because the proponents of this position were able to conjure, employ and successfully maintain over time a powerful counter myth which resulted in sufficient social action and collective drive, as to bring about major social and political change, which effectively altered the social situation of an entire country completely (Lincoln 1989:36-37). Such is the power of the successful counter myth.

Within a South African context, apartheid era counter mythologies spoke ardently against the oppressive regime instituted by the National Party led government and against the apartheid system. Counter mythic expressions which contained content or messages of this nature were often banned by the apartheid-era government and therefore, in many case media representations which spoke to this counter mythic discourse had to be produced underground. Whilst much of South Africa's black population was impoverished by the apartheid system, few blacks had the resources to produce mass media texts, and let alone ones which spoke against the apartheid system. The emergence of a white-owned alternative press provided a small but significant body of media representations of apartheid counter mythologies. These included the publication *DRUM*, a magazine aimed at a black audience but white-

owned, whose chief investigative journalist, Henry Nxumalo was credited with publishing a collection of stories exposing various human rights abuses of apartheid authorities, before being murdered. Coincidentally, Henry Nxumalo is poignantly portrayed in the film *Drum* (2003), which is described in chapter six (see 6.3.4).

Journalist, Max Du Preez, founded the publication *Vrye Weekblad*, with its first publication on 4 November 1988. The catalyst for the establishment of this newspaper was, at Du Preez's own acknowledgement, a dissatisfaction with the manner in which the majority of large newspapers in South Africa, as well as the national broadcaster (the SABC – South African Broadcasting Corporation) were either directly controlled by the state, or ideologically loyal to the state, obviously impacting the content of messaging in these media. *Vrye Weekblad* then operated in a context where most news media were biased in favour of the apartheid government, and so set itself the task of acting as an alternative resource for the Afrikaans language reader by offering counter mythic messaging that was often, though not exclusively, in opposition to the political discourse of the National Party led government and other mainstream news media (Berger 2000:70-83). The *Vrye Weekblad*, in reaction to and in contradiction with the repressive journalistic environment of the time, refused to align with any particular political party or submit to organisational accountability (Berger 2000:83). This alone indicates that *Vrye Weekblad* can be understood as part of a counter mythic discourse with regard to its position within the political economy of the South African media at the time. More importantly to this study however, is that the nature of its content was decidedly counter mythical, in that it contained consciously constructed counter mythical messages. Some of these were explored in a recent article, by Koenig-Visagie (2011:56-79), where the manner in which *Vrye Weekblad* employed the semiotic mechanism of ironic anchorage in order to encode messages of resistance and dissent is explored.

In keeping with counter mythical discourse produced during apartheid in or about South Africa, and with reference to the case study in chapter six which involves a description of the counter mythic content of a selection of post-apartheid South African films, this study recognises the various films produced during the apartheid era, which contained messages of resistance to the apartheid system. Two notable foreign produced films set in South Africa (though not filmed in South Africa) were Richard Attenborough's *Cry Freedom* (1987) and John Avildsen's *The Power of One* (1992). Both films contain the counter mythic discourse of resistance to, and defiance of, apartheid. Both films depict the plight of black people in South Africa and contain scenes of violence meted out on blacks by white policemen or officials. Both films reveal the horrific living conditions which blacks had to endure as a result of the apartheid system's policy of forced segregation. Yet both films relate their narratives from the perspective of a white male protagonist.

The white hero figure in these films is markedly different to the counter mythological construction of whiteness contained in many post-apartheid South African themed films, but these are described in chapter six. *Cry Freedom* (1987) and *The Power of One* (1992), were both released prior to the first democratic elections in South Africa, and hence both produced prior to the Mandela-inspired TRC-era discourse of reconciliation. The myth content of these films is then not one of reconciliation, but one of resistance and the human struggle against injustice. Therefore, the characters of PK (*The Power of One* 1992) and Donald Woods (*Cry Freedom* 1987) are not constructed as white perpetrators (who require forgiveness), but as white traitor heroes: whites who rebelled against the apartheid government and sided with the black struggle. It is an un-complex identity construction: these are whites who, when faced with the opportunity to do either bad or good, select the side of good, despite the personal sacrifice they inevitably have to make. Nonetheless, and although produced outside of South Africa (both films were filmed in Zimbabwe) they are significant filmic examples of counter mythology construction specifically addressed to the ideological discourse of apartheid.

The last two decades of apartheid saw the development of what Lucia Saks (2010:160) refers to as an oppositional cinema in South Africa. Such films were produced mostly by young, white, male, leftist filmmakers whose content was fiercely critical of the apartheid system taking "as their subject matter the horrors of apartheid and set out to counter 'pro-apartheid' cinema produced by the then-state. Dominated by young, white, mostly male directors who had studied film theory and production in the United States, Britain, and South Africa, and mostly financed informally or outside of the state's subsidy system...these films must be seen as a part of the mass opposition to the everyday structures of apartheid..." (Saks 2010:160-161). Such films included *Place of Weeping* (Darrel Roodt 1986), *The Stick* (Darrel Roodt 1987), *Jobman* (Darrel Roodt 1987), *Windprints* (David Wicht 1989) and *Saturday Night at the Palace* (Robert Davies 1988). Many of these films faced stiff opposition within South Africa and were subsequently banned at the time. In their content, however, these films countered the dominant narrative of apartheid, and revealed on film that the apartheid system was inherently flawed, unworkable and unsustainable (Saks 2010:161).

During the apartheid period of South Africa's history, many documentaries were produced (mostly by foreign producers) that described the socio-political situation within South Africa, represented the damaging effects of the system of segregation (apartheid) and revealed the suffering of many of South Africa's people. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) filmed a significant collection of such documentaries, which are still available on the BBC's online archive (BBC Archive: Apartheid in South Africa. [Sa]). The Community Video Education Trust (see figure 3.4.1) is an online resource which makes available a collection of video footage which was filmed at anti-apartheid political mass rallies, and includes interviews with anti-apartheid activists and speeches by anti-apartheid leaders (Community Video Education Trust. Documentary footage of the anit-apartheid struggle in South Africa. [Sa]). Most of this video footage, much of which is unedited, was captured in the decade between 1980 and 1990, when the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa had gained widespread momentum. Foreign documentary films such as the ones produced by the BBC, and locally captured footage of the anti-

apartheid struggle in South Africa, are stark representations of the counter myth discourse, to the then authoritative myth discourse of apartheid.

Figure 3.4.1: Screen capture shot of the Community Video Education Trust website

The very nature of power relations, however, mean that once a system of authority is replaced by a new one, such as what happened in South Africa when the apartheid system yielded to a democratic dispensation, the newly installed system of power by default becomes the dominant power to which counter myth may show its derision. For fear of oversimplifying the matter, it must be noted that this often occurs in intrinsically complex ways, not necessarily in simple binaries, and as can be seen in the South African situation, counter myths do not necessarily attempt to counter forces of power in terms of a top-down hegemonic framework, but also work laterally as different segments

within society as a whole attempt to come to terms with one another, as well as (re)establishing a collective sense of self.[3]

A more recent example in South Africa of counter mythic production, albeit in a sub-culture sphere, includes the rising popularity of Afrikaans 'Zef-culture', critiqued by Marx and Milton (2010). Considering music artists such as Jack Parow and rap-rock group *Die Antwoord*, and the *Watkykja.co.za* website, Marx and Milton (2010) describe Afrikaans youth Zef-culture as a project of the reconfiguration of identity in post-apartheid South Africa, arguing that some white Afrikaans artists currently "attempt to subvert dominant perceptions, or constructions of white identity". Within the post-apartheid South African context, white Afrikaans culture which was previously widely perceived as unproblematically in line with the national discourse of apartheid, now finds itself in a process of renegotiation and reconstruction. Whilst the 'Zef culture' brand of music is but one of a number of new Afrikaans genres to have sprouted since 1994 (Marx & Milton 2010) it speaks pointedly to issues of identity reconstruction in a post-apartheid era.

Zef culture is mentioned as an example of counter mythic production here also because it demonstrates one of the key functions of counter myth, outlined in chapter two (see 2.5): counter myth as an alternative identity. Previously well established apartheid era constructions of Afrikaans identity quickly became outdated, unfashionable and sometimes unacceptable in the post 1994 period in South Africa. Consequently alternative identities to these now irrelevant identity constructions were produced, some of which actively counter notions of Afrikaner oppressive hegemony, as well as

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[3] The brief selection of instances of apartheid era counter mythologies which were constructed and disseminated during the apartheid era specifically to deconstruct and in defiance of the dominant myth discourse of apartheid, are but a small sample of the entire collective anti-apartheid counter myth discourse of the era. They serve here only as an example, and the sample is kept purposefully small for the sake of brevity. The innumerable examples of anti-apartheid South African counter mythology are a site of fascinating and worthy study, but they are not the focus of this study. Indeed, the study acknowledges and pays homage to the fact that the entire resistance/struggle movement of the apartheid era, which eventually lead to the institution of a more democratic system of governance in South Africa, was in itself, driven by counter mythical thinking and discourse.

countering the idea (or stereotype) of the Afrikaner as the racist oppressor. Zef culture is interesting in that it performs this type of double-countering in its alternative identity construction: it is at once at odds with apartheid era constructions of Afrikanerdom, as well as suggestive that the time for being apologetic for being an Afrikaner should come to an end.

Figure 3.4.2: Screen capture shot of the *Watkykjy.co.za* website
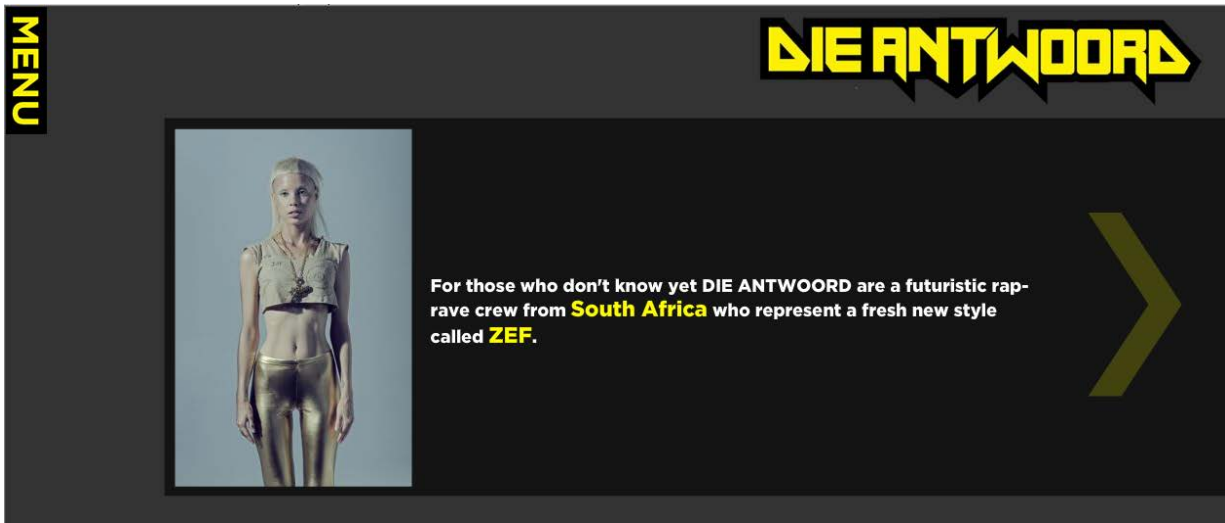
Figure 3.4.3: Two screen capture shots from the website of the Zef rap rock Afrikaans group, *Die Antwoord* (www.dieantwoord.com)

Moving on, the rise of the new digital media has provided the counter mythic project a platform for dissemination which seems previously unprecedented. Traditionally, the mainstream media have (at times simplistically) been understood to operate in as

Althuserian ideological-state-apparatus form, where the audience is ideologically duped by the dominant power, whether the bourgeoisie or the state (Barthes 1972:137-143). Of course, this simplistic model has been (partially) rejected by cultural studies, and audience studies in particular, which now understand that the audience is capable of producing meaning that is non-symmetrical to the intended meaning of the producer (Hall 1980) (and which may, in certain circumstances, yield counter mythic discourse). However, the audience's or reader's capability to respond to the media in a manner which involves active engagement or discussion remained limited, let alone the reader's capability to produce media of their own. In the case of the new digital media, this scenario changes entirely.

A significant recent example of how counter mythic activity, disseminated via the new media (including websites such as *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Twitter*), contributed to massive social movements is the 2011 uprisings, riots and unrest throughout the North African and Middle Eastern Arab regions. In Libya, for example, a number of *facebook* sites were set up in order to coordinate protestors and quickly spread news about events taking place around the country. In the first week of the Libyan uprisings, the website *YouTube* recorded a spike in the amount of amateur video footage being uploaded by Libyans, mostly recorded on cellular phones, representing scenes of conflict and violence (Jacinto 2011). The Libyan government quickly realised the potential of social networking websites to incite a revolution, and websites such as *YouTube*, *facebook* and *Twitter* were blocked. Despite such attempts, many users managed to circumnavigate the internet block, using the online technique of mirroring uploads. Some Libyan users had occasional access to *facebook* and *Twitter*, where volunteers (often outside of Libya) then directed these uploads to *YouTube* for wider circulation (O'Neill 2011).

The seemingly widespread disdain for President Muhammar Qaddafi (who has been in power for over forty years) is obviously counter mythical in nature, and the new media

provided (and at the time of writing, continues to provide) a communications avenue for adherents to the discourse that currently attempts to counter Qaddafi and his supporter's notion or position of power (O'Neill 2011). The use of social networking websites in the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in early 2011 are but one example of how the new media may be utilised as a mechanism for the rapid and widespread dissemination of counter myth.[4] Chapter seven of the study suggests that an enquiry into the relationship between counter myth and the new media is an avenue for further research (which does not fall within the scope of this study) (see 7.2).

Figure 3.4.4: Screen capture shot of the *facebook* page of the Libyan Youth Movement (http://www.facebook.com/LibyanYouthMovement)

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[4] At the time of writing a number of activist groups operating in the United Kingdom had announced (on 29 April 2011) that Facebook had un-expectantly and without notification, shut down over fifty Facebook pages linked to predominantly leftist and student-run organisations (Aitchison 2011). The official reason for the shutdown of such sites had yet to be announced at the time of writing.

Figure 3.4.5: Screen capture shot of the *facebook* page of the Libyan Revolution Support organisation (http://www.facebook.com/Libyan4Life)

Figure 3.4.6: Screen capture shot of the *facebook* page, entitled Day of rage in Libya, launched by Swiss-based Libyan dissident Hassan Al Djahmi (Jacinto 2011) (http://www.facebook.com/17022011libya?v=wall)

Figure 3.4.7: Screen capture shot of the *YouTube* website
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rrp-gcZU1zl)

3.5 Stereotyping

An important matter in the research of myth or counter myth is the relationship between myth and stereotype. The notion of stereotype is of particular importance to the study because the case study (part two of the study) specifically describes counter myths which may be generically classified as social identity (counter) myths. Because stereotypes often function as a shorthanded mechanism in which to classify a certain group of people according to a prescriptive set of easily recognisable characteristics, a consideration of stereotype is important with regard to the description of social identity myths (see in particular 6.3.4, where the content of two South African social identity myths is described: they are, the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator). At a functional level and most simply, this study operates

according to the assumption that although a myth is not necessarily always a stereotype, a stereotype is always a myth.

Many of the negative myths which may require counter mythical action in order to be 'corrected' are of course, stereotypes.

> Myths and stereotypes contribute greatly to how groups and group members are perceived, conceptualized and treated… In a general sense, stereotypes are exaggerated beliefs associated with a category and may be either favourable or unfavourable. Their function is to rationalize or justify our conduct regarding such a category. Categorization of course is necessary for the formation of classes and it consists in clustering associated ideas for the purpose of generalizing and therefore easing not only scientific but all kinds of everyday adjustments. As exaggerated beliefs, stereotypes distort the conceptualization of individuals and groups, by stressing certain characteristics which are often a source of conflict for either one or both groups of individuals involved. Negative human attributes such as dirtiness, stinginess, laziness, lustfulness, treachery, poverty, reticence, envy and so on are often strong components of stereotypes; also, sub-human or animal imagery is frequently used

(Rendon 1984:299-300).

As already established, the work of myth is to naturalise history. Myths attempt to hide in their origins and ideological orientations, while trying to obscure their political and social dimension, and present their meanings only as natural (Fiske 1982:89). When the myth acts as a negative stereotype (for example) the fact that myth hides its ideological orientations assists the myth in presenting a negative view of a certain group as 'the way things are' and not as a certain viewpoint.

It must be noted that mythical stereotyping should not necessarily be considered as wholly negative. Such myths may also assist in communication. This often becomes

evident when a society is moving to a position of greater diversity, and people of different ethnicities are entering the community. While it is impossible for people to comprehend the reality of various other communities or ethnicities in their entirety, myth provides a kind of short hand symbolic and mythical representation of peoples. In other words, entire peoples are summed up by the myth in order to make them and their identities more comprehensible. Included in this can be the mythic idea of a coherent community, inclusive of all ethnicities, thus once again, providing a coherent representation of the collective (Schöpflin 1997:208). Indeed, this necessary and communicative quality of mythical stereotyping may contribute healthily to a diversified society and amidst the theoretical criticism often offered against mythical stereotypes, this function must not be forgotten or overlooked.

However, within a post-colonial context the largely Western produced media stereotypical representation of the Other (including Africans) is still largely prevalent and also in need of reformulation. Stereotypes of and about Africa(ns), whether represented by Westerners or by Africans about themselves or each other, are perhaps amongst the most urgent dominant myths which need redressing in practical and representational terms. In film, to some extent, this is already happening. Of course, the plethora of post colonial mythic representations which function to dispel traditional colonial era mythologies from widespread media texts are certainly not the only example of counter myth activity in the global media today. Indeed, they are one type of many, and the understanding of counter myth has potential practical application outside of post colonial concerns of the dominant myth discourse of Africanism and Africa's resultant counter myths. But where post colonial theory in cultural studies and visual communication has often been concerned with the effects of the colonial power's representations in and of Africa, it is also time that critical attention is focussed on the representation of Africa's mythic and counter mythic response. Added to that, apart from the examination of counter mythic post-colonial activity in Africa, it is also important, as theorists, to suggest additional ways in which African and South African representations could work to counter the negative colonial era stereotypes of Africa(ns) which still find widespread representation in the global media today.

Chapter three of the study attempts to expand on the theorisation of counter myth offered in chapter two, by discussing how counter myth may manifest in a social sphere and inspire social action which may lead to changes in the framework of a particular society. In summary then, to chapter three: this chapter has examined the relationship between political myths, with particular regard to counter myth and questions of national identity, as well as how myth and counter myth may inform collective social identities within a postcolonial environment (see 3.1 and 3.2). The chapter further discussed the technical manner in which myth and counter myth may contribute to the shaping of collective perceptions and beliefs, and how myths or counter myths may inspire social action (see 3.3). Chapter three offered a selection of examples of how counter mythic discourses have altered the trajectory of a collection of societies in the past, and some examples of how counter myths potentially continue to do so (see 3.4), before expanding on the complex relationship between counter myth and stereotype (see 3.5). The five different subsections included in chapter three are engineered to demonstrate, at the title of the chapter indicates the importance of political and counter myth research, particularly with regard to the establishment of collective national identities and understandings of nationhood, as well as the social value and dangers of counter myth.

The next chapter, chapter four, follows a different theoretical trajectory to chapter three because it returns to an examination of media theory, and in particular myth theory. This is done both in preparation for the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth on film, offered in chapter five, as well as to address the main purpose of the study: to make a contribution to the field of myth theory.

CHAPTER FOUR: MYTH THEORY III: MYTH-AS-NARRATIVE AND MYTH-AS-OBJECT

This chapter begins with a discussion of the widely held theoretical position within the literature of myth theory that myth is inextricably bound to narrative and appears always within a narrative (see 4.1). In keeping with the semiotic understanding of myth the study refutes this definition of myth, and therefore this section discusses the theoretical problematics of the myth-as-narrative-only definition of myth. As justification that myth is capable of operating within non-narrative representations also, Barthes' theory of myth as a speech act is discussed. Further theoretical problems with the accurate definition of myth are identified in the tendency of theorists from various disciplines to define myth to suit their own particular theoretical ends or from the perspective of a particular field of study. Thus myth theory's seemingly incoherent definition of myth is discussed and a suggested classification framework for myth is suggested as a potential theoretical solution to this problem. This classification framework is important for both the goal of the expansion of the theoretical understanding of myth, and for the development of a framework for the analysis or description of myth on film.

The technical semiotic format of the myth-as-narrative is juxtaposed to the format of the myth-as-object in order to both demonstrate the differences between the two, and to prove the functional capabilities of the myth-as-object. This technical demonstration is performed with particular regard to the analysis of myth on film: in order to adequately analyse the myth content of a film, it is important to understand how the myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-object work in a symbiotic relationship within the medium of film. This piece of theory is laid out here because it is of particular importance in the chapter six of the study, where a selection of South African films are analysed according to this concept.

The myth-as-object is understood by the study to operate, in a Barthean sense (1972), as a near immediate summary of a portion of a particular myth discourse. The myth-as-object may or may not function in representation, in connectedness with the myth-as-narrative representation. The myth-as-object does not rely on the construction of a particular narrative (in the traditional, story sense) in its representative structure, but offers the reader a non-narrative culturally produced artefact which (on the third and fourth levels of meaning, or in its deep structures) is a referent to the collective myth discourse.

This chapter further includes a discussion of the relationship between the myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-object, and how these myth formats function within the medium of film. In preparation for the establishment of the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth on film offered in chapter five, chapter four concludes by describing how some of the theoretical assumptions of the field of social semiotics may be utilised for the analysis of the representation of myth in media texts.

4.1 Myth and narrative

When examining a great deal of literature on myth a consistent contradiction becomes apparent in the general collective theoretical understanding of myth with regard to the relationship between myth and narrative. What is also concerning is that it appears that until now, there has been little attempt to set this contradiction straight. Consequently there are two virtual camps which currently treat myth in two very different ways, for lack of a mutual understanding of the technical capacities of myth. These two viewpoints have been producing literature about myth and its societal effects for many decades, seemingly in theoretical parallel to one another, but not unaware of one another. Many of these theorists refer to other theorists from the opposing theoretical viewpoints, but without addressing their differences of understanding of how myth works, or rather, how

myth is represented. It is important, however, that this contradiction be addressed as it has subtle but important implications for both the practical analysis of myth, and the technical theorising of how myth works.

The first 'camp' is the collection of theorists who believe that a myth is a narrative, and always and only a narrative. These theorists contend that a myth must and always does, tell a story of some kind. If a representation does not do this, then it is not a myth, but a representation of an idea about a certain set of beliefs. This more traditional view of myth-as-narrative is common amongst those theorists who have examined political myths and sacred myths in particular, as is discussed in this chapter. The second 'camp' of theorists are those who consider myth capable of entering and grabbing on to any mode of representation, or any object for that matter. Myths may appear in a narrative format, but they may also reveal themselves in countless other forms of representation such as magazine advertisements, photographs, fashion items, consumer products or images on the Internet.[1]

The myth-as-object is in part encouraged by the industrial revolution and consequent mass expansion of the global media, and is also in keeping with a Barthean view of myth. Theorists in visual communication or visual studies most often adopt this view of myth, and so does the study. This section argues in favour of this second view of myth. Additionally the understanding of the myth-as-object has significant implications to the analysis of the medium of film, which is a mode of representation that is particularly narrative-orientated.

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[1] Arguably these mediums may also be considered as narrative formats, or at least capable of containing narrative components. An example of the theorisation of this is performed by Jeanne Prinsloo (2009:204-253), where the narrative components of a print advertisement are analysed. However, and for the purposes of this chapter, it must be noted that representations such as static print advertisements, photographs or still images are not considered capable of being infused with myth (since they do not adhere to a traditional narrative/story structure) by the collection of theorists, referred to here as the myth-as-narrative-only theorists.

The study acknowledges that the varying definitions of myth (some of which will be discussed in this chapter) are constructed by theorists according to the assumptions of their particular field. This study does not attempt to disprove the validity of the assumptions of any of the theoretical fields of enquiry which have engaged with the study of mythology, and acknowledges the viewpoints and understandings of myth, of mythologists operating within the fields of, for example, political science, religious studies, and classical studies. The discussion in this chapter, however, serves to highlight one of the main difficulties encountered by the mythologist when performing the theorisation of myth: because myth is investigated by different fields across the social sciences it is most often defined, not according to the phenomenon of myth itself, but according to the theoretical assumptions of the specialised field of expertise of the mythologist (Segal 2007:2). Thus, the definition of myth across the body of myth literature is varied and fragmented. While the author acknowledges the theoretical positioning of each of the myth theorists discussed below, this chapter attempts to offer a solution to this confused scenario in mythology, by suggesting that myths may be generically classified. Thus mythologists from varying fields may be able to maintain and operate according to the theoretical assumptions of their own field, because the generic classification of myth(s) allows the myth theorist to identify which myth genre under evaluation.

4.1.1 The theoretical problematics of myth-as-narrative

It is necessary to begin here by discussing a selection of theories which define myth in narrative terms only, in order to demonstrate the theoretical disparity between the myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-object understandings of myth. This allows a discussion of some of the theory which explains the capabilities of the myth-as-object and the technical condition of this understanding of myth. The importance of this particular subsection with regard to the description of film performed in chapter six, is that while film is a medium which is loaded with narrative content, the study offers an description

of film which includes narrative type myths *and* myths which are more immediately evoked by the visual image and which do not rely on narrative content alone. While films are easily described with heavy emphasis on their plot, story-line and narrative, it is significant that mythologically, this is only part of the content of any film which deserves analysis. Film, like any other visual media, is also imbued with instances of the myth-as-object and this should not be overlooked when performing film analysis. In fact, such instances gain greater complexities within the medium of film than in other more static mediums, such as photography or magazine advertisements. The myth-as-object in film is often specifically offered at key moments during the plot, adding greatly to the narrative. Here myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object experience a working relationship which operates in an intertwined and complementary manner in order to produce the meaning of the entire text. Therefore it is important to establish that myth has the capability to function in both a narrative *and* in an instantly consumable visual format.

Tudor's (1972) book entitled *Political Myth*, often serves as a starting point for the theoretical understanding of, in particular, political myths. In *Political Myth*, Tudor (1972:16) maintains that myths are typically a tale or narrative which represents past events, imbuing these events with new or refreshed meanings which aim to reinforce the authority of those in power within a particular community. Although myth is always a story, or at least inspired by a story, this does not equate to say that it is a piece of fiction. Many events which actually took place find themselves much later being the subject of political myths. A myth then, is the interpretation of what the myth producer, correctly or incorrectly, takes to be as fact (Tudor 1972:16). Tudor (1972:17) describes myth as "... a device men adopt in order to come to grips with reality; and we can tell that a given account is a myth, not by the amount of truth it contains, but by the fact that it is believed to be true and, above all, by the dramatic form into which it is cast".

Flood (1996:44) continues the tradition of myth-as-narrative-only in his definition of political myth: "[i]n summary, a working definition of political myth would be: *an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group*". Importantly, Tudor (1972:17) makes it clear that political myth is not technically different from other myths but differs only in that its content deals with political matters. If this is the case, (except of course when referring to two separate myths where one is a dominant myth and the other a counter myth) then it is reasonable to assume that theorists such as Flood (1996) and Tudor (1972) believe that all myths, political or not, act as narratives imbued with ideology.

In his book (of the same title as Tudor's) *Political Myth*, Flood (1996) devotes the first section of his fifth chapter, *Questions of form: Problems of definition (1&2)*, to discussing various theorists who have, in his mind, mistakenly defined myth. It is not necessary to repeat his summary here, but his main concern seems to be the vague manner in which some theorists have theorised the capabilities of myth. Flood (1996:107) contends that while many theorists include the specificity of a narrative form in the definition of myth, they then tend to extend "the definition with escape clauses to make it less constraining", whereafter myth "… becomes a vague, catch-all term without much analytical edge". Flood (1996:101-107) considers the refusal to restrict the criteria of myth to that of a narrative format a theoretical drawback, and finds the notion that a myth may not necessarily be a narrative but also an idea, invalid, because he feels that it blurs notions of what myth actually is, makes myth applicable to any ideological discussion and is theoretically imprecise.

Flood's (1996) desire to be theoretically precise is arguable, depending on one's definition and understanding of narrative. Flood (1996:102) states "… one cannot legislate on usage, and in any case the reduction of the meaning of myth in this way is widespread in common parlance". Indeed, the idea of myth-as-object is widespread, if

not always understood in precisely the same way. And indeed, one cannot in a personal capacity legislate on the use of the term myth, but one can certainly justify one's own use of the term in the hope that others will agree.

Firstly, a concern of the degree of inaccuracy of definitions offered about myth which Flood (1996) points out is warranted, although perhaps not in the same direction. Certainly, it is not enough to say that myths are narratives, but then vaguely imply that they may take other forms also in order to avoid potential theoretical criticism. This kind of "escape clause" denies myth a large part of its actual activity, because it indicates an insecurity with myth's capacity to assume non-narrative functions and representations, which myth does indeed do. Rather it must be said that myths may find representation within narratives, however they are constructed, and whether communicated orally, in literature or in visual texts such as television or film. Myths may also be produced in non-narrative texts and are not bound by narrative convention. Narrative representation is but one type of many forms of representation which may be imbued with myth.

Secondly, Flood's (1996) concern that to open up the definition of myth in this way results in inaccurate theoretical analysis, may not be entirely justified. The myth-as-object understanding of myth must be practiced responsibly, within the technical realms of what myth is actually capable of and must not be mistaken for ideology. To understand myth as an object of speech, which can be evoked without and outside of the construct of a narrative is not necessarily to reduce the analytical discussion of myth to one of inaccuracies and vagueness. The idea of the myth-as-object has been theorised by numerous authors since Barthes' discussions thereof to provide an adequate body of literature, analytical framework(s) and theoretical instruction to prevent the wanton use of the term myth, and the irresponsible inclusion of irrelevances in the discussion of myth. It does not serve to insist on this point here. If instances of inaccurate analysis occur with regard to the definition or capabilities of myth, then this is

not as a result of a theoretical lack of instruction, but rather an oversight on the part of the researcher in question.[2]

Returning to the discussion of myth-as-narrative only, Flood (1996) and Tudor (1972) are certainly not alone in their notion that mythic activity is restricted to take place within a narrative. Bullock and Trombley (1999:555) provide a definition of myth which is fairly inclusive of the main streams of thought regarding what myth actually is, save one. Here myth is described first as a sacred narrative, including fairy tales and legends, but the description continues to include the anthropological view of myths as justifications of institutions. Bullock and Trombley (1999:555) then continue with Lévi-Strauss' structuralist idea that the meaning of the myth "lies below the narrative surface" and is identifiable by a detailed analysis of individual instances within the narrative. Bullock and Trombley (1999:555) conclude their discussion of myth by asserting "[i]n the latter, myth is often no longer a 'sacred' narrative but, so to say, a whole value-bestowing area of belief". The idea of myth as a social space which functions to 'bestow value' according to a certain set of beliefs is moving closer to the definition of myth-as-object. Bullock and Trombley (1999:555) do not go so far as to describe myth outside of the general understanding of myth-as-narrative-only.

In keeping with a nineteenth century paradigm of myth Lang (1884:26) offers the following explanation: According to Lang (1884:26),

> "[m]ythology (*μυθολογία*) is the science which examines (*μῦθοι*), or
> legends of cosmogony and of gods and heroes. Mythology is also
> used as a term for these legends themselves. Thus when we
> speak of 'the mythology of Greece' we mean the whole body of
> Greek divine and heroic and cosmogonic legends. When we

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[2] The argument in this paragraph refers only to the accuracy of the definition of myth, for the sake of not confusing the phenomenon of myth with other related yet different social forces, such as ideology. This argument does not refer to the analysis of myth, the accuracy of which is arguably impossible to measure, and which is acknowledged by the study.

speak of the "science of mythology" we refer to the various attempts which have been made to explain these ancient narratives".

Myth, for Lang, is an entity which must assume the narrative format. Doty (1986:8) is doubly limiting in his definition of myth, stating that its main function is to provide information about the customs of a society in narrative form, and also, that it most often is set in the origin time of the society, representing the creation or beginning of the world and culture. Consequently, Doty (1986:8) not only restricts the *form* of myth (to that of narrative) but also the *content* of myth (to that of sacred origin myth).

A characteristic of recent myth theory is that while myth theorists often define myth in terms of narrative, they then proceed to analyse instances of myth which do not necessarily conform to the definition of myth-as-narrative-only which they have offered (for example Fiske 1982:88; Day 1975; Schöpflin 1997). This disparity is rarely addressed and serves to highlight two aspects here. First, the various examples in recent myth theory which analyse myth in this way are in many cases inadvertently dealing with myth-as-object. Hence, despite the disparity between each individual theorist's definition of myth and practical application thereof, these examples collectively form a body of literature which asserts the societal workings and functions of myth-as-object. Secondly, this theoretical disparity indicates both the disorder surrounding the collective theoretical and technical understanding of myth and points to the need for a revision of this understanding and a re-formulation of a flexible and workable myth-category framework.

For example, according to John Fiske (1982:88), "[a] myth is a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature". John Fiske seems to overlook the dilemma of the myth defined as a narrative, and the myth as object. First,

Fiske (1982:88) describes myth as a *story*. He immediately follows this description with a reference to Barthes' notion of myth and the example of the myth of the British policeman, which "includes concepts of friendliness, reassurance, solidity, non-aggressiveness, lack of firearms" (Fiske 1982:88). Fiske (1982:88) overlooks that while he has described myth as a story, Barthes did not conceive of myths as stories (Flood 1996:161, Moriarty 1991:268), but as a chain of concepts. Also, the myth of the British policeman as Fiske (1982:88) describes it is not in the form of a story, but a set of ideas about a certain professional group. Fiske's (1982:88) confusion about the narrative or story characteristic of myth, serves not only to highlight the theoretical confusion as to whether myth is bound to narrative or not, but also the tendency of many myth theorists to achieve a disparity between their own definition of myths-as-narrative followed by a practical application which does not ascribe to this definition.

Schöpflin (1997:206) argues that collections of people and especially nations use myths as mechanisms to organise themselves. Myths are ways in which such groups can identify their systems of morality, sets of values, and collective identities. Schöpflin (1997:206) states, "[i]n this sense, therefore, myth is a set of beliefs, usually put forth as narrative, held by a community about itself". After offering this definition of myth Schöpflin (1997:211-212) then continues to describe how political leaders often employ myth to encourage various social effects, varying from the negative stereotyping of the collective's mythic enemy, to the encouragement of the collective's organised response to a social crisis. Evidence in mass media news coverage suggests that politicians will use mythic rhetoric for the advancement of their own personal mythic status (often evident prior to elections) or to discredit their political opponents.[3] However, if considering politicians' capacity to use myths as a mode of communication to the public, Schöpflin (1997) could be asked to reconsider the idea that myths are "usually put forth as narrative". If this were the case then one would need to say that politicians communicate most often by story-telling. But this is not always the case. Politician's

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[3] For an example of such political mythic activity refer to subsection 2.5 and the example of the Iranian revolution.

may appear in the public wearing military uniforms (such as various African post-independence presidents) because it enhances their mythic appeal as a military hero. Much to the same effect, in the 2008 American presidential campaign, republican presidential candidate John McCain's mythic image was repeatedly injected with media messages that reminded the reader that he once served in the military during the Vietnam War. Various South African politicians are in the position to claim the mythic identity of the struggle hero, a figure who actively opposed the apartheid system and may have been subsequently imprisoned by the apartheid government and police service, in order to improve or maintain public support. Such mythic indicators attached to politicians may be narratively represented, but they are not necessarily so. They are often evoked by nothing more than the dress code of the political figure, or by the physical context in which the politician chooses to reveal himself: these are instances of the myth-as-object.[4]

Apart from over-looking the points of contradiction between their definition of myth and the practical application of myth, some myth theorists assume the category or type of myth with which they concern themselves to be the *only* category of myth.[5] According to Cohen (1969:34), "[t]he chief characteristics of myth are as follows: a myth is a narrative of events; the narrative has a sacred quality; the sacred communication is made in symbolic form; at least some of the events and objects which occur in the myth neither occur nor exist in the world other than that of the myth itself; and the narrative refers in dramatic form to origins or transformations".

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[4] The myth-as-object as explained here may be employed as an indicator or a referent for the myth-as-narrative. This symbiotic relationship between the myth-as-object and myth-as-narrative is explained in subsection 4.2.

[5] The theorists referred to here, operate, for the most part, within disciplinary perspectives which contain different nuances of the understanding of myth to that of media studies and semiotics, and which are primarily concerned with the narrative structure of myth, such as the fields of religious studies, sociology or history. The perspectives of these various fields with regard to their understanding of myth is acknowledged by the study. Nonetheless, the understanding of myth-as-narrative-only within these various disciplines is of concern to the study because it may delimit the understanding/definition of myth within the broad field of mythology to exclude the semiotic view of myth-as-object.

Not only does Cohen (1969:34) assume the myth-as-narrative-only view, he also subscribes to the view, popular in the nineteenth-century and the first half of the twentieth century, that myth always concerns stories of the origin of the world, or some parts of it, and is also concerned with god-like or divine characters. This line of thought is almost in keeping with Malinowski's conception of primitive people's usage of myth to explain those phenomena in the world which they could not explain to themselves. Cohen's (1969:34) conception of myth is limiting, from a semiotic point of departure, because it would confine the myth to certain specified boundaries with regard to not only its form, but also its subject matter (content).

This is almost in direct opposition to Barthes notion that any object can be assumed by myth (liberating the form) and the myth can talk about anything (liberating the content). Indeed, the study suggests, that what Cohen refers to may be one of many categories of myth (popularly referred to by myth theorists as sacred myth or origin myth), or as is explained in subsection 4.3.1, a particular *myth genre*. Significantly, Kirk (1973:60-61) argues that any given myth may have more than a single explanation. Also, various different types of myth may have explanations that are different from one another, though not common to one another. Kirk (1973:61) uses the example of "a folktale type of myth", stating that while it may have narrative appeal, it may not necessarily function on any other level.

Nonetheless, throughout the largest part of the history of the evolution of theory regarding myth, the explanation of myth which has received the most currency is the myth-as-narrative notion that myth is a kind of sacred narrative or origin story. Writing on myth and religion, Mircea Eliade (1963:5-6) states:

> Speaking for myself, the definition that seems least inadequate because most embracing is this: Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of "beginnings." In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the

whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality – an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a "creation"; it relates how something was produced, began to *be*. Myth tells only of that which *really* happened, which manifested itself completely. The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings. They are known primarily by what they did in the transcendent times of the "beginnings." Hence myths disclose their creative activity and reveal the sacredness (or simply the "supernaturalness") of their works. In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really *establishes* the World and makes it what it is today. Furthermore, it is as a result of the intervention of Supernatural Beings that man himself is what he is today, a mortal, sexed, and cultural being

(Eliade 1963:5-6).

Oden (1992:111) observes the difficulty which scholars have had in determining an adequate definition of myth, but states that amongst all the disagreement, many definitions reveal elements which are common to one another. Oden (1992:111) lists these common elements as follows: "[t]o qualify as a myth, scholars are beginning to agree, the material has to be (1) a story, and (2) traditional – that is, transmitted, usually orally, within a communal setting; further, these traditional stories must (3) deal with a character or characters who are more than merely human… In addition, several of the above definitions suggest the addition of a final criterion, that myths (4) treat events in remote antiquity".

This view of myth, though true for narrative-sacred-myth, is not true for all myth and it is not an adequate explanation of the modern position of myth.[6] Myth theory widely then

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[6] Armstrong (2005) traces the historical development and technical formats of myth from the Palaeolithic to the modern periods. During the Palaeolithic period, mythical narratives were devised by early peoples both to explain their own interaction with their environments and to connect them to the world of unseen deities. Such myths were injected with a sense of the spiritual, since animals were somehow connected to the spiritual world, and therefore these myths were inevitably pointing to the realm of the gods, or at least, an alternative reality unattainable to humans but accessible to the animals that they killed. During the Neolithic period humans developed agriculture, their existence no longer depended solely on hunting

suffers the current condition of the unwarranted retention of an outdated and old-fashioned definition of myth that once did, but can no longer, encompass all of the nuances of modern mythic activity, which includes mythologies represented in mass media. Myth has, in the modern world, outgrown this theoretical understanding of myth-as-sacred-narrative-only. This does not mean that myths-as-sacred-narratives have ceased to exist, function and supply cohesion to society, but they are not the only myths which now do so. It would be unwise to now disregard as invalid all of the theory which defines myths-as-sacred-narratives-only, but it must be recognised that instead, this body of work must be theoretically added to, in order to include the plethora of other categories of myth.

According to Brown (2004:276) myth is defined as a narrative, or an active drama that readers are able to participate in and identify with. Brown (2004:277) states that the

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and gathering, and as a symptom of this new development, they began to infuse their mythological narratives with the concepts of farming.

During the Axial Age (c. 800 to 200 BC) the mythical focus on God (especially amongst the Jews) and on the ethical treatment of one's fellow creatures became even more highly advanced and strongly emphasised. During this period of prophets and sages the foundations of various new faiths and philosophical systems became clearer: Judaism and Christianity (Middle East), Confucianism and Taoism (China), and Buddhism and Hinduism (India). Such myths emphasised the need to adhere to a strong moral framework, and they, through the engineering of myths, encouraged the ethical treatment of other creatures but especially other humans. Myths were part of ritual practice, but it was also insisted upon that myths should inform behaviour in ethical daily living (Armstrong 2005:83-107). During the Post-Axial period (c. 200 BC to c. 1500 CE) the main mythological developments took place almost entirely in the monotheistic religions.

The great Western transformation saw a massive shift in this kind of mythological thinking, both in the technical format of myths, but also in the spiritual / intellectual content of myths. Firstly, the rapid pace of industrialised society, the visualisation of the lived environment and the bombardment with mass media messaging meant that myths, in order to survive and compete with thousands of messages received by the individual reader every day, had to lose much of their narrative structure. Myths had to become, similar to most media messages, instantaneously receivable if they were to be effective. Of concern is whether the human senses or intellectual capacity is capable of making any sense of anything within this current of visual bombardment, or whether we threaten ourselves with being overwhelmed (Patterson & Wilkins 2008:24). Within the mass mediatization of the lived environment, myths began to lose much, and in most cases, all of their spiritual reference. Many myths still inform humans of how to behave, but even more myths, it seems, inform humans of how to think, and more importantly, what to think of other people, and because of the information global media highway, such myths are now immediately transferable from one location to all over the planet.

plausibility of the logic on the myth-as-narrative is of primary importance. Although myths appeal to emotion more than logic, the subject matter and logical progression "of the narrative must offer an acceptable justification of the ideas contained within the myth" (Brown 2004:277). The factual truth of the myth-as-narrative is of no importance. The most important factor, according to Brown (2004:277) is that the ideas represented within the narrative must be believed and accepted. Surely, this would be the case whether a myth is contained within a narrative or not. That the ideas contained within a myth must be believable to the audience is a matter of necessity for the myth, but it does not technically consign the myth to the limitations of narrative representation.

4.1.2 Barthes and the myth-as-object

Within visual communication, the theoretical understanding of the myth as an object, or a type of speech rather than only a narrative owes much to the theories of Barthes (1972) in *Mythologies*. Barthes' (1972:109-159) widely influential and detailed explanation of the technical and societal functioning of myth cannot be ignored by the myth-as-narrative theorists, and as such Flood (1996:161-166) attempts to confront Barthean myth theory. Flood seems to contradict both himself and perhaps unintentionally points out the theoretical contradiction in the understanding of myth when he refers to a Barthean understanding of myth. Flood (1996:161) explains Barthes notion of myth, saying: "[p]olitical myths are not always relayed in exclusively verbal form and sometimes not in verbal form at all. The purpose of this chapter is to consider how visual images, artefacts, and rituals can evoke political myths". At first, this statement seems to contradict both Tudor (1972) and Flood's (1996) insistence that myth is inextricably bound to narrative. Looking carefully it can be noticed that Flood (1996) has diplomatically side-stepped the issue by saying that myth are not always expressed in "verbal form". He does not go so far, however, as to admit here that myths may be expressed in a format, visual or otherwise, which does not contain a narrative.

Also, by including an albeit, largely summarised version of Barthes' theories on myth within the context of his book on political myth, Flood (1996:161-166) now includes the understanding of myth which theorists operate according to within the field of visual communication. Obviously, Flood (1996) feels that the contribution of the theorisation of myth offered by visual communication is valuable enough not to be ignored. Once again, this does serve to highlight the rift in the theoretical understanding of myth between myth as narrative bound and myth as representation. Towards the end of his very brief summary of Barthes' contribution to our understanding of myth, Flood (1996:165) admits that his own definition of myth differs from Barthes by saying: "[i]t should be evident that Barthes' conception of myth does not coincide with the definition which I have adopted. He is not concerned with myth as narrative, since he considers that a myth can be purveyed by any image, object, or verbal message… he did not see myths as stories". Flood (1996:165) does then acknowledge that his own definition of myth is incompatible with that of Barthes (1972) but disappointingly he does nothing to defend his position, or explain the validity of his definition of myth in opposition to that of Barthes'. He offers only this brief comment: "it is not necessary to accept [Barthes'] model as adequate or to adopt his conception of ideology in order to acknowledge the value of his insight into the process by which iconic images and objects can communicate ideological messages" (Flood 1996:166). This is a weak and dismissive explanation. If Flood (1996) is convinced that it is not theoretically appropriate to adopt Barthes' definition of myth, then he should explain in detail, why, since Barthes' understanding of myth is so widely influential and so regularly referenced throughout myth theory and literature.

Flood (1996:166) continues to say that according to the model which he proposes in his book, the pictorial image itself does not constitute a myth, but it is certainly capable of evoking a political myth or even an entire mythology. He states, "In modern societies a photograph, a painting, a piece of sculpture, a carving, a cartoon, a poster, a mosaic, a collage, among other things, can all represent an established political myth…" (Flood 1996:167). This is reminiscent of Barthes idea that everything can be a myth, or at least,

everything can convey a myth, while every object or representation is open to be appropriated by society and imbued with mythic meaning (Barthes 1972:109). Here, it becomes difficult to understand why Flood (1996) regards his ideas as different from that of Barthes: it seems nonsensical in Barthean analysis to even suggest that the image itself is the myth (as Flood implies of Barthes theory). The image is a signifier, the myth is, very simply, an additional meaning which attaches itself to the signifier or image, robbing it of one meaning and enriching it with another. The meaning which the myth impregnates into the first level signifier may certainly point to, or be part of, a larger mythology. It seems that according to Flood (1996) although a pictorial image does have the ability to evoke a myth (in the narrative sense) that is not to say that the image is a myth in itself. However, Barthean theory does not regard the visual image as a myth in itself. Furthermore, it is true that a visual representation may point to a myth or only a part of a myth, but the myth which the visual image represents need not be a myth which is embodied in a narrative: instead it may be akin to the type of mythical thinking that survives within societal discourse, of which narrative represented myths form only a part of the entire body of mythical representation.

Moriarty (1991:268) comments on how Barthes calls myth "a system of communication… a message". According to Moriarty (1991:268) this idea seems at first contradictory, but in practice is not so. A myth is a message, but not simply any message because it is transmitted via a specific signifying mechanism. What characterises myth is not its content, nor the communication medium which a myth may adopt when it is spoken, but this formal aspect that is the signifying system. Thus, myths can surround anything, from (as Barthes has mentioned) soap powder to wrestling. Material objects can evoke myth.

Day (1975:52), in an analysis of a selection of political myths of the former Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) during the period of Rhodesian white minority rule, begins his article by summarising Tudor's (1972) definition of political myth, but then makes an

interesting comment: "[t]he use of the word 'myth' in this article conforms to Tudor's extended definition, except that I am prepared to call fantasies 'myths' even when they take the form not of narrative but of generalizations". Day (1975) receives criticism from Flood (1996:107) for this small but important comment, as Flood feels that this is an example of vagueness in terms of the defining of myth which lacks "analytical edge". Once again, one could legitimately be opposed to this lack of preciseness in the definition of myth, but unlike Flood (1996) it is not necessary to believe that Day (1975:52) is inaccurate in his definition of myth, only lacking in a degree of conviction. Nonetheless, Day's (1975) analysis serves as an example of the plethora of communication theorists who have produced work according to the myth-as-object tradition.

Perhaps it is necessary to briefly pause here at the main tenets of this position, before offering a technical comparison between myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object. Barthes describes myth as a type of speech and as a system of communication. It is a message. It is not a concept, idea or object but "a mode of signification, a form" (Barthes 1972:109). When seen as such it is difficult to imagine it in terms of Flood's (1976:101) criticism when he insists that myths are, but should not be, thought of as only ideas, or expressions of ideas. Indeed, myths are more than merely ideas. They are entire structures of communication.

Barthes continues to introduce what has become the point of contention in myth theory. He contends that because myth is a type of speech, anything can be taken up by myth so long as it is placed within a discourse. Therefore, the meaning of a myth is not determined by the object which it appropriates, but by the way in which the myth is 'spoken' by the object (Barthes 1972:109). Everything can be a myth, or at least, everything can convey a myth. Every object or representation is open to be appropriated by society and imbued with mythic meaning (Barthes 1972:109). Added to that, objects can change their mythic meaning over time. Some objects attain a certain

mythic meaning for a while, then this meaning is dropped, and another myth/object takes their place (Barthes 1972:110).

Most importantly, mythic speech is not confined to oral or written speech in the traditional sense. It may consist of various forms or writing or representations, including photography, cinema, news, sports and so on. Myth is not defined by its object nor by its material presence since it is arbitrary in nature and only attaches itself to already existing objects. Representational material or objects which have already been manipulated in order to be made technically suitable for communication is where myth positions itself, endowing these representations with additional (mythical) meaning (Barthes 1972:110).

The Barthean model and understanding of myth, briefly summarised here, is the one adopted by the study. It has been adopted and utilised by many cultural theorists since Barthes first published *Mythologies* (1972), and in particular by theorists working within the fields of visual communications or visual cultural studies. The following subsection demonstrates a technical view of myth-as-narrative juxtaposed with a technical model of myth-as-object in an attempt to explain why and how it is that myth is capable of functioning within both formats. Hopefully, this will serve to demonstrate the decidedly possibility that myth is in fact, not dependent solely on a narrative type format but may also adopt other formats, in particular visually orientated formats. Also, the following subsection explains why a myth-as-object analysis is important when analysing a film.

4.1.3 Defining myth

> Theories of myth do not begin with a definition. They end with one.
> They define myth to fit their views of the origin, function, and subject
> matter of myth. Definitions are self-serving
>
> (Segal 2007:3).

This section explores the theoretical difficulties of establishing a universal theory of myth, and concludes that such a theory is, in terms of myth content at least, not possible. This is largely owing to how myth theorists from various disciplines often view myth from the particular viewpoint of their field of study and define myth according to their own theoretical ends. This section confronts this issue, and then offers a suggested theoretical framework for the more accurate classification of myth in order to curb the generalised and thence confusing treatment of myth by theorists from various disciplines.

4.1.3.1 Problems of the classification and the definition of myth

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, numerous theorists from a variety of different theoretical disciplines concerned themselves with the exploration and analysis of myth. Theories of myth are almost always interjected with the concerns of the theoretical fields from which they originate. Many of these theories were, and are, self-serving, and exude the particular theoretical flavour of the discipline of the theorist in question. None of the theoretical disciplines which have considered myth, have been able to develop a single, widely applicable, unified theory of myth, because their view of myth is skewed by the theoretical vantage point of a particular discipline (Segal 1996:vii). It would be difficult to find a definition of myth that would be acceptable to all scholars and at the same time intelligible to non-specialists. Then, too, is it even possible to find *one* definition that will cover all the types and functions of myths in all

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traditional and archaic societies? Myth is an extremely complex cultural reality, which can be approached and interpreted from various complementary viewpoints (Eliade 1963:5-6). Much of the fragmented understanding of myth amongst myth theorists stems from the situation that no one seems to be able to agree on what exactly myth is. Doty (1986:9) laments, "[c]asually collecting definitions as I studied the literature on myths and rituals, I now have a list of more than fifty individual definitions, chosen on the basis of eliminating duplications. Fifty!".

Because the study of myth is so widespread across so many different theoretical disciplines, it is important that the mythographer recognises that his or her approach is only one of many possibilities. Not all myths can necessarily be regarded as sacred narratives, not all myths are linked to rituals, and not all myths are about gods. There may always be exceptions (Coupe 1997:6). It is therefore important, when studying myth, that the myth theorist both recognises that his or her conception of myth is one of many, and that this position must be openly stated and contextualised with regard to other myth classifications. In other words, the theologian should not assume that the key characteristics of the content and form of religious myths are necessarily true for myths of popular culture.

Kirk (1973:59) considers the difficulty in defining myths and concludes that the model for defining myth must by necessity be a flexible one. Taking the various different theoretical approaches to myth into account, Kirk (1973:59) notes how while a certain view may be appropriate for one approach and class of myths, it may not be adequate for all approaches or categories of myths. Therefore, a universalistic theory of myth is not only misleading, but invalid (most often as far as the content of myth is concerned, and less often in terms of myth form). Kirk (1973:60) asserts,

> "[p]rogress in this field is to be made by recognizing myth as a
> broad category, within which special forms and functions will
> require different kinds of explanation. The analysis to be applied to

a myth must be both flexible and multiform, and it must not reject
earlier ideas because of their formal limitations…".

Oden (1992:109) brings attention to the difficulty and disparity of attempts made at finding an adequate definition of myth and recognises that a large problem with defining myth seems to lie in attaining a definition which is compatible with all theories within all disciplines which are concerned with myth. Typically, various different disciplines view myth in different ways, to the extent that one discipline may sometimes see myth as something entirely different to how another discipline views myth. The various disciplines which have explored the theoretical analysis of myth include the "classics, anthropology, folklore, history of religions, linguistics, psychology and art-history" (Ruthven 1976:3). Each of these disciplines regards myth from a separate theoretical standpoint, and each views myth in light of its own preoccupations, meaning that when considering the view of myth taken by all of these disciplines, one may conclude that they are indeed not really talking about the same thing (Ruthven 1976:3).

If it can be assumed that these various disciplines are not talking about the same thing, one should then also question, what, in fact, they *are* talking about? Confusion arises because theorists from all of these disciplines call myth by the generalised label, 'myth' and do not specify any further. What these various theorists are dealing with, however, is different and varied categories of myth. Because this distinction is rarely made, much myth literature reads in a fragmented manner. What the scholar of Greek mythology calls 'myth', would more correctly be called 'sacred narrative myth'. What the visual culture student who analyses print advertisements calls 'myth' would more accurately be called 'myth-as-object' and popular culture myth. The student of literature studies not 'myth', but 'myth-as-narrative'. The theologian explores not 'myth', but 'narrative origin myth' and 'sacred narrative religious myth'. None of the latter classifications can be legalised or universally decided upon, and the classification of the myth in question will always depend on the personal label offered by the theorist. The type of classification

described here is a suggestion and may assist with the more accurate theorisation of all myth. Myths appear within various genres of content, and therefore they should be classified accordingly so that when embarking on a study of myth a researcher can make it clear precisely which type or species of myth is referred to.

Perhaps the only solution to this problem is to finally admit that such disciplines are in fact dealing with separate cultural products which are not necessarily the same simply because each discipline chooses to give them the same name (myth). A more precise labelling or delineation of these cultural mythic products is required so that if one theorist analyses medieval mythic narratives about Celtic warrior heroes, and another theorist examines contemporary expressions of the myth of the American Dream, it may be clearly understood that the two theorists are not examining two examples of the same thing, but rather two different *types* of a *related* thing. This is why the delineation between the classifications of myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object is important, because although they are related and sometimes intertwined, and their social effects may be similar or even the same, their technical form is vastly different and therefore they require a different type of analysis. Added to these concerns of *form*, myths of different genres of *content* should also be recognised as distinct and analysed as such. Additionally, Kirk (1973:60-61) argues that any given myth may have more than a single explanation. Also, various different types of myth may have explanations that are different from one another, though not common to one another. Kirk (1973:61) uses the example of "a folktale type of myth", stating that while it may have narrative appeal, it may not necessarily function on any other level. Significantly, Kirk does not suggest what some of these other levels may be.

4.2 Myth-as-object and film

Honko (1972:49) addresses the definition of myth-as-narrative-only stating that a myth is essentially, in its form, a narrative which traditionally describes, or is an account of sacred origins. Honko, however, in a rare instance, directly confronts the question of whether myth is necessarily always a narrative, and supplies a surprising and refreshing answer.

> The question is: can myths be expressed through the medium of other genres than narrative, for example, prayer or sacred pictures where there is no need to recite the narrative content? When investigating a certain myth all the information that helps to perpetuate the myth must be included. There can be no limiting the material under investigation to the most traditional and fixed forms of the myth's manifestation: attention must also be paid to every individual, temporary, unique and non-fixed aspect of the use of myth.

> Myth can be brought to life in the form of a ritual drama (enacted myth), a liturgical recitation (narrated myth), in which case both verbal and non-verbal media (sermons, hymns, prayers, religious dances) can be utilised. Similarly myth can be manifested in religious art (icons, symbolic signs). In addition to these codified forms we also have the way in which myth is transmitted in speech, thought, dreams and other modes of behaviour. A religious person may in the course of his experience identify himself with a mythical figure. Myth may totally dominate his behaviour, but it need not be verbalised. Since the material which empirical research into myth has to work with is so varied, it would perhaps be useful to have a term for the minimum amount of information that the human mind needs in order to create a recognisable version of a myth no matter what form or context the myth might adopt for its expression

> (Honko 1972:49-50).

Honko (1972) is not alone in the notion that myth is capable of functioning beyond and independent of the boundaries of narrative. The theological myth theorist, Robert Segal (2007:4) also admits that certain theories do not necessarily consider myth as inextricably attached to narrative.

That myth, whatever else it is, is at least a story may seem self-evident. After all, when asked to name myths, most of us think first of *stories* about Greco-Roman gods and heroes. Yet myth can also be taken as a belief or credo – for example, the American 'rags to riches myth' and the American 'myth of the frontier'. Horatio Alger wrote scores of popular novels illustrating the rags to riches myth, but the credo itself rests on not story. The same is true for the myth of the frontier.

Not all theories or disciplines assume myth to be a story. For political scientists, for example, myth can be ideology, which may be illustrated by stories but is not rooted in them. And even those disciplines or theories that do deem myth a story by no means accord the story equal importance

(Segal 2007:4).

Why is the recognition of the possibility of myth-as-object, and the realisation of the difference in form between myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object so important to the analysis of myth on film? While certain mythic communicative representations adopt either the format of the myth-as-narrative *or* the myth-as-object, film adopts and makes use of *both*. It is vitally significant then, when analysing the myth content of a film, to be well acquainted with the differences in form and technical capabilities and functions of the myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-object.

Film is an inherently narrative medium, one would immediately expect that when investigating the myth content of a film, one would focus exclusively on the myth-as-narrative aspect of the film. This is a valid course of action in terms of myth in film analysis, but it cannot be the only course of action. The myth-as-object is common in film representation, and must also be investigated during myth in film analyses. If not, then only part of the mythic content of the film has received attention, and the mythic analysis of the film is not complete. This distinction is made here because it is of great practical importance in chapter six where a detailed description of a selection of post-apartheid South African films is performed.

Narrative (and myth-as-narrative) is end-orientated and end-directed. It proceeds naturally towards a conclusion which follows logically and convincingly on that which came before (Flood 1996:115-117). The most crucial aspect of narrative is the time dimension. Events are sequenced and arranged chronologically and are related to the reader over a particular amount of time (Flood 1996:117). This is the main formal difference between myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object. The myth contained within the narrative is revealed to the reader over time, and only in its entirety once the narrative has reached completion. The myth-as-object myth is quickly consumable by the myth reader, so long as the reader is familiar with the relevant myth discourse (but this applies to the myth-as-narrative also). This particular difference is revealed in the following two models.

NARRATIVE TEXT

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

This may be any narrative format, including oral narratives, literature, or film and television texts.

Significantly, these texts are constructed from a sequenced selection of signs and codes, specifically chosen, manufactured and manipulated by the text producer. These codes are presented to the reader over a certain amount of time in a determined sequence.

Pollution / disruption

Guilt

Purification / restitution

Redemption

MYTH

Myth in this sense operates within, and is also constituted by, the structure of the story / plot / narrative. The narrative reveals mythic meaning to the reader as the narrative progresses over time. Once the narrative is complete the entire mythic meaning is revealed.

Narrative structure is contained within the narrative text.

The block arrows between the key points in the narrative structure above indicate the progression of time from one portion of the narrative to the next.

Figure 4.1: Technical framework of the myth-as-narrative

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NON-NARRATIVE TEXT

This may be a text of any non-narrative format, including objects or consumer items, static images such as photo-graphs, magazine / news-paper advertisements, billboards, consumer item packaging and so on. It may also include myths which are evoked within traditionally narrative mediums such as television, film or literature that are not reliant on the narrative for their meaning, are quickly consumable, and may or may not contribute to the progression of the narrative as a whole. Stereotyping may often be associated with this form mythical action.

TEXT STRUCTURE

Photograph / visual image

Product image / consumer item

Logo / slogan

Anchorage

MYTH

Myth operates within the structure of the text. The text reveals mythic meaning to the reader as the reader consumes the text.
This consumption often takes very little time, in comparison to the narrative text.

The text / object consists of a selection of signs and codes, which are specifically arranged in such a manner as to convey a particular (mythic) meaning. At times, however, the text may consist of a singular sign only. The selection of signs / codes offered above may be typically found in a magazine advertisement and can be expanded in greater detail, but this is just an example. This model, with adjustment, may be applicable to various myth-as-object type texts.

Although the text may take a certain amount of time to produce, it can be read in a near immediate fashion, unlike the narrative text. Resultantly, the only aspect which is not included in this model when compared to the myth-as-narrative model, is the aspect of the progression of time.

Figure 4.2: Technical framework of the myth-as-object

The sign mentioned in the model above (non-narrative text), whether iconic, indexical or symbolic, may be connected to narrative inferences and even function as a referent for/to a narrative, and/or may function as a narrative in and of itself. It does not necessarily do so, and if such a sign does function as narrative, it does not do so according to the same form as the narrative orientated text.

As mentioned, the most significant difference between the myth-as-narrative model and the myth-as-object model is the variance in the time dimension between the two models. What is also significant, however, is that from a semiotic and technical point of view, this is the only difference. This must be stressed because it enforces the possibility and the plausibility that myth may function as an object/symbol/non-narrative signification as well as working within a narrative. From the two models above it becomes clear that the myth-as-object is capable of doing the same semiotic work as the myth-as-narrative, only in less time.

It now becomes clear that if, as the myth-as-narrative-only theorists claim, myth can only function within a narrative, then the distinctive criterion for a myth to be a myth is that it is something which must take place over time. And here the argument collapses, because if this is so, how much time should the myth take to perform its work before the reader? What is the minimum time period for the representation of a myth, for the myth to be classified as a myth? Of course, one cannot enforce such inflexible stipulations. Static images, and non-narrative myths also take time to read and for the viewer to produce (mythic) meaning. They simply tend to take less time to do so than traditionally narrative mediums, but their mythic activity remains nonetheless. The distinctive characteristic difference between the myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object is the variance in time spent to communicate the mythic message, but both these forms of myth transfer the mythic message nonetheless.

Cohen (1969:47) comments that Lévi-Strauss's emphasis on myth as an abstract mode of thought offers the narrative element of myth a secondary importance. Cohen (1969:47) continues: "[i]n my view, the fact that myths are narrative *is* of primary importance". According to Cohen the narrative structure of myth is so important because of the relationship it constructs between the myth and time/history. Because of the narrative structure of the myth, a dramatic sequence of events is related. This sequence, however, has a beginning point which is anchored somewhere in time/the past. Cohen (1969:48) argues, that myth therefore anchors the present in the past and claims that even if the myth reader is not able to pin-point the precise historical moment which the myth portrays, the myth has provided a time-anchored point of reference. According to Cohen (1969:48) this location of things in time provides a far more effective form of legitimation than providing an abstract set of ideas which are not time-bound (myth-as-object).

This line of thinking is problematic, when considering the semiotic nature of myth. First, we cannot define the structure of myth(s) by first determining their effectiveness as myths. Cohen may or may not be correct in saying the time-anchored narrative type myths are more effective forms of legitimation (although this may be debated). That does not mean that non-narrative myths are not myths, because they are less effective forms of legitimation (although this is not necessarily the case, because they may be very effective forms of legitimation, but this is for the sake of argument here). In short, a myth should not be classified as a myth by its effectiveness, but rather by its structure. It is also difficult to understand why placing an argument or discourse somewhere on a historical timeline would make it seem universally more convincing. This may be the case if the content of the myth requires such historical justification. This is not always the case. Additionally, myths could potentially link the past and the present, or connect with a past point in time, without necessarily resorting to the use of a narrative structure to do so.

Nonetheless, one cannot legalise the use of the term myth. As demonstrated here, from a semiotician's point of view at least, the use of the notion of the myth-as-object is wholly justifiable. This demonstration is also of major significance with regard to the analysis of the mythic content of film(s). Film, similar to many visual media, may be injected with instances of the myth-as-object apart from the over-arching narrative myth. This allows for a subtle but complex relationship between the myth-as-object and myth-as-narrative, even more so than in non-narrative mythic texts. In film (as well as in other narrative mediums) the myth-as-object may be evoked at key moments within the plot in order to add mythic value to the narrative. The myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object function in an intertwined and complementary manner in order to produce the whole meaning of the entire text (as is demonstrated in chapter 6).

This symbiotic relationship often results from the very characteristic which sets these two types of myth apart: time. In film, a producer may be pressed for time and may need to complete a large portion of the story in very little screen time in order to adequately advance the plot. Here producers may rely on the myth-as-object, because it is capable of conjuring a wealth of mythic meanings in a particularly short space of time. As discussed in subsection 3.5, stereotypes are particularly commonly used in film where the plot requires rapid advancement and little time is allowed (see 3.5). The stereotype-myth-as-object may be visually evoked on film within a matter of seconds, but introduce a number of commonly held (albeit often negative) assumptions about a certain group of people. Stereotyping in film functions as a compressed message, which may be used to advance the narrative and the narrative-myth in various ways, including contributing to the humour, drama or excitement of the film.

In describing the phenomenology of the narrative with regard to film theory, Christian Metz (1974:18-20) discusses the time variance between the narrative and what he calls descriptions (such as photography). The narrative is temporal, or a system of temporal transformations, which is constituted by a sequence of events and in the case of film,

takes a certain amount of time to see (Metz 1974:19). By contrast, in descriptions "what is represented is a point in time that has been frozen; the viewer's intake is also supposed to be instantaneous..." (Metz 1974:19). Metz (1974:19) continues to elaborate on the complex relationship between the narrative and the description, significantly noting that, in the case of film, descriptions can act as key moments within the narrative. Metz (1974:19) states that "within this "narrative-descriptive" category, which is defined by a feature of the signifier, narration and description are contrasted by a feature of their significates, for in the narrative the signified is temporalised, whereas it is instantaneous in description...". These descriptions (as referred to by Metz) are understood by the study to at times appear in film as the mythical object, or the myth-as-object. Metz's (1974:18-20) theorisation of the filmic narrative and its relationship to the description (or mythical signifier) is then in keeping with the assumption of the study: that while the filmic myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object vary in their degrees of temporality, the myth-as-object appears at key moments within the film narrative in order to advance the myth-as-narrative or to signify key moments within the narrative.

In chapter six this is practically demonstrated through an analysis of how both the stereotype-myth-as-object as well as other myth-as-objects, function in an intertwined and complementary manner with the myth-as-narrative within a selection of post-apartheid South African films.

4.3 Social semiotics and myth

This subsection (4.3) refers to the field of social semiotics and utilises insights from social semiotics to formulate suggestions for improved mechanisms of defining and, in particular, classifying myths for analysis. First, the concept of genre is discussed, and the study suggests that myths may be classified according to myth genres. In order to perform such generic classification of myths, within the field of media studies, the study

suggests the implementation of some of the principles of iconography (see 4.3.2). Then, in order to avoid inaccuracies and for purposes of orderly classification, as well as to meet the criterion of myth of repeated representation, the study suggests the utilisation of inventories as a method for the analysis of myth (see 4.3.3).

4.3.1 Myth genre

One of the many concerns of social semiotics is the manner in which instances of communicative work may be naturally organised into genres. Genres function as semiotic 'templates' for performing communicative work which are constructed by signs. They are versatile but not neutral. Genres are culturally specific and possess a history of communicative acts (Van Leeuwen 2005:128). In particular, this section of the study suggests that it is possible to categorise certain myths into various genres, in much the same way as theorists are used to doing for mass media texts. If we do this, then the action of genre classification has moved from the first level of signification to the second mythical level, and this is possible because of the many similarities observable between genre and myth.

The myriad different types of myths which are reproduced within cultural artefacts may be organised into certain specified categories and these may potentially be called *myth genres*. For example, sacred myths are one type of myth genre, but even this genre can be broken down into sub-genres of myth: Greek mythology, Norse mythology and so on.

The same action of genre categorisation can be performed with the contemporary myth genre of modern myths and popular culture myths. A brief examination of the contemporary or modern myth of the hero, as represented on mainstream film, will suffice as an example. The myth of the action hero genre is commonly represented by

the (predominantly male) protagonist(s) within a certain genre of film, popularly called the action movie. In recent years the action hero myth genre has been extended to include a feminine representation, and has been assumed by characters such as Lara Croft (*Tomb Raider* 2001), Trinity (*The Matrix* 1999), Eowyn (*The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* 2003), and the three main characters in the *Charlie's Angels* (2000) films. The myth of the action hero genre is subject to sub-division. Firstly, the action hero myth genre is separated into representations of either male or female action heroes. The genre is further divisible according to the particular phenomenal traits displayed by the action hero, which are employed by the hero to thwart the enemy or villain figure or entity. The action hero may possess enhanced physical strength and particular abilities in combat. This sub-genre of the *military* action hero myth is often evident in films which display a military theme such as the *Rambo* (1982) series, and the *xXx* (Triple X) (2002) series. The less commonly represented female version of the military action hero myth is perhaps most poignantly remembered for Demi Moore's character in the film *GI Jane* (1997). Another sub-genre related to the military action hero myth is the *war-time soldier* action hero myth (which involves the depiction of real or historical wars), represented by the protagonist characters in films such as *The Patriot* (2000), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *Flags of Our Fathers* (2006), *Fly Boys* (2006) and *Pearl Harbour* (2001). The sub-genre of the *super-spy* action hero myth is represented in the James Bond series of films and the Jack Ryan character in the series of films inspired by Tom Clancy's novels: examples are the films *Clear and Present Danger* (1994), *Patriot Games* (1992), and *The Hunt for Red October* (1990). Additionally, the sub-genre of the *super-hero* action hero myth is imbued in films such as *Superman Returns* (2006), *Spider-Man* (2002), and the *X-men* (2000). The super-hero is defined by his or her possession of particular traits which go beyond what is within the normal range of human capabilities and, most importantly, which may be of great value within a combat situation.[8]

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[8] It is clear that various contemporary modern popular culture myths of the hero can be neatly organised into categories of myth genre along very similar lines as the categories which the visual representations of these myths, such as films, are organised into film genres. This, however, is not always the case with myth genre, and the reference to film genres here serve only as an example of how myths can be

The myth of the action-hero genre may be categorised in far greater detail and discussed at great length, but it does not serve to do so here. What is important is to note that, first, a set of myths may be accurately and easily organised according to genre-type classification and second, can be further organised and classified by sub-genre type classifications. This may seem to be a small point, but it is nonetheless important, particularly to the following subsection of the study where semiotic inventorying is employed as a mode of analysis, and the possibility of creating semiotic inventories of myths according to myth genre-type classification is explored.

As justification for the possibility of organising and categorising myths according to genres, it serves to note the similarities in both the understanding of myths and that of genres. Van Leeuwen (2005:122-123) describes genre as follows: "The term 'genre' is generally used to mean 'a type of text'. Texts become 'typical' when they have characteristics that can also be recognized in other, similar texts. The reason for this is that the people who produce the texts follow certain 'rules' – prescriptions, traditions, ingrained habits, role models, etc… Three kinds of 'typical characteristics' characterize genres, characteristics of content, form and function".

The three typical characteristics of content, form and function may be applicable to myth in much the same way as they are to genre, and in particular when organising myths according to their genres. According to Van Leeuwen (2005:123) the concern with genre 'content' involves a discussion of discourse, which is also important in much the same way when performing a discussion of myth. The 'form' refers to the means of expression or media which is selected for representation: this may differ from one myth genre to the next, while certain myths may also be more common in some modes of

organised according to genres. Table 4.3.1 and Table 6.3.5 are evidence of how myths may be generically classified, and not necessarily in line with traditional film genres.

representation than others. Of course, one must be careful not to put too much emphasis on the form of myth representation. Form may at times not be a defining characteristic of a myth genre: as already discussed Barthes (1972) claims anything can be taken up by myth and resultantly the same myth may be evident in representations of different form. Semiotically, it must be recognised that at times, certain myths belonging to certain myth genres may find representation in similar, if not the same, form.[9] What is important to realise here, is that a myth genre is not necessarily governed by its form, but this is to be expected because, myth genre classification must be performed according to the second level of signification, and not the first language level, as done with traditional genre analysis.[10] Lastly, the text may be typical of a certain genre because of what the text actually does. Van Leeuwen (2005:123) here notes how the genre of advertising is defined by the function of selling a product or service. Certain types of myths may also be recognised and defined by their societal functions. While some myths operate to enhance social cohesion (dominant myths), other counter myths (such as stereotypes) counter these myths of a coherent society by fostering negative views of some groups.

Myths then can be characterised by genre, while numerous myths display similarities of content, form and function, but the most important of these 'typical characteristics' with regard to myth-genre classification, is content and function. (Significantly, one must recognise here, that this view is almost the opposite approach to the structuralists, especially Levi-Strauss, who thought of the form of the myth as primary while trying to unearth deep structures, and the content of the myth was considered immaterial).

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[9] Simply, often myths belonging to the same myth genre will be represented by the same/similar media. For example, the myth of authority (Fourie 1997:78; and Bignell 1997:113) (which results in a simulacral reality) invoked by a television news reader is most often utilised by media such as television news and occasionally documentary programming, but would seem inappropriate in many other media. But myth of the same genre are not always limited to the same medium. For example, in South Africa the myth of the Rainbow Nation has been represented across many different media and thus assumed varying form: this includes representations in soap opera television programmes such as *7de Laan*, comedy films such as *White Wedding* (2009) and sports events such as the advertising surrounding the 2010 FIFA World Cup.
[10] The study recognises that this distinction between content and form may be relevant to any analysis of myth in general, but is referred to in this subsection for its particular relevance in the discussion of genre, and the generic classification of myth.

The question arises of whether or not it is possible to speak of generic myths? Perhaps an exercise in the application of generic classification to myths would serve as an experiment. The table below offers a simple yet clear categorisation of various examples of *social identity* myths, classified here as a myth genre. The table here includes only three columns, but could potentially be expanded to include the delineations dominant myth and counter myth, and myth-as-narrative or myth-as-object. The table could also include other columns, categories or be substantiated with a discussion of the social functions of each myth (in particular, whether each myth informs social cohesion or negative stereotypes or social disunity), the medium(s) of representation which is most often imbued with each myth, and perhaps even the signifiers or the iconography which are used for the communication of each myth.[11] The table below is an exercise to demonstrate the possible generic categorisation of myth, and contains an arbitrary selection of myths, since this is only an example.

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[11] Such classifications are included in the case study (chapter six), in the description of the generically classified myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator, as they are represented on post-apartheid South African new history film.

Table 4.1 Example of tabular generic myth classification: social identity myths

Genre	Sub genre	Examples of individual myths
Social identity myths	Nationhood	• The myth of the American Dream • The myth of British Imperialism • The myth of the Rainbow nation (South Africa)
	Stereotypical myths of ethnicity/race	• The myth of the savage black African, or the myth of the noble savage • The myth of the dishonest Indian • The myth of the racist white Afrikaner • The myth of the Coloured drunkard • The myth of the fundamentalist/terrorist Arab • The myth of the racist white Southern American redneck
	Cohesive myths of ethnicity/race	*These are unique to each culture and function to unify the culture/racial group:* • Afrikaners: the narrative myth (sacred origin myth) of the Great Trek • Americans: the narrative myth (sacred origin myth) of the penning of the Declaration of Independence and the American war of Independence
	Gender mythologies and myths which describe gender roles	• The myth of the macho man • The myth of the femme fatale/evil seductress • The myth of the home mother • Homosexual myths: various, including for example the mythical identities of the male homosexual 'queen' and the ultra-masculine and butch lesbian. • The myth of the nuclear family
	Myths of commercial identity and sub-cultures	*These myths are generally necessitated by two things: first, each subculture relies heavily on a specific cultural artefact which is regularly produced, whether it is a certain type of music, a motor vehicle or a certain sport. Second, the members of each subculture are required to appear a certain way, to dress and accessorise according to the 'uniform' of the subculture as a statement of identity. (Subcultures are often counter mythical).* • Musical mythic identities: Goths, Punk rockers, Hip hop, Pop etc. • Motor vehicle myths: including Hell's Angels (Harley Davidson enthusiasts), super-bikers etc. • Sports orientated mythical identities: surfers, street skaters, rugby, soccer etc.

Here, the main myth genre of social identity myths has been divided into a selection of subgenres, and substantiated with a few arbitrary examples of individual myths (though there are many more myths which may be included in each subgenre). This exercise could be performed with other main myth genres also, which include political myths, hero myths, sacred narrative myths (including god-myths and myths of divine origins or creation myths), commercial consumerist myths and so on. Significantly, all of the above myths can either be dominant myths or counter myths, although it is safe to assume that some myth genres will tend towards a dominant myth structure, while other myth genres will reflect a preference for the counter myth. It must be expected that some myths may, in a similar way that media texts such as films do, overlap between one generic classification and another, while perhaps combining the main elements of more than one genre. Also, and this must be stressed, there will always be exceptions: not all myths will fit so neatly into tabulated categories of myth genres, but through detailed and widespread genre myth research perhaps we could safely establish the assumption that many can and do.

Importantly, the categorisation of myths according to generic categories may contribute to solving the problems of the classification of myth discussed in subsection 4.1.3.1. (Problems of the classification and the definition of myth). If myths can be arranged in a flexible yet orderly fashion into specific genres, much confusion amongst myth theorists can be avoided, since researchers would be able to accurately state which general or main myth genre category and which myth subgenre category is being evaluated, discussed and most importantly, defined.

4.3.2 Iconography and myth genre

But if myths are to be organised into generic categories, what criteria or methodology may be used in order to classify myths, and which indicating markers visually available in the representations of myth can be relied upon in order to discern the genre of the

myth? In the case of myth-as-narrative, the answer may seem self evident: the narrative of the text and the evidence of the myth-as-narrative therein will often reveal generic classification at first glance or analysis. But what of the myth-as-object? The social semiotician's recent concern for iconography may hold a portion of the answer.

Grant (2007:11-12) discusses how concepts of iconography may be used for the analysis of, in particular, the genre film. Here, the various objects which are repeatedly found within a specific genre can be analysed for their particular meaning. For example, in the genre of the American Western, such objects would include horses, wagons, cowboy hats and weapons. Grant (2007:12) states, "[i]n genre films, iconography refers to particular objects, archetypal characters and even specific actors. In the western, the cowboy who dresses all in black and wears two guns, holster tied to either thigh, is invariably a villainous gunfighter. This is the iconographic wardrobe of a generic type, bearing little relation to historical reality". The iconography of a film can also include the common mise-en-scène of a genre. Grant (2007:12) describes the low-key lighting and visual excess of melodrama common to horror films as an example. Grant (2007:12) explains that "[l]ike conventions, iconography provides genres with a visual shorthand for conveying information and meaning succinctly".

With regard to the study of myth in film, and especially the inventorying of a myth across a number of films or the categorisation of a myth into a particular myth genre the study of film iconography can prove useful. First, because it is through recognising of iconographic traits in a film that two important things can be done: the film itself can be placed within a certain film genre, and, through the analysis of the visual iconography embedded in the filmic text one can decipher some of the mythic meanings of the film then placing the embedded myths into myth genre categories. Second, where similar iconographic visual traits appear in several films not only do these films belong to the same genre, but the possibility exists that some of the same mythic meanings are present within the entire group of films, which then effectively may constitute the representation of a single myth or at least, a myth genre. Both genre and myth require a

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collection of representative events as a criteria for the fulfilment of the definitions of 'genre' and 'myth' (Barthes 1972:120). The inventorying of the iconography of selected films then becomes the evidence of the presence of a single or particular myth, or myth genre, within a number of films. Iconography in film, film genre, myth and myth genre are then intrinsically tied to one another, are not interchangeable, are not equivalents but are not separable from one another.

The detailed analysis of the iconographic content of a media text proves useful when establishing myth categories, generic or otherwise. One concept which is fundamental to the science of semiotics (although it has not always been recognised as such) should be discussed here because it is important in any semiotic consideration of iconography, and it is of particular importance to the mythical construction of various post-apartheid South African identities which are analysed in the study (see chapter 6). It is the concept of context.

In order to overcome the perceived draw-backs of Barthean semiotics in that this it ignores the context of the image focussing all analysis on the image itself, social semiotician Theo van Leeuwen (2001) proposes a type of analysis which combines semiotics and iconography in an attempt to address this problem. He says:

> "… where Barthean visual semiotics studies only the image itself, and treats cultural meanings as a given currency which is shared by everyone who is at all acculturated to contemporary popular culture, and which can then be activated by the style and content of the image, iconography also pays attention to the context in which the image is produced and circulated, and to how and why cultural meanings and their visual expressions come about historically"

> (van Leeuwen 2001:92).

One of the most important aspects of social semiotics appears to be a concern for the context in which resources are produced and read. Without the consideration of the context an analysis cannot be considered to be complete or sufficient. For social semiotics, context is of paramount importance and is an area that has always taken into account how the different semiotic rules apply in different contexts (Jewitt & Oyama 2001:134).

Van Leeuwen (2001:95-96) describes four aspects which could be taken into account in order to overcome the problem of an under-consideration of context with regard to denotation, two[12] of which are relevant to this study and the description of the iconography in a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films offered in chapter six, and both of which may be considered with regard to iconography:

1. Categorization: represented peoples can be categorised by captions or by simple visual indicators such as clothing. Typification is created by visual stereotyping, and the more the individuality of the person, object or landscape is imbued with a stereotype the more it is represented as a type.

2. Groups vs. individuals: when people are represented in a group or belonging to a group a similar form of generalisation takes place, and they are classified according to the same type. When people are represented alone, devoid of notable stereotyping, they retain some sense of individuality and personal power.

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[12] The other two aspects described by Van Leeuwen (2001:95-96) are distancing, which refers how when people are represented in long shot and at a distance, we are less able to make out discerning features or individuality and more likely to classify them according to types. Although this technique may be used in film, the case study emphasises the representation of the white protagonist figures, who are offered a great deal of visual attention in the films selected for this study. The fourth aspect is surrounding text or adjacent images which can contribute to the classification of represented figures, while captions can name people or describe their types. This is not applicable to the medium of film.

Thus, people, and in the case of film, characters may be classified with regard to the iconography with which they are visually associated, which may include the mechanisms by which they are stereotyped, their dress and how they are grouped. This concept is expanded upon in subsection 6.3.4 of the study, where a description of the iconography of a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films reveals how the characters of the 'good white' and 'bad white' are visually inscribed by certain repetitive visual markers (iconographic myth-as-object signifiers). For example, the character who fulfils the role of the bad white perpetrator is often associated with the swastika like symbol of the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging*, wears khaki coloured clothing, is often carrying a weapon, is often uniformed and may be grouped or associated to a larger collection of 'bad whites' (see 6.3.4.2 *The collective mythologisation of bad whites*). Table 6.3 (see 6.3.5) in chapter six lists the iconographic signifiers of the myth-as-object of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator as identified by the study on a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films.

Another social semiotician, and a scholar of van Leeuwen, David Machin (2007:27) recommends the semiotic investigation of the iconography of a text according to five carriers of connotation: poses, objects, settings, participants and photogenia (style) (the latter four of these carriers of connotation are identified by Barthes (1977:44)). Similar iconographic carriers of connotation are identified and described in subsection 6.3.4 of the study as they find representation on a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films. For example, Machin (2007:27) explains how the pose of a represented figure may carry a meaning potential which may be metaphorical in nature. As an example, the pose of the character Tertius Coetzee (*Forgiveness* 2004) is discussed in subsection 6.3.4: Coetzee displays a difficult walk, a slumped posture and most often carries a wounded facial expression. Coetzee's pose is metaphorical for his inner conflict, and his unassailable remorse and feelings of guilt which he entirely unable to assuage. This metaphor, invoked by the iconographic pose, is significant not only in Coetzee's case, but is relevant to a number of characters who invoke the myth of the

good white perpetrator throughout the genre of post-apartheid South African new history film. Further, this brief example serves to illustrate how the iconography of a film (or media text) may be utilised in determining not only the genre of the film, but in establishing the generic classification of a myth or counter myth.

Colin McArthur (1977:118-123) describes the iconography of the gangster film genre where he notes how the dress code of characters, as well as the city landscape and objects such as the automobile are key iconographic signifiers of the gangster film genre. Importantly, McArthur (1977:118) notes that the recurrent patterns of visual imagery, of objects and figures (the myth-as-object) may be identified as the iconography of the film genre. Indeed, genres become established as such by the repeated iconographic representation of fixed conventions (MacArthur 1977:119). This occurrence of the repeated representation of the iconography of a particular film genre, and a particular myth genre, points to the potential importance of another social semiotic suggestion for the analysis of visual texts: that of establishing semiotic inventories. If the iconography of a film genre, or the associated iconography of a myth genre, is established through repetition, then the inventorying of the representation of such iconography may be a useful tool for analysis, which is discussed in the following subsection (see 4.3.3).

4.3.3 Creating a semiotic myth inventory

Van Leeuwen (2005:6) describes the necessity of making semiotic inventories when performing a semiotic research project. This involves the collection and inventorying a group of signs and describing their use within a specific context. Van Leeuwen (2005:6-25) offers a number of different examples of semiotic inventories which he has constructed: these are as varied as the observation of framing in a collection of magazine advertisements to the use of framing in office space. This idea of semiotic

inventorying, however, may be taken further by suggesting that it is not only possible to create inventories of a collection of signs, but also of a collection of myths, or at least, instances of myth representation, and organise these inventories, where relevant, according to varying myth genres. In fact, not only is it possible to construct such an inventory but it is also necessary to establish whether an instance of myth representation is mythic at all, as it can only be thus if it is represented more than once, and indeed, rather often. If we cannot fill an inventory with a substantial collection of instances of representation of variations of the same myth, then the myth in question cannot be called a myth. Semiotic inventorying is then not only a helpful tool for analysis, but also a mechanism of myth identification.

Returning momentarily to Barthes (1972:120), each myth has the potential to be represented on innumerable possible occasions through various different signifieds. Consequently, the quantitative quality of myth (the number of times it appears in social circulation) is far greater than the number of myths finding "speech". Repeated representation of the mythical signified by a greater number of signifiers is then a prerequisite criterion for myth. Simply put, an ideologically constructed idea must be represented more than once, and preferably many times, before it can be called a myth. This is why a semiotic myth inventory may be useful in establishing the study of myth as a more accurate endeavour. If myths can be inventoried, or at least counted in a way, then their status as myth can be validated. A suggested manner in which to do this is discussed in subsection 4.3.3, and is applied in chapter six.

But how to place myth representations alongside one another within the same inventory? There may be many possibilities of classification and these will greatly depend on the argument and criteria of the study in question. The study, however, will rely on the main classifications of dominant myths, counter myths, myth-as-narrative, myth-as-object and myth genre in order to classify and inventory individual instances of mythical representation. The structure of the inventory, or the inventory template, is also

something which should be versatile and flexible to suit the specific criteria of each separate semiotic research study. The study makes use of a tabular format, columned along certain criteria and separate degrees of interest. These tables are, suitable here, but may not be elsewhere. A large part of the inventorying of a mythology relies on the insight of the researcher, but it must always conform to logic, treat the myth representation as a sign, and work to discover the presence or the non-presence of a coherent ideological motivation between seemingly like-minded mythical signs or texts.

Below, follows a summary of the key elements which will be taken into account by the study in the establishment of a semiotic myth inventory, for the analysis of myth and counter myth on a selection of post-apartheid South African new history film. Two inventories are established by the study, and they are provided in chapter six (see 6.3.2 and 6.3.5, tables 6.2 and 6.3).

It is important to take stock of all of the classificatory mechanisms established so far before starting with a semiotic myth inventory, or performing an analysis according to the theoretical framework (which is presented in the following chapter). The classification criteria of myth must consider the type and function, the format or form and the genre or content of the myth. Firstly, the myth type entails whether the myth is a dominant myth or a counter myth, and can be deciphered by reading the ideology or world view to which the myth points and naturalises. This classification should also, to some extent, reveal the myth's societal function. Secondly, the criterion of form concerns whether the myth is technically constructed as a myth-as-narrative or a myth-as-object. This is fairly simple to determine: either the myth tells a story over time, or its does not (although this will depend on individual representations of the myth, and may vary from one representation to the next). Thirdly, the criterion of content: this, as is discussed in this section, may potentially be classified according to genre, or more specifically, myth genre (see also to 4.1.3.1 *Problems of the classification and the definition of myth*).

Although these distinctions are important it must be noted that a myth genre is a very different classification than a myth type. With regard to myth type, literature has to date identified two myth types (there may be more, but they are not yet theorised). The first is that of the dominant myth, most commonly referred to in theoretical literature as just 'myth', and the second type is that of the counter myth. Both myth types can be represented in any category of myth genre. Because of its motivation, however, the counter type myth is more often characteristically identified by its political myth type genre, or may combine the political myth genre with other myth genres. Nonetheless, each form of myth genre may be utilised in representation by either myth type. Additionally, any myth type or myth genre may be represented in two different but related myth formats: myth-as-narrative or myth-as-object.

It is important to understand the technical relationship between myth genre, dominant myth, counter myth, and political myth, since these are discussed in detail in the study. A political myth is another type of myth genre, which is identifiable and distinguishable by its political content (Tudor 1972 and Flood 2002). The political myth genre may potentially be sub-divisible according to the ideological orientation or political motivation of a collection of political myth representations.

The study is mainly concerned with the appearance on myth on film, and therefore it may be asked whether this type of semiotic myth inventorying can be applied to the medium of film. A related example of similar filmic inventorying is offered by Cameron (1994:211-229) who develops a filmography, which offers a historical summary of the manner in which Africa has been represented on mostly Western produced film. This is a list of a selection of films and the archetypes[13] (which can be understood as mythic

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[13] The archetypes listed on Cameron's (1994:211-229) filmography indicate a stereotypical view of the African and Africa from a colonial Western perspective, which constructs the African Other. Such films invoke the representation of Africanism (see 3.2 of the study, Said 1978; Pieterse 1992), and thus are understood by the study to be visual evidence of the mythologisation of Africa, from the perspective of

identities) which they employ. All of the selected films were included because their content dealt with Sub-Saharan Africa in some way.

It must be noted that Cameron's (1994) criteria for his filmography, and the criteria of the study for a film myth inventory are not the same. Firstly, Cameron (1994) is primarily interested in the colonial era representation of Africa and Africans by Western film producers, while the study is mainly concerned with the post colonial and post-apartheid filmic representations which speak of or about South Africa (but are not necessarily produced by South Africans or/and the West). Where Cameron's (1994) filmography mainly reflects the stereotypes (which are myths) which Western culture projects onto another foreign group of peoples, the study examines how a society's historical introspection is represented on film.

Nonetheless, the content of Cameron's (1994) filmography is inextricably related to present day post colonial and post-apartheid representations of Africans, in both Western produced and African produced films. Most importantly, the format of Cameron's (1994) filmography provides justification for the usefulness of inventory-type myth analysis of film. Where Cameron (1994) measures the particular archetypes which manifest in each film, this delineation of archetypal content could easily be replaced or substantiated with the identification of myth (and resultantly other delineations could also be included in the filmography, such as the delineations of dominant myth or counter myth). Because Cameron's (1994) filmography offers such a good example of filmic inventorying, it is worth examining an extract from the filmography. The final column of Cameron's (1994:211-229) filmography list has been excluded from this extract, because it indicates the availability of each film, which is not a criteria of inventorying which is of importance to this particular study. Cameron's (1994:211-220) filmography is used as a guiding template for the inventory established by this study, offered in 6.3.2 (table 6.2).

Africanism, and because of the stereotype content of these films, are also the visualisation of (dominant) myth.

Title	Year	Country	Archetypes
Allan Quatermain and the Lost City of Gold	1987	US	White Hunter; lost civilisation; savages (some parody
Alone in the Jungle	1913	US	dangerous animals, jungle…
Bomba and the Jungle Girl	1952	US	Jungle Boy; jungle
Bomba and the Elephant Stampede	1951	US	Jungle Boy; dangerous animals, jungle…
Four Feathers	1921	GB	Imperial man; black horde…
A Game for Vultures	1980	SA	Mercenary (type), Dangerous African; black horde…
Gods Must be Crazy, The	1980	SA	Good Africans; savages, skins, dangerous animals…
Golden Dawn	1929	US	Black Eve, White Man's Grave; witch-doctor, savage dancing, jungle…
Gorillas in the Mist	1988	US	Strong Woman, Helper; dangerous animals…
Guns at Batasi	1964	GB	Imperial Man, Good African, Dangerous African; black horde…
Jungle Goddess	1948	US	White Goddess; savages, treasure
Jungle Jim	1937	US	White Goddess, White Hunter; jungle…
Jungle Master	1956	GB	Jungle Lord, White Queen; jungle…
King Solomon's Mines	1937	GB	White Hunter, Good African; savages, savage dancing, treasure…
Mapantsula	1988	SA	Dangerous African; urban anti-stereotypes…

Men of Two Worlds	1946	GB	Educated African, Imperial Man, Crowing Hen; witch-doctor, savages…
Old Bones of the River	1939	GB	Imperial Man (parody), Good African, Educated African; savages, fur and feathers, savage horde…
Power of One, The	1992	GB	White Torturer, Awakened White, Good African; anti-apartheid…
Return of Tarzan (aka *Revenge of Tarzan*)	1920	US	Jungle Lord; jungle, dangerous animals…
Safari	1940	US	White Hunter, Good Black; dangerous animals…
Sanders of the River	1935	GB	Imperial Male, Good African, Black Wife; savages, fur and feathers, savage hordes…
Skeleton Coast	1987	SA	Mercenary, Dangerous African; savage horde…
Slaver, The	1927	US	Good Black; savages, savage dancing…
Stanley and Livingstone	1939	US	Imperial Man; savages, dangerous animals…
Tarzan of the Apes	1918	US	Jungle Lord; jungle, dangerous animals, savages, Arab slavers…
Trader Horn	1931	US	White Hunter, White Goddess; dangerous animals, savage horde…
Untamed	1955	US	Afrikaner myth-making…
Voice of the Hurricane	1964	US	Dangerous African; savage horde (Mau Mau)…
Watusi	1959	US	White Hunter; dangerous animals, savage horde, savage dancing, treasure…
Whispering Death	1971	SA	Dangerous African (as monster), Good African, Mercenary; savagery, savage horde…
Winning a Continent	1916	SA	Afrikaner myth-making, savages…

(SA: *De Voortrekkers*)

Zulu	1963	US	Imperial Man; savages, savage horde…
Zulu's Devotion, A	1916	SA	Good African

(Cameron 1994:211-229).

Understanding the possibilities of utilising semiotic myth inventories are important to the study and their use is outlined in both chapter five and chapter six. Chapter five explains the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth on film which is developed by the study. Chapter six applies the framework proposed in chapter five to a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films and an important part of this description is the semiotic myth inventories used to demonstrate various characteristics of the mythologies discussed and to categorise the myths in question in a generic fashion.

In summary chapter four (this chapter) included a discussion of the nature of the difficulty of the theoretical definition and classification of myth, due in part, to the manner in which myth has been defined according to the various fields of enquiry from which it has been investigated (see 4.1.1 amd 4.1.3). This chapter discussed the validity of the semiotic position of the understanding of myth as the myth-as-object (see 4.1.2) within the context of the largest majority of myth literature which describes myth in terms of myth-as-narrative-only. The relationship between the myth-as-object and the myth-as-narrative as it occurs in filmic representative practice was described in subsection 4.2. Subsection 4.3, by drawing on insights from the field of social semiotics, suggested some measures which if practiced, could alleviate some confusion across the spectrum of literature which defines myth according to the assumptions of various theoretical fields by suggesting that myths may be generically classified. Potentially mythologists from varying fields could thus continue to operate according to the theoretical assumptions of their own field, because the generic classification of myth(s) allows the myth theorist to identify which myth genre is under evaluation.

CHAPTER FIVE: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF MYTH IN FILM

This chapter involves the setting out of a theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth in film. The theoretical framework established here is constructed specifically to suit the particular needs for the examination of filmic media texts as this framework is practically adopted in the study for the description of myth in post-apartheid South African films. When referring to 'South African film' the study does not make reference to South African funded and/or produced film. Rather the main concern here, in keeping with myth orientated analysis, is with content and therefore the study analyses films set in, or about South Africa. For clarity, the study is concerned with films that involve stories about South Africans and where the plot takes place within South Africa, regardless of whether the film was produced in South Africa or funded/produced by South Africans. According to Hughes-Warrington (2007:83) this descriptor is valid, since when considering the manner in which films may, for example, construct national identity, the site for analysis is at the level of content and not production. However, the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth established here has the potential to be utilised in the analysis of myths which find representation in other mass media texts, and also can be used to analyse myths which appear across a spectrum of media texts. It should be understood then that the theoretical framework proposed here should not be considered as static in nature, should be treated flexibly, and could potentially require changes or additions to comply the research goals of other similar myth orientated projects. Additionally, the theoretical framework offered here focuses close attention on the analysis of counter myth in particular. The reason for this is twofold.

Firstly, as already established, the analysis and documentation of counter myth is wholly under theorised and therefore this approach seeks to offer a necessary addition

to myth theory.[1] Secondly, the filmic myths which are practically analysed in the study are predominantly of the counter myth type.[2] This approach does not indicate, however, that this theoretical framework could not be adjusted suitably for the effective analysis of dominant type myths in mass media texts such as film.

This theoretical framework is constructed according to the theoretical assumptions which are established in chapters two, three and four of the study. These assumptions include the differential relationship of dominant myth and counter myth, the differential relationship of myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object, and the possibility of myth classification according to genre. This chapter thus seeks to offer a practical mode of theoretical analysis by suggesting a technique in which these theoretical assumptions can be applied to the analysis of myth on film.

In the theoretical framework offered below are suggested key elements which could be included on a myth inventory, which could operate as an additional tool of analysis for the detailed and orderly study of myth. The key elements which are to be included when inventorying myth, however, should depend on the key research objectives set by the mythologist and thus these elements must be thought of flexibly. Also, the format of the myth research inventory should also be aligned to best comply with the study in question: for example, separate inventories could be created for each different key element at each different step within the technical framework offered here, or alternatively, all of the key elements could be presented on one over-arching master inventory, involving a number of the steps taken throughout the analytical process.

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[1] The larger body of myth theory/literature is concerned with dominant myth, while counter myth has received comparatively little critical attention, as is discussed / explained in chapter two of the study (see 2.1).

[2] The counter myths discussed in the study, are classified as counter myth in type (as opposed to dominant myth type) according to the characteristics of counter myth, and the technical semiotic functioning of counter myth, established in chapter two of the study (see 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4).

What follows in this section then, is the description of the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth on film as offered by the study, and developed in accordance with the theoretical assumptions discussed in chapters two, three and four. The framework for analysis suggested here can be sub-divided into six key sections, each of which are discussed in this chapter. They are as follows:

- Myth identity: naming and placing the myth
- Medium of myth representation
- Myth type (form and function): dominant myth and counter myth
- Myth format (form): myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object
- Myth genre and myth sub-genre (content)
- Mythic iconography (content)

The framework developed for the study is visualised according to table 5.1. Below this table follows an explanation about each of the steps indicated in the table.[3]

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[3] The table offered in chapter six (table 6.1) is based on table 5.1, and utilised in chapter six (see subsection 6.3) for the analysis of myth and counter myth on post-apartheid South African new history film.

Table 5.1

A theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth

5.1 Myth identity: naming and placing the myth

Contextualise the myth according to its geographical, historical, social, political and cultural context.

5.2 Medium of myth representation

List/inventory of exemplary or typical instances of the representation of the myth.

5.3 Myth type (form and function): dominant myth and counter myth

Identify the myth type as dominant myth or counter myth.

5.4 Myth format (form): myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object

Identify which format, or whether both formats, are utilised in the representation of the myth. (In film, both myth formats will likely function symbiotically, as the myth-as-object is employed to advance the myth-as-narrative).

5.5 Myth genre and myth sub-genre (content)

Describe the myth genre and sub-genre, if necessary, by utilising an inventory.

5.6 Mythic iconography (content)

Identify and inventorise the iconographic labels/markers which indicate the presence of a particular myth.

5.1 Myth identity: naming and placing the myth

This step may seem self evident, but is nonetheless important for the sake of theoretical thoroughness and ease of reference. The mythologist must list the name of the myth(s) or counter myth(s), or must formulate the name of the myth(s) which is to be studied. This simple act of labelling could invoke a great deal of theoretical debate and questioning. For example, should the name of the myth reveal or refer to the ideological orientation of the myth? Or, should the name of the myth refer to or at least include descriptions of the myth function and/or myth format? Or, should the myth label refer exclusively to the myth content? Such concerns are numerous and varied enough to justify and entirely separate study of this nature, and it may be more suitable if such matters were addressed within the field of linguistics. The study, for the sake of ease of reference and recognisability, names or labels myths according to one or more characteristics of their content (for example, *the myth of the good white perpetrator*): such a technique offers readability and enhances the possibility of generic classification. The names for myths offered here, however, are certainly not legalistically applied and can be changed or adjusted following justification or further analysis.

Also for ease of reference, the mythologist should place the myth: the geographical, historical, cultural and social context of the myth should be described. Perhaps a theoretical discussion of myth content could take place here. This contextualisation of the myth in question is important because it will affect other considerations at later points within the theoretical framework. For example, the context of the myth may assist in determining whether or not the myth can be considered a dominant or counter myth. Therefore, the concept of myth context cannot be exclusively considered in this first step of the framework of analysis, but it is a concern which should be referred to throughout the analysis of any myth. An introductory discussion to this context, however, could be presented at the beginning of the myth analysis.

5.2 Medium(s) of myth representation (form)

While each signified can have many signifiers, similarly, the myth may have an unlimited number of signifiers. Quantitatively, the concept is outweighed by the signifier and the form. Simply put, there are more possibilities to represent the myth than there are myths in social circulation, and "to the quantitative abundance of the forms there corresponds a small number of concepts" (Barthes 1972:120). Qualitatively the concept is richer, because the concept has at its disposal the whole of history and a wealth of possible meanings. This quantitative and qualitative disparity is important because what it practically means is that the same concept of myth finds representation in many forms. It is this repetition of concept through different forms which is so important because it allows us not only to recognise the myth as myth, but helps us to investigate its motivations (Barthes 1972:120).

Simply put, to qualify any signified as myth, it ought to have appeared within the cultural artefacts of a society numerous times. It would be impossible to list all instances of the representation of a single myth on one mythic inventory because the possibilities for myth representation are endless. It is important for the mythologist to supply a list, perhaps as an inventory, of exemplary or typical instances of the representation of the myth in question. First, this serves to identify the signified, at least in part, as myth because it demonstrates the criterion of repeated representation and dissemination. Second, such an inventory could document the medium(s) of representation for each example of the myth's appearance. Noting such a criterion would assist with the later identification of the myth as myth-as-narrative or myth-as-object, and could also assist in the generic classification of the myth. Third, many myths are not exclusive to one medium of representation: if a myth appears in regularly film, it is not to say that it does not also appear in, for example, literature, theatre, music videos or advertising. Inventorying examples of the medium(s) of a myth's representation may reveal the

prevalence of the myth within society and may assist in the identification of myth type. As previously discussed in chapter two (see 2.7), often the discourse of those in political and economic power, dominant myths find regular dissemination within the mass communications networks of society. Counter myths often do not have access to all or many of society's institutionalised communicative networks, therefore at first only appearing in fringe communicative mediums, or the limited media available to the counter myth proponents.[4]

5.3 Myth type (form and function): dominant myth and counter myth

It must be established whether the myth(s) to be examined is of the dominant type or counter type myth. This is important to the overall myth analysis for various reasons.

- The technical framework of the dominant and the counter myth bear distinct differences, thereby affecting the resultant myth representations relationship to history and ideology (see 2.4). These technical differences must be understood and documented so that the ideological orientation of the myth in question may be revealed through analysis. As well as playing a large part in the social function of myth, the type of the myth will also determine its ideological function: whether or not the myth maintains a certain world view, or whether, in the case of counter myth, it partakes in ideological translation, denaturalising the ideology of an original myth and replacing it with a suggested ideological alternative (see 2.4).

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[4] Importantly, in recent years the digital new media have become an important site for counter mythic activity, as discussed in chapter 3 (see 3.4).

- Because the type of myth connotes, to a large degree, the social function of the myth (which is connected to the ideological function), the myth type must be established to ascertain whether the myth aims at maintaining the current state of being or whether the myth aims to encourage social change.

- It is important to establish whether or not a myth is of the counter type in order to assess whether the myth has any potential of bringing about some type of social change. Is the counter myth political in nature, and if so, what kind of political action does it encourage? (see 2.6). At times the successful representation of a counter myth discourse has resulted in massive social change, and if such counter myths can be identified such social change can potentially be predicted (see 3.3).

Further concerns which should occupy the mythologist when considering myth type are as follows:

- It should be noted, that when performing this step in the theoretical framework and the analysis of myth, the mythologist should take into account and record the historical context of the myth representation. This is because a particular myth may have operated as counter myth at one time in the past, but because of resultant social change the same myth may not operate as a counter myth any longer, and may have been so successful in its attempts to encourage social change that it has reached a kind of mythic maturity in that it has become the dominant myth. The same myth can be of different types at different points in time/history (see 3.4). Therefore, the mythologist must record the time period of the myth analysis, and take note as to what type the myth displayed during that particular time.

- If the mythologist identifies a myth as a counter myth, it must be clear that it is indeed countering *something*. A dominant myth discourse must also be identified in order to give some indication of what the counter myth is working against. Significantly, the identification of the dominant myth requires no such juxtaposed identification (see 2.1, 2.4 and 2.5). Also, here one must not fall into the trap of setting up the two myths as binary opposites. Counter myths are inter-animated with dominant myths, but are not (and cannot be) the direct opposite of dominant myths (see 2.7).

- The mythologist must analyse the basic functions fulfilled by the myth or counter myth (see 2.5). These functions should be considered with regard to the following key points:

  Functions of the dominant myth:

    (a) reinforce beliefs and values
    (b) escape reality
    (c) unify audiences through self-definition
    (d) ascribes the basic models of culture, including various social, economic and political institutions (see 2.5).

  Functions of the counter myth:

    (a) self-definition
    (b) alternative identity
    (c) recognition of the need for social change
    (d) mythical self-defence
    (e) a counter view of history (see 2.5)

As stated in subsection 2.5, there may be more functions of both myth types than those listed here, which may be discovered after additional research. Necessarily then, the concerns of myth function must be flexible and adaptable.

- Discourse and the myth/counter myth

  - The mythologist should take into account the kind of discursive work performed by the myth or counter myth in question (see 2.7). The difficulties, if any, which the counter myth in question encounters within its discoursal environment, should be examined as well as the counter myth's resistance of dominant myth discourses. Such difficulties may include, the frequency of counter myth representation as compared to the dominant myth, the willingness of audiences to accept the unfamiliar counter myth, and the ability or inability for the counter myth to adopt effective communications mediums.

  - Additionally, attention should be given to the level of inter-animation between the dominant myth discourse and the counter myth to determine the level of effectiveness of the communicative acts of the counter myth (see 2.7). Intertextual references to a dominant myth discourse may be the only way in which to make the counter mythic representations understandable to audiences who are only familiar with the dominant myth discourse. However, an over-reliance on the discourse of the dominant myth by the counter myth, may lead audiences to mistakenly read the counter mythic representation as simply another communicative act of the dominant myth discourse.

  - The interaction or the disparity between the view of history according to the dominant myth, and the view of history according to the counter myth should be examined (see 2.7). This is important because the collective's

view of history is pivotal in the establishment of collective/cultural/national identity (Rosenstone 1995, Sorlin 1980).

Identifying the myth type is crucial to the mythologist. Because of the technical variances, the differences in both the ideological and social functions, and the social consequences of the two myth types (dominant and counter) it becomes impossible to perform a detailed and complete mythological analysis without specifying and recording the myth type.

5.4 Myth format (form): myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object

Identifying the myth format is important to any detailed analysis of myth, but it is crucial when analysing the medium of film. Film, unlike some other mass communications media, such as photography or print media advertising, makes use of both the myth-as-narrative *and* the myth-as-object (see 4.2). In fact, it is difficult to see how film could operate otherwise, without relying on the symbiotic relationship of the myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-object. Importantly then, the mythologist, when analysing the myth content of a film or collection of films, must be aware of this mythic relationship, and record significant instances of this mythic activity which could perhaps be included in an inventory for ease of analysis and reference.

- Myth-as-narrative and/or myth-as-object

As established in subsection 4.1.2, myth has the technical capability to operate in narrative format or as a speech act of near immediate summation. The mythologist must therefore state the myth format which will be studied. Any particular myth may technically appear in either narrative form, or as the myth-as-object, or both (Although it cannot be denied that certain myths often reveal a preference for one or the other). The mythologist should therefore explicitly state whether the myth(s) in question will be studied in its narrative form, or as the myth-as-object. Ideally, one would hope that any particular myth would be analysed in both formats in a given study in order to attain a thorough and holistic view of the myth and its ideological activities, so if this is not done and only one myth format is reviewed by the mythologist, reasonable theoretical justification therefore should be supplied. (There are, of course, genres of myth for which the study of myth-as-narrative only are self evident, such as the study of religious mythologies or the study of ancient Greek mythology).

Included in an overall or separate myth inventory could be recorded instances (or at least, examples) of the representation of the myth(s) in question as myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object.

- Myth-as-narrative, myth-as-object and the analysis of film

As established in subsection 4.2, film adopts both formats of myth, myth-as-narrative *and* myth-as-object. A suggested technique for analytical approach may be to pay attention to the myth-as-narrative content of the film first,

thereafter investigating key moments in the film when the myth-as-object is presented in order to contribute either to the narrative, or the myth-as-narrative. (The narrative and the myth-as-narrative must not be mistaken as equivalents). Such key moments of the representation of the myth-as-object could be reflected on an inventory. Special attention could be paid, for example, to the representation of stereotypes in film, as immediate mythic summations, especially when used to advance the plot of the film, or the narrative mythic content (see 3.5). Once a particular stereotype has been identified, the various instances of its representation in a pre-selected collection of films could be recorded in an inventory, revealing its frequency.

The mythologist should pay attention to the key formal difference between the myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-object, which is time (see 4.1). The myth contained within the narrative is revealed to the reader over time, and only in its entirety once the narrative has reached completion. The manner in which the myth-as-object complements the myth-as-narrative and promotes its progress should be examined.

5.5 Myth genre and myth sub-genre (content)

The utilisation of an inventory may assist in identifying a myth or counter myth genre. As demonstrated in subsection 4.3.3 such an inventory could include demarcations or typical descriptors of a selection of myths which justify their inclusion within a specific genre. The social function of each myth could also serve as a generic descriptor, and this could be linked to the dominant or counter status of the myth. Another potential descriptor would be the myth content, or more simply, that which the myth is literally

speaking about. Myths which address similar societal concerns, or which offer similar explanations to social conflicts, could be classified within the same myth genre.

The value of such an exercise in generic classification and inventorying is twofold: first, as discussed in subsection 4.3.1, it serves to address an overall difficulty in the classification and definition of myths, as theorists or mythologists could then clearly define the arena of myth analysis. Generic classification of selections of myths can tell us not only what the mythologist is studying, but also indicate what the mythologist is not studying, addressing the need for more theoretical accuracy within myth theory. Secondly, the action of developing an inventory of a myth genre may function to more accurately indicate other important characteristics of a particular body of myths, including the frequency of the communication of myths within a genre, or the prevalence of the myth genres' representation.

5.6 Mythic iconography (content)

This step within this theoretical framework may by necessity need to occur in conjunction with the inventorying of the myth genre(s), as the descriptors identified when analysing the iconography of a selection of myths may serve to indicate a natural generic classification. Instances where the iconography present within a visual medium of representation, such as film, should be recorded by the mythologist if they contribute or communicate mythic meaning within the text. The analysis of the iconography of a film may offer insight into both the myth content of the film, and offer characteristic descriptors for the generic classification of myth. Often visual iconography acts as a visual label or marker, which effectively indicates the presence of a particular myth, and especially the myth-as-object.

The analysis of the iconography of a selection of visual texts would naturally require the employment of a mode of visual analysis, and these could include iconography (Panofsky), traditional or mainstream semiotics (Peirce, De Saussure, Barthes, Eco), social semiotic frameworks for analysis (van Leeuwen, Kress, Hodge, Jewitt), Multimodal analysis (Machin), film studies/theory (if the unit of analysis is film) and so on. The study, when analysing the myth-specific iconography in a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films, makes use of semiotics as a mode of analysis.

Depending on the study and the body of myths to be examined, the above steps in the framework offered here do not necessarily need to be followed in the order indicated here. This is not for reasons of theoretical imprudence, but because the nature of the theoretical framework offered in the study should be understood as flexible, and malleable to the requirements of the particulars of the study of myth in question. For example, the ideological orientation of the myth may not be immediately evident, prior to detailed analysis, so it may not be at first possible to establish whether the myth is a dominant or a counter myth.

In the following chapter the framework for myth analysis on film which is offered here, is applied to a selection of post-apartheid South African films. This is done to analyse a variety of counter myths that have been recently established and represented within the film medium as mythical activity works to re-establish and reconstruct collective national identities, and inform a society of ways in which to cope with a traumatic past.

CHAPTER SIX: HISTORY FILM: THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF WHITE COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN FILMS BY MYTH AND COUNTER MYTH

The main aim of the study is to contribute to the body of media studies myth theory by exploring ways in which to theorise counter myth, and to develop a theoretical model for the analysis of counter myth as represented in mass media texts. A purposive sample of post-apartheid South African history films will be discussed as a case study in this chapter which serve as an example of how counter myths have found recent representation in the South African media landscape. Importantly, the description of these films serve as an example of how the theoretical model for the analysis of counter myth may be utilised.

South African new history films have been selected as the unit of analysis in this case study. The chapter therefore begins with a discussion of new history film as a genre, and how it may manifest as national film and how this is applicable to the current South African film industry. This discussion (in subsection 6.1) serves to contextualise the case study of counter myth in post-apartheid South African new history film. Subsection 6.2 discusses the identity politics surrounding the representation of whiteness on film: this further serves to contextualise the case study in subsection 6.3 since the content of the counter myths discussed in subsection 6.3 are specifically orientated toward the mythologisation of post-apartheid white identities.

A description of a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films is made in subsection 6.3. This description is performed specifically as a demonstration of the operation of counter myth, and in particular, the operation of counter myth within the medium of film. The two myths which are selected for description in this case study are, the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator. These

two myths have been selected mainly because of their regular frequency of appearance in post-apartheid South African history films (as is demonstrated in the inventory found in Table 6.2).

6.1 History film and national cinema: a new South African film genre and a site for counter myth

> [F]or many people, 'history' is what they see in films…
>
> (Hughes-Warrington 2007:1).

> The thought of any motion picture is myth-like. 'Myth' refers to a 'fantastic' story told in an especially powerful way. The purpose behind myth is not to constrict its telling, but to expand upon it, to let the fantasy become unharnessed and to project it into the world as an enactment of power. For its creation a myth requires the release of more energy than could be possessed by any individual psyche. The energy manifested and enacted in myth is collective; this is also true of the motion picture
>
> (Monaco 1981b:65).

Rosenstone (1995a:3) claims that, "[a] century after the invention of motion pictures, the visual media have become arguably the chief carrier of historical messages in our culture". If this is the case, then filmic representations of a colonial past in/of many African countries including South Africa require attention. If historically motivated films do form part of the chief cultural carriers of historical messages, then important questions may be asked here. For example, how do post colonial era African films refer to, or represent the identities of the previous colonisers? What version of colonial history is offered and is it the same as the version offered previously by the colonisers? If not, what sites for counter myth or counter histories are being visually constructed in new history films? Is the new version of history offered by these new history films responsibly

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informed, not in terms of fact, but in terms of mythology (do these filmic mythical messages offer messages whose societal effects may be damaging to society or to democracy)? And perhaps most poignantly, how do these new history films visually reconstruct African collective identities in ways that aim to transgress (although perhaps not always successfully) the identity descriptors imposed by the colonial system? Film, but more precisely, the *new history film*, is the site for analysis in the study, which will be used as a case study for the demonstration of the counter myth theoretical framework, developed in chapters two, three and four, and established in chapter five.

The South African films which are analysed for the study and in this chapter are selected according to two main criteria for analysis. First, all of the films discussed here are, in terms of their content, about South Africa, although they may not necessarily be produced, directed, or funded by South Africans, and in many cases the lead roles are not performed by South Africans. In terms of their content at least, and with regard to their plots and narratives, they are about and are set in South Africa. The second criterion for the selection of the films discussed here, is that each of these films, in one way or another, refer to or speak of South Africa's apartheid past, and the social difficulties of race and identity experienced in the present which are a result of the country's past racial segregation. Each of these films directly refer to the period of apartheid they, and therefore, by default, perform intertextual references that are historical in nature, and may be referred to or even generically demarcated as (new) history films. The now substantial body of South African new history films which have been produced since 1994 deserve critical attention because they serve inform the film audience's idea of apartheid era history. Importantly also is how these films represent collective South African racial or national identities with regard to apartheid and its lingering social effects.

Referring to films produced in the era of a newly democratic South Africa, Saks (2010:2-5) explains that in the wake of an immense social transition, there exists an atmosphere

of urgency to establish new formulations of representation, which partially function to "disgorge the old styles of thinking and showing". With regard to the South African experience after apartheid, Saks (2010) refers to this phenomenon as the 'race for representation'. Filmmakers in the first decade of post-apartheid South Africa produced narratives that, in their own way, contributed significantly to the "democratisation of the public sphere" (Saks 2010:10). The social upheaval and transition from apartheid to democracy that occurred in South Africa in 1994, called for cinema to contribute to the collective social healing of the nation, and carry messages of 'oneness' (Saks 2010:14).

Saks (2010:17) highlights that the effort to establish a new form of cinematic representation which is in keeping with the reconciliatory discourses of post-apartheid South Africa is spurred on by a number of motivations. Among these are the desire to represent some of the significant events of South Africa's recent past, such as the TRC (and in 2010, the 1995 Rugby World Cup, represented in the film *Invictus*). Further, such motivations include film's role is assisting with social reconciliation, to offer counter views of apartheid era history, to dispel social stereotypes and to formulate new ones. This observation is important to this study, as these characteristics are evident in a number of the films selected for the case study, as is discussed later in this chapter.

The term 'new history film', as it is employed for the purposes of the study must be clarified. The term has been used by historian and film theorist Robert Rosenstone (1995) to describe a particular trend in the film-making of historically themed films, outside of the more traditional confines of Hollywood produced period/history films. The collection of films selected for description in the study may be understood, to some degree, with regard to Rosenstone's (1995) understanding of new history film as is discussed below. However, this study employs the term 'new history film' in a different manner to Rosenstone (1995). First, and for the purpose of the study, the term (new history film) is referred to only with regard to and in connectedness to films about South Africa's apartheid era history as such: *post-apartheid South African new history film.*

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The study therefore considers post-apartheid South African new history film as a genre, within the wider landscape of varying genres within the South African film industry. The study limits or focuses its case study analysis on this particular film genre, necessitating the accurate and precise identification of the genre.

Second, the terms 'new history film' are employed in the identification of the genre with regard to the functions of counter myth discussed in subsection 2.5. The mythologisation of a counter view, or alternative view of history and the social past, is identified as one of the main social functions of counter myth (see 2.5). This mythical countering of dominant or previously dominant versions of history result in, literally, a new view, or new version of history. The term 'new history film' is then employed by the study to indicate or identify, a collection of films which are about South Africa, and which offer a counter view of history which in part, denaturalises previously dominant apartheid era versions of South African social and political history. This study recognises the value of the term, new history film, as employed by Rosenstone (1995), and although there may be a theoretical connectedness between some of the concerns of the study and Rosenstone's (1995) analysis of new history film, it should thus be emphasised that the use of the term in the study, is different to that of Rosenstone (1995).

Until recently, the history film has not enjoyed scholarly attention which regards it as a legitimate way of constructing the past. Traditionally history films have been analysed in one of two ways: either as an indication of the social and political climate in which they were made, meaning that the historical content of the film becomes irrelevant to the analysis, or as films which have been adapted from books, in which case the analysis operates according to the assumption that the film should represent exactly what appears on the written page, or written history. Robert Rosenstone (1995a:3) heads up a collection of theorists who believe that the history film is a unique strategy for confronting and representing the past, the analysis of which requires that the history film

be considered as a vessel for the reproduction of history in its own right. Rosenstone (1995a:3) makes the argument that "the visual media are a legitimate way of doing history – of representing, interpreting, thinking about, and making meaning from the traces of the past".

As an illustration of how history film ought to be considered according to the production mechanisms of the medium of film, and not against the yardstick of written history, he elaborates on what he calls new history film. Rosenstone (1995a:4), mentions a relatively new format of film which he terms the "New History Film". Such films originate in the cinema industries in countries all over the world, and deal with historical concerns in very different ways to the more traditional Hollywood costume drama, which is largely a setting for adventure and romance. According to Rosenstone (1995a:4-5), "[t]he difference between such works and traditional historical films is a matter of intent, content and form. Their aim is less to entertain an audience or make profits than to understand the legacy of the past". The majority of post-apartheid South African new history films selected for description in the case study (see 6.2 – 6.4) are produced by foreign film companies, funded by non-South Africans and many of the lead roles are played by non-South Africans. For the most part, the film style of the films selected for the study are broadly within a Hollywood mainstream tradition and visually reflect influences of the Hollywood costume or historical drama both in their aesthetic and narrative. They therefore do not adhere entirely to Rosenstone's (1995) classification of the new history film, which describes films mostly produced or funded locally and which employ filmic techniques which differ from traditional Hollywood narrative formulas. Nonetheless, Rosenstone's (1995 & 2006) notions of the film as a legitimate visual interrogation and interpretation of the collective social past is an important and relevant concept to the case study offered in subsections 6.2 to 6.4. Therefore, this study acknowledges Rosenstone's (1995 & 2006) recognition of the *social value of the representation of the past* on film as a key concept. As is illustrated in the case study (see 6.3) the representation of a community's past on film, offers a site for the reliving of

a traumatic past, a site where the trauma in question can be explained and may offer suggested mechanisms for communities to come to terms with a traumatic past.

Short (1981:16) supports Rosenstone's position by stating that historians ought to realise that films and the film industry are subjects which require historical study according to a separate set of criteria. Similarly, Sorlin (1980:32) states that "[m]ost books and reviews on the subject of history in film compare the events shown in film with a written description of those same events, but such an approach is ineffective". The historical film should not be examined with regard to how closely it visually translates written history, but according to its own rules of representation (Rosenstone 1995a:3). An analysis of film which measures the film only according to how closely it resembles written history is inadequate because it does not take into account that film, and literature (history books), are two very different mediums each with their own sets of codes and conventions. Filmic representations of history should be analysed according to the codes and conventions which are applicable to film.

Rosenstone (1995a:4) continues: "[j]ust as written history is not a solid and unproblematic object but a mode of thought, so is the historical film. This means that at the outset one must forget about comparing history on the screen to history on the page and focus instead on the larger realm of past and present in which both sorts of history are located and to which both refer. It is neither useful nor relevant to begin by asking, does film convey facts or make arguments as well as written history? The important questions are, how does film construct a historical world? What are the rules, codes, and strategies by which it brings the past to life? What does that historical construction mean to us?". To the mythologist this could be interpreted further: how do history films mythologise the past, in order to establish the myth discourse of the present?

The version of history offered by the printed page and that offered by the film have some similarities: both operate according to a set of conventions which have developed over time, both refer to actual events, but still both partake in the unreal and the fictional (Rosenstone 2006:2).

> This visual form of historical thinking should not and cannot be judged by the criteria we apply to the history that is produced on the page. Essentially it exists as a separate realm, one with its own set of rules and procedures for creating works with their own set of historical integrity, works which relate to, comment upon, and often challenge the world of written history… The history film speaks in a language that is metaphorical and symbolic, a language that creates a series of proximate or possible realities rather than a reality that is literally true – though it does intersect with the literal

> (Rosenstone 2006:37 & 48).

Importantly, the history film bears key characteristics which set it apart from films in other genres. Almost all historical films are centred around a story involving a selection of individual characters, whose lives play out against the backdrop of some historical narrative (Zemon Davis 2000:6). The filmic text evokes the past by individualising it: a story is told which is set in the past but the plot centres around a handful of central characters who are effected in some way by their historical circumstances (Rosenstone 1995a:8). Because we experience the past through the characters we can identify with them, and for a time achieve as sense of personal evolvement. Also, because the past is evoked by 'telling the story' of a few selected people, the emotion of past events becomes the nucleus of the text, and the factual preciseness becomes almost irrelevant.

Sorlin (1980:20) discusses how the audience are able to identify a film as historical with relative ease. The historical film contains certain recognisable signs and details which the audience can easily associate with a historical past. The history of any community contains dates, individual figures and key events which are known to every member of the group, and Sorlin (1980:20) refers to this as 'historical capital'. As historical film can draw a few key references to this historical capital and is therefore automatically placed as a representation of the past. Where the events which the film represents are not part of the general historical capital, the film must do additional representative work to stress the past-ness of the film (Sorlin 1980:20).

Because history films often evoke the historical capital of a specific community, they often tend to speak of content which is imbued ideas of the national, the nation and nationality, and, as is demonstrated later in this chapter, this is often the case with South African post-apartheid new history film. According to Hughes-Warrington (2007:10), "[o]ne of the functions most often connected with historical films is the establishing, affirming or challenging of national identity". When trying to theoretically define a national cinema or consider national identity as constructed by film, however, it should be remembered that such classifications should not be determined on the level of production. Instead, these concerns are satisfied in the content of the film. Hughes-Warrington (2007:83) states, "[c]inematic financing, production, distribution and reception have never fitted neatly within the analytic frame of the nation-state… films have been made as co-productions, drawing together finances, resources and personnel from different nations". Again, when a film evokes a sense of the national, it does so because of what it says to the audience, and not because of who financed or produced it. Content then, is key in determining whether a film forms part of a country's national cinema. For this reason, the films described in the case study (see 6.2 – 6.4) are purposefully selected for their content: the films selected for the study are narratively described as taking place within South Africa, and in some way represent a portion of South Africa's apartheid era history, for the purpose of examining how such films perform the counter mythologisation of South African apartheid history.

In her book *South African National Cinema*, Maingard (2007a:3) focuses her attention exclusively on those South African films which invoke a sense of the 'national' and the positioning of these films in their immediate political and historical contexts. The representational and semiotic formulas of South African cinema have transformed rapidly and remarkably since the advent of democracy. As a result cinema in South Africa cannot and should not be viewed outside of its historical and political environment. Historically South African cinema representational activities reflected the real world situations of colonialism and apartheid. Because in a new democratic dispensation audiences have such vastly different requirements and expectations of cinematic representations, new modes of analysis which take these into account, must be formulated (Maingard 2007a:2). Importantly, this is what the study endeavours to do.

South African post-apartheid film dealing with national history may be identified as a critical site for the formulation of reconstructed and even new collective identities. Until recently, identity in South Africa has been categorised, informed and understood within the frameworks of colonialism and apartheid, with race, class and gender acting as the key signifiers. Films are therefore an important visual reference to understand how they served to construct identities both during and after apartheid, and perhaps tracing this transition as it is visualised on film, can tell us something about what it is to be South African (Maingard 2007a:3).

According to Monaco (1981b:65), the nation becomes, or is, a "major repository of collective psychic energy in modern life". Thus, the nation is something which is widely mythologised, especially in and by film. Maingard (2007a:3) states, "[s]ince cinema is a medium that has the ability both to shape and reflect our perceptions, how it visualizes identities has crucial significance for our citizenship and nationhood". In this way, films contribute to a sense of nationhood, where in the modern era collectivity is most often nationally defined (Monaco 1981b:65). Cinema has a unique and important role in terms

of representing some of the various issues and aspects involved in the emergence of the new sense of 'nation' or 'nationhood'. We can see this from a historical perspective also, because a South African sense of 'nation' has long been interwoven into South African film representations (Maingard 2007a:2).

Importantly, history films seem to spawn naturally out of communities which are in the throes of collective recovery and in desperate need for historical connections: this includes post colonial nations, societies recovering from totalitarian regimes or where political systems have undergone particular upheaval (Rosenstone 1995a:5). It is significant that as groups of peoples or societies enter such periods of recovery a collective need arises for a reconnection to history. The history film can cater to this collective need perhaps better than any other medium, not only because it presents the audience with connections to the required segment(s) of history, but because these filmic representations of history are mythologised (or imbued with political myths) in ways which explain the community's current predicament and suggest projected outcomes for the future (see 3.1) (Tudor 1972:139).

History films, like counter myth, sometimes provide a version of the past that is very different from traditional history in that, although they may not necessarily revive a factually precise rendition of the past, they do provide a sense of the emotion which surrounded past traumatic events (Rosenstone 1995a:5). Since the enactment of a new representation of the past is a key function of counter myth (see 2.5), history film is often imbued with counter myth and relies heavily on counter myth discourse to determine the direction of its own narrative and content. Importantly, counter myth often supplies a version(s) of colonial/apartheid era history which is very different to the view of history offered by the (previously) dominant myth discourse (the discourse of those in power) and this is often evident in recent South African post-apartheid national new history film.

The question may arise as to why it is so important to take note of the counter versions of history offered by post-apartheid South Africa new history films at the current time. Where films are often regarded only as a form of mere entertainment and little else, the importance of this line of questioning may not be immediately apparent. Importantly, "history films, even when we know they are fanciful or ideological renditions of history, have an effect on the way we see the past. In most cases, a subtle effect, but an effect none the less" (Rosenstone 2006:5). It cannot be ignored that counter mythical history films and national cinema are more heavy in political content and social commentary than various other genres of film. It is their content which makes them so important, because they refer to (in South Africa in particular) questions of collective and national identity, ideas of reconciliation after a traumatic past, and counter ideas of the oppressive legislation of the past. They therefore are in the process of forming collective ideas on these notions, which are both sensitive and at the core of societies concerns. According to Hughes-Warrington (2007:58), historical films may be considered a site where one could explore contemporary attempts at a kind of social therapeutic effort at healing and closure. According to Good and Dillon (2002:x), "[m]ovies can be a possible source for ethics not because they present clear moral guidelines, but because they present visions of how people cope with various moral obligations and dilemmas".

Furthermore, film has the capacity to not only present openly the difficulties or complexities with regard to the change taking place within a society, but it can also offer, through its narrative, suggested coping mechanisms.

> One can argue that film is an important part of the cultural domain in any country, but particularly so in South Africa where social change depends on the *quality* of communication in the society. Communication is one of the cornerstones of democracy, and film and video can make an important contribution to the democratisation and development that need to take place within this society… as

forms of popular fiction, films and videos such… can explore the changes taking place in South Africa in a way that helps people to make sense of these dramatic changes

(Botha 2002:sa).

In keeping with these concerns, the following subsections of this chapter are a description of a selection of myths and counter myths according to their representation in post-apartheid South African new history film and national cinema. This is done in accordance to the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth on film offered in chapter five of the study.

In keeping with the discussion offered above, the case study of the study has purposefully selected films which:

- are represented or narrated as taking place in South Africa

- are not necessarily produced, funded, or acted by South Africans

- are directly linked in the narrative to South Africa's apartheid history

- contain evidence of the counter mythologisation of an alternative view of South African apartheid history, with particular regard to the counter mythologisation of the identity construction of South African whiteness

All of the films selected for description in the case study adhere to the determinants listed above. Each film is considered to form part of what this study regards as a film genre: that is, the genre of post-apartheid South African new history film. Andrew Tudor (1977:22) explains that film genres may be best employed when regarding a set of films within the social and psychological context in which a film was produced, while genres "might constructively be used in tapping the socio-psychological dynamics of film...".

The value of the recognition of post-apartheid South African new history film as a genre is then twofold with regard to the study. First, because the films selected for the study address a very particular and sensitive aspect of the South African socio-psychological condition, in that they represent the repercussions of South Africa's traumatic apartheid past. Second, if the utilisation of genre allows for the consideration of the social and psychological context of film production, then this notion addresses the social semiotic and the iconographic concern for the incorporation of the notion of context, in the analysis of the text (see 4.3).

6.2. The mythologisation of race: whiteness in post-apartheid film

> Whiteness as a construct depends on myths and distortions.
> What better place than the cinema to define, create, and
> maintain such myths and distortions?
>
> (Foster 2003:93).

As films mediate a great deal of the collective understanding of history, the myth content of such films is important because it facilitates the mythologisation of the past, resulting in specific formulations of identity and the collective sense of community in the present. Importantly, the production of various recent South African post-apartheid films constitutes the development of a new genre of South African new history films: the importance of this genre, and the mythological work which it performs, must not be ignored because of its positioning and ability to inform the collective community's idea of the past and understanding of the political present.

Mamdani (2004:6) calls the colonial European powers the "first fundamentalists of the modern period". Whether or not this is historically/chronologically true, the logic does make sense. The colonial powers put two key principles into practice: first that each colonized peoples must have a true, pure and original cultural tradition, and second,

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that this tradition must be returned to and revived at all costs and also be required by law.

This evocation of law in the enforcement of identity is problematic. Ethnicity, when practised as a cultural identity is consensual, but when enforced by state institutions it becomes political. As such, it becomes easier for the state to discriminate between various different identity groups (Mamdani 2004:7). Added to that, the legalisation of identity immediately restricts the potential of the identity with regard to the meanings which it can produce. Cultural identities "are non-coercive, consensual, voluntary and can be multiple" (Mamdani 2004:8). Once identities become political, that is, enforced by law, they lose much of these traits. The natural inter-pollination of cultural identities ceases, as individuals are considered to be of one identity or another, never a part of both, or understood to belong to one but assume certain attributes of another. In an ironic fashion, while legalised cultural identities are founded on at least sections of historical tradition, they cannot be accurately considered to be *real* tradition as they have indeed, to some extent, been manufactured by the state (Mamdani 2004:8). They are a result of a peoples colonial encounter with a Westernised framework of government, and although they are manufactured by turning to historical cultural tradition, the restrictions of legalised identities means that such identities are hardly natural enough to be considered sociologically valid. While the colonial powers no longer operate politically in Africa, however, these descriptors of identity are changing in representational practice such as film.

Turning attention to film's representation of ethnic identity then, with particular emphasis on how the medium semiotizes white ethnic identity, Foster (2003:1) asserts that,

> "[t]he history of moving pictures is a living record of performances of whiteness, class, gender, and myriad identity markers, such as sexuality, nationality, and ethnicity. It is ironic and fascinating that,

in the face of the biological evidence that race really doesn't exist, more than a century of filmic performances of whiteness would appear to insist on the existence and visual supremacy of whiteness".

Throughout the course of history the 'success' of different peoples has risen and fallen, and with them the discourses and significations which supported and hegemonised their power has done the same. The second half of the last millennium saw the widespread naturalisation of European global expansion and rationalisation of power, particularly over 'Other' peoples. The military, material and cultural wealth of Europeans created a schism between these Europeans and those relegated to the identity of 'Other'. Steyn (2003:235) identifies this as "... the ideologically powerful space of whiteness". While at the centre of cultural wealth and power, whiteness was able (and arguably still is able) to represent itself as normal, as *the* norm, and everything outside of itself as Other. From this point of view, the life-world and experience of the disadvantaged is examined and explored, but the world of the privileged goes unexamined as it is not seen to need explanation. Thus whiteness also becomes the yardstick by which the Other(s) is measured: representations of peoples can only be understood when explained in relation to whiteness (Steyn 2003:235).

According to Wasserman & Jacobs (2003:15), "... April 27, 1994 saw the birth of the "new" South Africa; in its wake social configurations have started to shift, identities are in the process of being renegotiated and cultural borders are being transgressed".[1] After the end of official whites-only rule in South Africa, re-alignments of cultural spaces and orientations have started taking place, while the balance of political power has

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[1] The 'new South Africa' is a term that has been popularised within South Africa which refers to the country's period of democratic governance, and was initiated on 27 April 1994 when the first democratic elections were held in the country's history.

effectively shifted from white to black. As a result, whiteness has had to consider a changed way of defining self and Other, since the position of (political) power from which it had validated its identity formulations in the past, is no more (Steyn 2003:236). Although whites have lost political power, they have not relinquished their position of material privilege and wealth. Consequently, new representations of whiteness do appear, in terms of the new political position of the white, but these new representations make only the political re-adjustment, and not the social/cultural one.

The initial optimism and euphoria which surrounded South Africa's transition to democracy has gradually been replaced with some disappointment as it became clear that although political power had now been given a black face, material wealth was not going to change hands, or even, become more readily available to the black. The past decade has seen numerous protests taking place in local, largely black populated local communities to protest about the lack of basic municipal services. Nonetheless, since the transition to democracy whites in South Africa have been experiencing a period of adjustment, as whiteness has literally been decentred and its (political) power decapitated. The traditional whiteness constructions of self and Other are now being challenged by the society in which South African whites find evolving around them, where both a new sense of self, and a new sense of the Other (from a white perspective), are being rearticulated. To analyse how white South Africans are representing this re-articulation may shed some light on how they are adjusting, if at all, to their new position in society and their loss of racial entitlement to privilege and power (Steyn 2003:236). Prior to democracy whites in South Africa seemed willing to tolerate or interact with the Other only on terms that facilitated a position of white control. The new South Africa was then, for whites, a new encounter with Africa, where the Other had to be met in a very different power environment (Steyn 2003:238).

One might expect that the opportunities afforded by a new South Africa might result in the disappearance of the old binaries of self and other, but this has not always proved to be the case, and in some instances old mechanisms of representation have survived. Accordingly, the impact of the past should not be neglected when trying to analyse the new formations of identities (Wasserman & Jacobs 2003:15-16).

When examining the current formulations of South African identities one must be careful not to fall into the trap of over-emphasis on issues of race, and over-exaggeration of the resistance and struggle: there are many more aspects to identity than race. Conversely, the questions surrounding race, past resistance and the hegemony of apartheid still do need investigation. Wasserman & Jacobs (2003:17) assert that, "[r]ace (and class) have been the master narratives of most South African texts in the post-apartheid context, and although there have been attempts to break with it, this seems easier said than done. While care should therefore be taken not to afford race and class over-determining importance, they remain key determinants in the formation of cultural and social identities and can therefore not be taken out of the equation".

Almost as an aside, when discussing genre's repertoire of elements, Lacey (2005:53) mentions that genres can also be identified by the emotion which they try to illicit from the audience: "[r]omance may try to elicit tears; horror, fear; thrillers, thrills; comedy, laughter". Lacey (2005:53) continues: "However, more importantly, genres are often associated with particular themes: for example the wilderness versus civilisation opposition in Westerns, and human: non-human opposition in SF". If this is the case then perhaps South African post-apartheid national cinema can be identified by some defining emotions and themes, such as reconciliation, forgiveness, the sadness for the past, the black-white opposition and the evil white versus good white opposition. Indeed, such themes are elicited by the regular and frequent representation of the myth

of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator in post-apartheid South African history film, as is discussed in the subsection that follows.

6.3   Applying the theoretical model: counter myth analysis on post-apartheid South African new history film. The myths of the good and bad white perpetrator

> The new millennium has seen a pronounced increase in the number of films about white people in Africa, about their travails in chaotic political situations
>
>   (Rijsdijk 2007:306).

This subsection performs a description of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator in post-apartheid South African history film, as a case study for the purpose of demonstrating the operation of counter myth in film. The study acknowledges the repeated representation of various other myths of whiteness in post-apartheid representational practice, but these two myths have been chosen specifically for description here because they overtly engage in the troubled political relationships and roles (such as that of the apartheid era oppressor, or the post-apartheid figure whom requires forgiveness) which South African whites have been embroiled in with regard to South Africa's apartheid past and its democratic present. Furthermore, these two myths are of particular importance to the study, because they are understood to operate as counter myth (see 6.3.3).

For ease of reference and to guide the reader, Table 6.1 is included below: it represents a summary of the discussion which takes place in subsection 6.3 (this subsection). It should be clear from this table, that the discussion here (in 6.3) is structured according to the theoretical framework for counter myth analysis, which was theorised in chapters two, three and four, and technically laid out in chapter five. Therefore, the subsections of chapter five are used in a similar manner in chapter six, except that in chapter six a practical counter myth description is performed. These subsections, as they appear in chapter five, are as follows:

5.1 Myth identity: naming and placing the myth

5.2 Medium(s) of myth representation (form)

5.3 Myth type (form and function): dominant myth and counter myth

5.4 Myth format (form): myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object

5.5 Myth genre and myth sub-genre (content)

5.6 Mythic iconography (content)

Only the last subsection (5.6) is altered in chapter six, because it is included in subsection 6.3.4, and the reason for this is explained in the table below and in subsection 6.3.4. Below then, is a table which serves as an overall summary of the counter mythical case study analysis which is presented in this chapter.

Table 6.1: Summary of the application of the model for counter myth analysis developed in chapter five and practically performed in chapter six: counter myth analysis on post-apartheid South African new history film.

6.3.1 Myth identity: naming and placing the myth

This section contextualises the discussion of the counter mythical construction of the collective identities of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator. Some of the main characteristics of each of these myths are described in an introductory fashion (and are dealt with in more detail in 6.3.4).

6.3.2 Medium of myth representation

A film inventory of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator in post apartheid South African national history film is offered to qualify and validate the status of these two myths as myth. This is done because one of the criteria for a signified to be classified as myth, it that it must have appeared within cultural artefacts (in this case, films) on numerous occasions (see 4.3.3). This inventory then serves to justify the mythic status of the two above mentioned myths.

6.3.3 Myth type: dominant myth and counter myth

Because the main focus of this study is to contribute to the larger body of myth theory by exploring the theorisation of counter myth, the selection of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator is significant as a case study because both of these myths are understood by this study to be counter myths. These myths status as counter myth is explained in this section.

6.3.4 Myth format: myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object and mythic iconography

This section contains a detailed analysis of a selection of South African post apartheid history films. The semiotic representation of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator is discussed with regard to how these myths manifest in both the narratives and the visual codes of these films. In particular, the following myth genres are discussed:

    6.3.4.1 Bad whites and good whites on film
    6.3.4.2 The collective mythologisation of bad whites
    6.3.4.3 The bad white turns good white
    6.3.4.4 The new white

The mythic iconography of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator in post apartheid South African national history film is discussed at length in this section. For the purposes of this particular case study, the iconography of these myths is discussed in an integrated way when describing the semiotic encodifications of these myths, and therefore will not be discussed in a separate section as indicated in the theoretical model developed in chapter 5 (see 5.6).

6.3.5 Myth genre and myth sub-genre

This section continues the argument established in chapter 5.5, that certain myths may be generically categorised into myth genres. Therefore, a myth genre inventory of racial mythologies of whiteness in post apartheid South African history films is offered here.

6.3.1 Myth identity: naming and placing the myth

The myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator as represented in post-apartheid South African new history film are often represented in a binary way, and while the content of these two complex myths should not be oversimplified, they are sometimes structured in a near binary or opposing format to one another. Paradoxically, these two myths, while both constructing new understandings of whiteness, and while they encourage two separate ways in which to view whiteness, bear many of the same characteristics. While a white person in post-apartheid South Africa, according to these myths, can be in possession of a set of either good or bad ethics, a white person is almost certainly a perpetrator or a transgressor of some of the ethical delineations which accompany the idea of South Africa's new democracy. As will be discussed later in this chapter (see 6.3.4), white filmic protagonists such as Anna Malan (*In My Country* 2005), James Gregory (*Goodbye Bafana* 2007) or Tertius Coetzee (*Forgiveness* 2004) are all good white characters: although they may have committed some kind of transgression in their past they express genuine remorse for having done so. Although such characters are not mythologised as bad whites, and an entirely different filmic treatment of them is practiced (audiences are encouraged to forgive such characters) they are represented as perpetrators nonetheless. Within both the myth of the good white and the myth of the bad white perpetrator, it is nearly impossible for the white character to be entirely guiltless.

Recent South African film narratives have involved the white character or protagonist, in various representations of reconciliation, and this has been done most notably in the TRC themed films. Significantly, and this cannot be avoided, such attempts at reconciliation predictably involve the mythic representation of the white figure, recognised as the apartheid era oppressor. White characters in these films are afforded the opportunity to confess their crimes and show remorse, in symbolic acts of filmic

reconciliation. Unfortunately, black characters are often afforded limited spaces for character development and are largely positioned only to receive the apologies of the white character and gain some insight into collective white guilt (Rijsdijk 2007:306), therefore allowing little space for an in depth filmic representation of detailed and complex black characters. The myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator are often positioned in terms of whether or not they deserve forgiveness, and consequently in direct or even binary opposition to one another.

A social and cultural reconstruction is inevitably taking place in an attempt to replace apartheid's constructions of socio-cultural significations. It would be a mistake, however, that these new reconstructions are a simple opposite, or negative of the apartheid past, because the process of these reconstructions are more complex and contain their own nuances and subtleties (Tomaselli & Shepperson 2001:98). Also, when examining the current formulations of South African identities one must be careful not to fall into the trap of over-emphasis on issues of race, and over-exaggeration of the resistance and struggle: there are many more aspects to identity than race. Conversely, the questions surrounding race, past resistance and the hegemony of apartheid still do need investigation. Examples of the recent representation of race, and especially the white race, in post-apartheid South African new history film is expanded upon later in the chapter (in particular, see 6.3.4).

Foster (2003:25) claims that "[w]hiteness as a construct was already in place at the end of the nineteenth century when photography and cinema began their respective histories. Certainly, whiteness has been an identity in flux since very early times. Most interesting in examining whiteness in the cinema, though, is the peculiar rise of a falsely stable American whiteness, which was created at the expense of hybridity". For the most part, the construct of whiteness in Hollywood remains largely preserved to the present, while whites fulfil the traditional roles of heroic protagonists, while Asians,

blacks and Latin Americans play either the roles of the white's helper or the evil villain. Although South African film for a large period of its history was able to mirror and exemplify Hollywood's example by fronting a solid and seemingly stable construct of whiteness, this is no longer possible. The construct of whiteness, not only in film but in popular culture in general, is in a post-apartheid era, less stable than ever before, for myriad complex and interrelated societal reasons.

The two most significant differences between the good and the bad white, are first, their capacity to show remorse for their past actions, and second, whether they are represented as being deserving of forgiveness. The good white perpetrator is usually a character who is opposed to the system of apartheid and has a personal framework of good ethics, and reveals this through various personal traits or comments: the good white has black friends and colleagues (often black 'side-kicks'), works against the apartheid system and may even have a black lover. The good white perpetrator may be involved in a filmic buddy relationship of some kind: the Hollywood filmic tradition of paring the protagonist white character with a black character to suggest racial harmony. The good white character is often a tragic figure on South African film because this character is a perpetrator nonetheless. The good white perpetrator may have good intentions now, but this was not always so. Somewhere in the past, or throughout the duration of the film, the good white does (or is forced to do) an action of (usually racially inspired) a dubious nature which usually does harm to someone who is not white. The good white perpetrator, however, is imbued with a strong sense of the ethics of the new democracy of South Africa, and is therefore tortured for and by these past actions. This torture may be emotional, psychological or physical, and may require the good white to suffer a great loss of some kind, which may entail losing a loved one, or becoming the victim of physical torture. The good white perpetrator, in order to be cleansed of the guilt of his or her past wrongdoing, must suffer this torture and loss: it is almost a ritualistic signifier for the redemption of the good white perpetrator. Films, as is argued in 6.3.4, encourage the audience to forgive the good white perpetrator for whatever wrongdoing has been committed in the past, because of two elements: first, because the good white

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has received a portion of fair and just punishment for the crime of the past, and second, because the good white has revealed genuine remorse for these past actions and is haunted by the guilt of the actions.

Conversely, the bad white perpetrator character never expresses remorse for the grossly unethical and often cruel or diabolical actions which he has committed in the past (the bad white perpetrator is almost always a "he", and therefore imbued with the masculine). The bad white does not like to associate with anyone other than whites like himself: he is racist towards blacks and dislikes good whites because they do not dislike blacks. The bad white perpetrator has, and possibly still does, commit blatant offences often including physical violence, torture or murder, against blacks and against whites who associate with blacks. Key to the myth of the bad white perpetrator is that he does not, at any point in the filmic narrative, undergo the redeeming transformation which the good white does. The bad white expresses no remorse or guilt for his diabolical actions. As a result the audience is not encouraged to forgive him, because he is undeserving of any forgiveness. Disappointingly, the bad white perpetrator is often signified as Afrikaans in ethnicity, which may result from and contribute to the negative stereotyping of the collective Afrikaner.

Significantly, the bad white perpetrator also suffers an apportionment of torture. This torture does not serve the same purpose here as when it is applied to the good white, who must undergo a certain degree of torture as a cleansing ritual. The torture which eventually befalls the bad white is pure punishment. The bad white perpetrator as a central character in the filmic narrative, will always become entrapped by his punishment before the end of the film, whether this punishment is imprisonment or death. Perhaps this part of the myth is engineered to offer film audiences some kind of satisfaction: mythically we are informed that the perpetrators of the apartheid era have received what they deserve. From a narrative perspective, it would not do to allow the

perpetrators in the plot to go unpunished. Although this may seem morbid, in a sense it does offer a way of moving forward for the collective. If the bad white perpetrators of the apartheid era have been punished, then the collective nation can move on from its traumatic past. In a way then, the myth of the bad white perpetrator also functions as a type of reconciliation myth. The above theorisation and argumentation are further substantiated in the description of specific films in 6.3.4.

6.3.2 Medium of myth representation

As discussed in subsection 4.3.3 there exists a quantitative and qualitative disparity in the operation of myth. The concept of the myth is qualitatively richer, while the unlimited nature of the signifiers and forms make the signifier wealthier qualitatively. Therefore, the concept of one myth may be found across a spectrum of a wide range of signifying acts. It is this repetition of concept through different forms which is so important because it allows theorists not only to recognise the myth as myth, but helps us to investigate its motivations (Barthes 1972:120). What this means here, practically speaking, is that by formulating a simple inventory it is possible to collect evidence that the same myth(s) is present in a number of different post-apartheid South African new history films.

To qualify any signified, including filmic representations, as myth, it must have appeared within the cultural artefacts (in this case, films) of a society numerous times (see 4.3.3). It would be impossible to list all instances of the representation of a single filmic myth on one mythic inventory because the possibilities for myth representation are endless. Accordingly, an inventory of only exemplary or typical instances of the representation of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator as represented on post-apartheid South African new history film is provided here.

Such an inventory is found below. Nevertheless, to repeat and emphasise, the list is not exclusive, and additional instances of the representation of either of these myths may be found in other post-apartheid South African national history films, as well as other post-apartheid media texts such as, for example, in advertising. That is not the object of the study. Nevertheless, representation of both of these myths may also be found in mass communications mediums other than film.

Table 6.2: Film inventory of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator in post-apartheid South African national new history film (compiled in chronological order)

Film title and date released	White character who embodies the representation of the myth	Nature of the content of the myth: myth of the good white perpetrator or the myth of the bad white perpetrator	Does the character reveal genuine remorse for past actions/perform a redeeming action?	Form of punishment received
Cry, the Beloved Country (1995)	Arthur Jarvis (absent character)	Good white	No need in terms of the narrative for Arthur to do this. He is guiltless but also physically absent	Murdered by Stephen's son, though the punishment is underserved
Cry, the Beloved Country (1995)	James Jarvis	Bad white turns good white	Yes	Suffers the loss of his murdered son
Drum (2003)	Jim Bailey (British)	Good white	Exempt due to nationality	Suffers intimidation and the loss of friend and colleague, Henry Nxumalo
Drum (2003)	Jurgen Schadeberg (German)	Good white	Exempt due to nationality	Suffers the loss of friend and colleague, Henry Nxumalo
Drum (2003)	Can's girlfriend (British)	Good white	Exempt due to nationality	Harassed by the police then arrested when found in bed with Can, and deported
Drum (2003)	Major Alt Spengler	Bad white	No	Humiliated by the community of Sophiatown at the funeral of Henry Nxumalo
Drum (2003)	Prison wardens at Johannesburg Central Prison	Bad whites	No	Not visualised in the film
Drum (2003)	Farmer	Bad white	No	Not visualised in the film
Drum (2003)	Members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church	Bad whites	No	Not visualised in the film
Promised Land (2003)	Pieter Neethling (George's uncle)	Good white	No need in terms of the narrative for Pieter to do this. He is physically absent, because he has already been murdered	Subject to hostility from the community for showing sympathy for blacks, and murdered by Carla's family members and Gerhard Snyman.
Promised Land (2003)	George Neethling	Good white	Yes	Held captive by the community of extremist Afrikaners, and eventually forced to abandon his lover, Carla
Promised Land (2003)	Carla	Good white	Yes	Carla suffers the loss of her brother, who is murdered by her mother, and most of

				her family who are shot by the police. Her first fiancé is murdered by her family, and she is separated from her new lover George
Promised Land (2003)	Paultjie	Good white	Yes	Is tortured by the guilt of the murder of PN, although it was his brothers who committed the murder. Often harassed and physically tortured by his brothers. Shot dead by his mother.
Promised Land (2003)	Gerhard Snyman (Carla's new fiancé)	Bad white	No	Shot dead by the police
Promised Land (2003)	Carla's father and brothers (including Johannes)	Bad whites	No	Shot dead by the police
Promised Land (2003)	Community of Afrikaans farmers	Bad whites	No	Most are shot dead by the police
Stander (2003)	Andre Stander	Good white	Yes	Badly beaten by the father of a young township protestor whom Stander killed during a riot. Stander is shot dead by the police
Stander (2003)	Stander's father	Bad white	No	Suffers the humiliation of his son becoming a criminal
Stander (2003)	Standers police force colleagues	Bad whites	No	Although not explicitly revealed in the narrative, the implied rise to power of the democratically elected ANC led government eliminates these characters position of power
Forgiveness (2004)	Tertius Coetzee	Bad white turns good white	Yes	Tortured by the guilt of murdering Daniel. Shot dead by one of Daniel's struggle era comrades, Zuko
Red Dust (2004)	Sarah Barcant	Good white	Yes	Ostracised by the white community, imprisoned briefly as a young teenager, then forced to live in exile, while her young lover is murdered by the apartheid police
Red Dust (2004)	Collective white community of Smitsrivier, including the young white woman who lives in Sarah's childhood home	Bad whites	No	The rise to power of the democratically elected ANC led government has eliminated these characters position of power, which is visualised in their discomfort during the arrival

				of the TRC bandwagon
Red Dust (2004)	Ben Hoffman	Good white	Guiltless	Although undeserved, he suffers from bad health
Red Dust (2004)	Dirk Hendriks	Bad white	No. His display of remorse is not convincingly genuine	He is already serving 18 years imprisonment of the murder of an apartheid activist. He claims to suffer from post traumatic stress disorder and complains of how his family life is in tatters.
Red Dust (2004)	Captain Piet Muller	Bad white	No	His dishonestly regarding his part in the murder of apartheid activist Steven Sizela is discovered by authorities and he is arrested.
In My Country (2005)	Anna Malan	Good white	Yes	Her brother commits suicide, her marriage collapses, she is rejected by her own community, she is separated from her lover, Langston Whitfield, and she feels acute remorse for the atrocities of apartheid
In My Country (2005)	Col. Henri De Jager	Bad white	No	Denied amnesty at the TRC and is put on trial
In My Country (2005)	Anna's mother	Good white	Yes	Seems trapped in an unhappy marriage and her son commits suicide
In My Country (2005)	Anna's father	Bad white	No	His son commits suicide
In My Country (2005)	Anna's brother (Boetie)	Bad white	No. Attempts to justify his actions to Anna.	He kills himself, supposedly because of his unacknowledged feelings of guilt
In My Country (2005)	Sergeant De Smidt	Bad white	No	Unclear
In My Country (2005)	Sergeant Schempers	Bad white	No	Unclear
In My Country (2005)	Mr van Deventer	Bad white turns good white	Yes	Claims to have been psychologically tortured by the guilt of killing a young boy's (Peter Makeba) parents
Tsotsi (2006)	White policeman	Good white	Guiltless	None
Catch a Fire (2007)	Joe Slovo	Good white	Guiltless	None
Catch a Fire (2007)	Nic Vos	Bad white	No	The rise to power of the democratically elected ANC led government eliminates his position of power. He ends the film powerless, stripped of authority, old, lonely and seemingly in bad

				health
Catch a Fire (2007)	Policemen	Bad white	No	Although not explicitly revealed in the narrative, the rise to power of the democratically elected ANC led government eliminates these characters position of power
Catch a Fire (2007)	Foreman at Secunda	Bad white	No	Although not explicitly revealed in the narrative, the rise to power of the democratically elected ANC led government eliminates this character's position of power
Goodbye Bafana (2007)	James Gregory	Bad white turns good white	Yes	His son dies in a car accident, which he sees as punishment for his past actions
Goodbye Bafana (2007)	Gregory's Robben Island colleagues	Bad whites	No	Although not explicitly revealed in the narrative, the rise to power of the democratically elected ANC led government eliminates these characters position of power
Goodbye Bafana (2007)	Cape Town policemen who perform a pass book check	Bad whites	No	Although not explicitly revealed in the narrative, the rise to power of the democratically elected ANC led government eliminates these characters position of power
Jerusalema (2008)	Leah Freidlander & parents	Good whites	Yes	The drug addicted brother/son escapes from a rehabilitation facility and is then killed by Nigerian gangsters
Jerusalema (2008)	Police chief	Bad white	No	Suspended from the police force and even after arresting his nemesis Kunene. Kunene manages to escape custody
Skin (2010)	Abraham Laing	Bad white	Yes	Is estranged from his daughter Sandra, separated from her for over ten years and does not see her again before he dies.
Skin (2010)	Leon Laing	Bad white	No	None
Skin (2010)	Sannie Laing	Complex mythologisation of both good white and bad	Yes	Is estranged from her daughter Sandra. Despite many attempts to reunite

		white within this one character		with Sandra is prevented from doing so by her cruel and dictatorial husband. Suffers bitterly because of the separation from her daughter.
Skin (2010)	White inhabitants of Sandra Laing's school: teachers, pupils and headmaster	Bad whites	No	None
Invictus (2010)	Francois Pienaar	Good white	No	No punishment is meted out. Instead Pienaar is rewarded and achieves incredible success, captaining the 1995 Springbok rugby team which wins the Rugby World Cup.
Invictus (2010)	Pienaar's father	Bad white	No	None
Invictus (2010)	Pienaar's white Springbok team mates	Bad whites turned good whites	No	No punishment is meted out. Instead this group is rewarded and achieves incredible success, winning the 1995 Rugby World Cup.
Invictus (2010)	Mandela's white group of bodyguards	Bad whites turned good whites	No	None

6.3.3 Myth type: dominant myth and counter myth

The myths of the bad white perpetrator and the good white perpetrator are both understood by the study to be counter mythical. These myths can be considered counter mythical for various reasons.

Firstly, due to the historical positioning of the representation of these myths (historically immediately after apartheid in South Africa) and their chronological proximity to previously represented mass media myths of apartheid, we are offered the first indication that the myths of the bad and good white perpetrator are counter mythical. During or after any massive change in society (see chapter 3) counter myths offer themselves to readers as mechanisms to explain the changes within the social world, a call to actively reject present or previously dominant myth discourse(s) and a call to accept the counter myth discourse. Therefore, the historical positioning of the myths of the bad and good white perpetrators is indicative of potential counter mythic status, because these myths occur within filmic representation at a time when counter mythic activity is (and was) certain to be wide spread within mass media representational mechanisms. South Africa's transition from an apartheid government to democracy involved massive societal paradigm shifts, and to assume that mythic representational activity was immune to this would not be accurate.

Secondly, the myths of the bad and good white perpetrator can be considered counter mythical because of their narrative content. The characteristics and typical features of each of these myths are expanded upon in detail in different subsections of this chapter so will not be discussed at length here. Both of these myths perform a counter mythical function with regard to their content in that they, first, offer counter views which are markedly different to the views of whites offered by an apartheid-era dominant ideology

and discourse, and second, they provide new representational white identities. That an apartheid-era dominant myth discourse would not have encouraged the white figure to be represented as a perpetrator of any kind (whether good or bad) seems to need no explanation. The white as the perpetrator is a myth which has only found the social space in representation prior to the collapse of power of the apartheid-era dominant myth discourse. This counter myth discourse aims to counter the previously dominantly disseminated representation of whites, but also it provides alternate identities for white South Africans.

It is evident that the myths of the bad and good white perpetrator encourage a form of social change to some degree, but also function as a manner of explanation: they serve to explain to audiences how South African society arrived at its current position (Tudor 1972:139, and see 3.1). As with all myth, the history is emptied out of detail and complexities, and it is simplified: according to the myth of the bad white perpetrator South Africa now finds itself in the position of having to recover from an apartheid past because of a collection of bad whites who caused all the trouble. Social change, however, is both encouraged and approved of by the myth of the good white perpetrator: according to the simplified history (Barthes 1972:117-118, and see 2.1) offered by this myth, apartheid is at an end and this is because a small collection of good whites contributed both contributed to its demise, and function effectively in the new South Africa by integrating with blacks easily. The call to action from this counter myth comes in the form of the exemplary white: the good white perpetrator is the example which all South African whites are mythically encouraged to follow. Whites should be apologetic for the atrocities of the past, gladly accept their portion of punishment for any wrongdoing and embrace the ideals of a democratic South Africa in which racism and apartheid have little place.

Because both of these counter myths speak of new cultural identities, offer counter views to the identities of the recent past and encourage the assumption of a certain political position, they can be considered political myths, or more accurately, political counter myths (see 2.6). The narrative content of the myths of the bad and good white perpetrator, apart from being entangled with social concerns of collective identity, are undoubtedly intrinsically connected to the political issues of South Africa's recent history, and with particular emphasis on the political transition from apartheid to democracy. Once the political nature of these myths is recognised, it also becomes evident that there has been a marked inter-animation between the dominant myth discourse(s) of the apartheid-era and the counter myth discourse which operates in present day South African representational activities. Although it is clear that this counter mythic activity cannot be measured in terms of a binary opposite to the dominant myth discourse(s) of the apartheid-era (see 2.7, and Tomaselli and Shepperson 2001:98), the inter-animation between the apartheid mythologies of the past and the corresponding new counter mythologies of the present must also not be ignored. The construction of these counter myths form part of the social and cultural reconstruction which is invariably occurring in an attempt to reformulate apartheid's constructions of socio-cultural significations.

The technical format of the counter myth must be considered here. Recalling the multi-dimensional format of counter myth as described in chapter two of the study, counter myth takes as its point of departure the history offered by the (dominant) myth (see 2.1). The myths of the bad and good white perpetrator are observable instances of this mythic phenomenon. These myths begin to operate only from the platform offered to them by the apartheid-era dominant myth discourse. Without this starting point of apartheid mythology, the myths of the bad and good white perpetrator would not be socially necessary, they would have little to speak about, they would have no history to transcribe, there would be no need to rearticulate the identities with which they are occupied and there would not be an ideology and history to counter. The paradox of the dependency of counter myth on dominant myth again becomes evident, since although

these counter myths work to offer an alternate view of the past and rearticulate the identities inscribed by a previously dominant myth discourse, they would indeed not occur at all without the dominant myth discourse which they rival.

Taking history and context into account it must be stated that although the myth discourse of the bad and good white perpetrators are described in the study as counter myths, it is not likely that they will remain counter myths permanently. As time progresses these myths, or rather the myth discourse of which they form part, may become successful and reach a kind of mythical maturity whereby this counter myth discourse may become the dominant myth discourse. In the interest of the continuance of a newly established democracy in South Africa, it would perhaps be the mythological ideal that myths which operate according the principles of democracy, and equality of opportunity and human rights which do not depend on racial descriptors, are successful in their development and serve to entrench such a myth discourse. At this time it is likely that the counter political myths of the good and bad white perpetrator will change both their format and content to suit the social environment at that time. They may no longer need to operate necessarily as counter myths, but as dominant myths, at which point they will cease their countering function and attain a purpose of maintaining the myth discourse. This may require a change in content, which would include the narrative of the myth-as-narrative and the iconology of the myth-as-object. It is possible then, that the mythological construction of the white figure in both films and other mass communications media may change again. Of course, it is also possible that the myths of the good and bad white perpetrator and the myth discourse which surrounds them may not be successful due to a failure in widespread acceptance, in which case these myths, in order to survive, will need to drastically alter their content and format, or they will simply disappear from representational practice.

The basic functions fulfilled by the counter political myths of the good and bad white perpetrator are described below (see 2.5). These functions are considered with regard

to the key points outlined in chapter two, and are discussed here according to the five key functions of counter myth, delineated in subsection 2.5.

Self-definition

The counter political myths of the good and bad white perpetrator provide a manner in which white readers may position themselves within the social arena of a newly democratised South Africa. While myths always serve to simplify the complexities of history and the present, white readers are offered simplified and uncomplicated categories in which to position themselves. That these two myths may amount to the stereotyping of white figures additionally means that readers who are not white are also offered typical short-handed descriptions by which to understand the white South African collective.

Alternative identity

Both the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator offer alternative white identities. The content and myth-as-narrative of the good white myth suggest, as has been discussed, an exemplary kind of ideal identity for South African whites. This figure, as the good white, is viewed with acceptance in spite of the apartheid past. Because of this white's high standard of ethics, good moral code and willingness to embrace the principles of racial harmony as opposed to racism, the identity of the good white perpetrator is a suggested alternative to the white identity offered by apartheid-era myth discourse(s), which included notions of white racial and cultural supremacy, white authority and white separateness from so-called non-whites.

The myth of the bad white perpetrator also functions as an alternative identity because it vilifies the white figure who desists from indulging in the apartheid-era myth discourse of racism and racial oppression. The previously dominant myth discourse of apartheid would not have vilified the white figure for supporting the ideology of apartheid. Indeed, the myth of the bad white perpetrator then becomes an alternate identity, and perhaps also a negatively stereotyped one, though certainly it does not function according to the exemplary purpose of the myth of the good white perpetrator.

Recognition of the need for social change

The myths of the bad and good white perpetrator, as they are represented in post-apartheid South African new history film and national cinema, recognise that the large scale social change of a transition from apartheid to democracy has occurred, is yet to occur or is currently occurring, depending on the particular nuances of myth-as-narrative representation of any particular film. Both myths recognise the need for social change in South Africa in broad terms, and in particular address the rearticulation of the manner in which whites are viewed and represented. This rearticulation stems from the social change which saw white South Africans losing their previous position of absolute political power.

Mythical self-defence

The myth of the good white perpetrator fulfils the counter myth function of self-defence. While the bad white perpetrator is represented as the villain, the myth of the good white perpetrator functions almost as a counter myth to the myth of the bad white. The figure of the good white posits that not all whites are evil or morally depraved, that some whites are prepared to pay a high price in defence of their good ethical principles and

above all, that some whites are not racist. Importantly, that myth of the good white perpetrator also declares that certain whites may be forgiven of the collective blame allotted to whites for the atrocities of apartheid. The myth of the good white perpetrator, because it works hard to represent the white figure in a positive light in spite of a political climate which would perhaps vilify or negatively stereotype all whites, serves the counter mythic function of mythical self-defence.

A counter view of history (see 2.5)

The disparity between the view of history according to the dominant myth, and the view of history according to the counter myth should be examined (see 2.7). This is important because the collective's view of history is pivotal in the establishment of collective/cultural/national identity (Rosenstone 1995, Sorlin 1980). The history offered by incorporating the representation of the myths of the bad and good white perpetrators in post-apartheid South African new history film is a counter view of the history presented by apartheid era film producers. Speaking of the manner in which white Afrikaners were represented in apartheid era South African films, Renders (2007:231) points out that prior to 1994, "Afrikaner audiences had been fed a diet of light entertainment in which idealised Afrikaners were treated with all due respect. These movies, which were heavily subsidized by the government, reinforced rather than questioned the traditional ideology of the Afrikaner people". As the description of post-apartheid South African new history film offered in this subsection amply demonstrates, this is no longer the case. In filmic terms, the ideology and white constructed identities of apartheid era representational practice have come under serious scrutiny, and have been overturned. All of the films analysed in this section refer to an apartheid history in one way or another, and significantly all do so in a manner that is recognisably critical of the apartheid policies and their effects on society in the past resulting in representations of South African apartheid era history that constitutes a counter view of history. More

specifically, the traditional construction of white apartheid era identities are also transcribed by the counter myths of the bad and good white perpetrator.

When referring to the myth and myth genre inventories in this section it becomes clear that the myths of the bad and good white perpetrator have, in a short period of time, received regular and reoccurring representation in post-apartheid South African new history film. The frequency of representation of these counter myths may suggest that they are well received and accepted by myth reading audiences, that they operate in a discoursal environment which favours their mythical message and that they have essentially been able to adopt effective communications mediums for their representation (which does not necessarily only include film).

As emphasised in subsection 2.5, there may be more functions of the counter political myths of the good and bad white perpetrator than those listed here, which may be discovered after additional research. Necessarily then, the concerns of myth function are considered flexible and adaptable by the study.

6.3.4 Myth format: myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object and mythic iconography

This subsection involves a discussion of the myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object content of a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films. The emphasis is on the explicit representation of the myths of the bad and good white perpetrators in these films.

The description of myth iconography is proposed by the framework for the analysis of myth on film in chapter five (see 5.6). Myth iconography, however, is discussed in this subsection and not in a separate subsection as indicated by the theoretical model in chapter five. This integration is performed because the study makes use of semiotics as a mode of analysis for visual iconography, and semiotics recognises myth to be an act of speech (myth-as-object). Therefore to avoid repetition and to aid ease of discussion, the iconography of the myths of the bad and good white perpetrators are discussed in terms of the myth-as-object in this subsection.

What follows then, in this section, is a discussion and description of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator in a selection of South African post-apartheid new history films.

6.3.4.1 Bad whites and good whites on film

The film, *In My Country* (2005), based on the novel *Country of My Skull* (Antjie Krog: 1998), follows two journalists, a white Afrikaans woman, Anna Malan, and a black American man, Langston Whitfield, as they follow the TRC hearings across South Africa which took place after 1994. *In My Country* (2005) is discussed in detail here due to the nature of the narrative the myth-as-narrative and myth-as-objects of the film which are heavy with content with regard to both the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator.

One representation of the bad white perpetrator which is examined in more detail than most is that of Colonel Henri De Jager. De Jager represents a fictional character who during the apartheid regime held a prominent position in the South African government's

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security branch, and who committed many human rights abuses, supposedly under the orders of his superiors. He holds the narrative position within the context of the film, as a kind of ultimate white perpetrator. Many white male characters appear before the TRC in the film, but in terms of the plot De Jager is vilified and established as someone who, perhaps because of his elevated position of power, committed grand atrocities on a large scale. In the film he is interviewed at his home by a black American journalist, Langston Whitfield, and is surrounded visual symbols which contribute to his mythologisation: armed white men, animal trophies and the old apartheid era South African flag.[2]

Figure 6.3.4.1: Henri De Jager during his interview with Langston Whitfield

(*In My Country* 2005)

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[2] The flag mentioned here, which was the national flag of South Africa during apartheid, is a symbol which predates the apartheid period. The flag was adopted in 1928, following the establishment of the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910, and continued use until 1994, which marked South Africa's transition to democracy. The flag was commonly known as the *oranje-blanje-blou* (orange, white and blue) (Berry 2011). Despite being adopted before the onset of the apartheid system (in 1948), the flag became synonymous with the apartheid regime and has since appropriated connotations connected to apartheid.

Figure 6.3.4.2: Henri De Jager during his interview with Langston Whitfield

(*In My Country* 2005)

At Whitfield's first meeting with De Jager we are mythically introduced to this figure of evil even before he physically appears on the screen. On Whitfield's arrival at the farm he enters a large and heavy security gate, after which he is immediately searched by an aggressive white man. Whitfield is then led into a room which appears to be an entertainment area as there is a bar at one end. Whitfield looks around the room and the camera follows his gazes so that the audience is given a sense of what he sees. The room is adorned with numerous stuffed heads of dead animals, most noticeably the head of a snarling hyena. In a brief shot the camera focuses on the old South African flag which is hung against a wall in amongst the animal heads. The apartheid era flag is so heavy in ideological meaning, used in this context that it operates as a myth-as-object symbol, used here to introduce De Jager as the bad white perpetrator and hence to advance the narrative and the myth-as-narrative. Through a glass door but outside of the room, a white man appears holding a gun. He says nothing but makes by his threatening body language he communicates that he is there simply to keep watch over the proceedings. Consequently, even before De Jager enters the room for his first interview with Whitfield he is mythically set up in a certain way by a collection of specifically constructed visual actions and mythical signs.

Figure 6.3.4.3: Langston Whitfield is searched on arrival at Henri De Jager's farm

(*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.4: Langston Whitfield is searched on arrival at Henri De Jager's farm

(*In My Country* 2005)

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Figure 6.3.4.5: The room where Whitfield interviews De Jager

(*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.6: A shot inside De Jager's bar, where he is interviewed by Whitfield. The mounted snarling hyena head against the backdrop of the apartheid era South African flag serve to mythologise De Jager as the bad white figure

(*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.7: An armed white man monitors Whitfield while he is inside De Jager's home (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.8: De Jager enters the scene, and expresses surprise that he is to be interviewed by a black man (*In My Country* 2005)

The interview which Whitfield conducts with De Jager intercedes much of the rest of the film as the narrative keeps returning to it in small instalments, in between and intertwined with other scenes. In this way, some of what De Jager relates to Whitfield

becomes a kind of narration for some of the atrocities uncovered by Whitfield, and the other journalists who follow the TRC's progress. For example, Whitfield, and some other journalists are led up a mountainside by a woman who claims her daughter's body was disposed of on the mountain. The journalists discover the body, which is not buried but only concealed by a few small bushes. As we witness Whitfield inspecting the skeleton, we hear De Jager's voice describing the details of how the young woman was tortured and killed. De Jager's words are then visually evidenced by Whitfield's inspection of the body. De Jager explains how the girl was kept naked during the three days he and his colleagues held her on the mountainside in the hopes of extracting 'information' from her. During this time the girl asked for a pair of panties, and her request was refused. De Jager relates how she found a plastic bag and fashioned herself an undergarment from the plastic bag. According to De Jager, he killed the young woman by shooting her through the top of her head. As Whitfield inspects the body he notices the blue plastic bag wrapped around the pelvic area of the skeleton, and finds the hole in the top of the girl's skull, gently pushing his finger through this hole. Although not explained by De Jager the camera also reveals a number of old beer bottles lying about the legs of the long dead corpse. Although this is a small visual detail, it is still significant in meaning. It is evidence of what the men from the security branch were doing as they held the girl captive, and during the time and perhaps shortly after she was murdered. This seemingly simple visual symbol, the old and empty beer bottles next to the corpse, is heavy in meaning because it compounds the barbarism of the men and De Jager in particular. The key element of De Jager's character though, is that he is unwilling to show remorse for his past actions. Instead he describes them in cold detail. He even describes his exhilaration when torturing someone and likens it to having sex. The audience is not encouraged to forgive this man.

Figure 6.3.4.9: Whitfield, Malan and a small group of journalists are led up a mountain by a woman who claims he daughter's body is hidden on the mountainside (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.10: Whitfield discovers the remains of a young black female on the mountainside (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.11: Anna Malan comforts the mother of the murdered woman (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.12: Whitfield notices the plastic bag around the pelvic area of the skeletal remains of the woman (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.13: Whitfield discovers empty beer bottles next to the remains of the murdered woman (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.14: De Jager demonstrates how he shot the woman through the top of her head, whose remains are discovered on the mountainside (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.15: Whitfield pushes a finger through the bullet hole in the top of the skull of the murdered woman's remains (*In My Country* 2005)

De Jager's status as the bad white perpetrator is fully entrenched when Whitfield and Malan discover the torture chamber on a secret farm location which De Jager and his apartheid era colleagues used to torture black inmates. The evidence of the atrocities which took place at this scene is still intact, and as Whitfield inspects the various torture devices in the room the audience is utterly convinced that De Jager is wholly evil.

Figure 6.3.4.16: Whitfield inspects the torture chamber which he and Malan discover on the farm where De Jager and his colleagues detained and tortured black prisoners (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.17: Whitfield and Malan enter the torture chamber, used by De Jager and his colleagues to torture black suspected terrorists during apartheid (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.18: Whitfield inspects the torture chamber which he and Malan discover on the farm where De Jager and his colleagues detained and tortured black prisoners (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.19: Whitfield inspects the torture chamber which he and Malan discover on the farm where De Jager and his colleagues detained and tortured black prisoners (*In My Country* 2005)

At the scene of the second TRC hearing represented in *In My Country* (2005) a balding white man, Sergeant De Smidt, gives testimony to his actions as a police officer during apartheid. When asked to do so by the chair of the hearing, he describes in detail the manner in which suspects were tortured using electric shocks. Sergeant De Smidt says that the police would use a small generator of one horse power. The subject would need to be naked so that the electrodes could be attached to the genitals. Sergeant De Smidt says, "You attach wires to the subject, and you pour water over them. Water is a good conductor of electricity".

Sergeant De Smidt's description is interrupted by Mr Sokufa, who is appearing as a victim before the TRC and confronting his torturer. He complains that he has been disabled by the electric torture and that the torture has stolen his manhood. We know that Mr Sokufa cannot walk because he is shown to arrive at the hearings in a wheel-barrow which is pushed by a young boy. The young boy now sits next to him at the hearing with his arm over the shoulders of the old man for comfort. After Mr Sokufa's protestations, Sergeant De Smidt replies that he is not an electrician by trade, so he did not know that the electric shocks would injure Mr Sokufa so badly. The chair of the TRC asks Sergeant De Smidt whether he had known, would he still have performed the torture. Sergeant De Smidt replies that if he had not followed orders he would have lost his pension. At this, the crowd gathered at the hearing expresses a gasp of disgust. Sergeant De Smidt is another example of the filmic representation of the myth of the bad white perpetrator, because although he is willing to describe the atrocities which he has performed, he is not represented as feeling any measure of remorse for his actions and instead attempts to justify his actions by making a weak excuse.

Figure 6.3.4.20: Sergeant De Smidt appearing before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.21: Mr Sokufa arrives at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing in a wheelbarrow, pushed by a young boy, because he has been paralysed by the torture he endured at the hands of Sergeant De Smidt (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.22: Mr Sokufa appears before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and is comforted by the young boy who transported him in the wheelbarrow (*In My Country* 2005)

At the fourth TRC hearing scene in the film, the two perpetrators are white policemen. The older of the two, Sergeant Schempers is quiet throughout the scene and says nothing. The younger policeman, Mr van Deventer, does all of the talking. He recounts how he and Sergeant Schempers killed the parents of a young black boy, Peter Makeba, who is also at the hearing and sits in front of the stage directly in front of Reverend Mzondo (the hearing chairman and a character who is no doubt modelled on the figure of Desmond Tutu), facing the audience. Reverend Mzondo tells the audience that the boy has not spoken a word since witnessing the murder of both of his parents. Mr van Deventer, after recounting the murder of the two adults, tells the commission of how he was obliged to kill the boy as well, but how he decided against it. "I couldn't do it", he says, in an exasperated fashion. And significantly, he adds "I defied an order". (Many apartheid era policemen excused their actions of abuse and murder, and received amnesty on the insistence that they had simply followed orders). Mr van Deventer seems genuinely remorseful for his actions, complaining that he cannot sleep

because when he closes his eyes he sees the little boy's face staring at him. Mr van Deventer then gets up from his seat, and walks to the centre of the stage to address the chairman directly. He offers to take care of the little boy, or to at least pay his school fees. He begs the commission to allow him to do something to help the little boy whom is now the object of his guilt. He then kneels down in front of the boy and utters the words, "Please. Please". After a moment of consideration the little boy stands up and without a word, puts his arms around the neck of the policeman in a hug. The audience at the hearing sigh collectively, in amazement.

Figure 6.3.4.23: Mr van Deventer (left) and Sergeant Schempers (right) appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.24: Mr van Deventer pleads with the commissioners to allow him to take care of Peter Makeba, whose parents he has murdered (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.25: Mr van Deventer kneels in front of Peter Makeba
(*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.26: In an act of forgiveness, Peter Makeba embraces Mr van Deventer
(*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.27: Mr van Deventer weeps as Peter Makeba embraces him
(*In My Country* 2005)

This scene is doubly mythologised. It is an example of an action of reconciliation, and invokes the myth of reconciliation. Reconciliation is thus visualised in the film: if the

young orphan is able to forgive his parent's killer, then the audience is expected to do so also. This is also an example of the bad white turns good white perpetrator myth: the young policeman has committed a terrible atrocity but is now genuinely sorry for his actions, he is prepared to admit to his actions and tell the truth about them, he is haunted by what he has done and as the audience we are therefore encouraged to forgive him.

Once De Jager has learnt that he will not be granted amnesty and instead be put on trial as a criminal, he informs Anna Malan that her brother was involved in some of the human rights violations during the apartheid era. Anna then confronts her brother, whom she calls Boetie, and he attempts to justify his actions, saying, "I did it for us, Anna. So our people could sleep safe. I got blood on my hands, so we could all sleep safe. You knew this Anna. We all knew this". Boetie does not, like other white perpetrators in *In My Country* (2005), verbalise precisely what kind of torture or murder he performed. Neither does he explicitly ask for forgiveness or express remorse. Instead his words to Anna are an attempted excuse for his actions. His inner conflict and guilt is revealed in his final action, when moments later he ends his own life by shooting himself. Boetie is another example of the white perpetrator myth. He is haunted by his past actions (although we only find this out about Boetie because he takes his own life) and must eventually pay dearly for them. In the myth-as-narrative of the white perpetrator, whether good or bad, he or she must and will suffer, although often the degree of the punishment is dependent on the perpetrator's willingness to admit guilt and express remorse.

Figure 6.3.4.28: De Jager cruelly informs Malan that her brother was involved in apartheid era atrocities (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.29: Anna Malan confronts her younger brother, Boetie, about his involvement in apartheid era atrocities (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.30: Anna Malan discovers Boetie's body after he has shot himself (*In My Country* 2005)

Anna Malan is classified as a perpetrator, not because of what she did during apartheid but because of what she failed to do. This is revealed most obviously in her dramatic scene of confrontation with Whitfield after he publishes an article in the *Washington Post* which suggests that all white South African's are to blame for the evils of apartheid. She is angry with Whitfield, and accuses him of sensationalising the matter to suit his own agenda. Whitfield then angrily tells Anna that it is she who has the agenda because she is trying to convince herself that she and the rest of her (white Afrikaans) people are guiltless with regard to apartheid because they were largely unaware of the atrocities being acted out on blacks. Anna then reveals that she knew of certain "things", and that "[w]e all knew things". This confession is difficult for Anna, evidenced in her crying and her striking out at Whitfield. She is, throughout the film, terribly moved by the tales and evidence of apartheid era atrocities. It is then extremely difficult for her to realise that part of the guilt for the atrocities lies with her, for knowing "things" and yet doing nothing. Anna is implicated in her guilt not because of her actions but because of her lack of action.

Figure 6.3.4.31: Anna Malan in an angry confrontation with Langston Whitfield, during which, her own sense of guilt is painfully revealed (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.32: Anna Malan attempts to strike Langston Whitfield, while he tries to restrain her (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.33: Anna Malan attempts to strike Langston Whitfield, while he tries to restrain her (*In My Country* 2005)

From the beginning of the film, Anna is established as being treated as a traitor to her own community which is largely due to the sympathy she shows to the victims of apartheid, and the faith she places in the idea of the new South Africa. This is established in three separate scenes. First, at the very beginning of the film, her father makes his displeasure known to her. He disagrees with her decision to cover the TRC hearings as a radio journalist. Later, on returning to the family farm, Anna's mother tells her that she sometimes listens to her radio show, when no one else is within earshot. Anna's mother has to listen to her daughter's show in secret. She does this because Anna is considered an outcast within her own family and especially by her father. At another point in the film, Anna and her husband entertain a small group of white friends at their home. As the group sits around the table next to the swimming pool on a bright afternoon they talk cheerfully and seem indifferent and unaware of the atrocities which have recently been revealed at the TRC hearings. Only Anna finds it difficult to interact so happily. When she mentions the hearings the mood amongst the group of whites becomes uncomfortable. Even Anna's husband does not know how to react to her comments, and he does not try to support her position. He simply attempts to change

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the topic of conversation by asking whether the guests would like some coffee. At this, one of the female guests replies that it is time for her family to leave. Anna, by this time, has been deeply affected by all she has seen and heard, and now has difficulty interacting with her friends, who are either unaware or ignorant of what it is that haunts Anna.

Even though Anna is physically guiltless, she expresses remorse nonetheless. Although she did not partake in any atrocities during the apartheid era, she seems more tortured by remorse and guilt than any of the actual perpetrators. Because of this she becomes a mythic representation of the exemplary white. She is an example of how all whites in the new South Africa should be encouraged to behave: apologetic for the atrocities of the past, whether technically guilty or not. Anna's willingness to confront the atrocities of apartheid openly sets her apart from her white family and friends. They are largely ignorant and apathetic, and she is not: she is the exemplary white for the new South Africa. Anna is also an example of how not all whites are evil, and that there is such a thing as the 'good white': a white person who, even after the atrocities of apartheid, deserves to be forgiven and indeed, loved. This idea, while it may be criticised for its seeming simplicity, may offer a force of immense magnitude within the collective psychology of the South African nation and people in a post-apartheid era and must be measured with regard to its potential value to collective reconciliation.

Apart from her status as a 'perpetrator', Anna Malan is visually encoded as a good white at various points throughout the film. She engages easily with black people, in her professional life and within a social context. She dances seductively with her black colleague Dumi, and takes the black Langston Whitfield as her lover. She hugs and shows affection towards Anderson, the black employee on her father's farm. And most importantly, she displays heartfelt and genuine empathy for the black victims of apartheid, some of whom give testimony before the TRC. These encodings of Anna Malan are important because they form the main characteristics of the myth of the good white perpetrator, as is revealed throughout the remainder of this chapter and which is represented on Table 6.3.

Figure 6.3.4.34: Anna Malan engaging happily with Langston Whitfield (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.35: Anna Malan dances with Dumi (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.36: Anna Malan and Langston Whitfield talk cheerfully after the onset of their love affair (*In My Country* 2005)

Figure 6.3.4.37: Anna Malan and Langston Whitfield embrace lovingly (*In My Country* 2005)

Major Alt Spengler adopts the role of the villainous bad white myth in the film *Drum* (2003), which recounts the story of the editorial staff of the magazine by the same name immediately prior to the forced removals of Sophiatown in Johannesburg in 1955. Apart from his whiteness, Spengler is identified as the bad white largely by the things that he says. When confronted by Nelson Mandela at an anti-pass march he attempts to discourage Mandela by saying, "[w]hites are born to rule. Blacks are born to serve us. That is the way it is". Compounding his identity as the bad white, Spengler orders his fellow policemen to arrest the protestors by saying, "[b]oys, let's take them away. And don't be gentle". Spengler's latter comment significantly enhances his villainy because it reveals a cruelty to his character. Later in the film Spengler confronts and intimidates one of the good white figures in *Drum* (2003), Jim Bailey and says "[y]ou nothing but a liberal kaffir loving little prick". In this, Spengler reveals disdain for good whites and their association with black people, characteristic of the myth of the bad white perpetrator. Also characteristic of this myth, Spengler reveals no remorse for his actions, not even after having orchestrated the murder of black journalist Henry Nxumalo, but is humiliated by the community of Sophiatown in the final scene of the film at Henry Nxumalo's funeral, as his authority proves ineffectual.

Figure 6.3.4.38: Major Alt Spengler confronts Nelson Mandela (*Drum* 2003)

Figure 6.3.4.39: Major Alt Spengler confronts Jim Bailey (*Drum* 2003)

A collection of additional white figures are mythologised as bad white perpetrators in *Drum* (2003), but are characteristically not portrayed in any depth or detail, and are stereotyped. The white farmer and employer at the farm where Nxumalo works undercover as a farm labourer, is represented as nothing short of a slave driver as his black workers are forced to work in conditions of near slavery. On Nxumalo's arrival at the farm, he promptly tears up Nxumalo's pass book, thus effectively entrapping Nxumalo on the farm and disenabling him from leaving. He calls Nxumalo an "ungrateful kaffir". As Nxumalo does escape the farm, the white farmer fires at him and Schadenberg (who rescues Nxumalo), supposedly trying to kill them. When Nxumalo is arrested and taken to Johannesburg Central Prison, the prison wardens are allotted similar mythical representation. The two white wardens beat the naked black inmates, and one of these wardens is visually vilified when he pushes a black inmate's face into a bucket of faeces and holds his head there by pressing his boot to the back of the inmate's head. In another scene, Can attempts to enter a church building belonging to a congregation of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Moments later he is thrown out of the church door and beaten by three white male church members. The church pastor then appears, and in an act of visual significance, closes the church doors on Can.

Because of the encodings of unashamed cruelty and racism towards black people, these different representations of whites in *Drum* (2003) are mythologised collectively as bad white perpetrators.

Figure 6.3.4.40: The farm where Henry Nxumalo finds blacks working in conditions of near slavery (*Drum* 2003)

Figure 6.3.4.41: Inside Johannesburg central prison where white prison wardens abuse black inmates (*Drum* 2003)

In *Drum* (2003) three figures embody the good white perpetrator myth. Significantly, however, none of these three figures are South African in nationality and in terms of the narrative, this seems to make them exempt from the requirement to express remorse for past offences and they seem guiltless. Jurgen Schadeberg, photographer and close friend of Henry Nxumalo, is quickly visualised as the good white. In the second scene he enters a Sophiatown bar which is entirely filled with black men and women, but Schadeberg does not seem uncomfortable. On the contrary, he greets various people cheerfully, and leans across a table to offer a black man the African three part handshake: this handshake is framed in the centre of the shot and therefore seems to forcefully signify Schadeberg's ease of association with blacks. He also rises from his seat at the table to plant a friendly kiss on the cheek of the plump black waitress, and soon afterwards is seen with a young pretty black woman sitting comfortably on his lap. Schadeberg is laughing and has his arms around the woman. All of these visual codes entrench Schadeberg's status as the good white. We learn later in the film that

Schadeberg is German and not South African, and the implications on the narrative myth are significant, because it would seem then, that he is both immune and exempt from the requirement of the myth of the good white perpetrator to express remorse or guilt for past actions or wrongdoings.

Figure 6.3.4.42: Jurgen Schadeberg amongst his black colleagues and friends (*Drum* 2003)

Drum (2003) navigates this mythological requirement with regard to all of its good white figures. Jim Bailey, the editor of Drum magazine, is British. Like Schadeberg, he associates easily with his black colleagues/employees and friends. His status as the good white is amplified in his willingness to publish the journalistic work of Nxumalo which is openly critical of the apartheid system. Bailey then becomes a member of the resistance struggle against apartheid, albeit sometimes reluctantly. The black journalist and colleague of Nxumalo, Can, falls in love with a white British woman and they become lovers. This woman is identified as the good white, because she is able to easily accept the idea of having a black lover, and seems unapologetic for her choice to do so even after being harassed by the police. Although she is violently separated from Can, and deported by the South African police, she is not required to express remorse

or guilt of any kind. It must be asked then, whether the myths of the good and bad white perpetrators as represented in post-apartheid South African new history film, require the expression of remorse only from South African whites, and whether this is an additional mythical distinction of these counter myths.

Sarah Barcant (*Red Dust* 2004) is established as a genuine good white because of her affair with a black youth when she was a teenager. Like Anna Malan, we learn that Sarah was ostracised from her own community for her beliefs, and briefly imprisoned. Sarah, now a lawyer, returns to Smitsrivier after many years of absence to represent Alex Mpondo at a hearing of the TRC. The first thing she does on arrival in Smitsrivier is visit the house in which she grew up with her mother. She is confronted about her past by one of the new inhabitants, a young woman. The young woman is a myth-as-object figure of the racist white South African. Her interaction with the young women who currently lives there is significant. It becomes immediately obvious that Sarah and this other young women are placed at two different ideological ends of the spectrum. Sarah is the good white, this young woman is the bad white. This is revealed plainly in Sarah's conversation with the young woman, who eventually interrogates Sarah as to why she had a black boyfriend in her youth. She jeeringly refers to Sarah's scandalous past, and how Sarah befriended young men from the township instead of spending time with young white men. As Sarah walks through the streets of downtown Smitsrivier on her way to her first meeting with Alex, she is glared at by white passers-by, and a middle aged white women whispers audibly to her female companion "that's the Barcant girl". This simple encoding reveals that Sarah is mostly ostracised by the white community of her home town.

Figure 6.3.4.43: Sarah Barcant and the white woman who lives in Sarah's childhood home (*Red Dust* 2004)

That's the Barcant girl.

Figure 6.3.4.44: Sarah Barcant endures the gossip of the town's people (*Red Dust* 2004)

Sarah is multifariously encoded as the good white figure. She associates easily with blacks. She sits comfortably in the living room of the black parents of Steven Sizela, and

gently agrees to assist them in finding out what became of their son fourteen years earlier after he was arrested and tortured by the police. She invites Alex Mpondo to join her at her breakfast table in her hotel and orders some coffee for him: Alex is the only black man in the room. Sarah openly displays her disdain, throughout the film, for the policemen who committed atrocities and tortured or murdered their black prisoners during the apartheid era. And references are repeatedly made to the relationship which Sarah had with a black youth, Johnny, when she was sixteen years old.

Figure 6.3.4.45: Sarah Barcant and Alex Mpondo in the breakfast room of Sarah's hotel (*Red Dust* 2004)

Sarah is only a perpetrator in that she is both reluctant to return to South Africa and is unwilling to remain in South Africa after the conclusion of the Mpondo case. This is not in keeping with the ideological construction of whiteness in the new South Africa, where whites are expected to be enthusiastic participants in the reconstruction of the country. She makes it clear that the only reason she returned to represent Mpondo is because Ben Hoffman requested her to, and regards her visit to Smitsrivier as an obligation to Ben but nothing else. Sarah admits to Alex Mpondo, "I hate this country". Unlike Anna Malan, Sarah confides to her buddy partner, Alex, that she now hates South Africa

because of her difficult past. (Anna Malan tells her buddy partner, Whitfield, that she loves her country so much that she would be willing to die for it). Although Sarah Barcant is guiltless with regard to any past wrong doing, she nonetheless suffers an apportionment of punishment, in keeping with the characteristic mythologisation of the good white. Instead of remorse, Sarah's character reveals evidence of trauma: she is obviously still haunted by her traumatic experiences at the hands of the apartheid police. Added to her trauma, is the punishment of being ostracised from her own mother After Sarah's arrest, the community of Smitsrivier alienates Sarah's mother who they see at fault for allowing Sarah to socialise with black youths. Sarah's mother then emigrates to Australia, effectively abandoning Sarah in South Africa.

Figure 6.3.4.46: Sarah Barcant and Alex Mpondo: the buddy formula
(*Red Dust* 2004)

Another good white figure who is represented in *Red Dust* (2004) is Ben Hoffman. He is, like Sarah, a lawyer who represented ANC activists on trial during apartheid. He also represented Sarah after she was arrested for having relations with a black man in her

youth. After Sarah's mother leaves South Africa because of being alienated by the community of Smitsrivier, leaving Sarah behind, Hoffman takes Sarah in and raises her until she is old enough to care for herself. Toward the end of the film he expresses a genuine belief to Sarah, in the work being done in the Truth and Reconciliation Comission hearings and their potential to facilitate healing within the country. This is a white man from the 'old' South Africa, who strongly adheres to the ideology of the new South Africa. He is a good white, who is blissfully guiltless due to his efforts to assist the resistance struggle during the apartheid years, and unlike many mythologised good whites, he therefore does not express remorse because he does not need to. Nonetheless, Hoffman suffers an apportionment of 'punishment' (characteristic of the good white) in that his health is waning, he is unable to move about without his wheelchair and Sarah does not seem to return the affection which he lavishes on her in the same measure.

Figure 6.3.4.47: Sarah Barcant and an aged/ailing Ben Hoffman (*Red Dust* 2004)

The two bad white figures in *Red Dust* (2004), Piet Muller and Dirk Hendriks, attempt to conceal the full extent of their human rights abuses when working as apartheid era

policemen, even in the context of the TRC hearings. Piet Muller tries throughout the narrative to ensure that his guilt and his part in the murder of apartheid activist, Steven Sizela, remains hidden and coerces Hendriks into hiding his involvement. When things take a dramatic turn in the TRC hearing and the township people riot in anger, Sarah Barcant is confronted by Muller amidst the rioters. Muller is antagonistic toward Sarah, and expresses his displeasure that she has returned to the town of Smitsrivier in order to represent Alex Mpondo at the TRC enquiry. Muller is a quintessential bad white: we learn that he, along with Hendriks, arrested Sarah (when she was sixteen years old) for her romantic involvement with a black man. For this, Muller is unrepentant. His guilt for the torture and murder of Steven Sizela is revealed in the narrative, as the audience is affronted by images of Sizela's bloodied and broken body. Instead of disclosing his guilt in the murder of Sizala, Muller works to prevent Sarah and Mpondo from discovering his involvement in the murder. It is only when his guilt is uncovered that Muller reluctantly applies for amnesty from the TRC.

Figure 6.3.4.48: Sarah Barcant is confronted by Piet Muller (*Red Dust* 2004)

The audience is introduced to Hendriks as he arrives in the small Karoo town in the back of a police van. The van leaves the main road and arrives at a seemingly barren

location: Muller is waiting. In the initial interaction between Muller and Hendriks at the start of the film their dishonesty is immediately established. Dirk is serving an 18 year prison sentence for killing what we assume was an apartheid era black activist. He explains to Muller that he will not be granted amnesty and released from prison unless he is truthful in front of the TRC about all of his past transgressions. Muller subtly urges Hendriks to say nothing of his (Muller's) involvement of any past wrongdoings when appearing in front of the TRC. To this, Hendriks nods in agreement.

Figure 6.3.4.49: Piet Muller attempts to dissuade Dirk Hendriks from disclosing the truth about the disappearance of Steven Sizela at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings (*Red Dust* 2004)

Later, while Hendriks' lawyer conducts an interview with journalists in front of the police station, Hendriks stands some meters away next to the building. He is accompanied and 'guarded' by two white policemen. Their conversation is not audible, but all three of these men chat cheerfully and are smiling. It is clear that this is not a usual prisoner-

guard relationship: the white policemen and Hendriks are semiotically inscribed as having some similarity (or ideological symmetry) amongst them.

Figure 6.3.4.50: Dirk Hendriks laughs with his policemen captors outside the prison in Smitsrivier (*Red Dust* 2004)

Significantly, and unlike almost all other bad white figures, Hendriks does reveal remorse for his past actions. What the audience cannot decipher, however, is whether this remorse is genuine, or part of his strategy to be awarded amnesty by the TRC. At the first hearing he explains that he has been having nightmares and suffers from post traumatic stress disorder: for this he is immediately and widely criticised. The crowd shouts loudly in protest, Sarah and Alex both express disgust and suggest that Hendriks is seeking unwarranted sympathy. This is in contrast to the myth of the good white, where the remorse of the good white figure is always genuine, and this is never questioned. Hendriks, however, reveals remorse in another scene when he is alone with Mpondo, and momentarily he seems to be genuinely sorry for what he has done to Mpondo. He apologises to Mpondo, whilst crying. He nonetheless explains to Mpondo

that Steven Sizela's death (murder) ensured that Mpondo's life was spared, thus justifying some of his (Hendriks') actions. Eventually, Hendriks reveals to Mpondo the location of Sizela's burial, but he does this only when it becomes clear that his refusal to do so would nullify his chances of attaining amnesty. Therefore, the authenticity of his apparent remorse is in question.

When Sarah Barcant interviews Dirk Hendriks in prison she asks him outright whether he regrets any of his actions as an apartheid era policemen. He replies in a resigned manner, and without conclusive evidence of genuine remorse: "Sarah, if it was a war, then they won. End of".

Figure 6.3.4.51: Sarah Barcant and Dirk Hendriks meet inside Smitsrivier prison (*Red Dust* 2004)

Within the context of all of the post-apartheid South African new history films selected for description in the study, Muller and Hendriks are semiotically inscribed most acutely as bad whites, because they are explicitly represented as torturers. In many instances

the bad white figure is visualised performing actions of abuse toward black(s) within the genre of post-apartheid South African new history film, but the scenes in which Hendriks and Muller torture Sizela and Mpondo are, with regard to this study, the most horrifying. Sizela and Mpondo are covered in blood, their faces are swollen and because Sizela's neck is broken he is dragged along the floor (he is paralysed before he dies). As Sizela is dragged away he leaves a large pool of blood on the floor, which is evidence of his tortured state. Because Hendriks and Muller are visualised so in such detail and at such length as violent torturers, they are semiotically inscribed as particularly evil.

Figure 6.3.4.52: Dirk Hendriks interrogates Alex Mpondo (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.53: Piet Muller holds Steven Sizela's head up by the hair, because his neck is broken (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.54: A close up shot of Steven Sizela's bloodied face after being tortured by Piet Muller (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.55: Dirk Hendriks drags Steven Sizela away to bury him, although he is still alive (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.56: The series of shots where Steven Sizela is dragged away from Alex Mpondo, shortly before dying (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.57: Alex Mpondo is tortured by Dirk Hendriks (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.58: Alex Mpondo is tortured by Dirk Hendriks (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.59: Alex Mpondo, during torture, is pushed to the floor by Dirk Hendriks (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.60: Alex Mpondo is tortured by use of the 'bag method', by Dirk Hendriks (*Red Dust* 2004)

Colonel Nic Vos, a leading member of the security branches anti-terrorist squad, is the central bad white figure in the film *Catch a Fire* (2007). Vos is also semiotically inscribed

with the notion of torture, but not to the same degree as Hendriks and Muller (*Red Dust* 2004) because he does not mete out the torture himself. He relies on his subordinate officers to torture the black prisoners, and although he oversees the torture he does not physically get involved. Nonetheless, his evil nature is entrenched by his association with these actions. Not only does he order and oversee the torture of the wrongfully accused black protagonist, Patrick Chamusso, but he orders the brutal torture of Patrick's innocent wife, Precious.

Figure 6.3.4.61: Vos' men torture Patrick Chamusso by forcing his head under water (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

Figure 6.3.4.62: Nic Vos oversees the torture of Patrick Chamusso
(*Catch a Fire* 2007)

Figure 6.3.4.63: Patrick Chamusso cries out in agony as he is tortured by Nic Vos'
men (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

Figure 6.3.4.64: Patrick Chamusso cries out in agony as he is tortured by Nic Vos' men (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

Figure 6.3.4.65: The officers at the anti-terrorist interrogation centre torture Patrick Chamusso (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

**Figure 6.3.4.66: Precious' bruised and bloodied face after being tortured
(*Catch a Fire* 2007)**

**Figure 6.3.4.67: Patrick is horrified as he discovers that Precious has been
tortured (*Catch a Fire* 2007)**

Additionally, there is a decidedly menacing element to Vos' character, revealed in persistently sinister and at times, bizarre, behaviour. For instance, Vos instructs his young daughters on how to operate a firearm. As he assists his youngest daughter to fire a weapon it becomes clear that she is far too young to be handling a lethal weapon. Vos expresses his disdain when his eldest daughter is reluctant to handle a firearm. Vos' insistence that his daughters learn to use guns is connotative of an apartheid era white paranoia for what became popularly described as the 'swart gevaar' (black threat).

Figure 6.3.4.68: Nic Vos teaches his youngest daughter to shoot a firearm (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

The protagonist of the film, Patrick Chamusso, is detained by Vos and his men after he is mistakenly suspected of taking part in a terrorist action to plant a bomb at the Secunda refinery. In another bizarre action, Vos insists that Chamusso should eat Sunday lunch with his family. Chamusso is released from his prison cell after days of torture and driven to the Vos family's home, where he is served lunch with the Vos family. This scene is peculiar for a number of reasons. First, the racism of Nic Vos and his wife is established at various points in the narrative of the film, and yet in this scene they invite a black man to their family dinner table (this would seem out of place not only

within the Vos family, but within the wider context of apartheid). Secondly, Chamusso is one of Vos' prisoners at the time, but is shown this inexplicable act of kindness. Vos' reasoning for inviting Chamusso to lunch with his family is never explained. it is clear that Vos' wife and his two young daughters are aware of the peculiar nature of the situation, evidenced in Vos' wife's failed attempt at making polite conversation, and Vos' daughter's uncomfortable and obvious glances toward Chamusso. Because Vos engineers this bizarre situation which is not explained, the audience is forced to question his state of logic and reason.

Figure 6.3.4.69: Nic Vos forces Patrick Chamusso to eat Sunday lunch with his family (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

Within the narrative of the film, Nic Vos does not reveal remorse or guilt feelings for his wrongdoings, which is in keeping with the characteristics of the myth of the bad white perpetrator. His allotted portion of narrative punishment seems only slight: he ages. In the final scene we are presented with the lonely figure of Nic Vos, visually isolated and represented as totally alone on the banks of a dam. One close up shot of his face

reveals that he has grown old, and in that moment, he wears a pensive stare. This is the only evidence of punishment of Vos which the narrative provides.

Figure 6.3.4.70: Nic Vos, toward the end of the film, is represented as entirely alone (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

Figure 6.3.4.71: Nic Vos toward the end of the film (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

The film *Skin* (2010), follows the story of Sandra Laing. Sandra was a girl who was born to white parents during apartheid, but she had a coloured appearance and dark skin tone. Sandra's father, Abraham Laing is mythologised as the bad white perpetrator in *Skin* (2010). Abraham and his wife Sannie run a general store in a rural community of the (then) Eastern Transvaal province where many of the customers in the store are black (Abraham and Sannie relocated to this rural community after Sandra's birth in order to escape social ridicule because of their daughter's darker skin tone). When arriving at the general store, Abraham enters to find his wife cheerfully conversing in a friendly manner with a group of black customers. Abraham reprimands his wife for this, stating that she should not converse with "them", but she should only sell goods to "them". Immediately after this, a black woman approaches the counter to purchase cotton from Abraham. The black woman holds some coins for payment in her hand, which she lifts toward Abraham. Abraham crossly taps his forefinger on the glass counter which is between them. The woman understands, and then places the coins on the counter. Abraham then picks up the coins from the counter. Evidently, Abraham would not take the coins from the black woman's hands, supposedly not wanting to risk touching the hand of a black person. This exchange (between Abraham and the black female customer) takes place with little dialogue, but works as an encoding which signifies Abraham's mythic status as the bad white. It is an example of the myth-as-object, which here has served, in a matter of seconds, to advance the myth-as-narrative in visually signifying Abraham as the bad white.

Figure 6.3.4.72: Sannie Laing talks cheerfully with black patrons of her husband's general store (*Skin* 2010)

Figure 6.3.4.73: Abraham Laing points to the counter where he wishes the black woman to place her coins, so that he need not take them from her hand (*Skin* 2010)

Abraham's sometimes violent behaviour, his conservative dress and appearance, and his strong (though inauthentic) Afrikaans accent are further significations of the myth-as-object. From a narrative perspective, Abraham's continued cruelty to both his wife and daughter, and his hostility to blacks, entrench his bad white status. Abraham reacts furiously on discovering that his daughter Sandra is romantically involved with a black man, Petrus, and chases Petrus from his property by firing a pistol at him. After Sandra leaves her parents to live with Petrus, Abraham severs his paternal ties with his daughter, and refuses to re-establish contact with her even after Sannie pleads with him to do so. Sandra's estrangement from her family, cruelly enforced by Abraham, has a detrimental effect on her life and the lives of her children for many years and leads Sandra to much suffering, hardship, abuse and poverty. Perhaps the most revealing aspect of Abraham's character is his absolute desperation to have his daughter (when still a child) classified as white by the South African apartheid era authorities. Abraham goes to extraordinary lengths to accomplish this, as if Sandra's legal classification as white would somehow vindicate Abraham. His fixation on Sandra's white classification indicates an underlying motive that Abraham cannot bear the idea of having a child who belongs to another race. Uncharacteristic of the myth of the bad white, Abraham Laing does eventually display remorse for his actions of cruelty against his daughter: he is on his death bed and desperately ill, but suddenly demands to see his daughter. Sannie Laing denies his request, stating he that is too ill to make the journey to see Sandra, but also implies that he does not deserve to have his wish granted after so many years of rejecting his daughter. Abraham's remorse then comes too late, and he dies without ever seeing his daughter again as a tragic punishment for his cruelty in the past.

Figure 6.3.4.74: Abraham Laing confronts Petrus, moments before shooting at him (*Skin* 2010)

As demonstrated in table 6.2 and illustrated through the discussion of filmic examples in this subsection, the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator in post-apartheid South African new history film are also prevalent in this film and find frequent representation. The study deduces that such representations may, or at least seek, to contribute to a general societal renegotiation of white identity and understandings of whiteness in South Africa.

6.3.4.2 The collective mythologisation of bad whites

In many post-apartheid South African new history films, the myth of the bad white perpetrator is dwelt on only briefly within the narrative, and often represented in a stereotyped shorthand fashion by the myth-as-object. Often, the bad white perpetrator is visually prescribed to a group within a film, apart from being apportioned to a specific

individual character. Here the myth of the bad white perpetrator attains an element of collectivity because its referent is the collective. For example, in the film *Goodbye Bafana* (2007), the bad white perpetrator is revealed at various points during the film and as a collective group. This occurs during the torture scenes such as when a black inmate is punished in front of the flagpole by the white prison wardens, the white men in the strip search scene, the white men guarding the inmates who are breaking rocks in the quad, and the white men guarding the inmates who are working in the quarry. During all these scenes white guards with Afrikaans accents shout profanities at the black prisoners. There is also the scene of brutality when white policemen perform a passbook check in a street, and beat some black women, one of whom drops her baby on the pavement. These scenes evoke the bad white perpetrator myth and are examples of myth-as-objects which are introduced at key points during the myth-as-narrative in order to advance the narrative as a whole. The street scene where the police perform a pass book check serves as an example. These police are immediately identified as the evil perpetrators, not because the narrative has led us to believe them to be so, but because of filmic codes which make the audience read them as such. These include, their use of violence, their uniforms, their brutish Afrikaans accents, their fast and dramatic entrance onto the scene, and the manner in which they rudely address the black people on the street. Even before these policemen start beating the women, the audience in encouraged to read them in a negative light. It is not the narrative-myth which leads us to do so, but the myth-object.

Figure 6.3.4.75: Police perform a passbook check on a street in Cape Town (*Goodbye Bafana* 2007)

Figure 6.3.4.76: During the chaotic passbook check a woman is seized by a policeman and drops her baby on the pavement (*Goodbye Bafana* 2007)

**Figure 6.3.4.77: The white policemen become violent during the passbook check
(*Goodbye Bafana* 2007)**

**Figure 6.3.4.78: The white policemen become violent during the passbook check
(*Goodbye Bafana* 2007)**

The collective mythologisation of bad whites is continued in *Catch a Fire* (2007). When Patrick Chamusso and his family travel home from a wedding by car, they are stopped at a road block and Patrick is interrogated by a young white, who speaks Afrikaans with an English South African accent. The white actors attempt at forcing an Afrikaans accent (myth-as-object) is evidence of the deliberate construction of the white Afrikaner as ironically connected to meanings of apartheid, and the oppressor. There is no logical reason why the actor should not have delivered his lines with his own English South African accent, except that this would have not conformed to the characteristic Afrikaans ethnicity of the bad white perpetrator figure.

Figure 6.3.4.79: Patrick Chamusso is interrogated by a white policeman at a roadblock (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

Figure 6.3.4.80: Patrick Chamusso is handled roughly by white policemen at a roadblock (*Catch a Fire* 2007)

In the film *Red Dust* (2004), the collective encodings of the myth of the bad white perpetrator is represented in a scene which takes place outside the first sitting of the TRC hearings in Smitsrivier. Outside the 'court' building on the first day of the TRC hearing crowds of blacks have gathered, who are chanting, singing, and carrying African National Congress banners. A small group of whites sit on a patch of green lawn: they are led in a prayer by a pastor. Behind them stand a small group of armed men dressed in Khaki clothing who have a large AWB flag. The blacks stand opposite this group of whites and chant, interrupting their pastor's prayer. The content of the minister's prayer is revealing: while he prays for God's protection from the "*swart gevaar*" (black threat) and the illegitimate (newly democratically elected) government. This small group of whites are at the hearing in support of Dirk Hendriks, and are therefore by association, identified as white perpetrators. They are a collective symbol for the bad white perpetrator myth and dealt with superficially and stereotypically.

Figure 6.3.4.81: A small group of white Afrikaners gather outside the court in support of Dirk Hendriks, before his appearance at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing (*Red Dust* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.82: A small group of white Afrikaners, who parade the AWB flag, gather outside the court in support of Dirk Hendriks, before his appearance at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing (*Red Dust* 2004)

The film *Promised Land* (2002) offers a detailed representation of the collective bad white perpetrator myth and the negative representation of whiteness since the film is largely populated by a group of bad white figures. Renders (2007:230-232) offers detailed analysis of how these seemingly barbaric white people are represented, noting that these are people who have not come to terms with the transition from apartheid to a new form of leadership, and are classified as savage and barbaric because of this. It does seem like a kind of warning to the whites in South Africa, especially considering the time of its release: be happy with the new dispensation, do not try to return to the old order, or this is what you will all inevitably become.

The film is set in a community of isolated rural Afrikaans farmers who eke out a meagre living from their seemingly unfertile and parched land. After the black government takes political power, these rural Afrikaners become an underclass (Renders 2007:230). They have abandoned the cities in order to live in their isolated community on their rural farms. They stubbornly cling to their racist views and are not prepared to accept a new social model which sees blacks in possession of political power. They express a vehement hatred for blacks and Jews, and are even engaged in an underground armed struggle in order to destabilize the new social order.

George Neethling, a good white, stumbles upon this community when he returns to the area after years of absentia living in London, to scatter his deceased mother's ashes on the old family farm. George speaks only English (and not Afrikaans), is sophisticated (he wears expensive clothes and arrives in a smart car) and works as a business consultant in London: he is in obvious contrast to the people he now finds himself among and inevitably these differences cause tension. George finds a sympathetic connection only with Carla and her brother Paultjie, both members of the community of Afrikaners, but both secretly in opposition to its extremist leanings and they seem

trapped in the community. Because of their ideological position, however, Carla and Paultjie are also mythologised as good whites. They both display feelings of guilt with regard to the murder of Pieter Neethling (who openly sympathised with blacks) and they both receive their allotted punishment. Carla suffers the loss of her first fiancé, Pieter, when he is murdered and witnesses the brutal death of most of her family, including her brother. Paultjie is harassed violently by his two extremist brothers and is murdered by his own mother who believes him to be a traitor to the community.

Promised Land (2002) represents a detailed visualisation of the collective myth of the bad white perpetrator, which is emphasised not only by the narrative but also by various instances of myth-as-object representations. The frequent appearance of the swastika-like emblem of the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* serves to visually inscribe the ideology of the community of Afrikaners. The sparse dessert like landscape which they inhabit and attempt to cultivate suggests a level of hopelessness for this group of people. The scene in which a chicken is decapitated also indicates a sinister savageness. The apparent barbarism of these people is stressed in an early scene when the Hattingh family eat chicken foot soup, which they regard to be a delicacy (Renders 2007:230). Renders (2007:230) notes that George's English accent is juxtaposed to the way in which the Afrikaans characters speak English with a heavy Afrikaans accent. Although an Afrikaans accent should not be considered as a label for barbarism, in the context of this film it separates George and the Afrikaans characters in a binary fashion. Significantly, although Carla and Paultjie are both members of the Afrikaans community, they speak English in an inexplicably less accentuated Afrikaans accent, perhaps signalling their difference from their extremist community.

One particularly heinous bad white character in *Promised Land* (2003) is Johannes, who is one of the sons of the elderly couple whom George lodges with when visiting the small right-wing extremist community of Afrikaners. Johannes violently assaults the

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defenceless Paultjie in a number of scenes. When Paultjies arrive at the house with an old soccer ball, Johannes asks Paultjie to explain where he acquired the "kaffir-bal". He then tries to intimidate Paultjie into playing rugby with the soccer ball, and tackles Paultjie to the ground from behind, cruelly hurting him. Johannes then engages in a fight with George, insulting him and resorting to physical violence. Johannes' very mannerisms seem uncouth and barbaric, and he laughs stupidly at the hurt he inflicts on his younger brother.

Figure 6.3.4.83: Johannes violently tackles Paultjie to the ground

(*Promised Land* 2003)

Figure 6.3.4.84: George assists Paultjie after he has been hurt by Johannes, while Johannes taunts them both (*Promised Land* 2003)

Figure 6.3.4.85: Johannes becomes violent toward George (*Promised Land* 2003)

Toward the end of the film Johannes arrives at Carla and Gerhard's engagement party carrying (similar to many of the other men) a shotgun: it is never explained why these men bring these heavy weapons to a party, but the props of these weapons attest to the

extremist violence-endorsing ideology of these people. At the party, Johannes drinks *Klipdrift* brandy from the bottle, and approaches a young girl who is sitting at the children's table (which indicates how young she is). He hands her the bottle and lets her drink from it, at which she grimaces. He dances seductively with her, and there is a close up shot of his hand caressing and squeezing her buttocks. It is an uncomfortable interaction to watch for the audience: he is obviously a great deal older than this girl, and she seems too young to be experiencing this kind of attention from an adult man. She is a great deal shorter than him (she is still a child), and she is the younger of two sisters: significantly, Johannes selects this younger girl to dance with, instead of the older girl (who is a teenager). Johannes is solidified as a wholly evil and bad white. Throughout the film he has proven to be racist, violent, rude, homophobic and in this last scene, seems to border on being a paedophile.

Figure 6.3.4.86: Johannes arrives at the engagement party armed with a shotgun (*Promised Land* 2003)

Figure 6.3.4.87: As Johannes dances with a young female child, he gropes her buttocks (*Promised Land* 2003)

Figure 6.3.4.88: Johannes encourages a young female child to drink brandy (*Promised Land* 2003)

The semiotics of the final scene of *Promised Land* (2003) (Gerhard and Carla's engagement party) is revealing of the ideology of this small right-wing group of extremists but also constructed as a visual signification of how their ideology cannot survive: the various visual signifiers of their ideology are blatantly and violently destroyed during the scene, symbolic of how their mode of thinking no longer has any power or place in the world.

A bird's-eye view shot of the dinner table opens the scene, around which the small group of guests sit. The table cloth is plain crimson red, and is covered with plates depicting a kind of feast like scene. It is inexplicable how these poverty stricken people have been able to gather all of this food and put this feast together: quite frankly we must ask, where did they get all this food from? The food, within the context of the film, appears quite lavish and decadent. The code of the feast on the dinner table is does not require a reasonable or plausible explanation in that it is represented as a symbolic metaphor: these people are celebrating their ideology. Before this scene is over, this lavish dinner table is entirely destroyed, which is visually symbolic for how the depraved world view of this group of people is utterly doomed to failure and can only result in the decimation of this community.

Figure 6.3.4.89: The bird's-eye view shot of the dinner table at the engagement party (*Promised Land* 2003)

After some tense moments at the party, the police arrive and surround the house. Most of the men inside the house open fire on the police and a violent shootout ensues. A slow motion panning eye-level shot pans from left to right over the dinner table. As the camera tracks along the table we see the plates and bottles of liquor literally explode and break as the bullets hit them. As the shot reaches the end of the table the camera reveals a *Vierkleur*[3] hung against the wall behind the table which quite inexplicably bursts into flames and burns. The celebration is over, the feast is finally done and this happens so vehemently that the very symbol of this community of white extremist Afrikaners ideology spontaneously combusts.

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[3] The *Vierkleur* (the four coloured flag), historically, was the flag of the former Transvaal Republic, called the *Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek* (the South African Republic). The old South African flag included the *Vierkleur* on its central white bar. Although the *Vierkleur* predates the apartheid era considerably, since it was adopted for the first time in 1857, in more recent times it nonetheless appropriated connotations connected to apartheid in a similar way to the old South African national flag.

Figure 6.3.4.90: A series of the shots representing the destruction of the lavish dinner table and the spontaneous combustion of the *Vierkleur* flag (*Promised Land* 2003)

Before the shootout begins, Gerhard sits at the head of the table and addresses the guests. Directly behind him on the wall hang a number of framed black and white pictures of apartheid era white leaders (one of them is Hendrik Verwoerd, often considered to be the architect of apartheid in South Africa). Gerhard is constantly framed so that his head and shoulders appear just off centre of the shot, and the rest of the frame shot includes a framed image of one of the apartheid figures behind him. The semiotic connection between Gerhard and the images of these men is obvious: he is visually connected to these white apartheid era leaders to encode Gerhard as belonging to the political discourse endorsed by these men. During the shootout, the hail of bullets dismantle these images from the wall, and slow motion shots of the frames falling and breaking on the floor. Again, this serves as an additional semiotic manifestation of the metaphoric destruction and failure of the racist ideology of this community.

Figure 6.3.4.91: Gerhard Snyman with the framed pictures of apartheid era white Afrikaans political leaders behind him (*Promised Land* 2003)

Figure 6.3.4.92: The framed pictures of apartheid era white Afrikaans political leaders are destroyed during a shootout (*Promised Land* 2003)

Whilst most of the guests are dancing, one elderly man remains seated at the table: he has a wooden object wrapped in a small piece of cloth in his hands and he carves at the object with a small knife. Soon he seems satisfied with his work and un-wraps the little statuette and places it on the table. It is a statuette of a vertically erect penis. He then produces a small red flag with the swastika-type emblem of the AWB on it, and places the little flag on top of the penis. During the shootout, this little penis is also summarily exploded by the police bullets. The man unashamedly displays the phallus and the flag of the AWB, supposedly as an indication of the warped and depraved nature of the ideology on display: it is one that is not only warped but also here connected (as it is throughout the film) with patriarchal male power relations. The visual destruction of this particular sign is metaphoric for the castration of this particular power relation in this community and the failure of its disturbed world view.

Figure 6.3.4.93: The carved phallus is placed on the dinner table and the flag of the AWB is planted on top of it (*Promised Land* 2003)

Religious signs are also apparent in this particular scene. While Gerhard prays before the meal, we see a shot of George (a good white) who unlike the rest of the party guests besides Carla, does not have his eyes closed and head bowed in reverence to the prayer. Framed within the shot, behind George on the mantle, is a reproduction of

Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. George is framed in a head and shoulder shot, while just to the right of his head appears the Christ figure, and Christ's right hand 'touches' George's head. In this way George is visually anointed, and blessed as the saviour of this community. He is not able to save their souls, or purge them of their ideology of hatred. He does facilitate their being purged from the world: he has contacted the police, who kill almost all of the members of this community. George is not able to save Paultjie, who is a kind of sacrificial figure, the innocent 'lamb' who dies an unjust death, but for what purpose or benefit we are not told (perhaps simply for dramatic effect).

Figure 6.3.4.94: George Neethling is framed in a shot with a reproduction of Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper* behind him (*Promised Land* 2003)

Renders (2007:231) states, "[t]he implied message of the movie cannot be misunderstood: extremism has no chance of succeeding and will be defeated. Exclusive appeals to country, history and people can only lead to waves of violence and counter

violence. They are self-destructive forces as the final shootout amply demonstrates. In South Africa there is no room for reactionary groups. They will suffer the unavoidable consequences. The fact that the policemen who raid the farmhouse are whites signals that not all whites are extremists…The Afrikaner community is portrayed as a bunch of primitive and pathetic nationalists who have outlived themselves by upholding values that are long past their sell-by date. The repeated references to the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* reinforce this representation… *Promised Land* was one of the first movies to be critical of the Afrikaner".

Significantly, Renders' (2007:231) final comment here above indicates that the mythologisation of Afrikaners in *Promised Land* (2002) operates as counter myth. There is no doubt that Afrikaners are decidedly negatively stereotyped in the film. This stereotyped mythology also does not operate in a similar way to the representation of the bad white perpetrator myth in various other post-apartheid South African new history films. Often the bad white is positioned within the narrative to encourage the ironic idea of reconciliation and promote an experience of catharsis. This in not the case in *Promised Land* (2002), which although it operates as counter myth, it also serves as a warning to all Afrikaners in a democratic South Africa: make peace with the new state of political affairs or suffer beyond measure. This is not a reconciliatory message and "[t]he grotesque way in which the Afrikaners are portrayed in this movie forecloses any meaningful debate about the position of minority groups and their rights in the new South Africa" (Renders 2007:232).

6.3.4.3 The bad white turns good white

A possible sub-genre of myth can be identified within the mythologies of the bad white and good white perpetrator: that of the bad white turns good white myth. Typically, this

involves a narrative where we meet a white character who is associated with all of the encodings of the bad white perpetrator myth. During the plot, however, a series of events and circumstances catalyse a change in the bad white, and this character begins to recognise that he has been mistaken either in his actions or his ideological position. The bad white then transforms and becomes the good white. Part of this transformation involves the evident sorrow and remorse felt by the white character for past actions. Also part of this transformation is the manner in which this white character is able to, prior to the transformation, find a new way to associate with the other, one that is in sharp contrast with the previous manner of association which involved visualised representations of hatred, dislike, abuse and racism. The transformed bad/good white is eventually able to associate with the other on terms which involve equality and a recognition of the humanity and dignity of the other.

In the film *Goodbye Bafana* (2007) James Gregory, a Robben Island Prison warden, experiences such a transformation throughout the film. He begins the film as an ardently racist individual, and is quickly identified as a representation of the myth of the bad white perpetrator. Early in the film Gregory refers to black people in the massively offensive and derogatory term "kaffirs". Gregory is responsible for guarding and monitoring the correspondence of Nelson Mandela during his imprisonment prior to his release in 1990. During the course of the film Gregory befriends Nelson Mandela and his character changes as he seemingly becomes more sympathetic to the cause of the black resistance struggle. Visual evidence of Gregory's ideological shift is the manner in which he secretly carries a copy of the Freedom Charter in his breast pocket. By the end of the film he is full of admiration for Mandela and becomes his friend which evokes a myth of reconciliation. He has almost entirely changed his ideological position throughout the course of the film: this is the myth-as-narrative which reveals whites as capable of more than mere practices of apartheid atrocities, but more importantly it involves the representation of a white who has been able to transform from the mythical position of the bad white to the good white.

Figure 6.3.4.95: Jame Gregory removes a copy of the Freedom Charter from his breast pocket (*Goodbye Bafana* 2007)

Figure 6.3.4.96: James Gregory studies his copy of the Freedom Charter (*Goodbye Bafana* 2007)

Nonetheless, Gregory must undergo his portion of punishment as his personal symbolic and mythical cleansing ritual: he is badly beaten by his colleagues and he is ostracised from the white community on Robben Island when they begin to suspect that Gregory is sympathetic towards Mandela. Additionally Gregory's teenage son is killed suddenly in a motor vehicle accident. Gregory is at first inconsolable in his grief, yet recognises that his son's death has occurred as a form of divine punishment for his past actions, and in particular because he supplied the police with information which he gathered while monitoring Mandela in prison. Symbolically it is the figure of Mandela who is able to offer Gregory a portion of comfort and understanding, again invoking not only a buddy formula but the myth of reconciliation.

Figure 6.3.4.97: James Gregory is comforted by Nelson Mandela, after the death of his son (*Goodbye Bafana* 2007)

Tertius Coetzee (*Forgiveness* 2004) undergoes a similar transformation from a mythical bad white to good white status. Significantly, Coetzee is never represented as the bad white figure throughout the film because in terms of the narrative, he has already

undergone his transformation period and the film begins when Coetzee has attained identity as the good white. The emphasis in *Forgiveness* (2004) is then not the process of transformation from bad white to good white perpetrator, but rather the repercussions on the good white of a life lived as a bad white. Coetzee's psychological discomfort caused by his incapacity to overcome the guilt that he feels because of the wrongdoing which he performed in his past are his defining characteristic throughout the film, as he perhaps quintessentially personifies the typical requirement of the good white perpetrator to reveal feelings of guilt for one's past actions and display genuine remorse. The good white's (seemingly insatiable) need for forgiveness and remorse are then the characteristic of the myth of the good white perpetrator which is most notably the main emphasis in *Forgiveness* (2004).

In terms of the narrative, Coetzee worked as an apartheid era policeman, who took part in the interrogation and torture of black anti-apartheid activists. He has appeared before the TRC, has disclosed the atrocities which he performed, and has received amnesty. The film begins when Coetzee enters the small west coast town of Paternoster by motor vehicle: he travels to the town to meet with the family of one of his victims, Daniel Grootboom, whom he killed during apartheid, because he wishes to ask Daniel's family for forgiveness.

Typically, and regardless of his willingness to admit his wrongdoing and to express personal anguish and sorrow for his actions, Coetzee receives an allotment of punishment. He is struck on the head by Daniel's brother Ernest and receives a bad head wound from the beating. Significantly, Coetzee appears quite content to receive the punishment, perhaps feeling that he is deserving of it, and insists that Ernest has done nothing wrong in injuring him. Additionally, another instance of symbolic punishment is meted out on Coetzee when the film reaches its narrative climax: Coetzee is shot and murdered by one of Daniel's struggle era comrades. Perhaps the

most significant and acute punishment acted out on Coetzee is the one which he seems largely to impose upon himself: his own psychological torment caused by the guilt he feels for having murdered Daniel. Indeed, the significations of Coetzee's state of mind are almost laboriously dwelt upon in the film.

Figure 6.3.4.98: Tertius Coetzee bleeds heavily from a wound inflicted by Ernest (*Forgiveness* 2004)

In the beginning of the film we see Coetzee as he drives towards Paternoster: a St Christopher charm (which operates here as a myth-as-object signifier and assists to progress the myth-as-narrative) hangs from his rear view mirror and is the first of many religious significations we see attached to Coetzee (Marx 2007:297). He is thus visually inscribed as a saviour figure, the one who offers his life as a sacrifice, but he is also the pilgrim in search of redemption and the salvation which he seeks is really his own. Coetzee's expressions are relatively constant: a wounded look on his face, a drooping and bloodshot eye which is often shown in close up and a difficult walk. He constantly

drinks pills and this action serves as another signifier for his damaged state (Marx 2007:297).

Figure 6.3.4.99: A close up shot of Tertius Coetzee and his near constant wounded facial expression (*Forgiveness* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.100: In an act which is revealing of his remorse, Tertius Coetzee decorates the grave of Daniel Grootboom with sea shells (*Forgiveness* 2004)

Figure 6.3.4.101: Tertius Coetzee is shot and dies, symbolically alongside the grave of Daniel Grootboom, whom Tertius murdered (*Forgiveness* 2004)

Evans (2007:260) states, "[a]t face value, *Forgiveness*'s conclusion implies an outright rejection of the reconciliatory discourse of the TRC. The torturer/villain/perpetrator is eliminated execution style". This representation of a subversion of the ruling of the TRC on the crimes of a certain individual, may serve as a visual metaphor for, a fantasy image for what a collective of previously oppressed people would like to do to their oppressors. This may seem at first disturbing, but it also reveals how film offers a mental space for the cathartic experience. Film allows us to do to torturers what the TRC in reality would not allow, and if audiences cannot indulge in revenge in reality, perhaps it is best that this is purged from their minds in film.

But, perhaps, the film *Forgiveness* (2004) recognises the moral complexity of this type of thinking. The perpetrator is killed, but this does not bring solace to the family of the young man who he murdered or to the man who executes him. The executor, Zuko, weeps after he executes Tertius Coetzee and does not receive any comfort from any of the other characters. There is a simple message here: redemption cannot be granted to those who seek revenge. Although difficult to achieve, forgiveness is the best way to react to those who have caused suffering in the past, provided one is certain that their remorse is genuine (as the film repeatedly assures, is Coetzee's) (Evans 2007:261). Within the socio-political context of post-apartheid and post TRC South Africa, this is an important message of reconciliation with a high moral content (and myth ethic): the myth of redemption or reconciliation is invoked. According to Marx (2007:300) "The film's promise of recurrent vengeance may, ironically, be read as a sober rewriting of the TRC's narrative of restoration, a recognition of the desire for revenge that ruptures the dream of healing".

Rijsdijk (2007) compares the filmic identities of Captain Nathan Algren in *The Last Samurai* (2003) and Captain André Stander in *Stander* (2003). Although a seemingly

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odd comparison, these two figures do hold some characteristics of narrative invention in common. Both rebel against not only their own culture and people, but against the imperialistic and oppressive institutions which made them and which they serve. Hollywood has a long tradition of this type of traitor-hero who turns against his own people in a quest to do the right thing. Examples include Tommy Lee Jones' character in *The Missing* (2004) who chooses to live amongst the native American Indians. John Dunbar (Kevin Costner) in *Dances with Wolves* (1990) appropriates the culture and lifestyle of the same people in rejection of the colonising oppression of the West, and in a rejection of the military which he is meant to serve. A common characteristic of the Hollywood traitor-hero is the figure of a male character, most often employed by the military, who is consumed by a sense of duty and patriotism, until finally his loyalty is shaken by a despicable act he commits on behalf of the object of his loyalty, so that he needs to embark on a quest of redemption. This quest leads him to the other side of the cultural spectrum, and as proof of his bravery he does what to most Westerners is the unthinkable: he learns about and lives amongst the other (in this context the very people who are oppressed by the institution which he previously served) and there he finds healing and redemption. The traitor-hero's transition is complete when he forms a lasting bond with the male leader of the people he now lives amongst, and enters into a love relationship with one of the women he encounters in this new environment.

Rijsdijk (2007:310) describes André Stander's transition to traitor-hero status: obviously, Stander rebels against the police system by whom he is employed when he begins his criminal career as a bank robber. Rijsdijk (2007:310-316) argues that the main problematic in *Stander* (2003) lies in that the film tries to repeatedly suggest that Stander's motivation for the betrayal of the police system was due to his disapproval of the apartheid government's policies of oppression, while in reality this was entirely unlikely and most probably certainly not the case. Instead of representing Stander simply as a criminal, he now becomes a criminal with a conscience. In the film, attempts to legitimise this view of Stander are recurring. He resigns from the riot squad because he does not enjoy "keeping the peace" amongst the blacks in the townships. He

comments angrily that while the police are preoccupied with monitoring the blacks, whites in the country are left to their own devices and could get away with anything. When captured and appearing in court, Stander proclaims his disgust that he should be on trial for robbing banks when he had killed unarmed and innocent people (in the township riots).

Stander has murdered a young black schoolboy, and for this action he must seek redemption. Eventually, Stander goes in search of the schoolboy's father, find him in a shebeen and admits to killing his son. The father then severely beats the submissive Stander with a knobkerrie, and this punishment symbolically serves to redeem Stander, as though this were a fit and adequate punishment for the murder of the boy. Significantly, Rijsdijk (2007:310) calls this a "proto-TRC moment".

Figure 6.3.4.102: Stander is badly beaten by the father of the young protestor whom he killed (*Stander* 2003)

Although *Stander* (2003) goes to a great amount of effort to convince us that the hero performs all of his actions and his personal transformation because of his disdain for the apartheid government, there is one critical difference between Stander and the Hollywood tradition of the traitor-hero. Stander does turn against the military type institution which he is supposed to serve, but he does not go so far as to live amongst the people who are downtrodden by the institution he abandons, appropriate their culture or begin a love affair with one of their women.

But in a kind of twist and reshaping of the traitor-hero, Stander takes a different turn to his Hollywood counterparts. Yes, he does reject the institution which made him, trained him and to which he was bound in loyalty to serve. Instead of turning to the Other for solace and a new cultural life, he becomes a more quintessentially South African post-apartheid traitor-hero: he needs to endure his own personal TRC and punishment. He is a traitor version of Tertius Coetzee (who does not rebel against the institution which holds his loyalty until that institution has crumbled). The traitor-hero myth has been re-contextualised to fit into the socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa. Stander also appropriates the myth of the bad white turned good white perpetrator: he commits a terrible atrocity in murdering a young black teenager, he is haunted by his feelings of guilt to the extent that he turns against the apartheid system and symbolically goes in search of redemption which he obtains in a form of violent punishment.

James Jarvis (*Cry, the Beloved Country* 1995), similarly to Coetzee, Stander and Gregory, undergoes the transformation from the bad white perpetrator to the good white perpetrator. It must be noted that this film was released in 1995, and very shortly after the first democratic elections to be held in South Africa in 1994. Based on the novel by Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995) contains representational trace elements of the myths of the bad and good white perpetrator, but reveals these in far more subtle visual and narrative codes than subsequent films in later years. The ideas encapsulated

in these myths are more suggested, than overtly represented as may be seen in other South African new history films. If one were to perform a myth genealogy or an origin study, it may be discovered that *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995) was among the first filmic appearances in post-apartheid South African new history film to represent the myth of the bad and good white perpetrator, and the myth of reconciliation (although this is not the purpose of the study). With regard to both the myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-content format, this film sees these myths in a very early stage of their mythic development. Hence, although not all typical representational characteristics and demarcations are present of these myths (simply because they had not yet had time to develop and become established as convention), *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995) does represent the bad and good white perpetrator myths quite starkly (and in hindsight) as counter myth. This may be because of the film's chronological proximity to the mass media representations of the apartheid era, in which such mythical representations did not exist. Consequently, the identification of James Jarvis as the bad white perpetrator and his eventual arrival at the position of the good white perpetrator are not spoken of by the film as explicitly as in films such as *Goodbye Bafana* (2007) and *Forgiveness* (2004). Nonetheless, James Jarvis does undergo a transformation of sorts, albeit reluctantly, without an outspoken or lavishly revealed confession of his own guilt and without a truly significant difference in the manner in which he interacts with the *Other*. (In fact, this difference is only revealed in his act of kindness in the final scene of the film, when he offers to build a new church building for the community of blacks living close to his farm).

James Jarvis is sharply affronted by the moral position of his son, Arthur Jarvis. Arthur never appears in the film because he has been murdered, and James begins to discover more about Arthur's ideological position only after his death. The transformation in James then traces the process of James' discovery, subsequent disdain and eventual acceptance of Arthur's political and ethical views. Key points in the narrative reveal that Arthur was involved in actively campaigning for the human rights of South African blacks and he was the founder of a black gentleman's club (a boxing

gymnasium) in Johannesburg. James Jarvis visits this club prior to the death of his son, and reads a portion of Arthur's political writings. He hears from the black manager of the gentleman's club how well respected Arthur was amongst the black members of the club, and how he selflessly gave of his time to assist these black men. James Jarvis thinks of his son as a dreamer, and calls his killers "bastards", wishing for them to be hanged. He expresses that he is in favour of separate development (Renders 2007:239). James is horrified at his son's activities, but later on in the film he establishes a peculiar relationship with Stephen Khumalo, the father of Absalom Khumalo, the man who murdered Arthur. Because of the subtlety in both narrative and myth-as-object in the film, we are not entirely certain why it is that James treats Stephen with such sympathy and kindness: James' racist ideological position (suggested mainly by his disdain for his son's activities) and the fact that he is faced with the father of his son's murderer would lead us to expect that he is infuriated and unkind when faced with Stephen. That is not the case, and James even expresses a level of sympathy for Stephen when asking him about the date of Absalom's execution. James Jarvis has made the remarkable transformation from bad white perpetrator to good white perpetrator, and indeed, he may have been the first filmic white in post-apartheid South African new history film to do so.

In *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995) (and many other post-apartheid South African films) the relationship between blacks and whites is highly politicised. Jarvis begins the film as an unashamed racist, and even refuses to shake the hand of a black man at his son's funeral. (This is markedly different from the novel where he is portrayed as an ignorant white farmer, unaware of the plight or social situation of black people). This black white polarisation is common in post-apartheid South African films and although it simplifies representations somewhat to simple binary opposites, it is not unexpected considering the context of these films production.

Figure 6.3.4.103: James Jarvis and Stephen Khumalo in the final scene of reconciliation (*Cry, the Beloved Country* 1995)

The motivations for these types of mythical representations are tumultuous, but they form a looking at the past, an honest acknowledgement of the past in order to reconcile and move forward. Where these seemingly negative myths (or stereotypes) have been offered in post-apartheid South African cinema they have usually been done in an attempt to demonstrate a narrative of redemption and reconciliation: the racist either changes his ways, or is punished as a result of his stubborn resolve. Such myth narratives offer what could be called myth ethics: stories engineered for a very specific and unique social environment (post-apartheid South Africa) which offer a carefully crafted "moral of the story". They also form a part, in films studies, of national cinema because they are uniquely identifiable to South Africa and the reformulation of specifically South African identities: the myth of the white racist who is eventually punished may be considered politically correct in South Africa today, but may not be as palatable to, for example, some European audiences.

Whether good or bad, it is significant that post-apartheid South African new history films often depict the white protagonist as a perpetrator of some wrongdoing in one way or another. One may assume that this idea may not sit comfortably with some audience members, particularly white ones. The possible social purpose of these myths must not be ignored. It may be argued that the myth of the good white perpetrator at least, may function also as a type of reconciliation myth, and this myth is part of the nation (re)building process in South Africa after apartheid because it encourages reconciliation. It suggests that not all white people who committed apartheid atrocities are wholly bad and evil. Some whites feel remorse. The good white perpetrator is genuinely sorry for the things he did during apartheid and deserves some level of forgiveness. He also suffers, physically or emotionally in some way, because of his wrongdoing and therefore cannot be thought of as getting away with his actions. He is the tragic hero figure. He is sometimes rejected as a traitor by his fellow whites because of his unwillingness to completely immerse himself in the ideology of apartheid. He therefore takes on hero status because he is prepared to suffer for his beliefs and will not abandon his high principles. He is not without flaws, which means that he is a type of anti-hero or tragic hero. He is often represented in juxtaposition with the bad white perpetrator in order to emphasise the difference of the good white. Most of all, it is possible for the film audience to forgive the good white (where it is not encouraged to forgive the bad white). One might conclude that, at an ideological level, South African audiences are being encouraged to forgive the perpetrators who are sorry, and that, yes, all whites are bad, but some are worse than others.[4]

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[4] It must be acknowledged that Martin Botha's (2007) book on South African film (*Marginal Lives & Painful Pasts*) addresses many of the same films discussed in chapter six. However, the study distinguishes itself from Botha's (2007) in at least two important ways. First, while Botha's book was published in 2007, the study includes the analysis of films which were released up to and including the year 2010. Importantly, filmic trends which have begun to emerge in post-apartheid South African history films in the year 2010 are addressed in the study, which have not been addressed in Botha's (2007) book. Secondly, while the nature of discussion in Botha's (2007) book emphasises narrative analysis, the focus of this study is on myth within the context of visual studies.

6.3.4.4 The new white

When studying the last film listed on the inventory of the myth of the good and bad white perpetrator in post-apartheid South African national history film (Table 6.2) is it clear that is bears some significant differences to the films which are listed chronologically above it. The main white protagonist in *Invictus* (2010), Francois Pienaar, is a good white but within the narrative of the film he does not display the main mythical criterion of the good white myth: he does not show remorse for the atrocities of the apartheid past, and in terms of the plot, he does not need to. Additionally, he is not punished in any way and instead he attains massive reward and personal success by captaining the Springbok (South African) rugby team to win the 1995 Rugby World Cup.

The myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator usually exist within the context of a filmic narrative that in some way deals with South African apartheid history (or new history) or its immediate after-effects. For example, it would seem nonsensical in comedy films such as *Jozi* (2010) or *White Wedding* (2009) which have narratives that are not explicitly concerned with South Africa's traumatic apartheid past, to represent white characters revealing laboured remorse and guilt feelings or undergoing punishment because of political issues that are not connected to the central plot. This would also be inappropriate for the comedy genre. However, this does not mean to say that signifiers of both the myth of the good white and the bad white do not appear in such texts, but they often do so in order to add to the humour, and in the form of stereotypes. Because they are stereotypes, and shorthand descriptions of the white collective, they are not explored in the same amount of detail as they are in the new history films, and so comedic representation of the white racist Afrikaner who wears khaki clothing may be offered without this character necessarily experiencing any kind of just punishment. Nor is the good white character in such comedy drama films expected to either show remorse or experience punishment, and if

the good white character does experience difficulties it is not motivated as punishment for past actions but rather facilitates the humour of the film. However, this is not the case for the white character in South African new history film, the narrative of which is always expressly connected with the country's apartheid past in a far more serious manner, and not for purposes of humour.

Francois Pienaar (*Invictus* 2010) is then a discernible exception. Various scenes throughout the film leave us in no doubt that Pienaar is a good white. Two scenes in particular emphasise Pienaar's good white status by juxtaposing his reactions to specific events to those of his white team mates, who have yet to transform into good whites (and who begin the film as bad whites). While Pienaar and the rest of the Springbok team exercise in a gym, a character (supposedly modelled on then president of the South African Rugby Union, Louis Luyt) arrives to announce that the team has been asked (by Mandela) to conduct training workshops with children in township areas. The white members of the team are appalled and appeal to Pienaar to refuse this request. Pienaar, however, implores his team mates to realise that it is time for them to change their attitude. He states, "You know, times change, and we need to change as well".

Figure 6.3.4.104: Francois Pienaar attempts to convince his teammates to conduct the township workshops (*Invictus* 2010)

Pienaar's willingness to accept Mandela's request to conduct the workshops with township children sets him apart from his white team mates who are not pleased with the idea. It must be noted, that Pienaar's white team mates are not represented as quintessentially evil bad whites: they do conduct a workshop in a township with a large group of black children and are represented as interacting closely with the children, playing with them, making them laugh and eliciting their cheers.

Figure 6.3.4.105: A series of shots from the township workshop conducted by the Springbok team (*Invictus* 2010)

Another scene takes place in a hotel, where the team are gathered together in a large room. Pienaar enters and hands out a sheet of paper to the members of the team. The document is a copy of the words of the new South African national anthem: the text of the first section of the anthem is in isiXhosa, isiZulu and Sesotho, which the white rugby players do not understand. Pienaar tells the team that they should study the lyrics, supposedly so that they will be able to sing the anthem properly before each game in the approaching Rugby World Cup tournament. A number of the rugby players refuse to study the lyrics of the national anthem, rolling the sheet of paper into a ball and throwing it on the floor. One player complains that he cannot pronounce the words on the sheet of paper. Pienaar behaves in a resigned manner in reaction to his white team mates disapproval, but as he is about to leave the room he turns to them and, referring to the first line of lyrics, says, "It means *God bless Africa*, which, you've got to admit, we could use". Pienaar's actions in the two above mentioned scenes are significant because they set him apart from the other white rugby players. He is obviously willing to accept the protocol of the new democratic South Africa, even when faced with opposition from the team of which he is the captain. This narrative-mythical meaning establishes Pienaar as the good white.

Figure 6.3.4.106: Francois Pienaar requests that his teammates learn the words to the new national anthem (*Invictus* 2010)

During the Rugby World Cup tournament, the entire Springbok rugby team visits Robben Island and take a tour through the prison where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned during apartheid. Pienaar is notably moved by the experience, more so than any of the other rugby players, signified by a number of visualisations. Pienaar lingers in the cell where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, as his team mates walk past the cell while glancing inside only briefly. As Pienaar stands in the centre of the cell he stretches out his arms and sighs as he sees that he can almost touch each side of the small room. He stands at the window and stares out through thick bars, into a dusty yard. As he does so the image of black prisoners breaking stones in the yard fades into the shot, as if Pienaar is having a vision of the prison's dark past. Looking at a chair in the cell, Pienaar has a vision of the faded personage of Mandela, sitting hunched on the chair while reading. Outside of the prison building, Pienaar has another vision: he looks down onto a stone quarry, and there sees black prisoners from the past, again breaking stones. One of these prisoners is Mandela, who pauses from the labour and looks up at Pienaar. Pienaar is transfixed by this vision as the rest of his team mates walk on behind him, seemingly oblivious to what Pienaar is experiencing. These faded visions signify that Pienaar has gained some insight into the suffering of the men who were imprisoned on Robben Island and for Mandela in particular. Because he is represented as alone in this experience he is again separated from his team mates, who do not seem to be as profoundly emotionally moved by the occasion.

Figure 6.3.4.107: Francois Pienaar lingers in Nelson Mandela's prison cell while his teammates walk by (*Invictus* 2010)

Figure 6.3.4.108: Francois Pienaar stares out of the window of Nelson Mandela's prison cell and has a vision (*Invictus* 2010)

Figure 6.3.4.109: The faded vision of the inmates working in the courtyard of the prison (*Invictus* 2010)

Figure 6.3.4.110: Francois Pienaar's faded vision of Nelson Mandela seated in his prison cell (*Invictus* 2010)

Figure 6.3.4.111: Francois Pienaar pauses to view a quarry on Robben Island and has another vision (*Invictus* 2010)

Figure 6.3.4.112: Francois Pienaar envisions Nelson Mandela working in the quarry on Robben Island (*Invictus* 2010)

That *Invictus* (2010) represents is based on real events may limit the workings of the myth of the good white perpetrator to some degree. Because *Invictus* represents a historical event of such recent history (1995) little space is (arguably) left for the film to deviate from historical accuracies, as many other new history films (and not only South African ones) are at liberty to do. Additionally, the main white protagonist of the film is based on an actual person and public figure: Pienaar (played by Matt Damon in *Invictus*) represents the actual Francois Pienaar. This is in contrast to other films which deal with the political difficulties and repercussions of South Africa's apartheid past. For example, in the film *In My Country* (2005) many scenes are based on real testimonies delivered at the TRC but the white protagonist, Anna Malan, is a fictional character which puts the film at liberty to endow Malan with the characteristics of the good white perpetrator (remorse and punishment). The same applies to characters such as Tertius Coetzee (*Forgiveness* 2004), James Jarvis (*Cry, the Beloved Country* 1995) and Sarah Barcant (*Red Dust* 2004): all of these characters, although placed within historical narratives, are themselves fictional. If Francois Pienaar's character in *Invictus* had been required to suffer an apportionment of physical or psychological punishment for his atrocities committed against the *Other* in the past, like the representations of good whites have been required to do in many previous films, while the actual Francois Pienaar is in no way implicated in any wrongdoing in his past, the disparity between the represented Pienaar and the real public figure may have been unacceptable to audiences (not to mention, to Francois Pienaar himself). This could then not be done in *Invictus*.

Nonetheless, *Invictus* (2010) has in a default manner then become a significant film on the South African media landscape because although the myth of the good white is invoked in the representation of Pienaar, it is not the myth of the good white *perpetrator*. Pienaar (*Invictus*) is not a perpetrator. He is a good white, and one which is significantly represented as not necessarily burdened by guilt or remorse. The representation of Pienaar in *Invictus* is then perhaps a signifier for a new white myth, or at least, an indication that certain myths of whiteness on South African film are undergoing

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development, are in a state of flux or are perhaps experiencing mythic maturation. Of course, at the time of writing, this interpretation can only be (admittedly) speculative: one such representation (Pienaar) of whiteness in post-apartheid South African film does not qualify the signified as myth (see 4.3.3, 4.2 and 5.6) since the signified must find numerous instances of representation before it meets the criteria to be classified as myth (Barthes 1972:120).

Significantly, the year 2010, however, delivered another post-apartheid South African new history film which also included a character whose mythologisation does not fit neatly into mythic categorisations as do many other good/bad white characters. Sannie Laing from the film *Skin* (2010) serves perhaps as further evidence that the myths of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator are currently in a state of flux. This is because Sannie Laing is represented as both the good white and the bad white perpetrator (and not as the bad white turns good white, which is something else entirely). This representation is performed in a complexly intertwined manner. At moments Sannie behaves as the good white, and at other moments she performs undoubtedly as the bad white. These disparate representations occur at intervals throughout the film, and do not amount to the progression from bad white to good white, but rather represent a character's inner turmoil and struggle against socio-political context.

Early in the film Sannie speaks cheerfully with a number of black people who are shopping in the general store that she and her husband run together. Importantly, she does not address them in English or Afrikaans but in Xhosa. This is a significant code because it is uncommon for a white character in South African film to speak one of the black languages (although many white South Africans speak African languages, expecially in KwaZulu-Natal province, it is uncommon for this to be represented on South African film). That Sannie is willing to converse with blacks in *their* own language

is a signification that is heavy with meaning and it endows Sannie with characteristics of the good white. Later in the film, however, Sannie is horrified when she discovers that her daughter Sandra is in a romantic relationship with a black man and even slaps Sandra in the face, before sternly lecturing Sandra on the matter. Sannie is represented in many scenes of *Skin* (2010) as having the unbridled love of a mother for her daughter, in spite of the fact that Sandra's skin colour is markedly darker than her own. Sannie's love for Sandra seems (at first) to be unaffected by the difference between her daughter's (racial) appearance and her own. However, after Sandra is offered an impossible choice by her father and thereby is estranged from her parents, Sannie does rather little to rectify the situation and bring the estrangement to an end. She does protest her husband's insistence on breaking all contact with Sandra. After her husband's death, when she writes to Sandra, she does not include any of her own contact details in her letter, thus preventing Sandra from re-establishing contact with her mother. Much of the above description of Sannie Laing concerns documentary truth. Similar to Pienaar, she is not a fictional character, which may again account for the unavoidable complexities in the representation of her character. Because of historical fact it may have been impossible for filmmakers to represent Sannie Laing as either a solely good white or exclusively bad white. Again, the unique representation of Sannie Laing's representation of whiteness, may have occurred in a default manner, but this does not render it any less significant.

Sannie Laing is a complicated character because of this constant oscillation between her role as the good white and the bad white.[5] The film appears to represent her as a

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[5] It is additionally interesting that, although not represented as an exclusively bad white, Sannie Laing becomes (in her 'bad white moments') the first white female representation of a central character as the bad white. In all other post-apartheid South African new history films discussed in the study, the female as the bad white is only represented as part of a communal collective, but never as a central character in the narrative, as the bad white myth seems predominantly infused with the representation of the white male. The three notable examples of the female good white are Anna Malan (*In My Country* 2005), Sarah Barcant (*Red Dust* 2004), and Carla (*Promised Land* 2003) since the good white myth seems to span both genders. The films *Promised Land* (2003) and *Red Dust* (2004) represent the female bad white only as part of a bad white community, and therefore accompanied by men. Sannie Laing is unique not only because her character is multi-dimensional in that she oscillates between good and bad white status, but also that she is the first central white female character to attain bad white mythic status (even if it is only a

victim of both the apartheid legal system (which threatens to remove her daughter from her) and subject to a dictatorial husband (who does remove her daughter from her), both of which prevent her, at various times, from doing the right thing (which the good white should do, not matter the personal expense). But Sannie Laing's guilt can not be attributed solely to these circumstances, since she also plays an active role of cruelty towards Sandra. For example, when Sandra leaves her abusive husband Petrus, and is rendered homeless on the streets with her two young children in tow, she contacts her mother. On this occasion Sannie refuses to assist Sandra.

Sannie Laing, unlike Francois Pienaar but similar to many other mythologised post-apartheid filmic whites, experiences her punishment. She is estranged from her daughter Sandra, and this becomes an estrangement which is enforced by her husband, Abraham Laing. Although at times she pleads with her husband to allow her to make contact with her daughter and her grandchild, he refuses. In a period of twenty years, Sannie meets with her daughter and her grandson only once, and only for a period of a few minutes. Additionally, she suffers emotional cruelty from her husband, who jealousy watches her interactions with other men, blames her when situations prove difficult and consistently refuses to adhere to her wishes of showing more sympathy to their daughter Sandra, and to re-establish a relationship with Sandra. The separation from her daughter appears to weigh heavily on Sannie Laing and makes her suffering acute. When Sannie is at last reunited with Sandra she does not display remorse for causing a portion of her daughter's suffering and does not ask Sandra to forgive her, but is instead initially hostile toward Sandra.

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temporary condition). Interestingly, table 5.3.2 identified not a single representation of the female bad white turns good white figure.

Figure 6.3.4.113: Sannie and Sandra Laing in a moment of affection (*Skin* 2010)

Figure 6.3.4.114: Sannie Laing confronts Sandra about her affair with Petrus, moments before slapping Sandra in the face (*Skin* 2010)

Together, Francois Pienaar (*Invictus* 2010) and Sannie Laing (*Skin* 2010) indicate the possibility that representations of mythical whiteness in South African post-apartheid new history film may be on the verge, or already in the process, of shifting. The evidence of such a shift is more subtle in the representation of Sannie Laing than with Pienaar: although she is encoded with significations of both the good and bad white, she is still contextualised within the text of a film (*Skin* 2010) which contains numerous representations of the quintessential mythic bad white and is juxtaposed with such representations. (The bad white figures which accompany Pienaar in *Invictus* (2010) are, as discussed above, not extreme in their status as bad whites and are not represented as fundamentally evil, if at times, ideologically misguided). Sannie Laing is embedded within the context of the bad white myth, and therefore, her complicated role as both the good and the bad white may easily be overlooked by audiences and readers.

It is difficult to determine from only two filmic representations of whites (Pienaar and Sannie Laing) whether the content, the narrative and the form of the counter myths of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator are now fundamentally changing. It is nonetheless important to take note of such potential shifts in mythic narrative because of the nature of counter myths: that they, if successful in their mythic endeavours, are bound to change over time and after repeated representation, and that in doing so they may mature from counter myths into dominant myths (see chapter 2). Once this process has taken place, in this particular case, a new formulation of the mythic identity construction of whiteness may find concrete establishment within South African society and its filmic media landscape: the content of such myths therefore merits theoretical attention.

6.3.5 Myth genre and myth sub-genre

Compliant with with the framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth on film offered in chapter five, an inventory of myth genre and myth sub-genre is offered below (see 4.3.3 and 4.2). This inventory specifically delineates the myth genre of identity myths with reference to South African post-apartheid racial mythologies of whiteness. Firstly, it is recognised that the myths of the bad and good white perpetrators are not the only mythologies prescribed to whiteness in post-apartheid South African new history national cinema, but these myths are the subject of this section of the study, and so all other myth genres of whiteness are excluded from this inventory. Further, not all of the films listed in this inventory necessarily display all of the myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object demarcations listed in the second and third columns, but all of the films listed here display some of them, depending on the narrative content of each film.

The dominant or counter myth status of these myth genres has been omitted from this inventory, because as is discussed earlier in this subsection, all of the myths and myth genres represented here are understood by the study to function as counter myth, making it nonsensical to include this characteristic on this inventory.

Table 6.3: Myth genre inventory of racial mythologies of whiteness on a selection of post-apartheid South African new history national films

Myth genre	Myth sub genre	Myth secondary sub genre	Filmic examples
Identity myths: *South African post-apartheid racial mythologies of whiteness (in film)*	*The myth of the good white perpetrator* **Myth-as-narrative** • Genuine remorse for the atrocities of apartheid • Psychologically tortured by personal guilt • Seeks reconciliation and redemption • Made to suffer physical, emotional and/or psychological punishment • Punishment becomes a personal cleansing ritual • May have a black friend or associate (buddy relationship) • May have a black lover **Myth-as-object (identified, in part, by iconography)** • White • Sophisticated mode of dress • Not uniformed • Speaks good English, often without an Afrikaans accent • Keeps easy company with blacks	*The myth of the bad white turns good white* **Myth-as-narrative** • Initially racist • Undergoes ideological transformation • Discovers error of former personal belief system • Becomes a good white • Genuine remorse for the atrocities of apartheid • Psychologically tortured by personal guilt • Seeks reconciliation and redemption • Made to suffer physical, emotional and/or psychological punishment • Punishment becomes a personal cleansing ritual • May develop a close relationship with black character(s) as a result of the transformation from bad to good white **Myth-as-object (identified, in part, by iconography)** • White • Mode of dress may change • Initial open disdain for blacks • May initially be uniformed • Speaks good English, often without an Afrikaans accent • Initially does not associate with blacks (for example: refuses to shake the hand of a black person) • Eventually seen to associate with blacks	• Cry, the Beloved Country (1995) • Drum (2003) • Promised Land (2003) • Stander (2003) • Forgiveness (2004) • In My Country (2005) • Red Dust (2004) • Tsotsi (2006) • Catch a Fire (2007) • Goodbye Bafana (2007) • Jerusalema (2008) • Skin (2010) • Invictus (2010)

	The myth of the bad white perpetrator	The myth of collective bad white perpetrators	• Cry, the Beloved Country (1995)
	Myth-as-narrative • Ascribes to racist ideology of apartheid • Dislikes blacks and is racist towards them • Dislikes good whites • Reveals no remorse for the atrocities of apartheid or for wrongdoing personally performed • No desire for reconciliation • Is often punished for transgressions **Myth-as-object (identified, in part, by iconography)** • White • Strong Afrikaans accent • Old South African flag • Swastika symbol of the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* • Uniformed (in police, prison warden or military attire) • Rude manner of speaking to blacks, often using expletives • Verbalises blatantly racist remarks • Armed with firearms or batons • Regularly displays violent behaviour	• Functions as negative stereotype **Myth-as-narrative** • Ascribes to racist ideology of apartheid • Dislikes blacks and is racist towards them • Dislikes good whites • Holds position of authority in apartheid's governmental system, such as soldiers, policemen or prison wardens (if film is set during apartheid) • Never reveals remorse for the atrocities of apartheid or for wrongdoing of the group • No desire for reconciliation • Is rarely punished for transgressions **Myth-as-object (identified, in part, by iconography)** • Whites • Strong Afrikaans accent • Old South African flag • Swastika symbol of the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* • Uniformed (in police, prison warden or military attire) • Rude manner of speaking to blacks, often using expletives • Verbalises blatantly racist remarks • Armed with firearms or batons • Regularly displays violent behaviour	• Drum (2003) • Promised Land (2003) • Stander (2003) • In My Country (2005) • Red Dust (2004) • Catch a Fire (2007) • Goodbye Bafana (2007) • Jerusalema (2008) • Skin (2010) • Invictus (2010)

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It is evident from the table above, that the activity of inventorying myth genres as has been done here supplies the mythologist with a set of markers or significant signifiers, which may assist in the identification of myth(s) or counter myth(s) in future representations. These significant signifiers are listed in the second (myth sub genre) and third (myth secondary sub genre) columns above. A myth genre inventory such as this may also serve as a tool to assist the mythologist in recording how myths or counter myths evolve over time, because as they do so, their significant signifiers are likely to change. If one were, for example, to produce a myth genre inventory of apartheid era filmic representations of whiteness, the significant signifiers in the second and third column of the table above may have been quite different to those listed here.

Apart from what has been discovered in this exercise about the content of contemporary racial identity myths of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa (which is the secondary aim of the study) is the contribution which this exercise of myth genre inventorying can potentially make to semiotic myth theory (the primary aim of the study). Monitoring the myth genre, may yield more insight into the motivation of myth (and the ideological movements within society in general) than monitoring a single myth or counter myth alone in a kind of vacuum. Perhaps, once turning attention to myth genres, rather than scrutinising individual myths, the mythologist may have more critical space to engage with the mythical discourse, and/or mythical rhetoric of a particular socio-political environment at any given time. Placing emphasis on the myth genre rather than the myth only, widens the critical lens of the mythologist, allows greater possibility for the negation of the problem of disregarding context and history, and gives the mythologist a more holistic view of the myth (and myth genre) as it operates within society and representational acts at a given time in history.

6.4 Counter myth and the re-mythologisation of whiteness: the myth of reconciliation

Evidently the theoretical framework for the description of myth and counter myth in film has assisted in revealing a number of valuable insights into the recent mythologisation of whiteness in post-apartheid South African new history film. These various insights are summarised and discussed with regard to their significance in chapter seven.

To conclude this chapter's description of the counter mythical construction of whiteness on post-apartheid South African new history film this discussion returns to the theorisation of counter myth performed in chapter two, and examines how this may be practically applied to the filmic examples mentioned in the study. Importantly, the aim of the study is to contribute to the theoretical field of semiotic mythology, by theorising counter myth and developing a theoretical framework for the analysis of counter myth in mass media texts. The description of a selection of post apartheid South African films in chapter six has been performed to demonstrate the utility value of this theoretical model by analysing the counter myths of the good and bad white perpetrator.

The description of the selection of films which conducted in this chapter has until now concentrated largely on the myth content of these representations. This is in accordance with the main emphasis of the study, which is myth and counter myth. As with any semiotic analysis, it is also important to consider the implications of the critically deconstructed mythical meaning on an ideological level of meaning (Barthes 1972:115-117). Importantly, it must be asked, what can these mythical messages mean within the social and political context in which they were produced, what do they indicate about society in general (if anything at all) and more specifically, what are the ideological motivations surrounding the reconstruction of whiteness in such ways?

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The study argues that the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator (as represented on post-apartheid South African new history film) both operate as reconciliation myths, albeit in slightly different ways, which are in keeping with the ideological leanings of a newly democratised South Africa, and perhaps form part of the same myth discourse as the myth of the Rainbow Nation. Both of these myths of whiteness perform two key tasks: first, they work to reformulate the identity construction of South African whiteness in ways which are contrary to those offered during apartheid (when, for the most part, whiteness was constructed as the norm and affiliated to power) and secondly, they represent these newly constructed white identities in ways that are formulated to encourage forgiveness and reconciliation. The first task mentioned here above, the reconstructed and re-mythologised identities of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator, and their myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object content, are described in detail in subsection 6.3 and summarised subsection 7.1, and will therefore not be summarised in this subsection.

The second task, the mythological encouragement of forgiveness and reconciliation, will be discussed further in this subsection. In a historical sense, the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator were necessary. As South Africa made the transition from apartheid to democracy a new way in which to consider and understand whiteness had to be developed, and one which would fit into the new political landscape. The apartheid era constructions could not be allowed to persist, and indeed, it was impossible for them to do so since whites had effectively lost their position of political dominance. Therefore, white identities which did not represent the white figure in a position of apartheid inscribed power had to be renegotiated, but the newly formulated white identities nonetheless needed to speak the reconciliatory ideological discourse of the new South Africa and the Rainbow Nation myth.

Equally, the apartheid era visual inscriptions of South African whiteness which were produced by foreign production companies and from a foreign perspective also required reconfiguration. During apartheid, many foreign film and documentary film productions, most notably those of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), were critical of the apartheid system in South Africa and represented the apartheid government's forced system of segregation in a negative light (a selection of these films and documentaries are mentioned in subsection 3.4). With the advent of democracy in South Africa, foreign audiences required a re-teaching of the socio-political situation within South Africa, and one that made sense with regard to the previously popularised and largely negative view of the country. The post-apartheid South African new history films selected for the case study in chapter six, are for the most part, produced by non-South African production companies (as is indicated on the filmography in Appendix A). Apart from reconfiguring the view of whiteness for a local South African audience, the films described here serve also to re-describe the situation of South African whiteness to a foreign audience.

Referring to the filmography offered in Appendix A, it becomes clear that only three of the films described in subsection 6.3.4 were directed by South Africans, and only one was fully financed in South Africa (*Promised Land* 2003). As explained in subsection 6.1, concerns of production were not the key determinants used by the study in the purposive sampling of films for the study. However, it is worth noting that although all of the films selected for the study were filmed in South Africa, almost all of these films were funded by non-South African film production companies, and most were directed by non-South African directors. Matters of the political economy of film production in or about South Africa fall outside of the scope of this study (although this is recommended as an area for further research in chapter 7). Nonetheless, this observation does raise questions of the motivation behind the remythologisation of whiteness on post-apartheid South African new history film, and the complexities therein.

First, there is the concern that while the films selected for the study work to reformulate the identity construction of South African whiteness, this function is being performed largely by non-South Africans, and therefore, seemingly for a foreign audience. Second, the mythologisation of whiteness in the selection of films described in subsection 6.3.4 has developed in a significantly binary way. The myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator are often represented as a binary pair, or binary opposition. This, however, is a simplistic reduction of what in reality is a complex social process. Of course, we know that this is the function of myth: myth simplifies, empties out the representation of complexities and even history, and offers a type of short-hand view that can be easily understood and consumed by the reader (see 2.1). The counter mythical representations of whiteness on the films selected for the study, may under critical scrutiny, amount to the stereotyping of South African whites by and for foreigners (see 2.5).

The focus of the study is to consider the films described in chapter six with regard to the counter mythical value which they may offer to a local South African audience in particular. This was done with regard to the discussion offered in chapter three of the study, which regards the social value of myth and counter myth production. In chapter three it is argued that the factual correctness of a myth or counter myth, the content of the myth, should be considered of secondary importance in analysis. Of primary importance is the social value of the myth or counter myth, which is to say: what does the myth ask of the myth reader to do, or believe, and is this within the best interests of the continued health of society (and democracy)? The ethical motivation of the myth or counter myth is of primary concern to the study (that is to say, that the counter myth should not do harm). This study has then focussed primarily on the myth content of the films described in subsection 6.3.4 from an exclusively South African perspective, and here attempted to elaborate on the social value that these counter mythologisations of whiteness may have for South African audiences. This was done to address the sensitive South African situation, where the reconstruction of racial identities and relationships is an ongoing process. The study acknowledges that the counter mythical

representations of whiteness offered in the films described in subsection 6.3.4, may be read from a foreign perspective and especially when considering the intentions of the producers of these films. The author's primary concern however, is whether the mythologisations of whiteness on post-apartheid South African new history film, are responsibly informed within the context of a South African myth reading audience, and ethically inscribed with a myth discourse in accordance with the reconciliatory discourse of South African democracy.

Moving on, while considering the catalysing force of any counter myth (identified in 2.1), it became clear that the South African situation and context surrounding the generation of the counter myths of whiteness, reveal a possible additional type of initiating force for the appearance of counter myth. The literature reviewed for the study and examined while theorising counter myth (see 2.1) referred only to one type of catalyst for the appearance of counter myth activity: counter mythical representations occur as a result of a collective recognition, amongst a certain social group, of dissatisfaction with the discourse of the dominant ideology. Counter myth is a conscious call for social change, an act to criticise existing dominant myths and provide alternative mythic meanings while denaturalising those of the dominant ideology (see 2.1) (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001:441, and Barthes 1972:135). Moreover, counter myth often works to oppose the myths that are produced by a certain powerful group within society, or a bourgeoisie, as Barthes (1972:137) puts it. Certainly, this type of counter mythical thinking was instrumental in toppling the apartheid government in South Africa and bringing about a more democratic system of governance. The focus of the case study for the study, are filmic representations which were produced after these political events.

Therefore, the study suggests a second scenario for the initiation of counter myth, and one which does not involve counter mythical opposition of a more powerful bourgeoisie. The second type of catalyst for counter mythic activity which is identified in the study

refers to the making of counter mythic meaning which may occur due to the necessary re-formulation of previously dominant mythic discourse. While the first identified catalyst for counter myth constitutes a call for social action, the second catalyst identified for counter myth constitutes a reformulation of social and political myths which counter the myths of a previously dominant myth discourse. Previously dominant myths which are no longer felt to be appropriate, leave a mythological void after the loss of power of the dominant group, and new or counter myths must then necessarily offer mythical alternatives to the now defunct previously dominant myth in order to fill this gap in mythical meaning.

When a dominant myth discourse exhausts its power position within society, mythic descriptors of togetherness or of the collective (the nation) as well as mythic significations of the self and the *Other* must be reconstituted. Because such new mythic significations are in such ideological contrast to prior mythic descriptors they qualify as counter mythical, as they work to offer alternate or counter meanings to the mythic descriptors of the past, or a counter view of history (see 2.5). Such counter myths may occur immediately prior to the acted out social change inspired by the counter mythical thinking of the first identified counter myth catalyst. The counter myths of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator, as well as other political counter myths such as the myth of the Rainbow Nation and the myth of the African Renaissance, formulated after South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy worked in the service of the newly empowered group within society. Unlike the first scenario for the initiation of counter myth (as identified in the review of counter myth literature and in subsection 2.1), these new South African counter myths did not oppose the powerful 'bourgeoisie' but worked to naturalise its position. The first insight to note here is that counter myth is a complex and multi-dimensional social phenomenon which must not mistakenly be over simplified in analysis. The second insight is that the study has revealed that there are two possible social and/or political scenarios in which counter myth can potentially find catalyst and representation.

The literature reviewed (see 1.3) for the study which dealt overtly with the definition of counter myth refer to counter myth mainly as a disruptive force, as it works specifically to oppose a particular more dominant myth discourse and therefore by its nature attempts to catalyse a social disruption of a more traditional way of thinking. In South Africa, in the period immediately prior to the transition to democracy, however, counter myth functioned rather as a force of cohesion, instead of disruption, since the message-content which it supplied served to inform the collective of ways in which to function in an acceptable fashion within the context of the new political landscape. This is significant, because this South African historical example (and the representation of counter myths on post-apartheid South African new history films in particular) has revealed that the social functions of counter myth are then more multifarious than the currently counter myth literature suggests, and this may require a revisitation of the functions of counter myth listed in subsection 2.5 of the study. Whatever the case, we may at least conclude that the South African post-apartheid mythological climate has revealed that counter myths then do only serve to disrupt society, but may also serve to encourage the social collective to function as a coherent whole.

With regard to the ideological content and context of the two myths discussed in the study: the myth of the good white perpetrator perhaps speaks most sharply and poignantly the symbolic message of the TRC. The re-mythologisation of whiteness in terms of forgiveness and reconciliation in the new South Africa poses a paradoxical problem. The white figure or white personhood naturally and understandably carries numerous connotations connected to apartheid, and therefore is suggestive of oppression, racism and the enforcement of white superiority. The representation of whiteness as such in the new South Africa would not do, since it would not be in keeping with the ideological discourse of reconciliation and democracy. A representation of whiteness which was compatible with the political myth discourse of the new South Africa needed to be established. This new representation of whiteness

could not realistically and plausibly ignore or attempt to omit the uncomfortable connotative connections between whiteness and apartheid. The myth of the good white perpetrator therefore, has to negotiate with and negate these powerful connotative meanings, which describe the white as inextricably connected to racism, and represent the white figure in a manner which is appropriate to, and compatible with, the political myth discourse of the new democratic South Africa.

However, this is precisely where the myth of the good white perpetrator reveals its counter mythic status most evidently. Remembering Barthes (1972:115) (see 2.1) the counter myth of the good white perpetrator re-inscribes apartheid era history and constructions of whiteness, denaturalising them and translating them to fit into new ideological arena. Literally, the counter myth of the good white perpetrator has re-translated the speech of apartheid era white identity myths (white as the norm and imbued with natural power) and spoken new meanings of whiteness. Significantly this has been performed whilst not erasing apartheid era history from the counter myth discourse but confronting issues of apartheid's relationship to whiteness overtly yet from a perspective quite different to that of apartheid era dominant myths of whiteness. This is after all, a key identifying marker of the counter myth: the inter-animation between the counter myth discourse and the discourse of the dominant myth to which the counter myth is ideologically opposed, as discussed in subsection 2.7. Counter myths do not suffer from amnesia. They do not forget history, but importantly, they *re-tell*.

The myth of the good white perpetrator as represented in post-apartheid South African new history film, both in narrative terms and with regard to the myth-as-object, acknowledges the role of the white figure within South Africa's apartheid history, as the figure of oppression, racism, and unjustified political power. In fact, this recognition serves as the starting point from whence all other facets of the myth seem to take their queue: because of the recognition of the relationship between whiteness and apartheid

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era oppression, the good white figure is required to suffer remorse, receive just punishment and ask forgiveness for past wrongdoing. The good white figure thereby becomes a symbolic redeemer: although he or she is still white and therefore by default, unable to escape general guilt, the inherent goodness of the good white figure as a compassionate person who is genuinely remorseful for the wrongdoings committed during apartheid, added to the good white's personal embrace of the ideals of the newly democratised South Africa, means that this white figure is one which may be accepted in the social collective of post-apartheid South Africa. By not denying the uncomfortable connection between the white figure and South Africa's apartheid past, but instead acknowledging it and re-transcribing it, the myth of the good white perpetrator supplies readers with an alternate view of whiteness that suggests and even justifies the possibilities for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Of course, neither of the descriptions of whiteness offered by either the myth of the good white perpetrator or the myth of the bad white perpetrator, are necessarily accurate in their descriptions of present day white South African (and particularly Afrikaans) people. The complex situations which existed in South Africa immediately after the apartheid period, and which persist currently, can hardly be adequately or accurately explained by reductionist and binary notions such as the simplified understandings of whiteness offered by the myth of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator. The study does not attempt to suggest a relationship of mimesis between the real and lived South African socio-political post-apartheid situation and that which is represented in the genre of post-apartheid South African new history film. The study acknowledges the complexities of the social repositioning of white South Africans within a post-apartheid environment, especially with regard to notions of guilt, denial and responsibility, but this socio-political situation is not the focus of this study. The case study has paid attention only to how these matters of the reconstitution of white identities are represented on the medium of film, and in particular how they are reduced of simplicities, stereotyped and popularised within post-apartheid South African new history film. The author acknowledges that that the binary framework of the myth of the

good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator is a simplistic one: nonetheless, it is the one which is repetitively offered by post-apartheid South African new history film, and therefore is the focus of the study. Additionally, the reductionist view, and the over-simplification of the reconstituted identity constructions of South African whiteness mythologised on post-apartheid South African new history film should not come as a surprise to the semiotic mythologist, because it is akin to the most fundamental function of myth: myth empties out the signifier of history, eliminates complexities and signifies the content of the myth in a qualitatively poor manner. Myth robs history of complexity and naturalises the mythical (more simplified) view (Barthes 1972:119 and see 2.1).

As mentioned in chapter three, the value of a myth or counter myth does not lie in the symmetry of its content to a factual account of events, but rather in the social function of the myth: that it to say, what does the myth or counter myth in question encourage its reader to actually do? In the case of the myth of the good white perpetrator, the reader is encouraged to forgive the good white for any perceived racially-connected wrongdoing and reconcile with this white figure as a legitimate member of the new South African collective. (One must keep in mind here that part of the functioning process of myth is to simplify reality, remove confusing complexities and offer a more simplified explanation of the world to the myth reader. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the forgiveness mandated by the myth of the good white perpetrator may seem like wishful thinking to some).

Although decidedly more negative in tone of content with regard to the white figure, the myth of the bad white perpetrator also serves a cohesive social purpose. As mentioned in subsection 6.3.4.3, the myth of the bad white perpetrator provides the collective with a mythical scapegoat: a site of personhood on which to purge collective anger in response to the trauma inflicted by the figure of the bad white (all of this within the safe confines of representational practice and cultural artefacts such as film). Indulging in the

viewership and response of personal anger towards the representation of the bad white figure, allows a safe psychological space for the viewer to freely hate and despite the mythologised bad white. More than that, this particular counter myth also fulfils the purpose of the re-telling of history, offering a counter view of history which is alternate to the view of history offered by the mythical discourse of apartheid. That the white figure should be inscribed as wholly bad and as a figure of characteristic cruelty would have been unthinkable within the mythical discourse of apartheid. Hence, and similar to the myth of the good white perpetrator, the myth of the bad white perpetrator is also markedly inter-animated with apartheid era myth discourse, and again reveals how counter myth engages with the past discourse, and transcribes it to fit more comfortably within the current political climate. Again, history is not denied, it is re-told (see 2.1 and 2.7). Moreover, the myth of the bad white perpetrator, and more so than the myth of the good white perpetrator, also functions as a political myth, in that it serves as a partial explanation to the collective of how society arrived at its current position (see 3.1 and Tudor 1972:139). The bad white figure becomes the symbolic object of blame: the counter myth executes characteristic simplification of complexities and renders the bad white as the *a priori* reason for all of the difficulties in South Africa's collective social history. While the bad white becomes the scapegoat and site of blame in the psyche of the collective, it must also be noted that the bad white figure (in post-apartheid South African new history film) is never represented in isolation of the good white figure: the bad white is always juxtaposed with the good white, and therefore film audiences are never encouraged to interpret the bad white as representative of all whites.

The case study of the representation of the myth of the good and bad white perpetrator as represented in post-apartheid South African new history film offered in this chapter may be applied elsewhere to other myths and counter myths, as the description of mythical content of the study concerns the universal character of both myth and counter myth. As well as being applicable within many other African post colonial situations, the mode of myth analysis demonstrated in chapter six may be relevant to other situations where a clash of myth or ideological discourses result in the emergence of counter

mythic activity, such as the tensions between the Western powers (the USA and UK in particular) and the Middle East/Arab region, or the cultural tensions in some European countries between Europeans and immigrant or foreign populations.

The following chapter presents the conclusions, contributions and implications of the study. The conclusions and contributions which have been made to the field of semiotic mythology by chapters two, three and four are discussed together in subsection 7.1.1. The conclusions and insights which have been offered about the filmic counter mythic re-articulation of post-apartheid South African whiteness is summarised in subsection 7.1.2. Finally, the study concludes with suggestions for further research (see 7.2).

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 Conclusions, contribution and implications of the study

The main purpose of the study is to contribute a portion of new myth theory to the field of mythology as practised in the academic discipline of media studies. This was accomplished by theorising the technical framework, societal functions, semiotic operations and key characteristics of counter myth (see chapters 2, 3 and 4). Additionally, the study sought to contribute to the theoretical debate surrounding the definition of myth by discussing the functioning and the distinction between of myth-as-narrative and the myth-as-object (see chapter 4). On the basis of this the new theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth on film (see chapter 5) was applied in a case study of post-apartheid South African new history film (see chapter 6). As mentioned in chapter one, the theoretical model for myth analysis developed by this study involves more than a purely semiotic analysis of myth. Because the study is situated within media studies, the iconographic content of film is not the sole concern of the study, but forms one of a series of critical concerns, which is evidenced in the first five steps 5.1 – 5.5 of the theoretical model for the analysis of myth on film, developed in chapter five. Iconography, which may or may not be examined using semiotics as a mode of analysis, is the concern of subsection 5.6.

What follows is a discussion of the conclusions, the contribution and the implications of the study. This discussion is structured according to the order of chapters of the study, in order to aid the reader and for ease of reference.

7.1.1 Conclusions and contributions of chapters two, three, four and five

The Barthean theory of myth was re-examined in chapter two and a re-reading of this theory was offered, which included the insertion of counter myth. The study concludes that the Barthean model of myth can be extended to reveal that counter myth is a multi-dimensional complex mode of speech, which does not operate as a second order of signification in the manner that dominant myth is thought to function (Barthes 1972:114-115). The diagrammatic representation of the of the structure of counter myth (see Figure 2.1) also revealed a key characteristic of counter myth: that while it functions to denaturalise the ideology which determines the discourse of the dominant myth, it is nonetheless impregnated with the discourse of the dominant ideology because it takes as its signifier the sign of the first order of myth (see 2.1 and 2.7).

During the course of the study the author encountered two specific catalysing forces for the appearance of counter myth within representative acts (see 2.1 and 6.4). (The study acknowledges that there may be additional catalysing instances that yield counter mythic activity which may be discovered after additional research or further counter myth observation. The literature reviewed for the study and the case study performed in chapter 6 have emphasised the two counter myth initiators listed here, in 7.1). The literature reviewed for the study referred exclusively to the first identified catalyst for counter myth activity: counter mythical representations occur as a result of a collective recognition, amongst a certain social group, of dissatisfaction with the discourse of the dominant ideology. Counter myth is a conscious call for social change, an act to criticise existing dominant myths and provide alternative mythic meanings while denaturalising those of the dominant ideology (see 2.1). The social or political environment that produces counter myths which challenge a specific social order are evidenced throughout history in various situations where major social change has taken place as a result of revolutions, to wars, to the institution of new legislation.

The second catalyst for counter mythic activity which has been identified in the study refers to the making of mythic meaning which may occur due to the necessary re-formulation of previously dominant mythic discourse (see 6.4). While the first identified catalyst for counter myth constitutes a call for social action, the second catalyst identified for counter myth constitutes a reformulation of social and political myths which counter the myths of a previously dominant myth discourse. When a dominant myth discourse exhausts its power position within society, mythic descriptors of togetherness or of the collective (the nation) as well as mythic significations of the self and the Other must be reconstituted. Because such new mythic significations are in contrast to prior mythic descriptors they qualify as counter mythical, as they work to offer alternate meanings to the mythic descriptors of the past. Such counter myths may occur immediately prior to the acted out social change inspired by the counter mythical thinking of the first identified counter myth catalyst. Historical examples of the second catalyst for counter myth activity abound in the post colonial environment, where the independent era sees previously colonised countries and societies representing mythic identities of self and of nationhood which are markedly different to the mythic significations produced during the colonial era. Such post colonial counter myths also offer counter versions of history which are in contrast to the version of history offered by colonial era discourse. This is the situation of the counter myths analysed in the case study in chapter six, since while the previously dominant myth discourse of apartheid is no longer relevant, counter myths work to re-inscribe the mythic discourse of society with meanings that are in contrast to those offered by apartheid era myths.

Subsection 2.2 explicated the semiotic structure of counter myth and compared this with the semiotic structure of (dominant) myth according to the Barthean model (Barthes 1972:115-117). Key differences in the semiotic and technical functioning between myth and counter myth were identified. Subsection 2.3 explained the relationship between

counter myth and media framing, and highlighted how these two communicative mechanisms are intertwined and closely related.

Subsection 2.4 revisited John Fiske's (1982:88) interpretation of Barthes (1972:115) model of myth, and expanded Fiske's diagrammatic model to include counter myth.[1] This was done for two specific purposes: first, as part of the study's contribution to the field of semiotic mythology through the theorisation of counter myth. Second, this revision of Fiske's (1982:88) model allows for the inclusion of semiotic activity which is not allowed for on the revised version of Barthes' model (figure 2.1). As discussed in subsection 2.4, the revised version of Barthes' model (figure 2.1) only accounts for the counter mythic instance where the counter myth adopts precisely the same signifier as the myth, but this is often not the case, as the counter myth may select a different signifier. The revised version of Fiske's model however, (in 2.4) allows for the instance where counter myth selects a different signifier to the dominant myth, while still taking as the catalyst of its signified, the discourse of the dominant myth.

As part of the theorisation of counter myth, the societal and political functions of counter myth were examined (see 2.5). This was done in part, by comparing the social functions of counter myth to those of dominant myth (which, unlike counter myth, have been thoroughly documented and theorised). The study acknowledges that the social functions of counter myth identified (in 2.5) are not exclusive, and further social functions of counter myth may be identified through additional research. The study then concluded that some of the social functions performed by counter myth are as follows. Counter myth functions as a form of self-definition (a), whereby groups distinguish

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[1] In June 2010 an academic conference was held in Madison, Wisconsin, entitled *Fiske matters: a conference on John Fiske's continuing legacy for cultural studies*, to mark the tenth year of Fiske's retirement from academia. The main enquiry of the conference was, given the changes that have taken place on the global media landscape over the past decade, whether Fiske's work on how the media play a central role in shaping collective social understandings of power remain relevant. According to the conference website the overall consensus was that Fiske's work is indeed still relevant to media studies and cultural studies theorists (www.fiskematters.com).

themselves from other groups while one of the main distinguishing characteristics of the group is its objection and/or difference to a dominant or previously dominant social order or myth discourse. Linked to the first function, counter myths offer alternative identities (b), where identity transference takes place due to a collective dissent toward the identities preferred by the dominant myth discourse, and the need for alternate identity construction. Thirdly, counter myths represent the recognition for the need for social change (c), often by simplifying the complexities that exist between the dominant ideology and the counter myth discourse in order to provide cognitive limits for the myth audience. Counter myth then simplifies and/or exaggerates the failings of the dominant myth discourse in order to make its own objection to the dominant myth discourse easily understandable. Counter myth functions as a form of mythical self-defence (d) and begins its action when a social group finds that it is necessary to counter certain negative myths which have represented the identity of the group in a manner which is disliked by the group.

Counter myths offer a counter view of history (e) which is at odds with the view of history offered by a dominant or previously dominant myth discourse. The study has repeatedly emphasised how this last function of counter myth has been evidenced in various post colonial situations, including that of post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, two examples of such counter myths were described in chapter six, where is was revealed that the counter myth of the good white perpetrator and the counter myth of the bad white perpetrator (as represented in film) offer mythic narrations of apartheid era history that are markedly different to the view of history offered by apartheid era dominant myths (see chapter 6).

The relationship between counter myth and political myth was explored in subsection 2.6. The study finds that, while they are not equivalents, there are intrinsic similarities between counter myth and political myth. A political myth may function as either a

dominant myth or a counter myth, while counter myth very often acts as a political myth due to its socio-political functions (discussed and described in 2.5). Both the counter myth and the political myth are particularistic in nature, because they are catalysed or initiated because of a particular set of social or political circumstances.

Counter myth building involves engagement with a certain discourse, and the encouragement of an alternate discourse (see 2.7). However, the more widely spoken and disseminated discourse of the dominant myth can pose difficulties for the success of the counter myth. The study discussed the obstacles related to discourse (see 2.7) and therefore recognises the potential difficulty encountered by counter myth at its moment of original representation. Because the counter myth is opposed to the discourse of the dominant myth, and because many myth readers may be adherents of the dominant myth or ideology, the counter myth may encounter widespread opposition. Additionally, where dominant myths are easily read by audiences due to their familiarity and widespread representation, counter myth may be entirely misunderstood by the audience, who is unfamiliar with the discourse of the counter myth and therefore a lack of symmetry exists between the intended meaning of the counter myth, and the meaning produced by the myth audience. Moreover, while counter myths retain a portion of the dominant myth discourse as their point of semiotic departure (see 2.1) the myth audience may read the representation of the counter myth within the framework of the discourse of the dominant myth, instead of the counter myth, thus skewing the meaning produced. The study found that counter mythical activity, by necessity, must often operate as a concerted effort in persuasion, in order to overcome and navigate these problematic surrounding the complexities of myth discourse.

A collection of reasons for the importance of counter myth research were suggested by the study in chapter three. The study acknowledges that the reasons for the value of the study of counter myth suggested by the study are not restricted to those listed by the

study, and further such reasons may be listed after additional counter myth orientated investigation. Political myths, and particular to the study, counter political myths play a role in the formation of the collective idea of national identity and nationhood. This role should be monitored if we are to understand how countries and societies have come to establish understandings of what it means to belong to the national collective, especially within post colonial and post-apartheid circumstances where the idea of the nation has in many instances by necessity been recalculated (see 3.1). Linked to the political concern of nationhood then, within the spectre of the study, is the concern for how myth and counter myth function to inform post colonial collective identities (see 3.2). The importance of studying myths and counter myths is emphasised because myths work to shape the collective's perceptions and beliefs, and may potentially result in a particular social action (see 3.3). While myths and counter myths inspire social action, myths which are not responsibly or ethically informed may inspire social action which has damaging effects on society. The mythical thinking which led to dangerous and damaging social action is evidenced in events such as the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the institution of apartheid in South Africa from 1948 to 1994, and other examples (listed in 3.3). That myth and counter myth carries the risk of inciting damaging social action, validates the critical analysis of myth, especially in terms of the ethical nature of its content.

In order to justify and substantiate this argument, subsection 3.4 examined a random selection of historical examples of counter myth, where the widespread acceptance of counter mythical messages led to social action which initiated a major change within a particular society. As another reason for the importance of the study of myth and counter myth, the study addresses the myth genre of stereotypes (see 3.5). Where stereotypes often operate as a shorthand and uncomplicated though negative description of a certain social group, these stereotype myths should be monitored for their potential unethical content and general harm which they have the potential to inflict on society.

Chapter four addressed the main purpose of the study (to provide a new contribution to the field of semiotic mythology) by engaging in the debate surrounding the relationship between myth and narrative, and the definition of myth as narrative. A review of myth theory and myth literature revealed that two distinct understandings of the nature of myth exist amongst mythologists across the spectrum of the social sciences (see 4.1.1). The first understanding of myth is that myth works as a narrative, and always or only as a narrative. The second position, which is the position of the study, is that myth may function as a narrative (the myth-as-narrative) but does not necessarily always do so, since myth may also function as an act of speech (Barthes 1972) and may appropriate various non-narrative texts (the myth-as-object) (see 4.1.2 and 4.1.3).

The dichotomy between these two understandings was addressed by the study: an admittedly daunting task due to the complexity of the issue. Nonetheless, the study took up this discussion in an attempt to further this particular dialogue in the hopes that once the position of the study is injected into the realm of mythology/myth theory/myth literature it may encourage further debate on the matter and mythologists can potentially come closer to finding agreement on the definition of myth. Chapter four furthered this discussion in light of the case study description which was performed in chapter six, by exploring the relationship between myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object on film: the author demonstrated how, from a semiotic perspective, the myth-as-object serves to advance the myth-as-narrative of the film, while the two different modes of myth (object and narrative) function symbiotically within the medium of film (see 4.2). This view was substantiated by the case study in chapter six, where the myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object content of a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films was analysed in detail (see 6.3.4). The study has then established what could potentially be utilised as a particular mode of analysis for film, or other mass media narrative texts such as television programmes, by future researchers.

In the review of literature, the author discovered that the field of social semiotics offered a number of useful modes of analysis and assumptions which held potential when applied to the analysis of myth and counter myth (see 4.3). Although the investigation of myth is not the usual theoretical territory of the field of social semiotics, the study has gleamed a selection of useful ideas for textual analysis from the writings of prominent social semioticians, and discussed how they could be appropriated for the analysis of myth and counter myth. The study also suggested that certain myths can be generically categorised and proposed the use of myth genres for the categorisation of myth (see 4.3.1). This effectually addresses two key concerns which mythologists often encounter. First, it serves to address the problematics surrounding the definition of myth (addressed in 4.1.1): if mythologists contextualise their myth research by referring to the myth genre which occupies their analytical gaze, then it serves to delimit their findings to the particular myth genre which they study. What is true for one myth genre may not necessarily be true for all myth genres. Second, the generic classification of myth may also serve to address the problem of vagueness which some mythologists employ when describing and defining their site of analysis (myth) (Flood 1996:107). Although the study admits that it may not always be possible to place a myth within a specific myth genre category, where it is done, it may contribute a further degree of accuracy and preciseness to the myth study.

Subsection 4.3.2 discussed a suggested manner in which to categorise myths into myth genres. The study acknowledged that the employment of the analysis of the myth iconography is a mode of analysis that is of particular use to iconographers and semioticians. The criteria for the generic classification of myth which may be utilised by mythologists from other fields such as theology, philosophy or classical theorists, would undoubtedly be different, but these criteria would depend on the approach of the field of enquiry. An exploration of these criteria falls outside of the scope of the study. For the purposes of the study, and from a semiotic perspective, the iconography of the myth in

question could be analysed, documented and inventoried in order to assist the mythologist with the generic classification of the myth.

Social semiotician, Theo Van Leeuwen (2005:6), emphasises the importance of compiling semiotic inventories when performing a semiotic research project. The study has appropriated this idea and applied it to the semiotic analysis of myths and counter myths (see 4.3.3). This is done to assist with the generic classification of myths discussed above, as well as the documentation of the iconography of myths and counter myths. The creation of such semiotic myth inventories has been practised in the case study in chapter six (see table 6.2 and table 6.3), in order to demonstrate that the semiotic inventorying of myth may be a helpful tool for myth analysis. Additionally, the inventorying of myths serves the purpose of identifying a particular signification as myth, since a myth must repeat its signified often to qualify as myth (see 4.3.3) (Barthes 1972:120). The study then advocates the inventorying of myth as a valuable theoretical tool for the accurate analysis of myth and counter myth.

Chapter five offered a theoretical model for the analysis of myth and counter myth in film by utilising the myth theory discussed and developed by the study throughout chapters two, three and four. Six key elements for the analysis of myth were identified in chapter five: these six key elements were summarised in chapter one (see 1.5), described in detail in chapter five, and practically utilised in chapter six (see 6.3). They are therefore not repeated here. The author hopes that this theoretical model for the analysis of myth and counter myth in film (see chapter 5) may be tested, critiqued, expanded on and utilised by other mythologists in future research. Furthermore, the general nature of the theoretical framework developed in chapter five lends itself to the investigation of the myth content of various mass communications media other than film, such as television, the internet, the news media and advertising. Such possibilities are discussed further in subsection 7.2 below.

7.1.2 Conclusions of chapter six: what was learnt about white identity construction on post-apartheid South African new history film?

In chapter six a case study description was performed of two counter myths prevalently represented in contemporary post-apartheid South African new history film. In order to contextualise the case study, a discussion of the film genre which had been selected for description was conducted: post-apartheid South African new history film (see 6.1). It was important to contextualise the film genre of history film in this manner because much literature on historical film incorporates the criteria of measuring the content of the history film with historical literature (written history) as an indication of the film's accuracy and merit (Rosenstone 1995a:3). This however, is not the position of the study, because this type of analysis is not appropriate according to the field of enquiry of the study (media studies). Furthermore, the analysis of myth within the filmic medium immediately indicates that the supposed historical accuracy of a film is not of primary importance to the study, since myths work to empty out the history of the sign, replacing it with a new version of history (Barthes 1972:117-119). It is this new version of history, offered by the myth, which occupies the mythologist's attention. A number of film theorists propose that historical films require analysis which regard the historical film as a mode for the reproduction or representation of history in its own right, which must be measured according to a set of criteria which are specific to the medium of film and visual analysis (Rosentone 1995a & 2006, Short 1981 and Sorlin 1980). Since the study is in agreement with this position, the proposed enquiry of the representation of myth and counter myth in history film is theoretically enabled.

The contextualisation and discussion of the genre of post-apartheid South African new history film was also important to the study because it brought to light how these films, within the South African filmic landscape, are a rich site for the current emergence of

counter myth. The genre of history film, as defined by Rosenstone (1995a:4-5), may work to represent new versions of an often traumatic past which are different to previously or traditionally represented views of history. These "counter histories" (Rosenstone 1995a:5) represented on film fulfil and link to one of the main functions of counter myth, which is to offer a counter view of history (see 2.5, point (e)). Although not the only site (medium) where counter myth fulfils the function of establishing counter views of history, the study examines history films as a major site of counter mythic history re-construction due to the detailed and extensive manner which the film medium allows for this counter mythic activity to occur.

The case study description in chapter six was conducted for the purpose of providing a demonstration of the use of the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth in film, developed in chapter five. A number of insights and observations were made possible regarding the content of the two selected counter myths due to the utilisation of the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth in film. The social and semiotic significance of the representation of the counter myth of the good white perpetrator and the counter myth of the bad white perpetrator was revealed during the utilisation of the framework laid out in chapter five of the study, illustrating how this framework may be employed to learn about various aspects of specifically identified myths or counter myths, with regard to their content, ideological orientation, methods of persuasion or rhetoric, ethical regard or disregard, capabilities for identity construction or renegotiation and more.

What follows below then, is a summary of what was learnt in the study, about the content and nature of the counter myths of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator through the utilisation of the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth in film developed by the study (see 6.3).

The counter myths of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator are two (post-apartheid) constructed modes of the racial representation of whiteness within South African film about apartheid. These two myths are often (though not always) juxtaposed with one another in post-apartheid South African new history films and thereby regularly coexist within the filmic text in a binary fashion (see 6.3.1). These myths have revealed a set of defining characteristics, the identification of which may indicate the presence of either one of these myths within the text. These defining characteristics or significant markers were discussed at length throughout subsections 6.3.3, 6.3.4 and 6.3.5 while illustrating how they had manifested in a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films by discussing various representations of white characters or collective white groups. The defining characteristics or key markers of the counter myths of the good white perpetrator and the bad white perpetrator were indicated in table 6.2 for the purpose of generically categorising these two myths.

The counter myth of the good white perpetrator is often entwined with the representation of a white character who takes a central role within the narrative, and often occupying the role of main protagonist within the film. The personal history of this character is inextricably linked to South Africa's apartheid history, since the good white character expresses genuine heartfelt remorse for the atrocities of apartheid. The good white experiences this remorse to such an extent that he or she is psychologically tortured by feelings of personal guilt. This guilt is associative because of the good white's ethnic or racial identity as a white person: the good white will experience this guilt and remorse regardless of whether he or she has personally committed any wrongdoing in the past. The good white is guilty by association, meaning that even if the good white is personally and technically guiltless, he or she will carry the guilt of the collective of white South African(s) in any respect.

With regard to the myth-as-narrative of the good white perpetrator, in an attempt to address the above mentioned guilt and remorse, the good white will seek a form of reconciliation and redemption. As part of the narrative action on this requirement of the good white perpetrator myth, the good white undergoes a form of physical, emotional and/or psychological difficulty, which becomes a type of punishment that the good white must endure because of the guilt associated with the good white. This punishment becomes a symbolic narrative cleansing ritual, after which the good white may accomplish atonement. A key narrative construct of the myth of the good white perpetrator is that the good white is associated with a black friend (in a buddy relationship), and may even have a black lover.

With regard to the myth-as-object of the good white perpetrator, a collection of key significations have revealed themselves to be frequent indentifying codes of this myth. The good white perpetrator is always white, and speaks good English, while often lacking an Afrikaans accent (even in the most inexplicable situations, and even if the good white character plays the part of an Afrikaner). The good white perpetrator is often not uniformed (unlike the binary bad white). The rare exception to this is James Gregory (*Goodbye Bafana* 2007), but Gregory is a prison warden and does not begin the film as a good white, since he makes the transformation from bad white to good white. The most telling myth-as-object significations of the good white perpetrator, is how the interaction with blacks of these good white characters is encoded. The good white keeps easy company with blacks. Good whites shake hands, hug, kiss, laugh and cheerfully talk with black people. They occasionally greet a black person in an African language. Good whites are not afraid to touch black people and do so often. And good whites are unashamed of their friendly interaction with black people, even when faced with the racist intimidation of their bad white counterparts.

A good white may engage in a romantic relationship with a black person, either explicitly such as Anna Malan (*In My Country* 2005) and Kunene's girlfriend, Leah Freidlander, (*Jerusalema* 2008) or this interracial relationship may be implied by the narrative, as in the case of Sarah Barcant (*Red Dust* 2004). It is worth noting, however, that all of the good whites identified by the study, who have engaged in a romantic relationship with a black person in post-apartheid South African new history films, have been female good whites. Good white men are not represented as having romantic relationships with black women. The only possible exception to this in the films selected for the study is Jurgen Schadeburg (*Drum* 2003) but even then no interracial relationship is dwelt on in any depth by the plot since Schadeburg's romantic interaction with a black woman is only briefly signified and does not form a central point of emphasis of the narrative, as it does in the case of the good white women mentioned above. Only in one scene do we see Schadeburg with a black woman sitting on his lap, but no further representation of a romantic relationship is suggested.

Linked to the myth of the good white perpetrator is the subgenre myth of the bad white turns good white. The white character who invokes this myth is, similar to the good white perpetrator, often the central protagonist of the film. Much of the film's narrative concerns this white character's ideological and personal transformation from bad white to good white. In the myth-as-narrative this white character is often initially identified as a racist (encoded by the myth-as-object) which becomes obvious through his racist remarks or violent actions towards blacks. However, a significant event in the life of this bad white figure catalyses an ideological transformation, during which the bad white recognises the errors of his ways and becomes a good white. This white figure is often disillusioned by his former personal belief system, prompting the character's change of perception. This white character then reveals genuine remorse for the atrocities of apartheid and especially for any wrongdoing personally performed. Whereas the good white discussed above does not necessarily carry any personal guilt connected with apartheid but is guilty by association, the bad white turns good white is personally guilty of past wrongdoing. Like the good white, the bad white turns good white is often

psychologically tortured by personal guilt, which may prompt the transformation from bad to good white. This character seeks redemption for wrongdoings personally committed in the past, and like the good white, is required to endure a form of cleansing ritual which manifests in the form of physical, emotional and/or psychological punishment. The most severe example of this type of bad white turns good white punishment is perhaps Tertius Coetzee (*Forgiveness* 2004) who, after expressing torturous remorse for the terrible actions which he committed during apartheid, receives his apportioned symbolic ritualistic punishment when he is murdered. Like the good white, the bad white turns good white often develops a close relationship with a black character, even though he would not have done so at the start of the narrative when he was still a bad white. This black character(s) is delegated the role of moral guide: one of the main functions of the black character is to act as the guide to the white character, leading him on his personal journey toward becoming the good white. Examples of this include Nelson Mandela who guides James Gregory (*Goodbye Bafana* 2007) and James Earl Jones' character, Stephen Khumalo, who guides James Jarvis (*Cry, the Beloved Country* 1995).

The significations of the bad white turns good white changes throughout the myth-as-narrative in order to indicate the personal transformation of this character. Originally the bad white turns good white is encoded in a similar fashion to the bad white, which is discussed below. As the bad white turns good white makes transformative progress, the myth-as-object of the good white perpetrator is encoded and attached to this character in the same way as it is done with the good white character. Significantly, the bad white turns good white in post-apartheid South African new history film is seemingly always male: the film inventory in table 6.2 reveals that no examples of a female bad white turns good white have been identified by the study. There may indeed be female representations of this myth in films not selected for description in the study, but the author would venture to state that such representations are rare, since the study incorporates almost all South African new history films produced since 1994. This is in

contrast to the myth of the good white perpetrator, which has been represented by both male and female characters.

As has been mentioned, the myth of the bad white perpetrator is often juxtaposed with the myth of the good white perpetrator in a binary fashion. The myth of the bad white perpetrator, however, is never applied to the main protagonist of the film because the bad white figure fulfils the role of the villain which the main white hero character (the good white) must oppose and overcome. The myth-as-narrative of the bad white perpetrator involves a white figure who adheres to the racist ideology of apartheid. The bad white dislikes blacks and behaves in a racist or abusive manner toward them, as well as sometimes revealing their disdain for good whites whom they believe show unnecessary sympathy to blacks. Unlike the good white, the bad white perpetrator will never reveal remorse for the atrocities of apartheid, nor for any wrongdoing personally performed. Therefore, the bad white perpetrator makes no attempt at reconciliation and does not seem to desire forgiveness or atonement. As a result, the bad white perpetrator is often (though not always) punished for his transgressions. The punishment of the bad white has a different purpose than the punishment of the good white: the bad white does not experience punishment as a symbolic cleansing ritual which facilitates forgiveness and atonement, since the bad white seeks no forgiveness. Instead the punishment of the bad white satisfies the audience's desire for revenge, and the meting out of symbolic justice.

The representation of the punishment of the bad white perpetrator then mythologises something which in reality, due to the amnesty offered by the TRC, South Africans did not see in a great many cases: the punishment of apartheid era white military and police personnel who had committed actions of torture, murder or oppression during apartheid. The visualisation of this punishment against characters such as Colonel Henri De Jager (*In My Country* 2005) and Gerhard and his surrounding community of Afrikaners

(*Promised Land* 2003) then becomes the mythic catharsis for a traumatised South African audience who may enjoy the justice meted out on these mythologised white villains, even while they may not witness this occurrence in reality. Although this may seem morose or macabre, such mythic content may nonetheless be valuable and even healthy for the collective. As discussed in subsection 6.3.4.3, if collective South African society can satisfy any residual desires for revenge within mythologised filmic fantasies, and purge desires for revenge in such engagements with the media, it may assist with overall societal wellbeing and reconciliation.

The myth-as-object signifiers of the bad white perpetrator are quite different from those of the good white perpetrator, with the exception of a white racial identity. The bad white often speaks English with a strong, if occasionally inauthentic, Afrikaans accent. The bad white figure has a rude manner of speaking when addressing blacks and often verbalises blatantly racist remarks or makes use of expletives. Depending on the narrative of the film, the bad white may be dressed in the uniform of the apartheid era military, police force or prison warden attire. The bad white may be armed with batons or firearms and regularly displays violent or cruel behaviour towards blacks, and occasionally towards good whites. The bad white perpetrator's encoding may be reinforced with symbols of apartheid and oppression: the bad white may be associated with the old apartheid era South African flag, or the Swastika-type symbol of the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging*. The study has found that the myth of the bad white perpetrator is sometimes applied to a collective group, which effectively functions as the negative stereotyping of white South African Afrikaners. The ideological position of figures represented according to the myth of the collective bad white perpetrators is identical to that of a figure represented according to the myth of the bad white perpetrator. The myth-as-narrative and myth-as-object significations of this collective myth, when applied to a collective group, are the same as the myth of the bad white perpetrator when it is prescribed to an individual character.

Although the myths and their respective subgenre myths summarised above were found to appear regularly in representation in most of the films selected for description in the study, the two films which were released in 2010 and selected (*Invictus* and *Skin*) revealed slightly different significations in the representation of the myths identified by the study. These significant differences were discussed in 6.3.4.4 and suggest the potential for a shift in the key characteristics of the myth of the good white perpetrator and the myth of the bad white perpetrator. The study maintains, however, that this cannot be verified by the study, since at the time of writing these new nuances of mythic representation have only received prominent representation in two post-apartheid South African new history films and even then, each of these films have dealt with the identity construction of whiteness in two different ways (see 6.3.4.4).

As explained in chapter six, the descriptions of South African whiteness offered by the myths of the good and bad white perpetrator are admittedly overly simplistic, because they exclude the complexities and nuances of real social identity experiences of present day South Africa. The myth of the good and bad white perpetrator, as evidenced on post-apartheid South African new history film, offer a binary and reductionist view of South African whiteness which is not necessarily accurate when compared to the intricate socio-political complexities which existed during apartheid, and which continue to persist at the present time. However, the purpose of this study is not to compare the myth content of the selected films to reality, but rather to uncover how the selected films actively construct white identity in a post-apartheid era. That the myth of the good and bad white perpetrator construct South African white identity in a decidedly simplistic manner is not surprising, when remembering that a simplification of history and an elimination of complexities is an integral part of the function of myth (Barthes 1972:119).

A disappointing factor perhaps, is that such reduced and simplified binary remythologised identity constructions of whiteness, do not seem to allow much

representative space for the construction of white identity outside of these already established mythic formulas. For example, on post-apartheid South African history film, there has been virtually no representation to date, of white resistance to, and during, the apartheid regime. One rare and very limited representation of this is that of Joe Slovo (*Catch a Fire* 2007) but this character plays a small role in the film. None of the main white protagonists in any of the films examined here embodied a mythologisation of the white anti-apartheid struggle hero: the representation of such a figure is almost entirely lacking from post-apartheid South African history film, meaning that a white response of opposition to apartheid, although a reality, remains un-mythologised on post-apartheid South African history film, and raises questions as to whether it is part of a common South African myth discourse in general. This non-represented filmic figure may tell us as much, as the mythologisations that we do witness on film. It is significant that whiteness is not as frequently inscribed with messages of active resistance to apartheid (which was a reality for at least some white people), as it is inscribed with connotations of guilt, wrongdoing, remorse and forgiveness. Nonetheless, perhaps the minor shift of the trajectory of white identity construction, evidenced in *Invictus* (2010) and *Skin* (2010), will lead to the creation of representative spaces which will allow for such mythic activity.

To conclude, the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth in film theorised and developed in the study (chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5) has revealed the above insights into the post-apartheid identity renegotiation of whiteness and opened these myths up for detailed analysis, which in the sensitive political climate in South Africa is important. The practical implementation of the theoretical model for the analysis of myth and counter myth in film (see chapter 5) to a selection of new history films has revealed to the author of the study a great deal of insight into how films are being employed to mythically reconstruct understandings of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa, and how such myths semiotically operate within the filmic medium. The author believes that work such as this may contribute to the social scientific understanding of not only how South Africa(ns) have come to terms with their new democratic post-apartheid

dispensation and the task of redefining national and/or collective social identities, but if applied further afield could potentially contribute similar insights into the social renegotiations of power and identity in various previously colonised post colonial and post independence countries.

7.2 Proposals for further research

The author suggests six possible arenas for further research subsequent to the study. First, as mentioned in chapters one, two, and three, an extensive literature review indicated that although there is a great deal of myth literature and research which deals with dominant type myth, the amount of literature which emphasises the theorisation or investigation of counter myth is comparatively small. The study seeks to reveal, through the explanation of the technical operations of counter myth, and through various examples of counter mythic activity, that counter myth may function as a powerful force of massive social and political change, which may have widespread and lasting effects on entire nations, and which can effect societies in good or adverse manners. Therefore, the study encourages further research on counter myth, in order to expand the body of literature on this subject and contribute to the creation of knowledge about counter myth.

The second area of suggested further research concerns the further development of the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth started in the study and the application of this framework to the critical examination of strong myths and counter myths finding representation in any type of mass communications media. The study acknowledges that through the further research of counter myth, the theoretical model for the analysis of myth and counter myth developed by the study (chapter 5) can be re-evaluated, re-constructed, improved upon and re-utilised. The study maintains that the

theoretical framework developed by the study should be considered flexible, and not legalistic, in nature. This is not due to a lack of academic rigour, but rather due to a recognition of the theoretical inexperience of the field of enquiry of counter myth. It would be of no use, when so little is comparatively known about counter myth, to legalistically ascribe the manner in which counter myth is to be analysed.

Part of the flexibility of the theoretical model developed in the study is the recommendation that the six key elements identified in chapter five do not necessarily have to be addressed in the order in which they are listed in chapter five. Evidence of this is supplied in chapter six, where the sixth key element identified in the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth, mythic iconography (see 5.6), is discussed in an integrated fashion in subsection 6.3.4 along with a discussion of the myth format. The six key elements identified in chapter five in the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth could, for example, all be discussed together in an integrated manner and not necessarily separately as indicated in chapter five: the six key elements might form key areas which the mythologist may consider during the analysis of a myth or counter myth, but the order in which they are presented in chapter five should not necessarily be used as a prescriptive outline for the discussion of a particular myth, although it could be. Additionally, the six key elements identified in chapter five could be added to so as to increase in number, when further key elements relating to the analysis of counter myth are discovered through future counter myth research, as suggested as the first possible arena for further research subsequent to the study.[2]

Thirdly, the theorisation of counter myth developed by the study should be tested with regard to the evaluation of theory. The author acknowledges that the theory of counter

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[2] With regard to the revision of the theoretical framework for the analysis of myth and counter myth developed in chapter five: multimodal analysis, developed within the field of social semiotics, most notably by Theo van Leeuwen (2005), Gunther Kress (1988) and David Machin (2007), offers a valuable potential method for the testing and redevelopment of the theoretical framework developed by the study.

myth formulated in the study should be evaluated according to scientific criteria for theory building and testing. As such, related areas of further research could include a critical inquiry into the scope of the theory of counter myth, and how well it describes the communicative phenomenon of counter mythic representation (cf. Fourie 2007b:111 and Wood 2000:41-47). The parsimony and utility of the theory of counter myth could also be tested, especially with regard to its practical value in describing the occurrence of counter mythic representation in the mass media (cf. Fourie 2007b:112) (the study tested the utility of the theory of counter myth to a limited extent in chapter six, by applying the theoretical framework for the analysis of counter myth on film, developed in chapter five to a selection of post-apartheid South African new history films, but the theory of counter myth could be examined with regard to utility, by application to mass communications media other than film, or various other film genres). Finally, the heuristic value of the theory of counter myth formulated by the study should be tested, with regard to how it may be, or is, used by other researchers and whether the theory encourages new thinking, or lead to the contribution of knowledge (cf. Fourie 2007b:112).

Fourthly, the phenomenon of counter myth could be explored in greater depth than has been allowed by the study, within the context and theory of media framing (see 2.3). The action of myth and counter myth making, occur arguably in either a parallel or an intertwined fashion to the action of media framing. The role of framing and its usability in the construction of myth and/or counter myth discourse, and the relationship between framing, myth and the cognitive processes of reading frames and myths warrants further attention. While the study is a textual or content analysis, the employment of framing theory could potentially open the way for the research of counter myth from the perspective of the audience through reception studies.

Fifthly, and connected to the matter of media framing, is a concern of political economy. A political-economic exploration of the South African media (and film) commercial environment could be conducted, with particular attention paid to how the political economic situation determines how or why specific information and messages are framed, and therefore mythologised. The selection and salience of certain information and messages may be largely motivated by commercial interests (Treffry-Goatley 2010) and while the media play an important role in mythologising, for example, important ideas of national identity and nationhood, the effect of political-economic interests should be taken into account as parcel to understanding how our national mythologies are really constructed, and according to what motivation.

Six: as discussed in subsection 3.4, the relationship between the new digital media and social networking and the dissemination of counter myth is an important site for future critical analysis. The use of social networking websites in the Arab region's uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in early 2011, serve as a significant example of how the internet has become an important platform for the rapid and widespread dissemination of counter mythic messages. The current and (potential) future effects of this phenomenon on society require critical attention.

Seven, and lastly: the study has argued that the counter myths described in chapter six function, in part and for the most part, as myths of reconciliation which encourage social cohesion. This is compliant with the political context in which they were most prevalent (1994- 2010), and the counter myth of the good and bad white perpetrators seem to have become infused with much of the discourse of the TRC and the Mandela-era discourse of forgiveness. However, recent trends in South African political discourse reveal a different way of speaking to and about one another, which is markedly different to the reconciliation-discourse popularised directly after 1994. The author has already written about the manner in which hurtful remarks, hate speech and racial discrimination

are becoming popularly used by public figures and this trend is inevitably widely emphasised by the news media, and the press in particular (Reid 2010).

The period from 1994 and lasting for approximately a decade thereafter, now widely and affectionately referred to as the halo-period, is giving way to the post-revolution, post-reconciliation period. Without the luxury of hindsight it is difficult to gauge the trajectory of the mythologies which are currently emerging in this new period, but preliminary assessments indicate that worrying ideological positions, are gaining sites of powerful centrality. Evidence of this includes the various instances of hate speech and hurtful remarks publicly uttered by amongst the most powerful political figures in the country. It includes the ruling party's continued insistence that statutory measures be instituted which would effectually limit the freedom of the press (a Media Appeals Tribunal) and which would severely limit citizen's access to information (the Protection of Information Bill). Added to these concerns, service delivery protests continue in townships and poverty stricken areas on a wide scale across the country, which are sometimes largely ignored by the news media as 'old news', but nonetheless indicate a growing discontent and disillusionment amongst the largest portion of the population who are poorer now, than they were under apartheid (Johnson 2009).

It would seem that ideological positions are shifting, and more volatile discourses are emerging, which will undoubtedly see the production of myths and/or counter myths which are in symmetry with these socio-political positions. It remains to be seen whether any of the reconciliation myths (and not only those described in this study) of the halo-period will survive in this now very different political environment. It would be of interest to see whether the reconciliation-themed counter myths of the halo-period will attain mythic maturity to become dominant myths (if they have not already done so) or whether these myths will be robbed, in a Barthean sense, of their history by the new (counter) myths of the post-revolution discourse. The study argues that myths should

not necessarily only be considered in terms of their narrative content, but also with regard to their ethical content: the mythologist should question what the myth asks the myth reader to actually do, and whether such a message is responsibly informed with regard to safeguarding the health of democracy in general (see 2.1 and 6.3.4.3). Therefore, the author suggests continuing research, in accordance with this thinking, to monitor the production of myths in South Africa's post-revolution period.

The seven potential areas for further research identified here will form the starting point for the author's future research. Such research could include:

- a further investigation of the theories developed by the study, and in particular, on the semiotic construction of counter myth
- the social functions of counter myth
- the disparities between and classification of myth-as-object and myth-as-narrative
- the theoretical framework for analysis of myth and counter myth, and
- the description of the counter myths involved in the post-apartheid identity construction of whiteness not only in South African film, but also in other media.

Film title	Date of release	Director	Cast[1] **Name of character, (name of actor in brackets)**	Production company(ies)
Cry, the Beloved Country	1995	Darrell Roodt (South Africa)	• James Jarvis (Richard Harris)	• Alpine Pty Limited • Distant Horizons • Miramax Films • Videovision Entertainment
Drum	2003	Zola Maseko (Swazi)	• Jim Bailey (Jason Flemyng) • Jurgen Schadeberg (Gabriel Mann) • Carol Shand (Tessa Jaye) • Major Alt Spengler (Greg Melville-Smith)	• Armada Pictures • Drum Pty. Ltd. • VIP 2 Medienfonds
Promised Land	2003	Jason Xenopoulos (South African)	• George Neethling (Nick Boraine) • Carla (Yvonne van den Bergh) • Paultjie (Daniel Browde) • Gerhard Snyman (Ian Roberts) • Johannes (Grant Swanby) • Hattingh (Louis van Niekerk) • Kotie Snyman (Lida Botha) • Mart (Wilma Stockenström) • Fanie Raubenheimer (Tobie Cronje)	Film Afrika Worldwide (fully financed in South Africa)
Stander	2003	Bronwen Hughes (Canadian)	• Andre Stander (Thomas Jane) • Stander's father (Marius Weyers)	• ApolloProMedia GmbH & Co. 1. Filmproduktion KG (I) • Grosvenor Park Productions • Seven Arts Pictures • Stander Productions • The Imaginarium
Forgiveness	2004	Ian Gabriel (South African)	• Tertius Coetzee (Arnold Vosloo)	• Giant Films • Dv8
Red Dust	2004	Tom Hooper (British)	• Sarah Barcant (Hillary Swank) • Ben Hoffman (Marius Weyers) • Dirk Hendriks (Jamie Bartlett) • Captain Piet Muller (Ian Roberts)	• British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) • Distant Horizon • Videovision Entertainment • Industrial Development

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[1] For brevity and relevance, this column has been limited to characters (and cast members) who have be described/discussed in section 6.3.4 for their relevance in the filmic representation of the myths of the good and bad white perpetrator, and an entire cast list of each film has not been supplied here.

				Corporation of South Africa • BBC Films
In My Country	2005	John Boorman (British)	• Anna Malan (Juliette Binoche) • Colonel Henri De Jager (Brendan Gleeson) • Elsa Malan (Aletta Bezuidenhout) • Willem Malan (Louis van Niekerk) • Boetie (Langley Kirkwood) • De Smidt (Daniel Robbertse) • Mr van Deventer (Robert Hobbs) • Sergeant Schempers (Russel Johnson)	• Chartoff Productions • Film Afrika Worldwide • Film Consortium • Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa • Merlin Films • Phoenix Pictures • Studio Eight Productions • UK Film Council
Tsotsi	2006	Gavin Hood (South African)	White policeman (Ian Roberts)	• The UK Film & TV Production Company PLC • Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa • The National Film and Video Foundation of SA • Moviworld • Tsotsi Films
Catch a Fire	2007	Phillip Noyce (Australian)	• Joe Slovo (Malcolm Purky) • Ruth First (Robyn Slovo) • Nic Vos (Tim Robbins) • Anna Vos (Michele Burgers) • Katie Vos (Jessica Anstey) • Marie Vos (Charlotte Savage) • Special branch sergeant (Eduan van Jaarsveld) • Special branch lieutenant (Robert Hobbs) • Young roadblock policeman (Justin Shaw)	• Focus Features • Studio Canal • Working Title Films • Mirage Enterprises
Goodbye Bafana	2007	Bille August (Danish)	• James Gregory (Joseph Fiennes) • Gloria Gregory (Diane Kruger)	• Banana Films • Arsam International • Film Afrika Worldwide • Future Films • Thema Production • X-Filme Creative Pool
Jerusalema	2008	Ralph Ziman	• Leah Freidlander (Shelley Meskin) • Police chief (Ian Roberts)	Muti Films

Skin	2010	Anthony Fabian (American)	• Abraham Laing (Sam Neill) • Leon Laing (Hannes Brummer) • Sannie Laing (Alice Krige)	• Elysian Films • Bard Entertainments Moonlighting Films • Lipsync Productions • Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa • The National Film and Video Foundation of SA
Invictus	2010	Clint Eastwood (American)	• Francois Pienaar (Matt Damon)	• Warner Bros. Pictures • Spyglass Entertainment • Revelations Entertainment • Mace Neufeld Productions • Malpaso Productions

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