# Bosbok Ses Films: Exploring Postheroic narratives

by

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## ABSTRACT

Much of Afrikaans cinema before and after 1994 is characterized by a historically dominant heroic narrative. In response to this dominance, this study offers a postheroic framework for contemporary Afrikaans cinema to demonstrate the ways in which selected contemporary Afrikaans films, especially those films produced by the Bosbok Ses production company – *Roepman, Verraaiers* and *Stuur Groete aan Mannetjies Roux* – offer alternatives to Afrikaans cinema's regular nostalgic and nationalistic indulgences.

To arrive at a conceptual framework of the postheroic, this study examines Afrikaner nationalism in traditional historical Afrikaans cinema and contemporary Afrikaans cinema and how it thematically manifests through a heroic narrative. In response to the particular crystallization of nationalism in contemporary Afrikaans cinema, a postheroic framework is demonstrated to negate ideological and social exclusion in selected contemporary Afrikaans films. In this sense, flawed attempts at multiculturalism in contemporary Afrikaans cinema are replaced with double occupancy. This framework is primarily informed by the work of pre-eminent German film scholar Thomas Elsaesser.

Elsaesser theorises a postheroic narrative for a European post-nation. Drawing on Elsaesser's work extensively, this study uses relevant elements of a postheroic narrative to interrogate the social and political content of a contested space such as South Africa. Furthermore, the notion of the postheroic in cinema illuminates and informs my critical reading of the Bosbok Ses historical dramas, *Verraaiers* (Eilers 2013) and *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* (Eilers 2013).

The study identifies the following markers for a postheroic narrative for contemporary Afrikaans cinema:

- atemporality (a non-adherence to chronological and linear screen time)
- the film screen as surface of flux (the screen as site of contestation instead of placation)
- the cinematic spatial inclusion of the political other as an act of double occupancy

- a posthero who repeatedly fails as a traditional hero and performs, in the end, Elsaesser's notion of parapraxis
- the abjectification of the hero's physical body (as evidenced primarily in *Verraaiers*)
- stronger female characters who counter the historically nationalistic heroines of the preceding decades (as evidenced primarily in *Stuur Groete aan Mannetjies Roux*).

By using these markers to critically discuss these films I argue for the legitimacy of a postheroic framework for selected contemporary Afrikaans films. This postheroic framework dismantles Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric.

The study concludes that a postheroic framework, drawing on Elsaesser's work in this regard, provides a politically productive set of key ideas and concepts with which to critically engage with selected contemporary Afrikaans films.

Keywords: Afrikaans cinema; Afrikaner nationalism, *Verraaiers*; *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*; postheroic narrative; double occupancy; parapraxis.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Generally, popular contemporary Afrikaans cinema is described as thematically shallow and littered with comic stereotypes (Broodryk 2015:14). Thematically, these films rarely deal with post-apartheid identity and often dwell on a sense of nostalgia (Botha 2014:[sp]). Enns (2007:476) explains that nostalgia is a passive way of engaging with history by referring to Hutcheon, who states that nostalgia involves an irrecoverable nature of the past – a longing for the past. Radstone (2007:112) problematizes nostalgia in that nostalgia often aims to envision a 'better' future by substituting it with remembrance of an idealised past. While contemporary Afrikaans cinema has the capacity to generate cultural memory and inform how society may interact with memory and how it is perceived (Broodryk 2015:1), Afrikaans cinema's means of interacting with memory remains largely nostalgic as it focuses on idealised heroic characters in narratives that often celebrate nationalism.

The idealised 'hero' and the heroic narrative as ideological production of nationhood have been present in Afrikaans cinema since the early 1900s in films such as *De Voortrekkers: Winning a Continent* (Shaw 1916) (Tomaselli 1989:127-13). According to Althusser (1971:6) an ideology is knowledge constructed by institutions, such as schools, churches, media (including cinema), and family structures, which serve a biased function in maintenance of state power. Ideological production in Afrikaner nationalism justified the hegemonic rule of an Afrikaner dominated state. In this regard, *De Voortrekkers* is considered the first film to actively propagate Afrikaner nationalism (Maingard 2007:26). The heroic narrative in Afrikaans cinema has changed throughout history to position the Afrikaner in relation to a shifting enemy of Afrikaner nationalism, from the British imperialist, to the black communist, of Afrikaner nationalism.[1]

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[1] In 1652 the Dutch East India Company settled in the Cape as a stopover for ships to trade with Asia (Gugler 2003:65). Due to the trade in the Cape, Europeans started settling in South Africa and soon started moving inland (Gugler 2003:65). These settlers became known as the Afrikaners due to the language which they speak, Afrikaans, a derivative of Dutch (Gugler 2003:65). These early settlers were also referred to as *Boers,* which can be translated as 'peasants' (Gugler 2003:65). According to Giliomee (1989:23), *Boers* are also pastoral farmers who settled in South Africa and relied on cattle farming and plantations.

German film scholar Thomas Elsaesser (2012:707) argues that the heroic narrative in a European context is problematic because of how the heroic narrative promotes nationalistic ideals. Elsaesser (2012:708) also suggests that European cinema has failed to consider the alternative to nationalistic heroic narrative, as a postheroic narrative, and instead European cinema has for most part reflected a nostalgic presence of the past, similar to the norms within contemporary Afrikaans cinema. Acknowledging Radstone's contributions to scholarship on film and nostalgia, Elsaesser (2001:194), stresses that this nostalgic remembrance of history creates a culture of victimhood and blame towards various ethnic, gender and sexuality groups, often against one another.

In light of the above contextualization, this study aims to create a postheroic narrative framework for the study of contemporary Afrikaans cinema as an alternative to its emphasis on nostalgic, nationalistic Afrikaner narratives. The impetus for transposing the postheroic narrative into a South African framework came after I pursued a research study in 2015, in which I critically analysed the presence of biopower with its links to nationalism within a Foucauldian framework in the film *Verraaiers* (*Traitors,* Eilers 2013)*.* The conclusion of that study already demonstrated the hero's failure as the failure of Afrikaner nationalism. The postheroic narrative does not replace the heroic narrative in Afrikaans cinema, but co-exists with it across the South African cinematic landscape. The study aims to explore manifestations of the postheroic narrative, including notions of parapraxis, double occupancy and the inoperative community in Afrikaans cinema, examining moments in selected films that either conform to or deviate from the elements of the postheroic narrative. These notions will be discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

The postheroic narrative, in opposition to nostalgia and collective identity-building of the heroic narrative, would seek to find commonality-within-difference, calling on a different sense of community (Elsaesser 2013:[sp]). The postheroic narrative aims to overcome victimhood and social blame as a result of trauma, such as communism, the Holocaust, and possibly colonisation and apartheid in South Africa. I argue that the postheroic narrative is particularly relevant to post-apartheid South Africa with its diversity of culture, language, religion and race. Exploring the postheroic narrative in contemporary South

African cinema, specifically Afrikaans cinema, seems a plausible framework of creating "formal solutions to unresolvable social contradictions"; as such, the study's aims are in line with Jameson's (1981:79) assertion that cinema is a socially symbolic act where the narrative structure creates ideologemes that function to solve social trauma.[2]

I will explore the work of film and media scholar Thomas Elsaesser (1987; 1989; 2001; 2008a; 2008b; 2012 and 2012) as primary scholarship in motivating for and proposing a postheroic narrative for an Afrikaans context. Selected films of production company Bosbok Ses will serve as objects of inquiry in the exploration of transposing postheroic narratives in contemporary Afrikaans cinema. These films are *Roepman* (*Stargazer* Eilers 2011), and *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* (*My Regards to Mannetjies Roux* Eilers 2013) and *Verraaiers* (*Traitors* Eilers 2013).[3] I will contextualise the selected films in a contemporary Afrikaans framework by critically engaging with the scholarship of Martin Botha (2007; 2011; 2012 and 2014), Keyan G Tomaselli (1989; 2000 and 2006) and Jacqueline Maingard (2007), as primary sources on South African and Afrikaans cinemas. The selected films are all historical films, diegetically set during the reign of Afrikaner nationalistic ideals, and serve as the visual representation of tensions around the affirmation, confirmation or rejection of Afrikaner nationalism.[4] This study aims to examine the selected Bosbok Ses films in relation to the construction of the heroic figures in its narrative.

Rosenstone (2012:47) explains that a historical film should not be seen as merely a collection of historical fact in narrative form, but rather holds a further metaphoric or poetic dimension, which serves as a commentary on the past. A historical film, unlike a period

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[2] Jameson (1981:76) states that an ideologeme is "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourse of social classes." An ideologeme serves in narrative as a small unit of ideology which historicises the tension between social classes and ultimately offers a restructuring of a manipulated account of history (Marling 1994:282-283).

[3] Bosbok Ses has also produced two other films, *Musiek vir die Agtergrond* (*Background Music*, De Jagers 2013) and *Free State* (De Jager 2016). *Musiek vir die Agtergrond* is not a historical film and *Free State* is not a contemporary Afrikaans film and therefore these two films fall beyond the scope of the current study.

[4] The diegesis of a film is the perception that the intrinsic reality of the characters, set within a specific time and space, is occurring in the present moment, becoming the current reality of the audience member (Bordwell 1985:3).

film, is the representation of a historical event, often portraying characters who are historical figures, or fictional characters in the context of a historical event. A historical film emerges from a specific historical context, yet is shaped by larger cultural forces of the time in which the film is made (Stubbs 2013:13). The cultural forces may be that which offers the specific commentary on the past. In comparison, a period film differs from a historical film in that a period film is merely set within a specific historical time, yet imposes fictional events or characters into the setting (Dirks 2016:[sp]).

The following brief plot synopses provide information on the main plot and characters of the films that are discussed throughout this study. All three films mentioned below were produced by the production company Bosbok Ses. While I will critically discuss why *Stuur Groete aan Mannetjies Roux* (Eilers, 2013) and *Verraaiers* (Eilers, 2013) are distinctly postheroic films, the earlier feature *Roepman* (Eilers, 2011) precedes these two films and is a heroic narrative. All three films are crucial in the discussion that follows from Chapter Two to Chapter Four.

### 1.1.1 *Roepman* (2011) synopsis

Based on a book by Jan van Tonder and directed by Paul Eilers, *Roepman* follows the story of a railway community on the Bluff, Durban, in the 1960s, during Verwoerd's rule and finally his assassination. Timus (Paul Loots), an eleven-year-old boy, is caught up in a small Afrikaner community, which is largely governed by the church, and the hardships of his poor white family. The community is finally saved from their own social blame and antagonism by a stargazer, Joon (John-Henry Opperman).

### 1.1.2 *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* (2013) synopsis

*Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* (Eilers, 2013) is a family drama set in the Karoo, told from the perspective of a teenage girl, Engela, played by De Klerk. Engela lives with her aunt (Anna-Mart van der Merwe) and uncle (Ian Roberts). After a surprise visit from her mother (Steffie le Roux), Engela discovers that her uncle is her father. The town is constantly obsessing about a great rugby try by Mannetjies Roux, a famous sports event

which triggers hidden memories of the family and ultimately forces the family to confront the truth about Engela's father.

### 1.1.3 *Verraaiers* (2013) synopsis

Directed by Paul Eilers, *Verraaiers* is a film about a *Boer* soldier, Jacobus, played by Gys de Villiers, in the South African war who renounces his participation in the war to protect his family from the scorched-earth policy. The scorched-earth policy dictated that all farms of Afrikaners be burnt down and the women and children to be placed in concentration camps. Jacobus and his sons, played by Vilje Maritz, Andrew Thompson and Jacques Bessenger, are placed on trial for high treason and are eventually executed.

### 1.2 Background and rationale

In order to contextualise my critical discussion of the above three films, I will provide a brief overview of the trends and dominant movements within South African cinema, both during- and post-apartheid. I will refer specifically to cinema's response to history, its political economy, and the presence of the heroism in Afrikaans cinema in the production of Afrikaner nationalism.[5] After the heroic narrative has been identified in Afrikaans cinema, I will problematize it in relation to nationalism. Chapter Two will provide a more in-depth conceptual chronicle of South African cinema, with specific reference to heroism in Afrikaans film.

### 1.2.1 A brief historical overview of traditional Afrikaans cinema

The Great Trek, a northwards movement of the Cape-Dutch *Boers* in an attempt to flee from the British Cape Colony, was the first major event to impact the political economy of South African cinema (Tomaselli 2006a:126). This movement resulted in the South African War between the two remaining *Boer* Republics against Great Britain, although

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[5] The political economy of a film refers to the economic and industrial factors influencing media (Tomaselli 2000:252). The political dynamics of a country has a direct influence on both the ownership and control over production of films, as a political and ideological platform (Tomaselli 2000:252).

no frontline action was recorded.[6] The majority of the films at the time were from American and British production companies, and films about South Africa served as ideological production, representing British soldiers as "fighting for a trinity of God, Motherhood and country" while the *Boers* were projected as the embodiment of evil (Tomaselli 2006a:126). The British victory in 1902 was eventually celebrated with a Union between Brits and *Boers* in 1910, which lead to publicity films depicting South Africa as a country with potential for British enterprises and capital (2006a:126).

In 1923 African Film Productions (AFP) was established. AFP made films for South African people specifically, although these films were also sold overseas (Tomaselli 2006a:126). The most notable of these films is *De Voortrekkers: Winning a Continent* (Shaw 1916), which portrays the Afrikaner as having a social contract with God (Tomaselli 2006a:129). This emphasis on the Afrikaner's relationship with their God would become a key marker of Afrikaner nationalism, even in Afrikaans cinema. I will revisit this point in the forthcoming chapters.

During the 1930s South African cinema moved from being British dominant to Afrikaner dominant. The *Reddingsdaadbond-Amateur-Rolprent-Organisasie* ("The Rescue Action League Amateur Film Organisation" or RARO) and *Volksbioskope Maatskappy* (National Bioscopes Company) sought to promote Afrikaner nationalism and establish dominance over the British imperialists (Botha 2007:21).

Most of the films during the 1940s and 1950s were in the Afrikaans language and excluded black South Africans (Botha 2007:22). This means that cinema catered for a predominantly Afrikaans, privileged audience. Under the Verwoerd regime, a subsidy system was brought into effect which would ensure that films would only be awarded a subsidy if it was financially successful at the box office (Botha 2007:24).[7] Given that the economy was Afrikaner dominated, the films that were successful at the box-office were

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[6] The South African war was originally known as the Anglo-Boer War; however, this term excludes certain racial groups, which created a misguided historical account (Smith 1996:6). The war was later referred to as the South African war to be more inclusive of all its participants.

[7] Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (1901-1966) was the South African Prime Minister from 1958 to his assassination in 1966, who was considered the chief architect of apartheid (SA History [sa]:[sp]).

those that promoted Afrikaner nationalism. Since ideologically 'appropriate' films had a visible presence at the box-office, only a few films actively resisted the apartheid nationalist agenda. Botha (2007:24) labels these films that engage with, challenge, or resist the socio-political realities of South Africa under the apartheid regime, involved films. Some of the directors whose films are described as involved films include Emil Nofal, Jans Rautenbach and Ross Devenish (see Chapter Two). During the later stages of the apartheid era and during the height of the Border War (1970s to 1980s), the film industry deliberately aimed to legitimate the military's political processes, which were said to protect South African borders from the Cuban-Angolan communist threat, but also to protect the Afrikaner's political and economic domination (Tomaselli 1989:219). Against the perceived communist threat, these films assisted in proclaiming, protecting and maintaining Afrikaner nationalist ideals.

In 1986 and 1987, South African cinema started critically engaging with the South African condition as characterized by war, apartheid and the colonial history (Tomaselli 1989:226-227). Botha (2012:165) explains that during the early 1990s, with the apartheid era coming to an end, the film industry in South Africa showed positive development towards forging cohesion in the country. Marginalised communities were finally given a voice, after years of oppression, when post-apartheid cinema foregrounded themes such as poverty, colonization, homosexuality, and the institutionalised violence of apartheid (Botha 2012:204-205). Shortly after the fall of apartheid, South African cinema was not only marked by the inclusion of marginal voices, but also international partnerships, such as with the Canadian and European film industries (Botha 2010:172). Although these partnerships seemed like a positive change in South Africa after international sanctions, it did lead to strong competition for cinema audiences. This meant that only a few South African slapstick comedies, such as Leon Schuster's comedies, would be financially successful in the early 2000s (Botha 2010:172).[8]

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[8] Schuster's oeuvre has been largely contested as he has shifted his public identity in media, including cinema, to adapt to the shift from apartheid to democracy. However, his films still reflect white angst towards racial tensions in South Africa, according to Tomaselli ([sa]:[sp]). I refer to Schuster again in Chapter Two.

Botha (2012:179) states that ten years after the fall of apartheid, the South African film industry experienced a revival, with local films receiving international acclaim at film festivals such as the Geneva, Rotterdam and Cannes film festivals. However, the revival seemed to come to a standstill due to a lack of government funding (Botha 2012:191). After this initial artistic revival, the majority of contemporary Afrikaans films were only financially successful if these films, like Schuster's comedies, provided audiences with escapism (Botha 2012:191).

Such escapist Afrikaans language films have traditionally portrayed a particular Afrikaner stereotype. This stereotype depicts Afrikaners as conservatist heterosexual Christians who are not capable of engaging with any socio-political realities (Botha 2012:218).[9] By ignoring the socio-political turmoil with the rise of democracy, these comic stereotypes reflect a lack of response to changing political realities (Botha 2012:218). Botha (2014:[sp]) refers to these unresponsive, escapist films as *verstrooiingsvermaak,* a pleasurable light diversion or distraction*. Verstrooiingsvermaak* relates to the Elsaesserian notion of *angestelltenkultur,* translated as white collar culture, which focuses on a visual, sensorial experience of distraction (Elsaesser 1987:67). Distraction offers the audience pleasure in the form of a depersonalized, nostalgic experience (Elsaesser 1987:82). This *angestelltenkultur* emerged as a consequence of what German film theorist Siegfried Kracauer has labelled the technical and administrative rationalization of the urban employees, as a need to distract them from the realities of white collar culture (Elsaesser 1987:72).[10] *Verstrooiingsvermaak* in contemporary Afrikaans cinema differs from *angestelltenkultur* as it is not necessarily to distract urban employees, but rather to distract the Afrikaner from the socio-political realities of South Africa.

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[9] The comic stereotypes within Afrikaans cinema are problematic when placed in relation to Bhabha's (1983:18) thought, where a stereotype is a discursive strategy in the maintenance of hegemonic rule, through endless repetition of the same knowledge, until it is deemed 'common sense'. For an interrogation of these ideas, please refer to Homi Bhabha's (1983) crucial work, *The other question: stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism*.

[10] Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966) was a German film scholar and cultural critic who is acclaimed for his writings on New German cinema and Weimar cinema (Von Molkte 2014:[sp]), which I will briefly discuss in Chapter 3. Kracauer's book *From Caligari to Hitler: A psychological history of the German film is* considered one of the most influential and ground-breaking books of the time to explore German film's aesthetic in relation to the psychology and politics of the Weimar Republic (Princeton University [sa]:[sp]).

*Verstrooiingsvermaak* rather focuses on the exceptionalism of Afrikaner culture to justify the Afrikaner's lack of response to the socio-political issues in South Africa (Broodryk 2015:198-199). Cultural exceptionalism is related to Degenaar's (1980:14) discussion of *self-beskikking* (self-assertion) as integral to Afrikaner nationalism, a mentality that entitles culture to power. I will discuss *self-beskikking* and other cornerstones of Afrikaner nationalism in Chapter Two.[11]

### 1.2.2 A brief overview of heroes and enemy figures in Afrikaans cinema

Historically, Afrikaans cinema has, for the most part, cast a clearly identifiable hero as the ideal Afrikaner. The hero would also be positioned in clear opposition to the enemy of Afrikanerdom, an ever-shifting enemy, such as the British imperialist, the 'evil' city and the communist threat. Tomaselli (2006a:129) explains that the hero was firstly the representative of the united front of the *Boers* and British following the South African War, while the enemy was represented as barbaric black tribes, as seen in *De Voortrekkers.*

With the growth of Afrikaner political and economic power, the enemy shifted from blacks to British imperialism, as British investment posed a threat to this power. *'n Nasie Hou Koers* (*A Nation Maintains Direction* 1961) was one of the films that emphasised the conflict between the imperialist British and *Boers* (Tomaselli 2006a:130). These films are firmly rooted in Afrikaans hegemony and cast the *Boers* as folk heroes against the British imperialist (Tomaselli 2006a:138).

After the discovery of gold in South Africa, the enemy shifted to the threats associated with the 'evil' city. Films, such as *Moedertjie* (*Little Mother* Albrecht 1931), explored the relationship between insider and outsider, where the outsider was deemed the *uitlander* (foreigner)*.* Often these films involved a love triangle between the *boereseun,* the

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[11] The younger generation of Afrikaans film-makers have attempted to move away from these stereotypes of the Afrikaners, in contrast to the norm of *verstrooiingsvermaak*. An example of an Afrikaans drama which separates itself from stereotypes is *Johnny Is Nie Dood Nie* (*Johnny Isn't Dead,* Olwagen 2017), based on the song of the same name by *Voëlvry* singer Johannes Kerkorrel. The film depicts how a group of young Afrikaans people separate themselves from the oppressive apartheid mentality fighting against the cultural norms of Afrikaner nationalism (Zietsman 2017:[sp]).

*boeredogter* and the *uitlander* (Tomaselli 2006a:143-144).[12] With the turn of the century South Africa experienced a vast spatial reconfiguration, as industrialisation lead to many Afrikaners moving to the cities from the countryside. The *boeredogter* becomes the maimed heroine as she is sexually swayed by the *uitlander,* which shifted from the British imperialist to the English-speaking South African (Tomaselli 2006a:146-147). Only after she is punished for betraying the Afrikaner nation does she become the *volksmoeder*, a beacon of hope for the Afrikaner nation (Tomaselli 2006a:147).

During increasing urbanization, the establishment of Johannesburg as the major hub for international investment in South Africa became a threat to Afrikaner capitalism (*volkskapitalisme*). This ideological and financial threat was a symbolic threat associated with the border. The enemy rapidly shifted to the communist, hence the Border War commenced as protection against this ideological and financial threat (Tomaselli 2006a:153).[13] Heroism in present in the Border War film as the films served as propaganda to sway South Africans to join the troops and therefore soldiers were characterized by their masculinity and exaggerated heroic acts, and were depicted as the saviours of their community (Craig 2004:31).

With the rise of political turmoil in South Africa, some films started portraying an image in opposition to the Afrikaner hero. *Shot Down* (Worsdale 1986), for instance, even depicted an English-speaking anti-hero, aiming to de-mythologize and disrupt the culturally dominant idea of the Afrikaner as *volk* hero (Tomaselli 2006a:139). Filled with political imagery – jokes about Hendrik Verwoerd; portraying whites as grossly overweight; a *voortrekker* couple having sex; an anti-military cabaret show – the film was banned for ten years and became an anti-apartheid cult film (Tomaselli 2006a:139).[14] This film aimed

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[12] A *Boereseun* is directly translated as 'farm son', but, more accurately, means a young Afrikaans man. *Boeredogter* is translated as 'farm daughter', but rather refers to the young Afrikaans woman.

[13] The key ideas associated with communism include that of a stateless society where all citizens are equal and thus the centralization of capital would be terminated, equally compensating all citizens for labour (Marx & Engels 1987:59). Communism is thus a threat to an Afrikaner nationalist monopoly.

[14] After escaping the strong censorship regulations, *Shot Down* became extremely popular amongst the international film community and later locally, and is still regarded as one of the best anti-apartheid films (Rare screening of South African gem Shot Down 2011:[sp]). The full film is available online for "archival and portfolio purposes" on Vimeo.com (2015).

to de-mythologize the *voortrekkers* as divinely-legitimate conquering chosen people, the myth popularized by *De Voortrekkers* decades earlier. Despite such involved films, to borrow a phrase from Botha (2007: 24), the majority of traditional historical Afrikaans cinema, before and after apartheid, nonetheless mostly remained nationalistic.

### 1.2.3 Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa

A national cinema's purpose is to communicate a national identity to its audience (National cinema, political economy and ideology: [sp]). Higson (2000:66) states that a national cinema implies a tightly coherent community, a national identity, which is ultimately closed off to other identities. Nationalism has an inherently contradicting inclusive/exclusive nature, and is evident in an Afrikaner nationalism cinema. South African philosopher JJ Degenaar (1983:10) explains the judicial and ideological production of nationalism as demanding a unified loyalty to a state in order to maintain hegemonic rule.[15] Degenaar (1980:14) reports that, from the early 1900s, Afrikaner nationalism consisted of *self-beskikking* (self-assertion), *volk*, race, structure and power. These five themes will be discussed in relation to the selected films as constitutive of nationalism.

- Self-assertion is the mentality of the Afrikaner which ensures the freedom of the Afrikaans nation to view themselves as superior, as it is a seemingly self-created freedom, with institutions such as the Afrikaner-Broederbond as ideological production of Afrikaner nationalism (Degenaar 1980:14).
- *Volk* is a cultural concept, including a shared language, religion and history, with which the Afrikaner has identified in creation of a sense of superiority in Afrikaner nationalism (Degenaar 1980:14-15).
- An emphasis on race as biological category classifies individuals of a shared ethnicity into groups, has given the Afrikaner a sense of a 'border-mentality', which

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[15] Johan Degenaar is a South African political philosopher, often referred to as the Socrates of South Africa, whose work is greatly influenced by the apartheid era and is still cited to this day (Brümmer 2013:[sp]). Praised for his contribution to South African philosophy and literature, Degenaar played a large role in resisting conformity to apartheid ideologies, which makes him one of the most influential philosophers in South Africa (Korporatiewe Bemarking 2015:[sp]).

isolates and includes based on race, and created a mentality of a 'pure race' (Degenaar 1980:15). Race is a dominant theme in the nationalist rhetoric, where accounts have strongly been manipulated throughout a 'heroic' history, justifying the dominance of one race over another (Calhoun 1997:58).

- Structure refers to organisational instruments and support in ensuring the power of the Afrikaner, and was originally grouped into two main organisations: the "Afrikaner Broederbond" (Afrikaner Brotherhood - AB) and the National Party (Degenaar 1980:16).
- Political power, in past Afrikaner nationalism, is dictated by ideological production of *self-beskikking, volk* and race, justifying the continuing legitimacy of Afrikaans power (Degenaar 1980:16).

Problematically, nationalism positions individuals in a collective or social group which comes to define the individual's identity (Calhoun 1997:69). Afrikaner nationalism rejects individuals based on differences in religion, culture, language and race.

Afrikaner nationalist cinema's heroic narrative represent the inclusion of individuals based on religion, culture, language and race to form its national identity. The hero justifies the exclusion of others and sustains dominant structural political power through self-assertion. The demise of the Afrikaner's structural political power in a democratic South Africa allows for a narrative structure which does not exclusively reassert a national Afrikaner self-identity – a postheroic narrative.

## 1.3 Conceptual and theoretical framework

This study is located in an Elsaesserian conceptual and theoretical framework with an emphasis on the postheroic narrative. Elsaesser (1989:125) problematizes the heroic narrative with reference to New German cinema by explaining that it bridges the gaps between spectator and the diegesis of the film through identification. What makes this identification with the hero problematic, is that it confirms the spectator's own political

beliefs and assists audiences "to be caught up in someone else's life", therefore resulting in an ideological production of nationhood (Elsaesser 1989:126). The presence of this hero would also act as a framework for a generation estranged from idols after the Holocaust, and serves as national or historical identification figures (Elsaesser 1989:127).

Before he discusses the postheroic narrative in relation to European cinema, Elsaesser (2012:703) observes that European cinema promotes national production companies. European cinema is mostly government funded, which results in cinema spreading cultural heritage representing Europe as a collective (Elsaesser 2012:703). European cinema creates a false boundary between itself and Hollywood, setting European cinema, as a collective, as 'good' and Hollywood as 'bad' (Elsaesser 2012:703). However, there is regular interaction between these supposed binaries including certain American auteurs making 'European' cinema, as well as a presence of European talent in the USA (Elsaesser 20120:704).[16]

In light of the above, Elsaesser (2012:704) describes the relationship between Europe and Hollywood cinema as one of 'antagonistic mutuality'. The relationship is mutual because of the cooperation between the two, borrowing on a structural level from one another, with Hollywood making 'European'-styled cinema and vice versa (Elsaesser 2012:704). The relationship is also antagonistic as European cinema is seen as 'counter-Hollywood', where Hollywood has questionable objectives such as a disproportionate emphasis on financial profit and expansion, and European cinema has placed itself under the umbrella term of 'world art cinema' with 'good' interest, such as furthering the cause of 'sophisticated art' (Elsaesser 2012:703). He refers to European cinema as 'doubly occupied' as the characters always contain a sense of the 'other', whilst trying to present a sense of unity, at the cost of suppressing difference (Elsaesser 2012:704). European cinema often stereotypes the 'other' to create an image of a unified Europe, which ultimately favours the viewing preferences of privileged European minorities (Elsaesser

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[16] Auteur theory states that the director of a film may be envisioned as the author of the film, meaning that the film reflects the artistic vision of the film, associated with recurring motifs and mise-en-scène (Roberts 2016;[sp]). Auteur theory originated in French New Wave Cinema and is mostly associated with European directors (Roberts 2016:[sa]).

2012:703). The identity of European cinema is defined both by exclusion from and inclusion in a collective.

In suggesting an additional narrative structure to the ambiguity in European cinema, Elsaesser draws on the work of Immanuel Kant and Jean-Luc Nancy in developing the postheroic narrative.[17] The notion of commonality-within-difference led Immanuel Kant to the notion of the unsocial sociability of humans, where one is bound by mutual opposition in society (Elsaesser 2012:706). An individual forms part of a society by both associating with certain people, but also removes him/herself from others. Kant explains that it is human nature to want to associate with others, but once placed in relation to others, humans have a desire to compete and find superiority over others (Wood 1991:331). In this sense, there is always antagonism and competition in societies.

The unsocial sociability of humankind highlights the relationship between singular and plural in Jean-Luc Nancy's thinking. Here, an individual both forms part of a collective (plural), but also isolates him/herself (singular). Nancy's thinking of singular/plural, finds a correlation with the work of JJ Degenaar. Degenaar (1980:109-110) suggests ways to counteract this Afrikaner nationalism model of the past by introducing pluralism which allows for a relationship between the state and its citizens, allowing for free association and groupings of society. A pluralist acknowledges that individuals do not necessarily have to identify with the state, but rather with a diversity of groupings (Degenaar 1980:113). The group should not be seen as a static construct where the individual has no individuality, but rather as a social network based on free association, where the group is a dynamic entity that constantly adjusts to the goals its individual members (Degenaar 1980:121-122). It is the state's duty to recognise a diversity of groupings and offer protections to all the groups, and the state also has to make available a social space

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[17] Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is one of the most influential German philosophers whose contributions to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics has gained him a great following amongst philosophers (McCormick [sa]:[sp]). Jean-Luc Nancy (1940-) is an acclaimed philosopher whose work on contemporary society has lead to questions surrounding identity and community (Devisch [sa]:sp]). His influences include Jacques Derrida, Georges Bataille, Martin Heidegger, as well as Immanuel Kant (Devisch [sa]:[sp]).

where individuals are free to insert themselves into social structures, a process that John Neville Figgis describes as "true social liberty" (Degenaar 1980:117).

Pluralism allows for the individual to have the freedom of association and to form part of a collective, as plural, yet still have the freedom to be an individual and isolate himself, as singular. Pluralism refers to one country, yet a diversity of groups, shared power and freedom of a social space for association, respecting group and cultural differences, accommodating the unsocial sociability of man (Degenaar 1980:133-134). A pluralist community would be accommodating of, to use Nancy's term, the unsocial sociability of humankind.

The postheroic narrative calls for a new thinking of 'community', which comes *after* the 'we' as a collective notion of nationhood, but also *after* the 'subject', as the isolation of the individual from the other (Elsaesser 2012:709).[18] In explaining what is meant by this community Elsaesser (2012:712) refers to Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of an inoperative community. According to Nancy (1991:13) an inoperative community defines the human body, not as an individual, but instead as a mortal entity caught in continuous movement from life to death. This notion suggests a community which does not categorise its members according to binaries of race, gender, religion and culture, as nationalism would. The new thinking of community instead suggests that these binaries are made irrelevant by the body's mortality. The deterioration of the mortal body suggests that the human is becoming a stranger to his/her former self. Community, in this sense, is then the awareness of continuous movement from birth to death, foregrounding the inescabability of humans' finite being (Nancy 1991:15).

This new thinking of community would require the movie screen not to be imagined as a mirror or window to reality, as is the case with the heroic narrative and its constant pursuit of audience-hero identification (Elsaesser 2012:711). Instead, the movie screen would be reconceptualized a surface of flux. This surface of flux can be achieved in numerous

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[18] When Elsaesser (2012:709) refers to the "we" and the "subject" he is implicitly referring to the failures of socialism, communism and fascism, such as the Marxist thinking of the subject as individual and the "we" as a collective entity in society.

ways, such as shifting character perspectives of the characters or a non-linear plot structure, thereby already destabilizing and deviating from the heroic narrative.

Using *Beau Travail* (*Good Job,* Denis 1999) as a focal text, Elsaesser (2012:716) explains how the temporal structure of the film is in constant flux, with flashbacks and flash-forwards, and the setting aesthetically appears timeless. The film also provides the audience with numerous perspectives, such as voice-over commentary, that of the hero and his diary entries (2012:717). The audience never truly gets to know the hero's inner thoughts through manipulative identification associated with the heroic narrative, yet is often placed in close proximity to the hero's body (2012:718). In the film, bodies are constantly bumping into one another and the audience is made aware of physical touch, signifying a community bound by the same undifferentiated space, but without implying that individuals have anything in common (2012:718). This physicality remains true to Kant's unsocial sociability, in that humans are bound to inhabit the same space, but do not necessarily have to find commonality to cohabit. The audience is therefore constantly made aware of mortal bodies, and the mortality of bodies, where bodies exist from birth to death, as with Nancy's thinking of an inoperative community.

The failure of the hero's mortal body forces him to confront the 'other' within himself and in doing so overcomes binaries of 'self' and 'other' (Elsaesser 2012:723). This posthero for a post-national community, may even be a white middle class man, but because of his failure, he is marked as the other (Elsaesser 2012:732). In failing to conform to the traditional sense of a community, the posthero fails as the traditional hero. This failure of cinema to represent a traditional hero in opposition to the antagonistic 'other' may be read as parapraxis.

Parapraxis, translated from the German *fehlleistung,* is performed failure. It refers to an active effort with unintended results (Elsaesser 2008:109). The unintended results are often associated with reversals or displacements in time and space, which is particularly relevant to social trauma. Trauma has a sense of non-representability, because a traumatic event causes the failure of memory (Elsaesser 2001:195). Parapraxis then

suggests a cinema of referentiality, instead of a cinema of recovered memory such as nostalgia (Elsaesser 2001:201). Parapraxis, as performed failure, is anti-nostalgic.[19]

With the notion of the loss of memory, parapraxis may then also be seen as a kind of memory work, where the failure to remember may be understood as the first stages of mourning (Ludden 2007:244). In Freud's terms, mourning takes on three stages: "remembering, repeating and working through" (Elsaesser 2008a:110). The first two stages of parapraxis are remembering and repetition.

New German Cinema has often failed to represent marginal figures such as the Jews after the Holocaust, yet continues to repeat the failure of exclusion (Elsaesser 2008a:113).[20] The repetition of failure is often signified by the absence of marginal figures and the inclusion of the white middle class man as the hero. The absence of these marginal figures as parapraxis, ultimately highlights "democracy's failure to 'represent' its citizens' personal concern in the public sphere" (Robnik 2012:[sp]). Parapraxis may then be explained as "a belief in the happy accident and the meaningful mistake" (Elsaesser 2008b:122).

## 1.4 Problem statement

In light of the above, and based on the available research on the postheroic narrative and South African film scholarship, it seems that discourse on the postheroic narrative into contemporary Afrikaans cinema is non-existent. Recent scholarship on contemporary Afrikaans cinema includes Lesley Marx's (2014) comparative research on *Die Wonderwerker* and *The Guest* (Devenish 1977), Alta Du Plooy's (2014) Masters research

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[19] Scharf (2008:105) explains that anti-nostalgia, within German film study, is the negative remembrance of the past. Anti-nostalgia is the attitude that allows people to let go of events, such as the Holocaust, and thus becomes a narrative component which aids reconciliation (Scharf 2008:105).

[20] Botha (2011:241) explains that in contemporary Afrikaans cinema there is also an absence of marginal figures, such as black characters. The images portrayed in contemporary Afrikaans cinema mostly contain characters of the Afrikaner nuclear family, ignoring the socio-political turmoil of apartheid and post-apartheid (2011:241). Although the failure to represent marginal figures in cinema may be read as parapraxis, this may not necessarily be the case with Afrikaans cinema, but rather reflects a deep-seated apartheid ideology, with blacks mostly being portrayed as the servant class (Botha 2011:241).

into adaptation from Afrikaans novels to contemporary Afrikaans film, Anna Elizabeth Kruger's (2014) study of religion in *Roepman*, Burgert Senekal's (2014) investigation into social network analysis (SNA) to identify collaborations in the Afrikaans film industry, Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren's (2014) study on heroism in *Verraaiers* and Julie Reid's (2012) research into mythmaking in post-apartheid historical film. Although some recent studies have referred to heroism in contemporary South African cinema and to Bosbok Ses films*,* there is none which a search of contemporary media and film studies have revealed, which critically engage with postheroic cinema in contemporary Afrikaans cinema.

Scholarship on contemporary Afrikaans cinema, which will be used in contextualizing and locating the postheroic narrative, include that of Martin Botha (2007, 2011, 2012 and 2014), Keyan G Tomaselli (1989, 2000 and 2006) and Jacqueline Maingard (2007), yet this scholarship does not refer to the presence of a postheroic narrative directly. With the exception of Botha's (2014) work and the scholarship of emerging scholars such as Dian Weys (2016) writing about trauma and ethics in *Treurgrond* (*Mourning Land,* Roodt 2015), the area of contemporary Afrikaans cinema remains under-researched on the level of formal publication.

Botha (2014) and Tomaselli (1989 and 2006) have indicated that contemporary Afrikaans cinema is largely nostalgic and nationalistic with a strong presence of heroism. The elements of postheroic cinema which I already identified earlier from Elsaesser's body of work are: parapraxis; double occupancy; unsocial sociability; or an attempted inoperative community. The postheroic narrative is a viable tool in creating a new form of contemporary Afrikaans cinema, as it aims to counter a nostalgia for a colonial past and recognises diversity, instead of a collective nationalism which glosses over difference. This research aims to address the gap in research by assisting in creating a framework of possibilities of how the postheroic narrative may aid South African cinema, by critically analysing three Afrikaans historical dramas by Bosbok Ses: the heroic narrative *Roepman,* and the postheroic narratives *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and

*Verraaiers.* As this study will demonstrate, *Roepman* will be located as heroic cinema in contrast to the postheroic cinema of the other selected films.

## 1.5 Research question

How can the Bosbok Ses films *Roepman, Verraaiers* and *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* be positioned as postheroic narratives?

The following sub questions will serve as a guide in answering the research question:

- Why is the heroic narrative in contemporary and historical Afrikaans cinema problematic?
- How does nationalism inform heroic narratives in Afrikaans cinema?
- What is a traditional hero in Afrikaans cinema, and what can be described as a posthero in contemporary Afrikaans cinema?
- What is postheroic cinema, as explained and discussed by Thomas Elsaesser?
- What touchpoints with postheroic cinema are already present in contemporary Afrikaans cinema?
- How do failure and the posthero relate to Elsaesserian notions of parapraxis?
- How are the Bosbok Ses films heroic (*Roepman*), and how are they postheroic (*Stuur Groete aan Mannetjies Roux, Verraaiers*)?
- What is the significance of the postheroic narrative for contemporary Afrikaans cinema?

## 1.6 Research approach

The research approach I follow is qualitative research within a predominantly Elsaesserian conceptual theoretical framework. Qualitative research is that which takes on a more subjective approach, concerned with the lived experience of individuals, which places this research approach within the interpretive paradigm (Munro 2015:52). The goal of qualitative research, as Ivankova, Cresswell and Clark (2007:257) describe it succintly, "is to explore and understand a central phenomenon". In the current study, the central

phenomenon is contemporary Afrikaans cinema. The study is a textual analysis of the selected films, *Roepman, Verraaiers* and *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux.* The study uses theory and discourse as its bases and as its instruments of analysis (see Hayward 2000:87–88, 387–388). The study follows an interpretive mode of inquiry where the researcher's subjectivity is foregrounded (Maree & Van der Westhuizen 2007:33). As such, the study is aligned with critical theory and its emphasis on critical research which highlights the "contest, conflicts and contradictions in contemporary society"; in addition, the current research acknowledges the multiplicity of ideological frames of reference and that "[t]he lenses that researchers use to critically analyse a system are subjectuive" (Nieuwenhuis 2007:62).

This study has no ethical implications as the study is of a conceptual and theoretical nature, does not involve any human or animal participants. This study is based on and informed by an engagement with existing relevant scholarship, which makes a critical discussion of the selected Bosbok Ses films possible.

Firstly, the study locates *Roepman, Verraaiers* and *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* as contemporary Afrikaans cinema, within the genre of historical drama. The films are thus contextualised as contemporary Afrikaans historical dramas. Primary sources consulted in creating a conceptual chronicle on South African cinema include the work of, but are not limited to, Martin Botha and Keyan G Tomaselli. Throughout the study, these primary sources are complemented by various secondary sources to map the representation of heroism within South African cinema.

Secondly, a detailed study into the postheroic narrative will be conducted by defining and problematising the heroic narrative and the presence of nostalgia within South African cinema and then creating a counter argument. The counter argument will explore the work of Thomas Elsaesser, as a primary source and as a means with which to counteract nationalism and nostalgia. In conceptualising the postheroic narrative I will further research double occupancy and the idea of unsocial sociability in creating an inoperative community; and parapraxis. Finally, the study will apply the conceptual theoretical

framework to films, *Verraaiers* and *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*, in the form of a comparative analysis. *Roepman* will be positioned as a heroic narrative, in Chapter Two, and reference to *Roepman* in locating postheroism will mostly be for comparative purposes. I will critically analyse the instances where the films diegetically conform to the postheroic narrative, or whether these films rely on the heroic narrative, in creating a framework for the postheroic narrative in contemporary Afrikaans cinema. Although all three of these films are my objects of enquiry, the weight distribution between the three will vary.

**1.7 Chapter outline**

Chapter One: Introduction

> This introductory chapter – the current chapter – consists of the background and rationale as motivation and stimuli for the study, as well as a review of scholarship, including a political economy of Afrikaans cinema, heroism in Afrikaans cinema, nationalism and the conceptual theoretical framework, to position the study as feasible and sustainable, due to the available body of knowledge. This chapter contains a short plot synopsis of the three films, *Roepman, Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers.* It also provides a problem statement and the aims that the study wishes to fulfil, including the research approach to complete these aims.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Chronicle of Afrikaans Cinema and the emergence of the heroic narrative.

> In this chapter, I will map the major trends and thematic norms in South African cinema, with reference to the political economy throughout the ages. I have also identified the presence of heroism as creator of Afrikaner nationalism, including notions of self-assertion, language, religion and race, throughout the development of South African cinema.

## 2.1 Afrikaans Cinema Pre- and During- Apartheid

This section provides an overview of the political economy of South African cinema and, as a result, the norms evident in South African cinema pre- and- during apartheid. I refer to the arrival of cinema in South Africa and the establishment of an Afrikaner dominated film industry, propaganda films of the Second World War, the Border War film and finally politically active films.

## 2.2 Afrikaans Cinema Post-1994

This section provides an overview of the major themes and political economy of South African cinema post-apartheid by exploring the inclusion of marginal communities, the film revival of the early 2000s and Afrikaner escapist films. I also explore heroism in *Roepman,* by identifying a traditional hero, as the saviour of the community, with specific reference to religious imagery, as one of the cornerstones of nationalism.

Having introduced the above ideas in the South African and Afrikaans cinematic contexts, the study moves to an exploration of key concepts within the European contexts occupied by film scholar Thomas Elsaesser. This third chapter, as I demonstrate in the description below, provides a critical lens constituted by a conceptual framework with a particular terminology. This lens, which takes into account the ideas discussed in Chapter Two, allows for the critical discussion and analysis of selected films to take place in Chapter Four.

## Chapter Three: The Postheroic Narrative

This chapter unpacks and problematizes the heroic narrative, indicated in Chapter Two, by engaging with discourse surrounding European national cinemas. I discuss how British national cinema, French national cinema and German national cinema have reasserted nationalism, yet retain an antagonistically mutual

relationship with its major competitor, Hollywood. Throughout my discussion of European national cinemas, I also indicate correlations between major themes in European cinema and Afrikaans cinema. I further explore postheroism in relation to Elsaesser by unpacking double occupancy, inoperative communities and unsocial sociability as that which a postheroic narrative aims to achieve.

Chapter Four: Postheroism in the Bosbok Ses films - *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers*

This chapter consists of an analysis of the postheroic narrative within the Bosbok Ses films, as historical dramas, either conforming to the nationalistic nostalgic form of cinema, or rejecting it and serving as an object of enquiry for the postheroic narrative. Throughout my analysis I draw on the elements of a postheroic narrative as identified by Elsaesser, including atemporality, depiction of space and physical bodies, abjectification, construction of a hero and parapraxis. The selected films include *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers.* I also briefly refer to *Roepman* as heroic film to draw comparisons between a postheroic narrative and a heroic narrative.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The concluding chapter provides a reflexive overview of the findings of the study, aiming to offer a framework for the postheroic narrative within contemporary Afrikaans cinema. This chapter also addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the study and provides suggestions for further research.

## 1.8 List of key terms

Here I include a list of key terms which will assist in guiding the reader's understanding of the study throughout the chapters, as I regularly involve these terms as concepts of the study.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Angestelltenkultur* | A white collar culture of distraction (Elsaesser 1987:67). |
| Double Occupancy | Cinema which aims to present unity by suppressing difference (Elsaesser 2012:704). |
| Hero | The saviour of a community who carries the collective ideologies of a nation; the identification figure in cinema (Reid 2012:46). |
| Heroic Narrative | A narrative structure which utilizes the classical codes of narrative in encouraging audience/hero identification and which serves to build a collective self-identity of a nation (Elsaesser 2012:707). |
| Inoperative Community | Jean-Luc Nancy's theory of a community harmonized by differences and antagonism (Elsaesser 2012:712). |
| Involved films | Films which critically engage with a socio-political issue (Botha 2007:24). |
| Myth | A romanticized act of speech on past events, often associated with a heroic figure; aiming to reinforce nationalistic values and beliefs (Reid 2012:46-48). |
| Nationalism | A sense of 'togetherness' in a nation, based on shared ideologies and collective beliefs, which justifies superiority above other groups (Calhoun 1997:69). |
| Nostalgia | A yearning for the past and to envision an idealised future based on the past (Radstone 2007:112). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Parapraxis | Cinema's failure to represent the 'other', highlighting democracy's failure to represent the 'other' (Elsaesser 2008b:122). |
| Postheroic cinema | An alternative to heroic narratives, which focuses on the failure of the hero and embraces difference (Elsaesser 2012:708). |
| Unsocial sociability | Humankind's need to both form part of a collective, yet to isolate from others in an attempt to reach superiority (Kant 1963:20-21). |
| *Verstrooiingsvermaak* | Cinema that offers a light pleasurable distraction to its audience (Botha 2014:[sp]), thereby avoiding any engagement with socio-political realities and issues. |

# CHAPTER TWO: A CONCEPTUAL CHRONICLE OF SOUTH AFRICAN CINEMA

## 2.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter will explore prominent themes in South African cinema, with specific focus on Afrikaans cinema, and explore the ways in which South African cinema responded to the major political changes following the country's shift from minority rule to democracy in 1994. In making sense of the changes in South African cinema, I will identify occurrences where Afrikaans cinema has furthered the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric through notions of heroism.

The term 'hero', with its Greek origin, means to serve and protect.[21] The hero would be depicted in cinema as a warrior and saviour of a community; his characteristics would include bravery and self-sacrifice (Jansen van Vuuren 2014:[sp]). The hero serves as the key identification figure due to his admirable character traits as the protector of the community. In Afrikaans cinema the hero is the embodiment of an Afrikaner national identity. Degenaar (1983:10) states that an Afrikaner national identity consists of the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric, including notions of self-assertion, *volk* (God's 'chosen nation') and race. This rhetoric justifies how a particular kind of Afrikaner nationalism historically included certain people based on similarities to Afrikanerdom, and excluded those who did not display these similarities.

Furthermore, myth is one of key aspects of nationalism and an element of heroism, as it acts to reinforce nationalistic values and beliefs. Nel (2010:25) traces the significance of mythmaking to Afrikaner nationalism by referring to how historically "intellectually-minded Afrikaners began creating a view of the past which could be used in the service of the present." Here, Nel (2010) emphasizes the ideological function of mythmaking in which those in power – a minority elite – use myth to secure their socio-poltiical standing. A myth is a multi-layered, multi-dimensional act of speech, which is selectively created by

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[21] Notions of the hero originated alongside ancient Greek theatre in celebration of the god Dionysus, god of wine and fertility. Such celebrations would occur ritualistically to honour gods and heroes (Chapter 4: the origins of Greek theatre 2012:[sp]). Heroes in this ritual refer to a person with divine ancestry, or "a man turned into a saint", such a demi-god (Chapter 4: the origins of Greek theatre 2012:[sp]).

favouring certain aspects of history (Reid 2012:46). Mythology offers a romanticised account of history and offers an escape from reality, often containing a nostalgic element. In film, a myth may manifest in the heroic figure, where this hero is not an individual, but should rather be understood as a representative of a collective ideology or nation requiring audience-hero identification (Reid 2012:48). To demonstrate this point, Reid (2012:47-48) explains that in the film *Die Wonderwerker,* the hero, Eugène Marais, is not portrayed 'factually' in accordance with available historical accounts. Instead, the character here represents the collective ideals and beliefs of the Afrikaner nation, that is Afrikaner naturalist, warrior and healer. I will elaborate on the hero as myth further in this chapter under section 2.3.2.

Heroism in South African cinema also changes in accordance to the major political movements and economic dominance in the country and serves as a discursive strategy to motivate this dominance. I will now provide a detailed account of these major political shifts and changes in South African cinema.

## 2.2 South African cinema before and during apartheid

I will chronologically refer to the arrival of cinema in South Africa, the Great Trek and South African War, the 1930s and the Second World War, the 1950s and 1960s, the Border War and, finally, apartheid resistance films during the 1980s and 1990s. By referring to the political economy of South African cinema I will indicate the ways in which South Africa has developed a film industry, which specifically aided Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric through heroic narratives. I will highlight how these Afrikaner heroic narratives have often been driven through a hero's triumph over the enemy, giving the hero agency in the plot and driven through the hero's character traits, as a faithful Christian, whose bravery saves the *volk.*

## 2.2.1 South African cinema 1890–1930: the establishment of a South African film industry

South African cinema dates back to 1896 and the arrival of Thomas Edison's kinetoscope, which reached South Africa only six years after it reached New York (Botha 2007:20).[22] British and American films were screened in South Africa through mobile bioscopes from 1896 to 1909 (Botha 2006:[sp]). Electric Theatres Limited (ETL) built the first cinema in Durban in 1909, but during the next five years, film distribution companies started competing with ETL by building other cinemas across South Africa (Botha 2006:[sp]).

The Great Trek was a major event which influenced the broader narratives of race and place in South African history, and which came to play an important part in the fictionalization – even mythologizing – of the Afrikaner as hero. The Great Trek, which started in 1836, was a northwards movement of the Cape-Dutch *Boers* fleeing the British Cape Colony (Tomaselli 2006a:126). The Trek resulted in a war between the British and the two remaining *Boer* republics; this war is known as the South African War, although no 'official' frontline action was recorded (Tomaselli 2006a:126). Cameramen during the South African War were faced with logistical difficulties in recording the war because there was no clear frontline (Hees 2003:51). This difficulty resulted in very little 'official' war footage, where some of the images produced were even 'fake' (2003:51).

The films that were screened in these early South African cinemas were mostly American or British (Botha 2007:20). The reason why the majority of the films were American and British is because the *Boers* were not equipped with movie cameras and only had still photographs to record the action at the frontline (Tomaselli 1985:16).  The only films during this time were produced by American Vitagraph and Animated Photography and films served as British imperialist propaganda. In the context of war, films shot in South

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[22] Thomas Edison is an American inventor of the 1800s, best known for inventing the light bulb and the phonograph (Blinderman 2014:[sp]). In 1890 Edison, alongside his employee William Kennedy Dickson, invented the kinetoscope which is a large box containing a strip of film which quickly moves over a light source, creating the impression of movement (Blinderman 2014:[sp]). With the kinetospcope, Thomas Edison created the first American film, titled *Monkeyshine*, showing a dancing man (Blinderman 2014:[sp]). Although Edison patented the kinetoscope, Dickson later started his own company which was responsible for further development of film, including the invention of the motion picture camera (Raimondo-Souto 2006:32).

Africa at the time had clear ideological aims to propagate support for the war, framing the British soldiers as "fighting for a trinity of God, Motherhood and country" while the *Boers* were depicted as the embodiment of evil (Tomaselli 2006a:126). The British victory in 1902 was replaced with a Union in 1910. The Union lead to publicity films depicting South Africa as a country with potential for British enterprises and capital (Tomaselli 2006a:126).

In 1923 African Film Productions (AFP), a British funded company, was established, because the majority of film stock screened in South Africa were American which became too expensive as it required high market prices (Botha 2007:126). American and British filmmakers made use of AFP's facilities and, as a result, films would depict *Boers* and Britain as a united front of civilization against "barbaric black tribes" (Tomaselli 2006a:126-127). Issues between *Boer* and British were soon forgotten in the interest of capital and the creation of a united ideology in the creation of a new enemy in the black South African populace.

*De Voortrekkers: Winning a Continent* (Shaw 1916) was first screened at the Krugersdorp Town Hall to celebrate the inauguration of the Paardekraal Monument, the film was screened in Afrikaans with English subtitles; the film reinstated a sense of pride in Afrikaners still wounded by a sense of defeat (Strebel 1979:25). Tomaselli (2006a:127) refers to the film as an Afrikaans mass consciousness builder. *De Voortrekkers* is an epic film in which the Afrikaner is portrayed to have a social contract with God to defeat the Zulus in battle; as such, the film was important in the Afrikaner community's sense of Christian faith and identity (Tomaselli 2006a:129). The screenplay was written by the Afrikaans journalist and historian Gustav Preller, who wrote it with reference to his own perception of the military engagement between blacks and whites during the Great Trek (Hees 2003:49).[23] The film addresses three major themes: white power, religion and the ideology of apartheid. These themes would become the principles of Afrikaner nationalism in the years that followed (Strebel 1979:27). In the following years, the film was shown annually on Dingaan's Day (16 December), as part of celebrations at the

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[23] Preller is one of the major Afrikaner nationalists, having written numerous articles and 'myths' on heroism of Afrikanerdom (Marx 2014:248).

Voortrekker Monument, to commemorate the Voortrekkers' victory over the Zulus at the Battle of Blood River in KwaZulu-Natal.[24] Dingaan's Day would be celebrated as the 'Day of the Covenant', or the Afrikaans *Geloftedag*, by Christian churches during commemorative church services (Grobler 2010:[sp]; Hees 2003:53). This celebration of white victory over the threat of the 'black mass' explicitly articulated the relation between politics, religion and culture in the Afrikaner context, which served to justify Afrikanerdom's self-proclaimed dominance.

In relation to Degenaar's (1980:14) research on the Afrikaner, *De Voortrekkers* marks the beginning of the cinematic representation of *self-beskikking* (self-assertion), *volk*, race, and structural exclusion (sanctioned by the law, and which would result in in apartheid) as constitutive of Afrikaner nationalist power and rhetoric. In addition, *De Voortrekkers'* endorsed the newly formed union between the British and *Boers,* which was only created six years earlier (Saks 2011:139). The *Boer*-British conflict was replaced by economic and cultural dominance over the blacks, where the British owned the mining capital and the Afrikaner owned the rural capital (Tomaselli 2006a:128). The need for a British-*Boer* union was because the state was owned by a white minority and, in the interest of white power, cinema, as ideological production, had to promote the union between different stakeholds in white political and economic dominance (Saks 2011:140).

Not only was *De Voortrekkers* one of the first major cinematic contributions to the celebration and validation of Afrikaner nationalism in South African cinema, but it was also characterized by nostalgia, even in early Afrikaans cinema. Here, nostalgia has a clear political purpose: "nationalism is clearly aroused by the glorification and idealization of the past" (Strebel 1979:27). This nostalgic glorification of the past is also derivative of myth, where the myth has created a manipulated account of the past, favouring and idealizing certain ideologies to promote and enhance Afrikaner nationalism (Reid 2012:46).

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[24] The spelling of the Zulu king's name differs from "Dingaan" to "Dingane" throughout scholarship. "Dingaan" would mostly be associated with the Afrikaans spelling, whereas "Dingane" with the English spelling. In the interest of a study on Afrikaans cinema, I have chosen the Afrikaans spelling.

Cinematically speaking, *De Voortrekkers* follows the classical codes of narrative. These codes are associated with the realist film structure as offering 'truthful' accounts of causally determined historical events (Cook & Bernink 1985:40). In the film, the classical codes of narrative inspire the audience to view the film as a fact-based historical document (Saks 2011:142).[25] The classical codes of narrative endorse the accuracy of the depiction of historical events depicted in *De Voortrekkers.* The narrative centers on a hero who has agency in the cause-and-effect chain of events, and whose actions lead to the resolution (Cook & Bernink 1985:40). Using the classical codes of narrative, the film suggests a 'truthful' account of a historical event that depicts a privileged and mythologized account of the Boer-Zulu conflict. From early on in the film, the audience is also manipulated into a position of sympathy and identification with the Afrikaner heroes through images of the suffering of the Afrikaner *volk* (Strebel 1979:28) in contrast to the rising threat of the Zulus. In supporting the new *Boer/*British unity, *De Voortrekkers* shifts the blame from the British to two suspicious Portuguese traders, confidants of Dingaan and the Zulu tribe, in opposition to the Afrikaner heroes (Tomaselli 2006a:129). In the film, the Afrikaner dominance over the blacks replaces the failure to dominate the British (Strebel 1979:25). The enemy to Afrikaner nationalist changed from the British imperialist to the 'uncivilized blacks', in the interest of white supremacy and control over capital and resources.

The first half of this two-hour film consists of Piet Retief securing a land treaty with the Zulu leader, Dingaan, and Retief's murder at the hands of Dingaan and his warriors. The second half of the film consists of the Afrikaners seeking revenge, and the film's culmination in the Battle of Blood River (Saks 2011:147). The stereotype of black people as 'faithful servants' or 'strong-willed barbarians' is reasserted in the film (Strebel 1979:26). Black tribes and communities are thus represented in the film in ideological

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[25] Most members of the South African public of the time would also believe that the film is factually correct as the great influential bodies of the time, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Afrikaans government, released a 'study' and comments on the film's historical accuracy (Tomaselli 1985:17). Another such film, which stays true to the classical codes of narrative and encourages viewers to see the filmic depiction of historical event as reality, is *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith 1916), about the American civil war and the justification of white supremacy (Saks 2011:142). The epic film is said to have inspired its South African equivalent, *De Voortrekkers.*

opposition to the Afrikaner, as having no God, morality or history (Hees 2003:55). Significant to a study of postheroism, the collective heroes in *De Voortrekkers,* due to their agency in the events, are the Afrikaner nation, however, it is only due to their faith in God. Their agency is thus powered through religion casting God as the ultimate hero in the film. Christianity, has served white supremacy throughout history in that it first served the British imperialists in its colonization ventures, bringing religion and 'civilisation' to Africa, and after the Union, it served the Boers. Citing Van Zyl (as cited in Tomaselli 2006:130) explains that *De Voortrekkers* established the premise for later films to interpret and manipulate history in order to promote Afrikaner nationalism, and even served as a model for international epic films, such as the American frontier film, *The Covered Wagon* (Cruz 1923).

Shaw also directed the ambitious *Symbol of Sacrifice* (1918), which was inspired by *De Voortrekkers* (Tomaselli 2006a: 131). The film depicted the black savage stereotype and reasserted the *Boer* and British union (Tomaselli 2006a:131). Once again the previous conflict between the *Boer* and British, namely the South African War over independence and ownership of land, was obscured in order to further their own capital and ideological interest; that is, a British/*Boer* white dominance over black people (Tomaselli 2006a:131).

In light of the above discussion of selected South African film milestones, the depiction of black characters in South African cinema before and during apartheid has mostly been in a stereotypical, antagonising nature and black people had few films to look to, to represent them as a people. In 1920 the first black cinema was created and films were directed specifically at the black South African public in mining compounds, which also fed into the white-held positions of cultural and monetary capital (Masilela 2009:5). These 'black' films were made by white South Africans as ideological production to maintain Afrikaner nationalist rule (Masilela 2009:5). In relation to the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric, this strategic move in black film production reasserts the 'pure race' mentality, aiming to

represent blacks in positions of inferiority, where the *volk's* power is maintained through the oppressive logic of racial segregation.[26]

The first Afrikaans films that marked the major beginning of an Afrikaner nationalist film industry, outside of British capital interest, were *Sarie Marais* (1931), the first South African sound film, and *Moedertjie* (*Little Mother* Albrecht 1931). These films were produced after the establishment of the *Reddingsdaadbond-Amateur-Rolprent-Organisasie* (The Rescue Action League Amateur Film Organisation, or RARO) in the 1930s, which sought to promote the Afrikaner nationalist agenda. The establishment of RARO came after cultural imperialism from Britain and America prevailed in South Africa, where films in South Africa were mostly from overseas (Botha 2007:21).

*Moedertjie* marked an intensification of insider versus outsider relationships in Afrikaans cinema, where the outsider was often the *uitlander* (foreigner) who would become involved in a love triangle between the *boereseun,* the *boeredogter* and the *uitlander* (Tomaselli 2006a:143-144). In furthering Afrikaner nationalism, the *uitlander* is the shifting enemy of the Afrikaner, whether it be the British imperialist, the threat of globalization and the 'evil' city, or the 'communist' black. In *Moedertjie,* the *uitlander* is the foreign influence, especially characterized by the city and its liberalism, which threatens the Afrikaner community with poor whitism, as the plot follows the struggle of a family after their son commits suicide due to rural poverty (Maingard 2013:48). Moedertjie is the heroine in the film due to her agency in holding the *volk* together against the threat of the evil city. Typical to traditional Afrikaner heroism, Moedertjie's agency in the plot is due to the strength of her faith in God, indicative of *volksnasionalisme.* Traditional historical Afrikaans cinema not only positions the patriarch as a hero, but also a matriarch. These two heroes are thematically made possible through the characters' faith, positioning God as the ultimate hero. The hero in *Moedertjie* is a female character, Tante Koester (Moedertjie), contrary

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[26] The black film industry was supported by government subsidies during the apartheid era. During 1972 to 1973 a subsidy system was set in place, called the B-scheme subsidy system, differentiated from the A-scheme subsidy system in that B-scheme catered for films in African languages (Paleker 2010:91). These films were produced by white people for black South Africans and would always reflect the apartheid ideology indifferent degrees, whether it be the separate development of blacks and whites, or the exclusive citizenship and voting right (Paleker 2010:93).

to the exclusion of women in Afrikaner nationalism, however, she is still the heroine as she keeps the Afrikaner *volk* in cohesion against the *uitlander,* securing victory for her community*.* The primary *uitlander* was the British imperialism (Tomaselli 2006s:145-146).

*'n Nasie Hou Koers* (*A Nation Maintains Direction,* Albrecht 1939) emphasised the conflict between the imperialist British, as the enemy, and the *Boers/trekkers* (Tomaselli 2006a:130). In its antagonism towards the British, in opposition to the admirable Afrikaner heroes, this film serves as evidence of the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric, where *self-beskikking* (self-assertion) reinforces the notion that the Afrikaner's power is seemingly self-created. The Afrikaner, as hero, is then entitled to power because of his agency in the narrative, that is the *Voortrekker's* growth as a nation and securing power in South Africa. This suggests that the audience of South African cinema had changed to a predominantly Afrikaans audience and that they had gained more economic and political power in the country. The films were firmly rooted in Afrikaans hegemony (Tomaselli 2006a:138).

The enemy of the Afrikaner *volk,* as part of the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric in Degenaar's thinking, then shifted from the British imperialist to the 'evil' city. This shift started with the turn of the century, where the South African War brought with it connections to the land. The mining industry, crop production and European investment foregrounded the Afrikaner's investment in land; a large number of Afrikaners removed from the farms and working in the cities (Tomaselli 2006a:142-145). The economic revolution in Johannesburg was due to the discovery of gold in the 1880s, followed by the industrialization of the country (Masilela 2009:1). Against the backdrop of industrialization and increasing urbanization, Afrikaans cinema developed what Tomaselli (2006:143) refers to as the Eden film, which reflected the tension between the 'evil-city' and the 'unspoiled rural setting', a modern Garden of Eden, as briefly mentioned in Chapter One (Tomaselli 2006a:143). This religious metaphor, comparing the farm to the Garden of Eden, is typical to the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric. As stated previously, Afrikaner nationalism has justified its claim to power through their faith in God. This self-assertion

is strengthened through religion, positioning themselves as "God's chosen race" due to their social contract with God.

In Afrikaans cinema's Eden film, the *boeredogter* represents the maimed heroine, who is spatially and culturally displaced in the city and violently and sexually manipulated by the *uitlander*, which later shifted from the British imperialist to the English-speaking South African (Tomaselli 2006a:146-147). She is a 'maimed' heroine as she is either physically or psychologically corrupted by the *uitlander* which leads to her degradation (Tomaselli 2006a:104) Her 'fall' from the 'Garden of Eden' ideologically symbolises the Afrikaner's response to international capital, which threatens Afrikaner nationalism, economically and culturally. The *boeredogter* is ostracised for betraying the Afrikaner community and can only redeem her status as the future of Afrikanerdom once she has undergone a ritual of punishment and cleansing (Tomaselli 2006a:147). The *boeredogter* can even become the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) once she reaches maturity (Tomaselli 2006a:147). An example of her transformation into the *volksmoeder* is in *Grensbasis 13* (*Border Base 13,* De Witt 1978), where the *boeredogter* is ostracised from the community for having lost her virginity in the city (Tomaselli 2006a:154). She reaches maturity and reclaims her purity by moving to the border and performs acts of nurture associated with the *volksmoeder*, such as caring for the men fighting the war (Tomaselli 2006a:154).[27]

The *volksmoeder* is an archetype which originated during the South African War, where, with the absence of men fighting the war and later working in the cities, the society became strongly matriarchal, with women raising children, ploughing the soil and supplying the soldiers with goods (Tomaselli 2006a:147). In Afrikaans cinema, the *volksmoeder* became a 'pure' spiritual and moral beacon to the *volk*, an idealized female to look up to. The *volksmoeder* is a heroic figure, as is already evident in *Moedertjie*, where the *volksmoeder* character holds the family together against the threats posed by the 'evil city'; symbolically, she is protector of the Afrikaner nation (Tomaselli 2006a:148).

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[27] The transformation of the *boeredogter* to *volksmoeder* in *Grensbasis 13* should be seen in the context of the Border War, to be further discussed in section 2.1.4. The *boeredogter's* transformation in the film occurs to endorse specific political aims and is not an occurrence which is regular in all pre-democracy Afrikaans films.

The *volksmoeder* and *boeredogter* are heroic figures in the narrative structure of traditional historical Afrikaner cinema, due to their character traits as faithful Christians acting as moral beacons keeping the *volk* together and securing an ideological victory over the threat to Afrikaner nationalism.

Despite rapid urbanization, the Afrikaner retained a strong attachment to the land, and to the farms as their homesteads and as a site for Afrikaner identity, motivating the attachment between the Afrikaner and the land (Baines 2003:36-37). This myth of the Afrikaner's 'inherent' connection with the land, depicting them as naturalists with a vast knowledge of the land, aid Afrikaner nationalism and justifies their claim to land ownership.[28] The myth of the Afrikaner as naturalist then also feeds into their self-assertion, a cornerstone of Afrikaner nationalism.

## 2.2.2 South African cinema of the 1940s: propaganda films and the Second World War

Films during the 1940s were mostly Afrikaans language films and covertly nationalist, with black South Africans excluded from cultural participation (Botha 2007:22). South African film actors also started becoming more popular, where Afrikaans household names such as Al Debbo and Frederik Burgers, marked the major beginning of Afrikaner celebrity culture (Botha 2006:[sp]).[29]

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[28] Although Tomaselli refers to the Eden film as mostly being present in the 1970s, the theme of the Afrikaner's connection to the rural land is still present in contemporary Afrikaans cinema, as seen in films such as *Prêtville* (*Pleasantville* Korstens 2012). Broodryk (2016:165) suggests that the contemporary *volkstaat* film is an intensification of the earlier Eden film. Here *volk* refers to tradition, customs, heritage and language, which justifies the Afrikaner's claim to land (2016:165).

[29] Al Debbo was a South African comedian, actor and singer, whose career in the film industry spanned for more than 6 decades (SA People Contributor 2011:[sp]). He made his film debut in 1948 in *Die Kaskenades van Dokter Kwak* (*The shenanigans of Doctor Kwak* de Wett) and shortly after became a celebrity, starring in 19 other films, mostly slapstick comedies, including Schuster's *Oh Schuks I'm Gatvol* (2004) (SA People Contributor 2011:[sp]). Debbo had a distinct style of performance and is known for his 'rolling-eye' routine, where he would dramatically roll his eyes around in his eye sockets, making him a favourite of the slapstick genre (SA People Contributor 2011:[sp]). Celebrities may be cast as heroes, as Barron (2014:16) explains that celebrities in the classical sense refer to individuals who become famous due to acts of "greatness". What is classified as an act of greatness may subjectively be promoted through media, that is television, magazines, news and so forth, which leads Barron (2014:16) to redefine a celebrity as an individual which is "well-known for their well-knownness". Broodryk (2016: 88) explains that a celebrity may even be the representative of the 'common man'. In this sense, stars such as

By the late 1940s South Africa had joined the Second World War fighting alongside its newly found ally, the British. Due to the South African War some Afrikaners were reluctant to fight alongside the British and the government saw the importance in propaganda to convince citizens of supporting the Allies (Chetty 2012:106). The Director of Military Intelligence of South Africa, EG Malherbe, viewed propaganda as flowing from both the military and the state to the easily manipulated public, although this task was difficult to achieve with racial tensions rising in South Africa (Chetty 2012:107).

During the first phases of the WWII, The Defense Recruiting and Publicity Committee, led by Colonel Werdmuller, developed a scheme to create films that would promote the war effort and motivate men to join the Allies (Chetty 2012:108). Some of the films and newsreels produced by these two companies would be shown to troops at the frontline, as well as to civilians. An important aspect of recruitment was also to motivate women and families to support men in joining the war (Chetty 2012:108).

The image of the *volksmoeder,* which originated during the South African War as 'the mother of the nation' which has held the Afrikaner nation together during the struggles of the war and the concentration camps, is also present in Second World War propaganda, including film (Chetty 2012:113). While the notion of nation seemingly underwent a reconceptualization towards greater inclusivity following the South African War, it still privileged the language and culture of the Afrikaner.

Janie Malherbe, a female transport driver and the wife of EG Malherbe, was often portrayed in popular media as the *volksmoeder* and heroine of the Afrikaner *volk.* Janie Malherbe is a significant historic figure in understanding the propaganda produced in media, such as film, during the Second World War. She is the depiction of what is expected of women in war, as she who is supportive of the soldiers and forges cohesion amongst the community. She is positioned in a supporting role, instead of as an equal to her male counterpart (Chetty 2012:114). Her heroism, then, is not independent from the main male protagonist's agency in the narrative. In an article in *Outspan,* Janie Malherbe

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actor/comedian, Al Debbo, is cast as a hero to the Afrikaner *volk,* not necessarily because of acts of greatness, but because of his relatability as the everyday man.

stresses the role of women during the war, in stating that it is merely a continuation of the role as mother and wife, and that women should offer their services on a voluntary basis, not expecting equal pay to men, as it is the men of this country that willingly sacrifice their lives (Chetty 2012:115). The propaganda produced during the first phases of the Second World War thus reflects the inclusive/exclusive nature of nationalism, where women are expected to passively offer support to men fighting the war, yet are excluded from active participation in major decision-making processes.

Films during the first phase of the Second World War romanticised the armed conflict, complementing images of destruction and violence with themes such as honour, duty and glory (Chetty 2012:109). This romanticised account of war created a myth of the heroic soldier in aiding nationalism. With the threat of 'poor-whiteism' propaganda also promoted employment and a privileged standard of living (Chetty 2012:110). The ideology produced through films and other publications was that joining the war efforts would not only serve as employment, but also promote physical health under the Physical Training Battalion (Chetty 2012:111).

Promoting physical health was an important aspect in media during the Second World War on two planes: firstly, to produce able bodied men to join and fight the war, ensuring victory, and secondly, as it was beneficial to 'national well-being', but also a discursive strategy in maintenance of patriarchal rule (Chetty 2012:111). The health of black people also became a concern during the 1940s. Syphilis and tuberculosis started spreading rapidly amongst the black township community and the white public feared contagion, but mostly, in economic self-interest, the declining health status of black labourers threatened the white public with an unreliable workforce to fuel their economy (Jeeves 2003:122). In response, the state ordered the production of propaganda films which promoted black health (Jeeves 2003:110). Botha (2006:[sp]) labels this cinema, which was created by white filmmakers, 'made-for-blacks' cinema.[30]

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[30] 'Made-for-black' cinema is somewhat problematic in that the term constructs a clear racial binary; however, the phrase does reflect the discriminatory mind-set of the time and literally refers to films made by white people to position black audiences as inferior.

During the second phase of the Second World War the Allies encountered a major setback with 30000 men taken as prisoner in Tobruk, North Africa (Chetty 2012:118). Due to the vast effects of this defeat, individuals and groups opposing the government's decision to join the war felt justified in their resistance. The film *Fall In* (Bennett 1940) served as a reaction to the defeat in Tobruk and emphasized the different types of appeal made by South Africans to the war (Chetty 2012:118). The heroic figure in the film, Major-General George Brink, encourages South African soldiers to prevent the war from reaching South Africa and to guard the South African border (Chetty 2012:118).[31]

*Fall In* is filled with images of destruction and ruin, such as violent Germans and Italians, burnt and bombed buildings and injured civilians (Chetty 2012:118). The film also makes references to the South African War and General Smuts, who symbolically represents the South African decision to enter the Second World War (Chetty 2012:119).[32] This reference served as propaganda in stating that Smuts has fought the British in the South African War, thus his primary interest lies with protecting South Africa and not the mere support of the British. This strategic reference also aided the Afrikaner nationalist agenda with Smuts being the image of the heroic right-wing Afrikaner (Chetty 2012:119). The images in cinema thus changed from the first phase of the war to the second phase from romanticised heroism to life threatening images calling on the individual to act heroically.

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[31]A nation, such as the Afrikaner nation, is defined by Benedict Anderson as an imagined community, that is a community which finds commonality in belonging to a demarcated space created by imagined borders (Higson 2000:64). Safeguarding the borders forms part of an Afrikaner heroic narrative, where the hero is charged with protecting the border from the 'other'. This border refers to the geographical border between South Africa and its neighbouring countries, but also a more discursive border which symbolises the inclusion of some and exclusion of others. The hero may then be the soldier guarding the border against the Axis powers in WWII, the Afrikaner protecting the country from the communist in the Border war, or even the *volksmoeder* protecting Afrikanerdom from the "evil" city in the Eden film.

[32] Jan Christian Smuts was an influential general in the South African War having fought alongside the Afrikaner nation and also participating in the negotiations between South Africa and England in forming a peace treaty (Lenel [sa]:1). In 1939 Hitler invaded Poland and Smuts, who had become deputy prime minister, decided to join the war against Germany, in alliance with the British (Lenel [sa]:4). To this day Smuts remains a divisive figure, praised for his intelligent, eccentric character, but criticized for some political stances (Willis 2016:[sp]). Smuts was instrumental in creating the League of Nations, a forerunner of the United Nations, but he failed to take action against the rise of the National Party in 1948 and was subsequently criticized for his failure to "deal with the native question" (Willis 2016:[sp]).

The threat is also to the *volk,* including a shared religion and history of the Afrikaners, furthering the nationalist rhetoric.

## 2.2.3 South African cinema of the 1950s and 1960s: celebrating Afrikanerdom

After the depreciation of resources of the Second World War, the South African film industry started to grow. During the 1950s, Twentieth Century Fox controlled three-quarters of film distribution in South Africa (Botha 2007:23). The major film distributer outside of Twentieth Century Fox, was *Wonderboom Inry Beleggings* (WIB), financed by Sanlam, which, in 1969, bought out and merged with Twentieth Century Fox to form the *Suid-Afrikaanse Teaterbelange Beperk* (Satbel) (Botha 2007:23). Satbel would soon become the major distribution company, controlling 76 percent of all distribution in South Africa (Botha 2006:[sp]). The creation of Satbel changed the political economy of South Africa cinema from the 1950s to the early 1960s from producing features that addressed a mixed English-Afrikaans audience, to a predominantly Afrikaans audience. The implications of this shift in the political economy on heroism is that images would mostly be of the strength of the Afrikaner hero as representative of Afrikaner nationalism, as will be discussed further in this chapter.

In addition to changes in the film industry, South Africa experienced vast spatial reconfiguration in the 1950s, as the National Party sought to eliminate the 'blackspots' in the cities by forcefully removing blacks to townships (Baines 2003:42). Certain films during this time did question the laws put into place during the 1950s, such as *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Korda 1951), although these films were mostly banned in South Africa and predominantly addressed international audiences (Norton 2015:31).[33]

Dominant Afrikaans cinema mostly sought to justify the government's efforts in service of the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric. Under the Verwoerd regime, of the 60 films made in South Africa during 1956 to 1962, forty-three were Afrikaans, four bilingual and thirteen in English (Botha 2007:24). Even in the conditions of their production, the films of the

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[33] The film is based on Alan Paton's novel and portrays the socio-economic situation of black South Africans under harsh government legislations (Botha 2006:[sp]). In 1995 Darrell Roodt adapted the novel once more.

1950s and early 1960s reflect apartheid ideology (Baines 2003:41). This emphasis on apartheid ideology was also in the films' narratives, as the subsidy system would only reward a film after box office success, and, under apartheid rule the economy was mostly Afrikaner owned (Botha 2007:24). The Afrikaner funded films that promote the apartheid ideology and maintain hegemonic rule. A conservative Afrikaner hero would aid this ideology and there is a link between Afrikaner heroism and the protection of this minority's wealth from those who seek to obtain it. The hero is an embodiment of Afrikaner nationalist interests by way of conservatism and isolationism.

*Die Kavaliers* (*The Cavaliers,* De Witt 1966) is a prominent Afrikaans film which features the hero as the protector of Afrikanerdom and as the embodiment of the Afrikaner nationlist interest. The film premiered on 24 September 1966 during the height of apartheid at the *Voortrekker* monument, and tells the story of the *Boer* war hero, Chris Botha, and his heroic endeavors during the South African War. Jansen van Vuuren (2015:53-56) argues that *Die Kavaliers* portrays Botha as the brave hero who eagerly accepts the call of duty to combat the British to protect his country. In citing Martin Botha, Jansen van Vuuren (2015:62) states that the film's mythologization of the *Boer* serves an ideological purpose: to remind Afrikaners of the struggles endured during the South African War, thereby maintaining the nationalist ideology.

In addition the celebration of heroism in films such as *Die Kavaliers*, films during the 1950s and 1960s also celebrated the growth of the Afrikaans language, including *Doodkry is Min* (*Impossible to Suppress,* Uys 1961) (Tomaselli 2006a:137).[34] The Afrikaner is compared to the resilient indigenous plant, the *Rhus Lucida*. The *Boers* were portrayed to be heroes, representative of Afrikaner strength (Tomaselli 2006a:138). Films of the 1950s and 1960s aimed to celebrate Afrikanerdom and painted a one-sided stereotype of the Afrikaner as masculine *Boer.* Certain English language films during the 1950s additionally painted a stereotype of the Afrikaner as the brutal racist, such as in *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Korda 1951)*,* but these films were intended for a predominantly

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[34] The film is derived from Totius's poem, *Die Besembos,* referring to the semi-dessert weed, the *Rhus Lucida* (Tomaselli 2006a:138).

American and British audience (Bickford-Smith 2001:185).[35] Despite the negative stereotypes of Afrikaners in certain foreign films, Afrikaans films of the 1950s propagated an Afrikaner identity of conservatism and heroic *Boers*. This conservatism of Afrikaner culture is characterized by a nostalgic attachment to the past, which justified ideals surrounding religious and moral norms, and linguistic and racial purity (Botha 2006:[sp]). Political conservatism is thus a key factor in the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric and in the image of nationalist Afrikaans films.

The chairman of the Publications Appeal Board (PAB) during the 1960s, Jannie Kruger, also ideologically furthered apartheid Afrikaner nationalist ideals through legislation and strong censorship (Tomaselli 1989:15). As a result, films such as *Katrina* (Nofal & Rautenbach 1969) received criticism or were censored by the PAB. *Katrina* may be classified as what Botha (2007:24) refers to as an involved film as it is based on Basil Warner's *Try for White* story, where a coloured women, Katrina, "tries for white" by renouncing her origins to provide a better life for her and her son in apartheid South Africa. *Katrina* had two endings and the Board required the ending where the white man rejects his coloured girlfriend due to cultural differences, as it was deemed ideologically 'correct' (Tomaselli 1989:15). The inclusion of coloured people in society and cinema would pose a threat to the white privilege of Afrikanerdom.

With the rise of international investment came another new threat to "wealth and the God-given privileges of Afrikanerdom", which was depicted as 'The Border'. Afrikaner capitalism, or *Volkskapitalisme*, was placed in opposition to the threat of communism (Scholtz 2011:198). To protect Afrikaner capital against the communist threat in West Africa, the South African Border War soon commenced, starting from 1966, where the South African Defense Force (SADF) attacked the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) in an attempt to protect Afrikaner capital against the 'communist' threat from west Africa (Craig 2004:28). This paranoid Afrikaner nationalism, which was

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[35] Although stereotypes of the white South African also included the liberal white against apartheid, towards the later stages of apartheid international film productions overtly classified white South Africans as brutal Afrikaners or neo-Nazis in films such as *Lethal Weapon 2* (Donner 1989) (Bickford-Smith 2001:197-198).

brought on by Prime Minister PW Botha's mindset explaining a 'total onslaught against South Africa' stimulated the Border War film (Norton 2015:35).

**2.2.4 South African cinema of the 1970s to early 1980s: the communist threat and the Border War film**

In the Border War film, the *uitlander* shifted from the imperialist British and English-speaking South African to the communist characterized by his blackness (Tomaselli 2006a:153). The threat to Afrikaner nationalism shifted from class-based hostilities represented by the 'evil city' to an explicitly racial threat, in which blackness was associated with communism. This threat was not only an ideological threat, associated with the demise of white dominance, but also a financial threat on the wealth of the Afrikaner monopoly.

The films produced during and after the Border War served as propaganda to convince South Africans to support the war, creating moral boundaries between 'us' (mostly Afrikaner South Africans) and 'them' (the 'communists', be they black, or Cuban or Chinese) and thereby furthering apartheid nationalism (Craig 2004:30). One of the most notable Border war films is *Kaptein Caprivi* (*Captain Caprivi,* Venter 1972). I specifically mention this film due to the extremity of heroic acts performed by the protagonist. Caprivi and his men are Afrikaner soldiers of some pedigree, who risk their lives in a daring rescue attempt to save a group of South African citizens abducted by the communists (Craig 2004:31). Caprivi can be described as the traditional hero as he is the brave saviour not only of South African citizens, but also the Afrikaner community.

*Kaptein Caprivi*'s sequel *Aanslag op Kariba* (*Assault on Kariba,* Venter 1973) follows the journey of the heroic Caprivi who rescues yet another group taken hostage by terrorists (Craig 2004:32). Where *Aanslag of Kariba* differs from its predecessor is the deaths of the supporting characters. In *Kaptein Caprivi,* Buks dies as punishment for losing control by charging into a Japanese militant office to gain revenge after the death of his brother, and in *Aanslag op Kariba* Clive and Filemon (a black character) die as martyrs, heroically sacrificing their own lives to protect others, marking a change in the urgency of the state

to gain participation in the war (Craig 2004:32-33). Despite the inclusion of a black hero (albeit as a supporting character) in *Aanslag op Kariba*, the majority of these war films exploited the Afrikaans 'super-soldier' stereotype to gain support for the war. Soldiers are expected to sacrifice their lives for the 'greater good' of all South Africans and, in exchange, are promised immortality within Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric as heroic figures who 'rescued' South Africa from the communists.

Another Border War film which reinforces the heroic tradition is *Mirage Eskader* (*Mirage Squadron* Retief 1975), about two air force trainee pilots, Frans (Barry Trengove) and Chappies (James White), who are more concerned with the day-to-day challenges of the air force, such as the absence of lovers, than with actual air combat (Craig 2004:35-36). *Mirage Eskader* was shot at a time when the war became more resource expensive and a stronger need for civilian participation and endorsement arose. This endorsement is invited and reflected in the film's romanticised version of the Border War. The experience of war is demonstrated to be a crucial and productive part of identity building (Craig 2004:35-36). *Grensbasis 13* also furthers total societal support for the war efforts. The film states that patriotic girlfriends, wives and families must accept and support the men defending their country (2004:38).

Still another Border War film which supports the apartheid nationalist agenda is *Terrorist* (Hetherington 1978), which depicts a terrorist attack on South African white-owned farms (Craig 2003:26). Censorship and government control over media required the director, Neil Hetherington, to re-edit the film to depict the terrorists as incompetent black people against the superior white hero (2003:26). Craig (2003:26-27) finds the depiction of the black household farm servants in *Terrorist* noteworthy, as they transform from innocent, loyal workers, to communist informants, suggesting the threat of all black people as potential enemies. The depiction of black characters in Border War films serves as an important element in Afrikaans film's maintenance of Afrikaner nationalism, as race is one of the key markers used to justify exclusion.

The Border War film also called for a rapid modification of the *boeredogter*, with the enemy becoming more complex than before, as seen in *April '80* (Scholtz 1980). In this

film, the *boeredogter*, who is an English-speaking heroine, changed from the scapegoat that undergoes purification after betraying the Afrikaner nation. In the film the *boeredogter* is English and the new enemy of Afrikanerdom is the terrorist communists, which ideologically states that Afrikaans and English-speaking South Africans will coalesce to face an external foe – the communist (Tomaselli 2006a:155).

A Border War film of specific interest is *Jantjie Kom Huis Toe* (*Jantjie Returns Home* De Villiers 1984), about a "non-white protagonist", to quote Craig (2004:40), who joins the Cape Corps to fight in the war. The "non-white" units became more important to the state towards and during the early 80s as enthusiasm amongst white soldiers and white resources declined in availability (Craig 2004:40).[36]

Towards the end of the 1970s whites and coloured people became more integrated in society and political operations, with coloured political parties being co-opted by the state. Soon Kruger retired from the Publications Appeal Board and was replaced by Judge Lammie Snyman who allowed a new Act to come into force with more flexible laws (Tomaselli 1989:16). The major difference between the 1963 Act and the 1974 Act is the presence of a black middle-class working force that secured an alliance with white businesses (Tomaselli 1989:22). Capital, and not race, became a drive towards collaboration greater than the division of racial laws and segregation. Certain drive-ins were granted permission to accommodate multi-racial audiences for economic gain (Tomaselli 1989:22). Although the Publications Board was praised for their 'enlightened' outlook, it nonetheless established an ideological and industrial framework to accommodate a 'new dispensation' where coloured people and Indians were unequally integrated into a white society (Tomaselli 1989:18).

During the final stages of the Border War, the film industry continued to validate the military's political processes. Films such as *Boete Gaan Border Toe* (*Brother Goes to the Border*, Van den Bergh 1984) and *Boetie op Manoeuvers* (*Brother on Manoeuvers* Van

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[36] The term "non-white" has in recent years become increasingly problematic as it assumes that whiteness is the primary global racial identifier, and that all other races exist in relation to whiteness. Where "non-white" appears in this current study it is in relation to specific source material only.

den Bergh 1985) invited support for the South African struggle against the invisible 'communist enemy' (Tomaselli 1989:219). Like their predecessors, these films maintained the ideals of Afrikaner nationalism, legitimizing South African military interventions in keeping citizens 'safe' from the certain threat of black communist ideology.

Only the so-called involved films would reflect the cracks in the apartheid ideology and prevail against the Afrikaner nationalist agenda (Botha 2007:24). The involved films included films by producer Emil Nofal and director Jans Rautenbach, such as *Die Kandidaat* (*The Candidate* 1968), which addressed political issues surrounding the election of a new director to the Adriaan Delport Foundation and explored the urban Afrikaner's mentality about Afrikanerdom (Botha 2007:24).[37] The film questions what it means to be a 'true Afrikaner' and then de-mythologizes the 'super-Afrikaner' as the *volk* hero depicted in both the war films (Botha & van Aswegen 1999:19).[38]

*Jannie Totsiens* (*Goodbye Johnny,* Nofal & Rautenbach 1970) also rejected the apartheid nationalist agenda; however, "South African audiences were not ready for this stimulating psychological drama that challenged Afrikanerdom's conservative culture," and the film was a box-office failure (Botha 2007:25). Nofal and Rautenbach created controversial films that challenge the apartheid mentality by emphasising the narrow limitations of '*volk*' and the fallacy of 'true' Afrikanerdom (Botha & van Aswegen 1999:19).

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[37] Jans Rautenbach is one of the pioneers in South African film history and is known for his highly involved political films (Botha [sp]:[sa]). After a 30-year silence, Rautenbach made a film called *Abraham* (2015) about an artist who struggles with the marginalization of society and whose story has inspired Rautenbach to make the film (Geldenhuys 2015:[sa]). Rautenbach passed away on 2 November 2016. He will be remembered for his kind nature and pioneering involved films (Jansen van Vuuren 2016:[sp]).

[38] The 'true Scotsman' fallacy explains that the moment a group denounces another with a universal claim, by stating that the group is not 'true' member of the group, a fallacy is committed (Bennett 2012:[sp]). The claim universalizes one group and excludes others, by stating that they are not 'true', is false because that which defines 'true' group membership changes from universal to specific (Bennett 2012:[sp]). An example from the apartheid era may be a claim such as "true Afrikaners don't mix with other races". The question then stands "what is a true Afrikaner?", to which the answer will be "those who don't mix with other races", turning a universal to specific. The true Scotsman fallacy thus disproves all notions of 'true' membership to a group, problematising the exclusive nature of Afrikaner nationalism. An Afrikaner heroic narrative often depicts a "true" Afrikaner, in that only when one conforms to a specific criterion, such as being Afrikaans speaking, Christian, white and conservative, may one be an Afrikaans hero.

During the 1970s Manie van Rensburg commented on the nationalistic Afrikaner culture through political satire (Botha 2006:[sp]). His film *Die Square* (*The Square* 1974) was banned by the Publications Board as it was not ideologically correct under the National Party's requirements and satirised Afrikanerdom (Botha 2006:[sp]).[39] Although a few apartheid resistance films in the 1970s and 1980s were successful both financially and at international festivals, such as *The Native Who Caused All the Trouble* (Van Rensburg 1989), the strong censorship regulations sustained apartheid ideology (Botha 2007:26-27). Apartheid resistant films would also not receive financing, because financers were risking commercial failure due to the censorship (Botha & van Aswegen 1992:17).

Censorship was common during the apartheid regime, where legal restrictions by state authority would limit the contents that would be published on radio, television, theatre and cinema (Tomaselli 1989:14). The government justified these censorship laws by claiming that these laws protected the public from racial hostility and civil disturbances. However, in reality these laws aimed to discourage political activity directed against the minority government (Ngwenya 2014:14).

Films about interracial sex or marriage, racially mixed living areas, or which contained any suggestion of communism were all banned as these ideas and content were illegal under the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 55 of 1949; Immorality Amendment Act 21 of 1950; the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957, the Group Areas Act 41 of 1950 and the Suppression of Communism Act 44 of 1950 (Ngwenya 2014:16). The censorship laws in South Africa during the 1980s became increasingly harsh as the South African government declared a state of emergency due to increasing local and international resistance to the apartheid government (Ngwenya 2014:18).[40] As had been the norm

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[39] Another director who succeeded in creating involved films which challenge the apartheid mentality, although not consciously, is Ross Devenish. Devenish's films, such as the apartheid-set *Boesman and Lena* (1973) interrogated the hardship that people of different racial groups experienced under extreme poverty in South Africa (Botha & Van Aswegen 1999:20).

[40] A state of emergency is equivalent to Giorgio Agamben's (2005:4) state of exception, which is "the suspension of the judicial order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept." A country may thus declare a state of emergency under severe political or economic turmoil giving more legal power to the government to ease the turmoil, but the country then becomes a constitutional dictatorship. On 25 June 1985 Pres. PW Botha declared a state of emergency, due to rising political turmoil and protests against the apartheid government and increased sanctions (Liberation

during the preceding decades, the apartheid government would fund films that would further Afrikanerdom and its claim to superiority, which resulted in films such as Jamie Uys's slapstick comedy, *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980). Norton (2015:8) explains that Uys was one of the apartheid government's most trusted propagandists, as he would deliberately assist in legitimising and naturalising white minority rule and white superiority through his films. In these propaganda films, whites are represented as heroes paternally governing the blacks, who are represented as either ill-equipped to function in a modern society, or incapable of governing themselves (Norton 2015:8). Uys's oeuvre fails to create a distinction between fiction narratives and documentaries, creating a seemingly accurate depiction as stereotypical, incapable black people (Tomaselli 2006b:171). His films mostly focus on the San people, portrayed in zoological curiosities, as they mimic animals, such as *Beautiful People* (1974) and later echoed in *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (Tomaselli 2006b: 177)*.*

Uys produced escapist comedies – *verstrooiingsvermaak* – and held the view that the South African community did not want to see films that are 'depressing' (Norton 2015:37). Uys's claim that his films are purely for entertainment and is politically naïve, according to Tomaselli (2006:173). In his films satire is not used for pure entertainment value, but instead to destabilise any resistance of Afrikaner nationalist agenda. His films would be rewarded state subsidies and these films blurred the line between apartheid propaganda and entertainment, seeing no difference between the two (Norton 2015:38).

## 2.2.5 South African cinema of the 1980s and 1990s: towards a politically active film culture

After the box office success of some involved films, such as the political satire *My Country, My Hat,* certain South African films started questioning the harsh political circumstances under the apartheid government. These involved films of the 1980s and 1990s are

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struggle in South Africa 2012:[sp]). This suspended the limits of the law and meant that media was increasingly censored, curfews were imposed, political activists were prohibited to meet, the names of detainees were not released and within the first six months of the state of emergency 575 people were killed in political violence (Liberation struggle in South Africa 2012:[sp]).

referred to as politically active films. British television rejected these apartheid ideals, such as partially funding Athol Fugard's *The Guest* (Devenish 1977) and *Marigolds in August* (Devenish 1980)*. The Guest* is about Afrikaans writer Eugène Marais, who remains a heroic figure to the Afrikaner to this day. *The Guest*'s depiction of Marais, however, is far removed from the heroic myth of a powerful, influential teacher and left-wing Afrikaner nationalist. Devenish's film focuses mostly on Marais' morphine addiction and his attempted recovery and suffering at Steenkampskraal, a site described as a 'torture camp' (Marx 2014:256). In a series of close-ups of the physically deteriorating Marais's filthy body, the film emphasises the repetitive, ritualised injection of morphine, highlighting the self-pity of the tormented intellectual (Marx 2014:252). In its negative portrayal of Marais, which his myth has depicted as a strong Afrikaner nationalistic hero, the film finally delivers commentary on the socio-political situation in South Africa, rejecting Afrikaner nationalistic ideals through problematizing one of its major heroes.

In 1986 and 1987 South African cinema started to critically engage with political conditions concerning war, apartheid and the colonial history of the country, marking the beginning of an alternative film culture (Botha 2006:[sp]). Ster-Kinekor screened more political films than in the past in an attempt to avoid an international boycott under the guise of being progressive (Tomaselli 1989:227). Films such as *Jock of the Bushveld* (Hofmeyr 1986)*, A Place of Weeping* (Roodt 1986)*, 'n Wêreld Sonder Grense* (*A World Without Borders,* Nel 1987) and *Saturday Night at the Palace* (Davies 1987) explored contentious aspects of South African history and the trauma of South Africa's racial conflict (1989:227). The politically progressive filmmakers of the late 1980s became the guardians of South African socio-political memory, where the Nationalist regime conveniently omitted certain events from history (Botha 2007:31). These films include, for instance, *The Road to Mecca* (Fugard & Goldsmid 1991) and *The Fourth Reich* (Van Rensburg 1990).

The norms and common themes within South African cinema had shifted between the early 1900s and 1990s from Afrikaner nationalism with heroic figures, to the problematisation and rejection of apartheid ideologies and its heroes, as seen in the

apartheid resistance films. The role of these heroes under Afrikaner nationalism was to represent the ideals of the apartheid government and justify white dominance through the nationalist rhetoric. Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric, in Degenaar's (1983:10) terms, had been present throughout South African cinema in that it structurally and racially justified white domination.

The section below will explore how post-apartheid cinema focuses on a diversity of themes articulated by marginalized voices finally having the opportunity to voice their socio-political concerns (Botha 2012:203).[41] During the early 1990s cinema played a vital role in forging cohesion in South African society, aiding the creation of a democracy (Botha 2012:165).[42]

Since the establishment of a South African film industry, Afrikaans films have mostly dominated the industry prior to 1994. These films were reliant on a heroic narrative to create a national identity, an exclusive identity indicative of Afrikaner nationalism. An Afrikaner heroic narrative prior to 1994 consists of a hero who, as the idealized and mythologized model of te Afrikaner, specifically the Afrikaner male, exercises agency in the cause-and-effect of history. These themes of the Afrikaner as faithful saviour and having a natural claim to dominance was later maintained during the 1930s and 1940s, through the heroic narrative in films such as *Die Besembos.* Films celebrated the growth of the Afrikaans language and the rise of Afrikaans dominance. Despite the subordination of women, some films even introduced female protagonists, the *boeredogter* and *volksmoeder*, who are the saviours of the nation through their conservatism and thus also serve the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric. In films during the 1940s women were encouraged to support their men in fighting the Second World War. The Second World War films utilized the heroic narrative in service of Afrikaner nationalism as the Axis were seen as

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[41] Marginalised voices is the term used to describe individuals from the poor social, economic circumstances, whom are marginalised either due to social classes within the nation, or due to political reasons (Botha 2012:204).

[42] In 1991 the Film and Broadcasting Forum (FBF) was established, consisting of a variety of directors, writers, musicians, actors, agents and many more, with the primary aim to create an indigenous film culture and provide equal access to film, redressing the inequality of the past (Botha 2012:165).

a threat to Afrikaner dominance and *volkskapitalisme.*[43] These films portrayed heroic, physically strong right-wing Afrikaners guarding the South African borders.

The need to protect the symbolic South African border against the outsider (black people, the 'evil' city, the Axis Powers) was further illustrated in the Border War films and the outsider shifted to the communist. Once again the hero was the male Afrikaans super-soldier who saves the *volk* from communism. Even the escapist comedies during the 1980s and early 1990s would be in the interest of Afrikaner nationalism, often portraying the Afrikaner, however comically clumsy, as *volk* hero who acts on a parental duty to save the nation and the uncivilized blacks, such as *Boetie Gaan Border Toe,* or *The Gods Must Be Crazy.* The success of these films which maintains Afrikaner nationalism is partially due to government censorship, the A-Scheme subsidy system and Afrikaner monopoly. Some involved films during the later stages of apartheid actively resisted Afrikaner nationalism and aided national cohesion toward a democratic South Africa.

## 2.3 Post-1994 South African cinema

In 1995, the A-Scheme subsidy system, which only rewarded box office success to white escapist films, ceased to exist. As a result, only seven Afrikaans feature films were made in 1995 (Botha 2012:165). From 1995 to 1999 forty-five feature films were made – for an average of nine feature films per annum – and in 1999 the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) was established which provided funding to local filmmakers and increased South African film production (Botha 2012:166). During the 1990s the NFVF played a key role in promoting short films as a training ground for filmmakers in South Africa (Botha 2102:166). Many of these films were apartheid resistance films and portrayed events which were conveniently left out of the official South African history to aid the National party (2012:166). After the radical censorship laws of the 1980s, films reclaimed South African history which was previously suppressed under apartheid rule (Botha 2012:211).

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[43] During the Second World War the Axis powers was a coalition between Germany, Italy and Japan (Britannica [sa]:[sp]).

Since the fall of the apartheid regime, it also became important for the South African film industry to shape international partnerships and by 2000 South Africa had established a partnership with the European Union (EU) (Botha 2012:170). The aim of this union was to ensure that small to medium-size enterprises would be strengthened in the film industry through co-productions (2012:170). Some of these co-productions would result in involved films, questioning and challenging the apartheid ideology to encourage a positive change in the political economy. One such foreign-financed film is the Canadian-South African co-production *Proteus* (Grayson & Lewis 2003), filmed in five different South African languages, about two Robben Island prisoners who receive severe sentences for the 'crime of sodomy' (Botha 2012:172). Arseneault (2010:26) suggests that *Proteus* significantly locates queer identities which have inherently been shaped through racialised masculinities in South Africa. Under the apartheid regime gay and lesbian voices were also silenced as apartheid legislation controlled all aspects of life, including who citizens associated with and who they could have sex with (Botha 2011:239).

Although these co-productions were responsible for involved films, very few locally produced films were financially successful (Botha 2012:172). During the 2000s one of the only local production companies that was financially successful, was Videovision, which produced the iconic *Sarafina!* (Roodt 1991) and *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Roodt 1995) (Botha 2012: 172). From 1991 to 1999 the amount of locally produced films that were released had declined at a staggering rate, with mostly slapstick, shallow comedies gaining a box office success (Botha 2012:172).

Ten years after the fall of apartheid the South African film industry started to undergo a revival (Botha 2012:179). Alongside the socio-political work of film veterans such as Ross Devenish, Manie van Rensburg and Jans Rautenbach, new voices that were previously oppressed, such as Zola Maseko, Ramadan Suleman and Ntshavheni Wa-Luruli were also included (Botha 2012:179-180).[44] One such veteran director is Darrel Roodt, who

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[44] The major films of Zola Maseko include *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman* (1998), *Children of the Revolution* (2002) and *Drum* (2004).
The major films of Ramadan Suleman include *Fools* (1997), *Deadly Myths* (2004), *Zulu Love Letter* (2004) and *Zwelidumile* (2008).

voiced the concerns of marginalised communities well into the 2000s (Botha 2012:207). Roodt's work was significant in how he not only explored marginality in South Africa, but also structurally deviated from the classic Hollywood narrative, experimenting with neorealism, oral narrative structures and even silent film (Botha 2012:208).[45]

A further theme evident in post-apartheid cinema in the 2000s is the restructuring of the memory of the South African War, although only a few attempts have been made at this restructuring (Botha 2012:214). *The Feast of the Uninvited* (Heyns 2008) follows a nonlinear structure reflecting the sweeps of memory as a result of the traumatic event (Botha 2012:216). The seven-hour epic film screened as a mini-series on M-Net in 2008 and based on a book of the same name by PG du Plessis, ultimately questions the ways in which traumatic memories of the war are retold, and establishes that one cannot merely recall the pain of history (Botha 2012:216). This is a significant attempt at a narrative structure which is both anti-nostalgic and located in trauma theory. As Elsaesser (2001:195) explains, trauma is non-representable as it leads to a failure of memory. The non-linear structure of *the Feast of the Uninvited* may reflect an element of postheroism because of the temporality of the traumatic event.

The feature film industry flourished during 2004 and 2005, with the NFVF co-funding more than 10 feature films, certain films explored themes of marginality and included black heroes (Botha 2012:182). One of the most prominent feature films of 2005 with a black protagonist, which deals with the socio-political circumstances of post-apartheid, is *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005), based on Athol Fugard's 1980 novel, about a young boy who is forced into a life of crime in the townships of Johannesburg (Botha 2012:187).

Another film which reflects the unhealed wounds of apartheid's oppression and how it has seeped through into post-apartheid South Africa expressing the need for redemption is *Forgiveness* (Gabriel 2004). The film follows the story of an apartheid-era police officer

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The major films of Ntshavheni Wa-Luruli include *Chikin Biznis...The Whole Story!* (1999), *The Wooden Camera* (2003) and *Elelwani* (2012).

[45] Unfortunately, Roodt has ceased to make these socially conscious films with their involved themes. He is currently making films of a commercial value, such as the escapist comedy, *Alles wat Mal is* (*Everything that is Crazy* 2014) and the B-grade horror film, *Safari* (2013).

seeking forgiveness from the family of an anti-apartheid activist who he murdered. The protagonist, Tertius Coetzee, is portrayed through the 'bad-white-turned-good' myth, characterized by the guilt for the crimes he committed (Reid 2012:56). In post-apartheid cinema the representation of white identities underwent restructuring to be classified as either bad whites, responsible for apartheid crimes, or good whites who show remorse for apartheid crimes (Reid 2012:45). The representation of the bad white myth in South African cinema is often associated with a lack of remorse, images of white armed men and symbols of the old apartheid-era, such as the old South African Nationalist flag (Reid 2012:51).[46]

After the film revival of 2004 and 2005, South African cinema experienced a decline, with some veteran filmmakers unable to secure government funding for filmmaking (Botha 2012:188). Only a few films dealing with an involved post-apartheid identity were able to secure funding, such as *Jerusalema* (Ziman 2008), as well as slapstick comedies, such as the Schuster films (Botha 2012:191). Schuster's films have been indicative of an underlying white anxiety concerning racial, ethnic and class transformation in South Africa (Tomaselli [sa]:[sp]). This anxiety towards the socio-political changes in the country are connected to the nationalist rhetoric, including a need for racial segregation, derivative of the self-assertion justifying white dominance. Schuster's films comically portray the shifting ideologies evident in South Africa, whether it be the ideological production of apartheid, as seen in his earlier films such as *Oh Schuks, Here Comes UNTAG* (1993), or white alienation towards a black inclusion, such as the more recent *Mama Jack* (Hofmeyr 2001). His films thus reflect the discursive shift in white mentality in the aftermath of political change (Tomaselli [sa]:[sp]).

Schuster's comedies bear an ideological and often stylistic kinship with Jamie Uys' slapstick comedies and the candid camera television genre, featuring buffoonish characters and these characters' underlying prejudices towards each other (Tomaselli

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[46] This stereotypical representation of white identities during the early 2000s is similar to the one-dimensional portrayal of white South Africans in some films during apartheid. As previously mentioned, in films such as *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *Lethal Weapon 2* white identities are either portrayed as liberals against apartheid, or brutal Afrikaners, but seldom recognises white identity hybridity beyond such stereotypes (Bickfort-Smith 2001:200).

[sa]:[sp]). These racial, ethnic and classist prejudices present in the Schuster comedies all adhere to the inclusive exclusive nature of nationalist rhetoric, where the ideologies produced in this nationalist rhetoric exclude individuals based on race, class, ethnicity and language.

As with the Schuster films' underlying white angst towards changing political operations and a need for distraction, the norms within contemporary Afrikaans cinema have certainly been that of a culture of distraction with films mostly being shallow slapstick comedies.[47] Some attempts have been made by young Afrikaners to rebel against the stereotypical image of the Afrikaner, as identified in cinema since the early 1900s (Botha 2012:217). These films often discredit the patriarch as the main decision maker and the Afrikaner nuclear family (Botha 2012:217).

Although some Afrikaans films have been successful in rejecting the Afrikaner stereotype, the majority of films are still escapist Afrikaans cinema. Some of these comedies, such as *Bunny Chow: Know Thyself* (Barker 2006) and *Running Riot* (Roets 2006), performed poorly at the box office (Botha 2012:191). Although certain comedies performed poorly at the box office, the Afrikaans language market that provides escapism has been successful, such as *Poena is Koning* (*Poena is King* Esterhuizen 2007) and *Bakgat!* (Pretorius 2007) (Botha 2012:191).

A recent study at the North-West University has analysed the major trends in South African cinema between 2008 and 2013, and has found that romances and comedies are the favourite film genres of young viewers and adult viewers (Smith 2015:[sp]). While not exactly setting the box-office alight, the Stellenbosch-based romantic comedy *Strikdas* (Nieuwoudt 2015) was seen by 70 000 people after two weeks at the box office (Smith 2015:[sp]). This comedy is about a geek in typical Al Debbo style, in his physicality and

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[47] Although Schuster may not be the typical traditional Afrikaner hero – he is not the brave, masculine saviour of the *volk* – he is still an icon to some Afrikaners and his films often contained elements of the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric. A group of Afrikaans students at the University of Free State, known as the Reitz 4, who filmed themselves embarrassing black workers in 2010, commented that they merely did it to be funny like their *volk* hero, Leon Schuster (Nel 2010:[sp]). While the Reitz-4's abhorrent actions are surely their own and are not attributable to Schuster, it is significant, and troubling, that the students would cite this filmmaker's films as influential on their sense of being, and their sense of humour.

clumsiness, earning the love of a young girl, who is torn between family obligations and her love for the geek. Robyn Sassen (2015:[sp]) strongly criticizes *Strikdas* by stating that the narrative is written with two-dimensional characters who are typical white privileged Afrikaners. Sassen (2015:[sp]) states that that the film is visually reminiscent of the way in which films were shot in 1972, where the Afrikaner community had to be shielded from the communist *swartgevaar* (black danger). The only black presence in *Strikdas* is a stereotypical servant character, who lends his horse to the geek so that he can heroically save the day. Strebel (1979:26) explains that the major black stereotypes to emerge from apartheid is that of the servant or a savage black, which suggests that, in *Strikdas,* the portrayal of the black servant has shown little to no development from the films of the apartheid era. The research at North-West University explained that ticket sales of Afrikaans films "were influenced by whether the films displayed a pride in Afrikaans, the technical prowess displayed as well as quality of film, the marketing and whether there were any famous names attached to the film" (Smith 2015:[sp]). The success of the Afrikaans romantic comedy clearly reflects the political disavowal of the Afrikaner community. Wasserman (2010:31) states that the tendencies within Afrikaner new media shows that the Afrikaans community tends to suppress and ignore any contribution to underlying socio-political issues of race.

Parallel to the political economy of Afrikaans cinema, is the Afrikaner's general denial of and non-confrontation with any racial, ethnic or class issue which does not fall into the rigid limits of Afrikaner nationalism. This attitude may explain why the historical drama *Verraaiers,* with the unconventional portrayal of a failing Afrikaner *volk* hero, failed at the box office (Jansen van Vuuren 2014:[sp]). Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren (2014:[sp]) explains that the hero archetype is the protagonist who drives that plot forward and is associated with being a warrior and  saviour of the community. With its alleged betrayal of the Afrikaner and its nationalistic ideals, the Bosbok Ses feature film *Verraaiers* was not well-received amongst the broad Afrikaner community, as "they (Afrikaners) did not want this tragic hero that reminded them of more mistakes made in the past" (Jansen van Vuuren 2014:[sp]). These 'mistakes' could refer to surrendering to the British in the South

African War, Afrikaner's involvement in colonisation or apartheid. The justification of Jansen van Vuuren's statement above is that the film underperformed at the box office and was unpopular with the broad Afrikaner community.

Another Afrikaans historical drama, Katinka Heyns's *Die Wonderwerker* (*The Miracle Worker* 2012) received praise at film festivals and award ceremonies such as the South African Film and Television Awards (SAFTA). *Die Wonderwerker* is another feature film about Eugène Marais, and differs substantially from its predecessor, *The Guest* (see section 2.2.5). Reid (2012:47-48) explains that a myth operates to explain and maintain a collective sense of nationhood and why it is justified for a community to have the power which they do. The myth of Marais often portrays him as a naturalism with a strong relationship to the land and animals. Marais clearly conforms to the traditional hero, as a warrior and saviour. His "'magic' has, by the end of the film, restored the love between estranged husband and wife, restored speech to the young son traumatized by the family dysfunction and enabled the entire community to share in the dance" (Marx 2014:258). This historical drama thus conforms to the heroic narrative, where the portrayal of this historic figure is that of the mythical Afrikaner hero.

Similar to *Die Wonderwerker*, *Roepman* is a contemporary Afrikaans historical drama that contains visual and thematic motifs of heroism. The hero of the community, Joon (John-Henry Opperman), who saves the community from their own social flaws, is not the typically heroic traditional Afrikaans hero, but is instead an outsider of the community who was born with an eye-defect (Kruger 2014:159). It is Joon's non-traditional physicality and comfort with his slender body which leads Alta Du Plooy (2014:70) to the conclusion that *Roepman* complicates the idea of a masculine saviour and therefore suggests gender fluid identities. However, Joon may still be seen as a traditional hero in some respects, as he is the man to whom the community turns in troublesome situations. In the end, Joon is a self-sacrificing saviour (Kruger 2014:159). The story is narrated by the young boy Timus, who speaks of Joon in a mythical manner (Kruger 2014:160). The heroic figure is often associated with a myth which tells the story of his heroic actions and in *Roepman* it seems that Joon is represented as an almost timeless character who will forever be

remembered by Timus for his kindness as a saviour figure, and as the one stable point of reference in Timus' coming-of-age narrative.

The film depicts a strong religious context playing on various religious symbols and either the confirmation or rejection of Christianity. The hero, Joon, is mocked by the other characters who call him a *sterrekyker* (stargazer) as he is always looking up into the sky due to his eye defect. Metaphorically, Joon is one of the wise men, who was following the star which would guide them to Christ in the nativity story (Kruger 2014:159). Joon is portrayed as a wise man who, despite the challenges to his eye sight, always seems to see (have knowledge of) the community's troubles. When a pipe bursts in the street Joon saves the community from their social conflict by bringing the community together to dance in the shower created by the burst pipe. Joon brings the community together in this scene, similar to the wise man who forms a community to celebrate the birth of Christ.



Figure 1: Joon gazes up while community dance (Eilers 2011)

Kruger (2014:172) further explains that Joon may be seen as a Christ-figure in the film, where he is the saviour of the community in that he restores peace in a miracle-like manner, as finally accomplished through self-sacrifice. The Christ metaphor is further reasserted in the film when Joon is found dead, lying in a cross position, similar to Jesus' death on the cross (Kruger 2014:174). When Timus urinates in his pants after being bullied, Joon saves him by dipping him in a pool of water to prevent further

embarrassment. This may also be seen as a religious symbol, where Joon is the Christ-like figure performing the baptism ritual (Kruger 2014:172).

Joon is the embodiment of good which is placed in polar opposition to Hein, the antagonist, who molested the young boy, Timus, and is constantly causing trouble in the community (Kruger 2015:179). This good versus evil motif in the film correlates to the Christian narrative, where Christ is the ultimate saviour of mankind – the hero. Religion and faith is one of the main elements of the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric, justifying Afrikaner dominance with events, such as the Battle of Blood River, which motivate the view of the Afrikaners as God's chosen nation, his *volk*. *Roepman* is a historical drama set during the assassination of President HF Verwoerd in the 1960s and during the height of Afrikaner nationalism. Provided the film's political historical contexts, the film's repetition of these ideologies, such as religious motifs, reflects a nostalgia for the past, which is strengthened by the mythological beauty foregrounded by its striking aesthetic. Given the film's political and historical contexts, the film's repetition of these ideologies reflects a nostalgia for the past. This nostalgia is strengthened by the mythological beauty foregrounded in the film's striking aesthetic. It is due to the above reasons, such as the religious imagery and its mythologisation of the hero that the film achieves in conjuring further Afrikaner nationalism through the heroic narrative. *Roepman* is thus positioned as a heroic narrative, with a mythical, Christ-like saviour of the Afrikaner community, and elements of the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric in contemporary Afrikaans historical dramas. *Roepman* is not a postheroic film.

South African cinema reflects the major shifts in the socio-political environment of the country through the representation of the heroic figures. In South Africa cinema before and during apartheid the hero firstly started off as the mythical *Boer* hero after the South African War, then became maimed heroine, then shifted to the healthy, strong soldier during the Second World War and finally became the Afrikaner nationalist fighting the communist threat and the so called *swart gevaar* (black danger). During the 1980s and towards the end of apartheid, resistance films finally started rejecting this Afrikaner hero, even portraying him as the anti-hero, aiming to demythologize the Afrikaner culture. Films

were also no longer merely made for an Afrikaner, or white audience and started voicing the concerns and unequal treatment of other racial groups.

Despite the selected financial success of some involved Afrikaans films, box office successes mostly go the escapist Afrikaans language market, which indicates that majority of the economy may still lie with the Afrikaner community. Escapist films perform better amongst the Afrikaner community than films dealing with an involved post-apartheid identity. Wasserman (2012:31-32) explains that after apartheid the Afrikaner community is living in denial of racism and inequalities of the past and would not want to confront any type of media which reminds them of their complicity in these processes. The Afrikaner community would rather blame racism and the exclusion of Afrikaner nationalism on the *outside* 'other', asserting that the moral universe of Afrikanerdom does not discriminate (Wasserman 2010:32). The "we-are-not-like-that" mentality shifts blame from the Afrikaner *volk* to select individuals. This mentality emphasises what Broodryk (2016:67) labels a "border-mentality" or "frontier-mentality", a self-imposed exclusion of the Afrikaner *volk* who deny any political involvement in South African issues. Similarly, Steyn's (2016:65) anthropological study reiterates how Afrikaners seek to separate themselves from the hardships of a democratic South Africa by re-inventing or re-claiming an Afrikaner identity through withdrawal from South African issues. According to Steyn (2016:65), this laager mentality manifests in cultural industries, including Afrikaans cinema.[48]

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[48] A "laager" is a Dutch/Afrikaans loan word referring to a wagon circle created for defencive and offencive purposes (Lamplough 2012:[sp]). It originated during the Great Trek as a secure base for Boers during conflict, offering protection during enemy retreat. Lamplough (2012;[sp]) states that "the laager became a symbol of Boer tenacity and independence, immortalised first in the Voortrekker Monument, dedicated in 1949, and later in a ring of bronze wagons at Blood River, erected in 1971. It was very easy, in this atmosphere of national pride, to be persuaded that the laager was a peculiarly Afrikaner invention, developed to ensure national survival at the tip of a hostile Africa." Steyn (2016) aptly terms the phenomenon in which Afrikaners seek to separate themselves from South African issues, a new postapartheid Afrikaner laager, as it is firmly rooted in Afrikaner nationalism and reflects a need for encampment and exclusion.

## 2.4 Summary of the key ideas of chapter two

Below are two tables, one of South African cinema before and during apartheid, and the other of South African cinema after 1994, to summarise this chapter and point to the major occurrences of heroism in the film industry.

| South African cinema before and during apartheid | Major events and the heroic narrative |
|---|---|
| 1890s – 1930s | This period witnessed the emergence and growth of the Afrikaans nation to power, from the unification with the British after the South African War to pure Afrikaner dominance. The major themes in films were the reassertion of a 'pure' race, language, religion and the protection of the *volk,* be it against the British, or the evil city*.*<br><br> White heroism in South African cinema was replaced by a purely Afrikaans hero, as the mythical portrayal of the ideal Afrikaner. This hero was the representation of Afrikaner nationalism, justifying dominance due to his faith and self-created freedom. |
| 1940s | The 1940s were marked by the Second World War and films would ideologically try to motivate men to join the Allies. With the threat of poor whitism emerged the first *made-for-black* cinema. Common themes were the masculinity, strength and the threat to South African borders.<br><br>The hero was thus the epitome of hyper-masculinity and the protection of the nation and female heroes were portrayed as the subordinate support structures. |
| 1950s – 1960s | This period is marked by the furthering of radical apartheid ideals, such as eliminating the 'black-spots' in the city. A subsidy system |

| | |
|---|---|
| | would ensure that only films that supported Afrikaner nationalism would be screened. The common theme was the growth of Afrikaners.<br><br>Afrikaner heroes were characterized by strength, conservatism, religious, racial and linguistic purity. |
| 1970s – 1980s | The 1970s signified the major start of the Border War and propaganda films would aim to legitimize the SADF's military actions. The common themes were extreme white male heroism, the threat to the South African borders and, with it, the threat to the "God-given privileges" of Afrikanerdom and *volkskapitalisme*.<br><br>Heroes were cast as Afrikaner super-soldiers and Afrikaner females were once again cast as the support structures, suggesting the role of the Afrikaner community during the Border War. The enemy was cast as the communist, but also black people, shifting the stereotype from loyal servant to the so called *swart gevaar* (black danger)*.* |
| 1980s – 1990s | The South African film industry finally started becoming politically active, despite the apartheid government's interference and censorship. Some involved films questioned minority rule and challenged the image of the ideal white hero. Some of these films claimed international success, but would not reach a local audience.<br><br>The A-scheme subsidy system ensured that only films that maintained the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric and escapist films are financially successful, partially to the Afrikaner monopoly. |

| South African cinema post-1994 | Major events and the heroic narrative |
|---|---|
| The early 2000s | Post-apartheid the subsidy system which ensured that mostly Afrikaner nationalist films would be screened ceased to exist. Marginal voices and involved films, depicting the harsh realities of apartheid, emerged. The early 2000s marked the revival of the South African film industry.<br><br>Heroes became more diverse, including racial and gender diversities. Some films also explored a deeper post-apartheid white identity, although this merely resulted in a bad white/good white stereotype. |
| 2006 onwards | After the revival of the early 2000s, the South African film industry experienced a decline in funding. Afrikaans films are financially successful; given that they are escapist comedies. Afrikaans films seem to reflect a nostalgia for the past, such as *Roepman* or *Die Wonderwerker*, and once again reassert heroism through the mythical portrayal of *volk hero*es. Afrikaans films often also reflect a *we-are-not-like-that* mentality by ignoring socio-political themes and mostly looking for escapist films as entertainment, *verstrooiingsvermaak.* Afrikaner nationalism is thus still present in contemporary Afrikaans cinema through heroism. These contemporary Afrikaans escapist comedies and heroic narratives reflect little development from the Afrikaner nationalist ideologies, rarely exploring post-apartheid Afrikaner identities. |

# CHAPTER THREE: THE POSTHEROIC NARRATIVE

As Chapter Two demonstrated, the heroic narrative of historical (and some contemporary) Afrikaans cinema reasserts nationalistic ideals of social exclusion and is therefore problematic in a post-apartheid era. Elsaesser (2012:708) suggests a postheroic narrative for European cinema to overcome the social exclusion of nationalism which is associated with a heroic narrative. This chapter will unpack the elements of a postheroic narrative by firstly providing an overview of European cinema, as Elsaesser's key point of reference for postheroism. I will locate the antagonistically mutual relationship which European national cinema has with its major competitor, Hollywood, in line with Elsaesser's argument. European national cinema also seeks to portray a national identity of integration, despite a history of exclusion, that is imperialism, colonialism and slavery (Elsaesser 2013:[sp]). I will thus elaborate on how European cinema seeks to constantly portray a national identity even though it does not have a national identity due to European cinema's linkages to foreign operations, its antagonistically mutual relationship with Hollywood, and the exclusion of the 'other' embedded in history. I will also draw similarities between European cinema and contemporary Afrikaans cinema's notions of nationalism and portrayals of a collective national identity which is inclusive of individuals who conform to the description of a national identity, yet exclude individuals which do not adhere to this description.

I will discuss European national cinemas, including British, French and German cinemas. I selected British national cinema, because South Africa is a former colony of Britain and British interest in the South African film industry has led to numerous co-productions. Afrikaans cinema, since the early 1900s has had a particularly interesting relationship with Britain, as it was firstly dependent on British film operations and then gained dominance to nationalise the Afrikaans film industry. As explained in Chapter Two, British involvement in the South African film industry has been prominent from the early 1900s, such as producing South African propaganda films depicting South Africa as an investment opportunity to British imperialists (Masilela 2006:[sp]).

French national cinema is of specific interest to this study, as it is one of the key countries which Elsaesser refers to in constructing an argument to explain a postheroic narrative. Elsaesser suggests a postheroic narrative for French cinema due to the exclusiveness of French culture and also uses a French film, *Beau Travail* (*Good Job* Denis 1999), to identify and discuss postheroism.

Finally, a discussion of a German national cinema is specifically relevant to this study, because major moments in German film history ideologically correspond to Afrikaans cinema's maintenance of nationalism and criteria of 'admission' to a nation. German cinema is also a point of interest to Elsaesser, which he refers to when theorising the key concepts to arrive at a postheroic narrative. As such, I will explain how European cinema is doubly occupied, in line with Elsaesser (2012: 704), as it seeks to represent a national identity of unity, yet fails to represent the 'other'. I will then discuss the necessity for a postheroic narrative, which is due to the failure of a national identity in European national cinema, and which can also be transposed into a contemporary Afrikaans cinema, given the overt failure of Afrikaner nationalism in a post-apartheid era.

## 3.1 An overview of European national cinema

The transition from silent to sound films during the 1920s and early 1930s played an important part in the development of European national cinema and the ways in which its relationship was shaped with Hollywood. The leaders in sound technology were Warner Bros. and Fox Film, but by the 1930s all American cinemas had adopted the sound-on-film system (Dibbets 1996:211). During 1928 to 1929 America would start exporting "talkies", although some European inventors had been experimenting with sound-on-film for years, despite European cinema's lack of interest (1996:212). "Talkies" required higher budgets and countries that could afford these productions were faced with competition from America (Danan 1991:607).

By the 1920s American cultural industries were so expansive that the bulk of films in Europe were American (De Grazia 1989:53). A *London Daily Express* writer in 1927 wrote, "the bulk of picture goers are Americanized to an extent that makes them regard

the British film as a foreign film" (De Grazia 1989:53). European cinema competed with American cinema, as America was a capitalist, globalized cultural force (De Grazia 1989:53). Due to the globalization of American cultural hegemony, European cinema struggled to maintain national cinemas (1989:54).

The introduction of the sound film meant that certain countries' film industries suffered because America had a monopoly with sound technology and used patents in an attempt to prevent Europe from competing in the sound film industry (Danan 1991:607-608). The Second World War also weakened Europe's efforts to compete in a sound film industry as economies had been weakened by the war (1991:608).

*Talkies* are significant to this study on nationalism and a heroic national identity, as the introduction of sound in cinema posed a threat to the national identity of most countries. One of the cornerstones of nationalism, not only Afrikaner nationalism, but also to other countries, is language (Dibbets 1996:212-213). American dominance in the film industry meant that most films screened globally were in English (Dibbets 1996:212-213). European and South African film industries sought to maintain its nationalistic ideals of a national language by nationalising its film. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the South African film industry during the 1930s maintained its purity of language by nationalising the film industry, producing *talkies* in Afrikaans, such as the first sound film, *Moedertjie* (Albrecht 1931)*.*

In March 1929, the German electronic company, Klangfilm GmbH, and Tobis aimed to organise resistance to the American domination and nationalise the European film industry (Dibbets 1996: 212). Germany and France, and later Italy and Spain, were the first to set up barriers such as strict import quotas to protect their national film industries from American dominance (Danan 1991:608–610).

Before the introduction of sound films, translation was an easy process as one could merely substitute original titles with titles in another language (Danan 1991:607). The result to this language barrier was the nationalisation of European film industries and certain countries, such as Italy, banned *talkies* that were not in their local languages

(Dibbets 1996:213). Due to European competition, American studios started to invest in European film industries and would shoot two versions of a film in different languages to accommodate European audiences and their ticket buying power (Dibbets 1996:213). Shooting a film with different languages was an expensive operation, and was soon abandoned in favour of dubbing (Dibbets 1996:214).

Danan (1991:613) argues that the prevalence of dubbing over subtitling in certain European countries is due to subtitling constantly reminding the viewer of the film's foreignness and that a nationalistic country would not want a foreign culture to influence the masses. The underlying tone of most European film industries has been to reassert a national identity, despite multi-national and multi-lingual films produced due to the establishment of the European Union (EU) (Ortega 2011:22). Indeed, European cinema has maintained an inclusive/exclusive nature, characteristic of a national cinema and the recent British vote to exit the EU may signify an arousal of nationalism from a British standpoint.[49]

### 3.1.1 An overview of British national cinema

Street (2008:1) explains that it is difficult to define British national cinema because it consists of certain complexities. Firstly, British national cinema has had economic boundaries which had led to foreign co-productions. Secondly, British national cinema had been developed and populated by stakeholders from diverse social and regional backgrounds. A national cinema is characterized by a shared sense of community and Britain, with its population diversity, cannot be said to only have a single community. British nationalism, or 'Britishness', has often excluded specific experiences of belonging to a community and these communities have not been fully represented in British cinema (Street 2008:1).

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[49] On 23 June 2016, Britain held a referendum to leave the EU, due to frustration because of Brussels involvement in British politics, law and immigration policies (FT Reporters 2016:[sp]). In response to Brexit, the British Film Institute (BFI) announced a 5-year plan with which to guarantee investment in the British film industry to accommodate filmmakers of diverse backgrounds (Wade 2016:[sp]). Despite the nationalisation of Britain with the Brexit vote, the BFI are aimed at securing an internationally accessible British film industry (Wade 2016:[sp]).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Britain has been involved in the South African film industry since 1916. After the South African War, in 1915, the British production company, African Film Productions (AFP) was established (Gutsche 1972:117-119). AFP was responsible for most South African films since the early 1920s to the 1940s, most notably *De Voortrekkers.* Gaines (2013:301-302) argues that, while the film contributed to the Afrikaner nationalist project, its goal was to promote imperialist expansion. AFP mostly produced films for a British market portraying South Africa as a major investment hub for Britons. As explained in Chapter Two, British imperialism in South Africa was soon replaced with Afrikaner nationalism, with Afrikaners dominating most industries.

It may therefore be argued that Afrikaner nationalism in cinema is dependent on Britain as a coloniser which brought cinema as an industry to the country, but also antagonises Britain in the ways in which it justified the gradual replacement of British imperialism with Afrikaner nationalism. This relationship between an Afrikaans national cinema and Britain may then be described as antagonistically mutual in the way in which was historically dependent on British film operations, but also positioning the British imperialist as the enemy.

Despite the rejection of British imperialism in South Africa, a British national cinema has, for the most part, been marked by imperialism and exclusion based on sovereignty.[50] British films prior the 1960s represented a privileged class, mostly associated with imperialism, with actors speaking in a "BBC English" accent, or "Queen's English", and set in major metropolises (Street 2008:1-2). Pre-1960 films would reassert the status-quo through the ideological production of the class system (Street 2008:2), such as the subordination of women (Street 2008:2). Women were represented in mass media as emotional, irrational homemakers who were subordinate to their husbands and who exist merely to serve men. Films such as *21 Days* (Dean 1940) would depict women as "tender, delicate organism(s), put into this world to make life a little brighter, a little happier, by

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[50] What I mean here by sovereignty is not only the British Royal family and their claim to power, but a further discursive sovereignty, which delegates power based on birth right, class and social standing, such as a claim to power due to land ownership, or the feudal system (Foucault 2003:36-37).

beauty and happiness and purity" (Harper 2000:13). In Britain during the 1950s women became more prominent in society and patriarchal dominance had to counteract this, which meant that media would also reflect what social order 'should be' (Curran 2002: 139). Similar to the changing role of women in British cinema, Afrikaans cinema has also adapted and changed the role of women to suit its national interests. Afrikaans cinema has been a cinema of nationalistic exclusion, such as the reassertion of the subordination of women, as explained in Chapter Two. The *volksmoeder* and *boeredogter,* although mostly subordinate to men, is originally charged with keeping the nation together against the evil city, but these architypes have adapted to a more active role in supporting the men fighting the Second World War.

Towards the 1960s, British films did however start to depict marginal communities, such as the inclusion of women's voices. Despite the subordinate position of women depicted in films from the 1950s, some films would question this position. During the late 1940s and 1950s some stark realist films would depict unfulfilled housewives and failed marriages, challenging a woman's role of subordination (Curran 2002:139). Towards the 1960s women became more politically active in questioning gender roles, which gave way to the London Women's Liberation Workshop of 1968 (2002:140).

Despite the depiction of the more active role of women in the 1950s, most British cinema still relied on patriarchy. Spicer (2003:[sp]) explains how heroes in British cinema have mostly been masculine figures and have adapted and changed in opposition to the enemy of British nationalism. Similarly, traditional historic Afrikaner national cinema has also adapted and changed its hero in accordance to the changing enemy of the hegemonic state, be it the British, evil city or black communist. During the earlier years of the Second World War male heroes in British national cinema mostly came from the privileged class, such as the gentleman hero, RJ Mitchell, in *The First of the Few* (Howard 1942), who views it as his duty to the British nation to perfect a war weapon (Spicer 2003:[sp]). Mitchell conforms to the traditional heroic figure as he sacrifices himself for the greater good of the British nation (Spicer 2003):[sp]).

During the later stages of the Second World War, this privileged hero in British national cinema adapted to the common man, to serve the ideology of it being a people's war (Spicer 2003:[sp]). The hero in *The Cruel Sea* (Frend 1950), Lieutenant-Commander Ericson, is the common man who has risen to greatness due to his professionalism and courage (Spicer 2003:[sp). Here, heroism aids the British nationalism as it characterizes traits which serves as propaganda in support of the war. The inclusivity of the middle class in cinema would ideologically strengthen the war efforts by encouraging comradery amongst citizens (Spicer 2003:[sp]).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the BBC aimed to bridge the gap between the elite communicators and the everyday audience (Curran 2002:142). New media, including films, became more and more populist, catering for the 'mediocre' man, with themes of self-improvement, family life and the everyday social conditions (Curran 2002:143). The films and documentaries of the 1950s and 1960s which portrayed the daily struggles of the everyday man is known as British New Wave cinema, or kitchen sink realism (McKibben [sa]:[sp]).

After 1960 some films have explored a more inclusive "Britishness", as a national identity, which includes a person's "place of birth, gender and sexuality, race, class, education and occupation" (Street 2008:2). During the 1990s, Welsh and Scottish cinema challenged the conventions of British cinema and have formed part of a greater British national cinema (Street 2008:2). Some scholars argue that, due to the celebration of pluralism and an inclusive national identity, contemporary British cinema is post-nationalist (Street 2008:2).

Despite a seemingly more inclusive national identity in British cinema, Elsaesser explains that cinema in Britain is classified around 'official' British cinema and 'unofficial' British cinema (Street 2008:3). In this sense, British cinema is still nationalistic, as that which does not conform to 'Britishness' is seen as unofficial, and therefore not a 'good' British film. Similar to other European cinema, British cinema wishes to position itself as 'good' and American films as the 'bad' other and simultaneously tries to make Hollywood blockbusters (Street 2008:3). British national cinema does not have a 'true' British

national identity, due to numerous co-productions with America and other countries and because it is constantly aiming to reassert its 'official Britishness' yet adopts Hollywood operations. French film theorist, André Bazin (2002:65), commented that British cinema is a cinema of mediocrity as it has no genuine roots or self-validating genres that classify it as having a British identity. Whereas American cinema has specific genres, such as Westerns or thrillers, to classify a film as American, British national cinema are merely "imitating" American film operations, genres and narrative structures (Bazin 2002:65). Higson (2000:68) explains that films such as *The English Patient* (Minghella 1996) is a film made by a British director, American producers, about a Sri Lankan-born Canadian; the film's 'nationality' is muddied by the various nations and nationalities involved in the production.

Higson (2000:64) argues that, although certain films or media events appeal to some Britons globally, it does not represent them in entirety. A traditional national cinema is then exclusive as it does not include all diversities and identities, which is precisely the case with the exclusive nature of an Afrikaner national cinema, as explained in Chapter Two. Higson (2000:67) argues that the existence of a national cinema is due to the tensions between 'home' and 'away', where it firstly tends to celebrate what is deemed a country's collective national identity, but secondly accentuates the differences between its country and others.

### 3.1.2 An overview of French national cinema

French national cinema has for the most part maintained a national identity, despite the differences between French citizens. Considering recent events in France, such as the ban on the burka and the prohibiting of Islamic prayer on streets, questions are raised on issues such as the inclusion of migrant populations as marginal communities in a French national identity (Gavarini 2013:155). Similar to Afrikaner nationalism's codes of inclusion, Faulkner (2009:67) states that the test for admission to a French nation is not being part of a geographic space, but instead whether one speaks a specific language, and belongs to a specific race and culture. In Afrikaans cinema, as indicated in Chapter Two, the representation of space is no longer a geographic notion due to the displacement of

Afrikaners through the ages; instead it reflects a tension between city spaces and the farm with its respective associations of liberalism and conservatism. A culture of conservatism and a shared language are two of the 'criteria' of admittance to the Afrikaner nation, similar as that which admits one to a French national identity.

The establishment and reassertion of a French national identity has been the subject of national French cinema from the early 1930s, with policies protecting its national cinema from foreign influence (Danan 1991:608). It seems tensions between an exclusive French national identity and the 'other', be in American influence, or immigrants, has been prevalent in French cinema, as will be explained in the below section. This section will map the major movements in French cinema where tensions of an exclusive national identity are displayed ideologically.

Starting in 1925, one of the first events in French history which created tensions between 'home' and 'away', as termed by Higson's (2000:67), and which is reflected in French national cinema, is spatial reconfigurations. The French architect, Le Corbuisier, sought to replace the narrow, dark streets of the French city with skyscrapers surrounded by serene parks and trees (Gavarini 2013:156). These large buildings started to appear across the borders of French cities and were depicted by early French Impressionist films, during the 1920s, as relaxing getaway spots for the aristocrats alongside riverbanks (Gavarini 2012:157-158).

Due to the policies and laws protecting a French national cinema in the early 1930s, the French government had control over the images portrayed in French cinema. 'Foreignness' was a threat to the nation state, a mind-set which was brought from the Depression years, and that which is foreign was thus depicted in cinema as the 'other', not to be included in a French national identity.[51] Some filmmakers soon started

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[51] The Great Depression was an economic crisis due to a stock market crash during the 1920s that was experienced by most of the world after World War 1. France experienced the Depression much later than the rest of the world, during the early 1930s, because they had an independent currency, the Franc and had a low unemployment number and had little foreign imports (Context: European history [sa]:[sp]). France soon started to feel the desperation from the rest of Europe as they were reliant on the tourism market and foreign exports that the rest of Europe could no longer afford (Context: European history [sa]:[sp]).

questioning: "who gets to imagine the nation, and on whose behalf or, how does one get to test the limits of one's identity?" (Faulkner 2009: 69). The question of the inclusion of a national identity became a major theme to some filmmakers of the 1930s and gave way to films such as *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (*The Crime of Mister Lange,* Renoir 1935) (2009:9). The film's self-reflexivity, its *mise-en-abyme,* emphasises how cultural operations, such as cinema, create that which is a community, through shared narratives (2009:9). The film therefore admits that with government control over the French film industry, cultural production will be elitist and in the interest of the aristocrats, excluding that which is deemed foreign.

*Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* was an exception to French cinema's nationalist norms during the 1930s. Most films relied on classical narrative codes to maintain the hegemony of the aristocracy and the submission of the peasant social class (Faulkner 2009:11). Further reassertion of aristocratic values and the exclusion of marginal voices evident in cinema is Cinéma Colonial, which was a French film movement with the sole purpose of depicting French colonies as fruitful land with investment opportunity (Faulkner 2009:10). These films of the 1930s closely adhere to the heroic narrative, where the hero was always cast as the colonizer in opposition to the other (Hayward 2005:121). *L'Appel Du Silence* (*The Call of Silence* Poirier 1936) is one such heroic narrative which aimed to justify colonialism. The hero is the idealised Christian Frenchman who opposes the threat of the other, the Islamist, to join the Christian religion (Hayward 2005:154).[52] These films were also overtly racist, sexist and classist and naturalised the "othering" of that which is deemed a non-French identity (Faulkner 2009:14).

The marginalisation of individuals based on race, language, sex and class, as the underpinning of the nationalist rhetoric, was maintained in French cinema until the 1950s. There is then no question that the foreign community in France would be depicted as the other. After depreciation, the large buildings of Le Corbuisier, built for leisure, became known as the *grande ensembles,* home to the vast immigrant population since the 1950s

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[52] The success of *L'Appel du Silence* is not only financial as it drew the biggest crowds during the time, but it also won the *Grand Prix du cinema* prize in 1936 (Hayward 2005:154).

(Gavarini 2012:156). The immigrant population living in the *grand ensembles* are known as the *banlieue* population, which has often been depicted in cinema as the French hub of crime, violence and drug trafficking (Gavarini 2013:158). The French films of the 1950s and 1960s portray this space and the immigrant population as the opposition to 'hygiene and whiteness', reflect nostalgia for a serene space and show an underlying French anxiety to the 'other'. The French films of the 1950s and 1960s are thus indicative of nationalist operations, which failed to include all social groups based on race. Despite some French films which do include marginal communities, Gavarini (2013:161) states that the exclusion and marginalisation, both spatially and ideologically as depicted through media, has remained unquestioned until the 1980s.[53]

Some of these films of the late 1950s and 1960s are collectively termed French New Wave Cinema and are characterized by the inclusion of marginal voices, such as the French lower class, and its concern with socio-political issues (Parnell 2016:[sp]). French New Wave Cinema adopted Hollywood editing conventions, such as rapid cuts, as well as Italian Neorealism's depiction of the lower working class (Parnell 2016:[sp]).[54] French New Wave Cinema also forms part of the European Art Cinema movement, characterized by its sophistication, cultural prestige and subversion of Hollywood operations (Elsaesser 2012:703). French New Wave cinema has subverted from Hollywood operations because it suggests that Hollywood's intentions are for mere capital gain. French New Wave Cinema's relationship with American film is then clearly antagonistically mutual as it had adopted certain Hollywood conventions, yet it antagonises Hollywood and positions itself as the opposite of Hollywood (Elsaesser 2012:704).

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[53] Some of these French films of the 1950s and 1960s criticise the standardised poor lifestyle of the *banlieues* and their exclusion from society, as well as portray the daily struggles of the working class, including *Mon Oncle* (*My Uncle* Tati 1958)*, Les quatre cents coups* (*The 400 Blows* 1959 Truffaut), *Play Time* (Tati 1967) and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her* Godard 1967).

[54] The Italian Neorealist film movement came after the fall of fascism under the Mussolini regime in 1943 (Neorealism: Historical origins of Italian neorealism 2016 :[sp]). The movement is characterized by a depiction of the stark social issues relating to a postwar Italy after the resistance against the fascist regime (2012:sp]). It also aimed to subvert as much as possible from commercial Hollywood operations, such afs filming in a studio and 'happy endings' in the plotline (2016:[sp]).

Marginal communities, such as the vast immigrant population, had up to the 1990s been excluded from French national cinema, with little acknowledgement of such cultural discrimination – the French saw colonisation as their "civilising mission" (Elsaesser 2012:715). The only inclusion of the 'other' was on the basis of assimiliation: "as long as you spoke French and abided by French laws (and cultural Franco-centrism), there was little official acknowledgment of, or political mandate for, debating racial or religious discrimination" (Elsaesser 2012:715). Despite attempts to seem inclusive of all citizens, French national cinema has failed to adequately include the other as it does not acknowledge the social exclusion of its history.

As with British national cinema, the question then arises of whether French cinema has a national identity. Tarr (2007:4) explains that a French 'national' cinema is problematic as it no longer has a set border due to globalisation. Due to Hollywood's dominance in new media, and due to multicultural influences from other world cinemas, such as film cultures of postcolonial, migrant and diasporic filmmakers, French cinema no longer has a national identity (Tarr 2007:6). The problematic nature of a French national cinema, based on its exclusiveness, discredits a narrative structure, such as a heroic narrative with its classical codes of narrative, which maintains the hegemony of the ruling class.

### 3.1.3 An overview of German national cinema

Similar to the maintenance of hegemony, German national cinema has largely been constructed on notions of 'Germanness' and the constitution of a national identity (Silberman 1996:297) similar to the reassertion of a national identity in both British and French cinemas. As with French national cinema, the question arises, as to the criteria which 'admits' one into this German national identity. Silberman (1996:297) explains that, that which admits one to a national identity is a shared culture, which in Germany is that of a self-proclaimed *kultur-nation* (cultural nation). This *kultur-nation* implies that a German nation is culturally sophisticated and therefore superior to another nation. Similar to Afrikaner nationalism, German national identity is constructed mostly on notions of inclusion and exclusion, where self-proclaiming one's own nation as culturally

sophisticated justifies the exclusion of another nation. Here, the German nation (similar to the Afrikaner) emerged as superior to other nations and populations.

Indeed, German national cinema has been defined by exclusion since its early history, such as the banning of all foreign films during World War I to protect its own film industry and only started importing again, although with strict quotas, during the 1920s (Silberman 1996:298). After the war, the Depression hit Germany and the 1920s were characterized by poverty, unemployment and antagonism towards the government due to the mass trauma of the war (Hake 2002:27). After mass protests, the first German republic was replaced with National Socialism, which gave birth to the Weimar Republic, seeking to socially emancipate the impoverished masses (Hake 2002:27). Siegfried Kracauer's analysis of Weimar films, conducted post WW II, conclude that themes and narratives already reveal pre-fascist tendencies and, in retrospect, make the rise of Nazism seem inevitable (Hake 2002:29). Weimar cinema came to an end after the introduction of sound in America. As stated in section 3.1, Germany was the first country to further nationalise its film industry, after American competition, and Hitler supporter Alfred Hugenberg bought out all American interest in Germany's film industry (Hake 2002:53).

There are marked similarities between the German nationalisation of its film industry and Afrikaner nationalism under the apartheid regime. As stated in Chapter 2.1.3, during the 1950s and 1960s, Afrikaner nationalists also dominated the film industry and bought out American interest in the South African film industry. This meant that films were either produced to maintain, or justify, the dominance of a self-proclaimed superior culture.

By the mid-1930s Germany's self-proclaimed superior national identity, known as *kultur-nation,* dominated German national cinema with Nazi propaganda. A combination of National Socialism, conservatism, language and racism formed part of the cornerstones of the Nazi nationalistic rhetoric and birthed Third Reich Cinema (Hake 2002:64). Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, assumed control of all new media in Germany and made it cinema's main goal to force a national Aryan community (Hake 2002:67-69). Third Reich Films depicted heroic figures. Heroes were portrayed as the "ideal" soldierly male, the personification of a German national identity (Hake 2002:79). The heroic figure in

Third Reich Cinema, similar to Afrikaner cinema, may then be seen as the representation of the national ideals and beliefs of the nation, with its basis of exclusion of the 'other' and inclusion of a national identity, especially with government control over the film industry, such as the apartheid regime and Nazi rule.

The geographic representation of Germany in Third Reich films also reflects the idealisation of a Nazi nation. Daffner (2011:37) explains that the visual geographies in Third Reich cinema aimed to provoke mental geographies amongst Germans, with naturalistic imagery alongside images of developed city landscapes. I specifically refer to the geographic representation of nationalism in Third Reich cinema as a point of comparison, as these images of an idealised Germany stand in stark contrast to the images of destruction and ruin seen in Second World War South African cinema mentioned in Chapter Two. Where images of an idealised space under Nazi rule served the political interests of the Nazi government, images of destruction and ruin served the interests of nationalism in South Africa.

After Nazi rule, from 1945 until the early 1960s, German cinema was largely a cinema of conservatism and a popular diversion of the hardships suffered during World War II (Hake 2002:92). During the 1950s, German cinema started imagining a postwar German identity, which was free from both the bounds of a divided Germany (West and East) and the social trauma of the Holocaust. The *Heimat* film wave (homeland films) of the 1950s served as an apolitical re-envisioning of the German national identity (Hake 2002:117). A central motif to the *Heimat* film is spatial reconfiguration caused by WW II and the serene depiction of rural, untouched Germany, turning back to cultural heritage was a reimagining of a national identity (2002:118). It is this apolitical nostalgia for the past, a pre-war Germany and its innocence, and the natural beauty of an untouched earth, which lead to a political cinema which confronts German history during the 1960s.

In 1962, German national cinema had experienced a decline in filmmaking, which sparked a need to redefine German national cinema and its role in postwar Germany as a tool in education concerning contemporary German issues, such as morality after the Nazi legacy (Fussel [sa]:[sp]). This need to redefine German cinema's role came after German

cinema was critiqued by intellectuals, journalists and cineastes for ignoring socio-political issues (Renschler 2000:262). Twenty-six German directors signed the Oberhausen Manifesto, which emphasised the philosophy of film as an educational tool, rather than entertainment and the importance of this form of new media in postwar Germany (Fussel [sa]:[sp]). The overall result of the Oberhausen Manifesto were low budget films, that were financially unsuccessful as they were rejected by audiences (Fussel [sa]:[sp]). The Oberhausen Manifesto eventually gave way to New German Cinema (1960s and 1970s), known for the work of *auteurs* such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Wim Wenders, Alexander Kluge and Margarethe von Trotta.

New German Cinema is of specific interest to a study of postheroism as it provides a partial impetus for Elsaesser's postheroic narrative. Renschler (2002:261) characterizes New German Cinema by the mythical construction of a historical hero and its international co-productions which aided both foreign and domestic support. New German Cinema is shaped around the concept of *autorenfilm* (cinema of the auteurs), which, to Elsaesser (1989:2), serves a local German market and an international community, and as such is an antagonistically mutual relationship (1989:3).

New German cinema aimed to nationalise the film industry and capture the essence of Germanness, differentiating itself from commercialism of the West, which, in this case, refers to Hollywood (Elsaesser 1989:87). After the Holocaust Germans have been stereotyped as villains and it is precisely the rejection of the Nazi ideals, as portrayed in cinema, which cast the *auteur* as the 'good' other. The *auteur* is a hero because he becomes the ideal representation of the nation as a collective, post WWII. The *auteurs* and their films are positioned as meritorious representatives of the German race, with the intention of creating artistic cinema. The auteurs are placed in relation to Hollywood, which is characterized by its emphasis on capital gain and shallow themes. The hero of a cinema of German high culture is often the representation of the *auteur* himself, as a culturally elite artist, caught between a pure artistic vision and commercialism of the aristocracy, associated with big Hollywood production houses and the German subsidy

system (Elsaesser 1989:87-89).[55] There is a therefore a tension between a European high culture, as artistically elite, and Hollywood low culture, which purely exists for commercial value. For the most part, German cinema, much like European cinema as a whole, has been dependent on Hollywood funding since 1945, after the fall of Nazism (Elsaesser 1989:9). After WW II Germany faced an economic crisis and America saw it their democratic duty to indoctrinate the world into freedom, against the propaganda of communism (Elsaesser 1989:9). This meant that German directors had to go to American distribution companies for funding for a film to reach a German market (Elsaesser 1989:15). The relationship German cinema has with America is antagonistically mutual as it seeks to be the good other and antagonises Hollywood, yet is dependent thereof financially and has adopted American film practices through numerous co-productions (Elsaesser 2012:704). New German Cinema is then a cinema of ambiguity, which aims to cater for numerous binaries. It appeals to a domestic market, yet internationally shapes itself as competitively highly cultural. It positions itself as the "good" other to Hollywood, yet is financially dependent on America. It restructures a postwar identity, yet adopts American operations through co-productions and funding systems.

When considering the political economy of contemporary German cinema, one should acknowledge government policy making and censorship as an attempt to nationalise German cinema and appeal to domestic audiences (Renschler 2002:265). After the death of the pioneer *auteur* of New German Cinema, Fassbinder, Friedrich Zimmermann became the new Minister of Interior and demanded radical changes to German film policy, such as a subsidy system granting funding to commercially competitive films (Renschler 2000:265), such as comedies which follow the classical codes of narrative. It is noteworthy to point to a similarity to the policy making of the apartheid government in South African cinema and the A-scheme subsidy system, which only awarded grants after

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[55] The subsidy system in Germany during the 1960s and 1970s was dependent on two factors: firstly, that films should be made for domestic consumption, but also that cinema should be defined as a cultural industry, fit to restore German cinema's international reputation (Elsaesser 1989:8). This subsidy system thus placed New German Cinema as serving an ambiguous purpose in that it had to appeal to a commercial market, domestically and internationally, but also had to have cultural appeal to conform to the elitism of European art cinema.

financial success at the box office. This meant that shallow comedies, as a form of distraction, would be funded in the apartheid years, similar to contemporary German cinema and its nationalistic domestic appeal. Contemporary Afrikaans cinema may then also contain a similarity to the norms in contemporary German cinema, which is a culture of distraction – *verstrooiingsvermaak*, as explained in Chapter One*.

Contemporary German cinema after the 1970s has been dominated by comedies with young urban heroes, specifically white German heroes, giving up the life of student freedom to take on adult roles of professionalism and penthouse living – "yuppie comedies" (Renschler 2002:262-263). To Elsaesser (1987:72) these comedies are a result of white collar culture, a culture of distraction for urban workers, which would choose to see a light comedy to distract them from the hardships of the mundane realities of postmodern living. This *angestelltenkultur* offers a depersonalised, nostalgic experience, which promises class transcendence from a competitive working environment to class superiority (Elsaesser 1987:72). The promise of class transcendence is a popular narrative which maintains the capitalist working machine, which is that which New German Cinema promotes; "[t]his new German cinema cultivates familiar genres and caters to popular tastes" (Renschler 2002:264). Renschler (2002:264) agrees with Elsaesser in that the success of these comedies amongst the postwar German generation is due to it being a "site of mass diversion", a distraction from the socio-political issues of contemporary Germany, such as coming to terms with a Nazi past. These tactics of diversion are similar to the *verstrooiingsvermaak* in Afrikaans cinema which has gained box office success for distracting an audience from the socio-political issues in South Africa.

The protagonists in contemporary German cinema up to the 1990s were precisely that of the traditional white male hero, with the absence of marginal figures, such as German Jews (Elsaesser 2014:98).[56] Contemporary German cinema has also relied, for the most

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[56] During the 1990s the marginal voices of the Jewish community in Germany did appear in cinema as protagonists in films such as *Abraham's Gold* (Graser 1990), *Aimee und jaguar* (*Aimee and Jaguar* Färberböck 1990) and *Rosenstrasse* (von Trotta 2003), but were excluded for the most part (Elsaesser 2014:98). The absence of Jews from cinema, post Nazi rule, may point to the non-representability of traumatic events, such as the Holocaust, and may

part, on the five major America distribution companies, Warner Bros, Columbia, UIP, Buena Vista and Fox (Renschler 2000:269). As a result of American dominance in most film industries across the world, contemporary German cinema duplicated Hollywood formulas, genres and narrative codes (Renschler 2000:266).

As with British and French national cinemas, one may then question whether there remains a German national cinema, as cinema of nationhood and depiction German identity, when considering its relationship with America and its co-productions. In further complication of this antagonistically mutual relationship which Germany and Europe have with America is that the two film industries (European and American) borrow from one another structurally, that is American *auteurs* making European "art styled" cinema and vice versa (Elsaesser 2012:702). Elsaesser (2013:[sp]) is therefore of the opinion that European cinema no longer has a national identity to be represented in cinema in the form of a heroic narrative of nationhood.

As the above discussion of selected prominent European cinemas makes clear, cinematic representation involves inclusion and exclusion, and national cinemas consistently play a part in a larger national project in which imperialism, cultural superiority and heroic narratives are woven into the socio-cinematic fabric.

## 3.2 Elsaesser's notion of double occupancy

A heroic narrative of a unified national identity is increasingly questioned by European intellectuals as it does not acknowledge the privileged inclusion and social exclusion of histories. Elsaesser (2013:[sp]) points to this paradox of a national identity which seemingly includes the other, such as immigrants, but when this national identity is historicized one will find imperialism, colonialism and slavery. Elsaesser stresses that European cinema should be post-national, because identification with a collective national identity is outdated, due to a diversity of identities (Siewert 2008:198). What would then be the alternative to a cinematic self-identity, which neither "speaks for the other", nor

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even serve as mourning work as parapractic memory (Elsaesser 2014:98). Parapraxis as the repetition of failure, such as exclusion, will be discussed under section 3.3.

forces itself into a community (Elsaesser 2013:[sp])?  Some film scholars have suggested multiculturalism in cinema, but with reference to Jean-Luc Nancy, Elsaesser (2006:648) dismisses the call for multiculturalism as "forcibly tethering together a patchwork quilt of tribes, clans, or culturally and linguistically distinct groupings." Multiculturalism is a social movement which suggests an integrated utopian society, including endless diversities of identities, such as individuals from different racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Hall 1992:531). Multiculturalism in cinema acknowledges a diversity of individuals, but suppresses difference in favour of a representation of national unity, which fails to recognise histories and patterns of exclusion from the nation based in imperialism, colonialism and slavery.

The failure of multiculturalism to recognise historic exclusion gives way to a different kind of identity politics, one which acknowledges power structures that remain present due to historical inclusion or exclusion (Elsaesser 2006:648). Double occupancy, however, is an intermediary term between cultural diversity and cultural identity, whilst conscious of the exclusion of said histories (2006:648). Although a post-nation contains a multitude of cohabiting identities, the geo-political space of the nation is always "already occupied" by specific power structures (Elsaesser 2008c:50).

Double occupancy has direct implications for space, whether it be geographic displacement or reconfigurations, such as the immigrants in Europe, or a way of imagining borders and representing otherness. As argued in Chapter Two, the cinematic representation of geographic space in South African cinema has often been associated with the Afrikaner's claim to land and protection of the South African border. The vast spatial reconfiguration that South Africa underwent, such as displacement from the farm to the city during industrialisation, has ideologically manifested in Afrikaner cinema as a threat to the Afrikaner nation. This nationalist rhetoric fails to not only ideologically, but also physically include individuals based on race, language and culture. Double occupancy, as the acknowledgement of past exclusion both ideologically and spatially, may then serve as an addition to ways to represent space, and those who inhabit those spaces in film.

In cinema, double occupancy poses a paradox in national identity, as it shaped a postnational identity, which comes after the politics of nationhood, representing the 'other' in a stereotypical nature, yet draws one eye to the exclusive nature of nationalism (Elsaesser 2009:28). The major problem with nationalism and the reassertion of a national identity in cinema, both a European national cinema and an Afrikaner nationalist cinema, is its exclusive nature which dictates who may be admitted to a nation. Double occupancy aims to overcome the exclusivity of who may be included in a nation, as it states that in an age of globalisation there can no longer be a binary between an "us" inside a border or a "them" outside the border, as everyone is displaced in some or other way from the criteria of nationalism (Elsaesser 2009:48). It is this recognition of the otherness within the self which allows for multitudes of singularities within a nation, whether it is racial, religious, regional or a language difference (Elsaesser 2009:48).

A multitude of singularities, a possibility created by double occupancy, is also suggested by Degenaar (1980:109-113), who refers to a pluralist society in a South African context. Pluralism embraces a multitude of identities, without suggesting that there is any mutuality amongst individuals. Pluralism then acknowledges power structures and social differences, embedded in history. Double occupancy may then be of specific relevance to a contemporary Afrikaans cinema, in a post-national context, as it recognises singularities, yet also acknowledges racial, religious, regional and language differences.

Double occupancy points to the paradox in a nation's need to appear unified, yet always contains the other, thereby acknowledging historical exclusion (Elsaesser 2012:706). Double occupancy forms part of the foundation of a narrative structure which suggests a community bound by antagonism and mutual opposition: a postheroic narrative (Elsaesser 2012:706). Since the postheroic narrative draws on and refers to the nation's past, and to processes of cultural and political inclusion and exclusion, it engages with trauma and memory to move beyond historically dominant heroic narratives.

## 3.3 Trauma and memory

Elsaesser's (2014:4) major interest, as reflected through most of his later work, is cinema's relationship with the collective memory of trauma set in history, such as memory of the Holocaust or the violence and terrorism of the Red Army Faction (RAF).[57] Memory is one of the key variables of an individual's identity formation, as well as a national identity (Elsaesser 2014:6). The collective memory of a nation has two components which constitutes a collective national identity, cultural memory and communicative memory. Firstly, cultural memory is a type of remembering introduced by Jan and Aleida Assmann, which refers to memorialising specific historic events, i.e. anniversaries, museum exhibitions, political speeches and all cultural practices which shape social perceptions (Elsaesser 2014:56). Secondly, communicative memory is the retelling of events and experiences by witnesses who have inevitably shaped a particular part of identity around these events (Elsaesser 2014:56). It is also important to distinguish between cultural and collective memory and history, where memory takes on a more subjective stance and history claims to objectively sequence traces of material left after the event into a chronological narrative (Elsaesser 2014:56).

Elsaesser's motivation for a postheroic narrative is derived from a context of social trauma, the memory thereof and cinema's response to it. "Cinema is always memory, even if it deals with history: each screening activates the presence of recall, so that a film is always more than the traces of an event located in the past" (Elsaesser 2014:56). Given that cinema acts, in a sense, as memory, that is a cultural and communicative memory, cinema which deals with a historic trauma may, in a sense, play a part in shaping a collective national identity. In Europe, this trauma may be a history of colonialism, imperialism and slavery, which oppresses the other. In a South African context, one may

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[57] The Red Army Faction, also known as the Baader-Meinhof Group, was a radical terrorist group, established in the 1970s, who saw it their goal to eradicate capitalism and the exploitation of Third World countries (Zalman 2014:[sp]). The group's founding ideology was sparked by the 1967 protests against the elitist Shah of Iran, who was visiting Germany at the time (Zalman 2014:[sp]). The killing of a young man at the protest by German police were perceived by the group as the actions of a fascist state and, with the terrors of the Nazi regime still fresh to them, the group pledged to further the ideals of communism (Zalman 2014:[sp]).

also refer to events such as colonialism and apartheid, as traumatic events which has formed part of collective memory. Elsaesser (2014:7) is of the opinion that, because of the prominence of collective memory, especially memory of a traumatic event, and it being a major constitutive of identity, it breeds a culture of victimhood. A culture of victimhood not only applies to the victims of the events, such as the Holocaust, but also its survivors, which can even be the perpetrators (Elsaesser 2014:7). The postheroic narrative aims to overcome victimhood and social blame as a result of trauma, such as communism, the Holocaust, and possibly colonisation and apartheid in South Africa.

When one experiences a traumatic event there is a delay in the memory thereof, a gap in time (Elsaesser 2001:197). The individual then fills this gap with meaning, a distorted meaning, which means that the memory of the traumatic event becomes somewhat distorted and unreliable (Elsaesser 2001:197). The temporality of the traumatic event is due to the individual's cognitive-emotional hesitancy (Elsaesser 2001:195).

Due to the gap in time which is then filled with a distorted memory, trauma has a sense of non-representability (Elsaesser 2001:195). Cinema cannot represent an accurate account of a traumatic event, because of the failure of memory.[58] Elsaesser (2001:201) thus suggests a cinema of referentiality, instead of a cinema of recovered memory. A heroic narrative, following the classical codes of narrative, that is linearity and a "window" or "mirror" to reality, is a cinema of recovered memory as it states that the event depicted is as close to reality as it can be. The inadequacy of the heroic narrative then paves the way for a different type of narrative structure, a postheroic narrative. The postheroic narrative, in opposition to the collective identity-building of the heroic narrative, would seek to find commonality-within-difference, calling on a different sense of community (Elsaesser 2013:[sp]).

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[58] What Elsaesser (2014:11) means by non-representability is not to question the accuracy of first-hand photographic evidence of the traumatic event, but instead that due to the enormity of trauma, the representation of the event would neither by appropriate, nor adequate as a medium to come to terms with the traumatic event.

## 3.4 An inoperative community and the unsocial sociability of humankind

A community based on commonality-within-difference is that which Immanuel Kant labels the unsocial sociability of mankind, which refers to the human need to form part of a society and symptomatically the need to exist in isolation from others (Elsaesser 2012:706). In this sense, individuals are bound to a community by mutual opposition.

Kant (1963:20-21) explains that it is human nature for individuals to have a need to live in a society, because in this way, they feel more humane, but, once placed in relation to others, they experience a desire to find superiority. This unsocial sociability of humankind, as identified by Kant (1963), leads to the nationalisation of countries, or groups within a country. This nationalism includes the expressed need to exclude some individuals, and to isolate and oppress others. Nationalism then always has a sense of competition and antagonism. One merely has to recognise the antagonism which has occurred throughout the South African history to see Kant's unsocial sociability in effect. The results of these antagonistic competitions over land ownership and power have led to violence such as the South African War, apartheid and the Border War, to name a few, as mentioned in Chapter Two. What Kant (1963:20) means by "antagonism" is precisely set in a context of the unsocial sociability of humans, in that the resistance to conform to a nation is that which threatens to destroy it.

The need to destroy society is thus human nature for Kant, it is this need which explains occurrences such as colonialism, slavery and imperialism. For Kant, the solution to this destruction of society is the 'right of morality'. The 'right' are the social codes which controls conflicts and tensions in a society and is therefore rationally planned (Wood 1991:344). 'Morality' refers to a set of standards which are justified by rationality, which Kant labelled the "Categorical Imperative" (CI) (Johnson and Cureton 2016:[sp]). The right of morality, for Kant, forms a harmonious community, which accommodates human nature of both having a rational and natural existence (Wood 1991:334).

To Jean-Luc Nancy (1991:13) a human being is a mortal entity, a deteriorating body. This deteriorating body forces one to acknowledge life and death and what is still to come after

death. In this sense, the body undergoes a sort of abjectification.[59] This deterioration of the human body towards an inevitable death forces one to confront the stranger in oneself, as the body becomes a stranger (Streiter 2008:59). Traditionally, community is associated with the static body, that is commonality defined by shared national, ethnic and racial constructs (Elsaesser 2012:712). It is the very collapse of the mortal body which makes these constructs of race, nationality and ethnicity insignificant. This community of being static is made inoperative. Similar to Kant, Nancy (1991:15) suggests a different kind of community, an inoperative community, which is defined by the awareness of the continuous movement from birth to death, a reassertion of one's mortality.

Due to this continuous movement, an inoperative community should not be seen as a static construct, such as nationalisation based on race, language, religion or gender, but is, instead a community of plurality. This inoperative community should accommodate individual's forming part of a society and in that being plural, but also accommodate isolation, therefore being singular (Nancy 1991:15). Nancy's community of singular/plural therefore allows for the unsocial sociability of humankind.

Nancy suggests that, to reach this community of commonality-within-difference, one should shift one's perception of *dasein* (being together), to *mit-sein* (being of togetherness) (Elsaesser 2012:712). *Dasein* would imply the forming of a collective self-identity, that of nationalism, where individuals are expected to conform to one common race, religion, and language. Instead, *mit-sein* refers to constantly shifting perspectives, allowing for individuality and free and shifting social configurations, without suggesting that individuals share any mutuality (Elsaesser 2012:713).

Here, the possibility of a pluralist community in South Africa is already introduced, as referred to in Chapter One and section 3.2. The inoperative community with its free social configurations, may be translated into a South African context as a community of pluralism, as suggested by Degenaar (1980:109). Pluralism implies that a community is

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[59] I will deliberate more on how the body becomes abject by referring to practical examples from cinema provided by Elsaesser in Chapter Four.

a space where individuals may dynamically shift from singular, that is existing in isolation, and plural, that is social associations, allowing for the unsocial sociability of humankind.

Traditionally, the unsocial sociability of humankind is mostly associated with a heroic narrative. The hero is independent (unsocial) yet is also bound to a collective (social), which explains his heroic acts and alignment of the self to a community in being the heroic saviour (Elsaesser 2012:707). However, when historicising national cinemas, one concludes that a heroic national identity is mostly based on histories and processes of exclusion, such as imperialism, slavery and colonialism, as I have indicated under section 3.1. One may merely consider an Afrikaans national cinema with its heroic narrative to identify its exclusivity based on race, language, religion and at times gender. I have explained in Chapter Two how the hero in Afrikaans cinema is mostly the white patriarch who stands for conservatism, is associated with Christianity, and that any deviation from this is mostly in the interest of defining an individual's role to further Afrikaner nationalism. A collective national identity, associated with heroism, is based on historic exclusion, which is Elsaesser's point of departure for a postheroic narrative.

In the following chapter I will demonstrate how Elsaesser's postheroic framework operates in contemporary Afrikaans cinema with reference to the films *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers*.

**CHAPTER FOUR: POSTHEROISM IN THE BOSBOK SES FILMS – *STUUR GROETE AAN MANNETJIES ROUX* AND *VERRAAIERS***

## 4.1 Postheroism: an introduction

This chapter aims to create a framework for a postheroic narrative for contemporary Afrikaans cinema by locating how postheroism operates in the Bosbok Ses films, *Verraaiers* and *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux.* The historical drama, *Roepman,* also forms part of my object of enquiry, but I have found, in Chapter Two, that the film mostly consists of a heroic narrative, in its linearity, the hero's agency in the cause-and-effect chain, and becoming a saviour of the community. I will therefore only mention *Roepman* in this chapter to briefly compare with the other two Bosbok Ses films.

This chapter will unpack key moments and scenes where the films conform to postheroism and deviate from a postheroic narrative structure. I will discuss postheroism in *Verraaiers* and *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* by referring to selected scenes, but also to the narrative structure as a whole. Throughout my discussion of *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers* I will identify Elsaesser's elements of a postheroic narrative and also provide examples from Elsaesser's (2012) analysis of the French film, *Beau Travail.* I will locate moments in the films which signify the unsocial sociability of humankind, inoperative communities, double occupancy, antagonistic mutuality and postheroes.

Postheroism for contemporary Afrikaans cinema would accommodate commonality-within-difference and the unsocial sociability of humankind and may then diegetically represent an inoperative community.

> "A postheroic narrative – in contrast to recovering such old or new universals that seek to find common ground between the religions or posit shared mutual responsibilities and interests—is more likely to affirm (in the spirit of Kant) antagonism, incompatible interests, and incommensurable values and still insist that there are things that bind singularities into a community" (Elsaesser 2013:[sp]).

The recovery of old, or development of new universals refers to notions around multiculturalism and diversity, which, as explained in Chapter Three, is problematic in that is does not acknowledge the differences embedded in power structured throughout history. This commonality between individuals is mostly associated with the nationalistic rhetoric, where individuals are included based on a shared religion, race, or language. In contrast to this heroic account of commonality, a postheroic narrative would instead embrace differences and antagonism in a community, accommodating for the unsocial sociability of human beings, staying true to the very nature of humanity.

Antagonistic mutuality states that individuals, such as the 'other' – be it second generation immigrants who are citizens of a country, but do not feel loyalty to it – do not necessarily have to find commonality with its nation state to be included (Elsaesser 2012:710). It would also be problematic to suggest a shared national identity in a South African context, given the long history of antagonism and social exclusion, such as occurred during apartheid. Antagonistic mutuality, in this context, would then include all individuals belonging to the South African nation, but would not impose any commonality between citizens.

## 4.2 Postheroism in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*

Based on a stage musical written by Laurika Rauch's songwriting husband, Chris Torr, *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* uses the Afrikaans *volk* songs of Laurika Rauch as an impetus for its narrative by constructing a family drama based on key lyrics (De Beer 2013:[sp]). Rauch's music, as soundtrack to the film, serves as a nostalgic reminder of the traditional *volk* song genre associated with conservative Afrikanerdom. Froneman (2012:1) suggests that while traditional *volk* songs have often been associated with Afrikaner nationalistic *Boeremusiek* (*Boer* music), Rauch's oeuvre is not part of this genre. *Boeremusiek* is mostly associated with the Afrikaner as right-wing conservatist and a supporter of apartheid, not necessarily music about *Boers,* such as Rauch's song *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* (Froneman 2012 1-2). The significance of Rauch in the Afrikaans music industry is, however, not merely that of Afrikaans *volk* singer, as Rauch, alongside Anton Goosen, started the *Musiek en Liriek* (Music and Lyric) movement of the

1970s, which sought to challenge, to some extent, the socio-political issues of apartheid South Africa (Klopper 2017:[sp]).

Despite the seemingly challenging themes already present in some of Rauch's music, which inherently shapes the film, Van Nierop (2013:[sp]) explains that other songs reflect a sentimental nostalgia for the past (that is, South Africa before democracy). There is more to the film than meets the eye; at first glance, the film, set in 1979, seems to conform to a heroic narrative by conjuring a nostalgic remembrance of Afrikaner history and the innocence associated with the farm, as seen with the Eden-film discussed in Chapter Two. However, I argue below that *Stuur Groete aan Mannetjies Roux* is a key film in contemporary Afrikaans postheroic cinema, and that its postheroic qualities override its surface nostalgia.

Diegetically, the farm is isolated from the city and it foregrounds how remote the farm is with long shots showing the beauty of a mostly uninhabited Karoo. One of the film's introductory images is an establishing shot of the farm house with an old windmill in the foreground, surrounded by the dusty Karoo landscape.  The only reminder of the city, or in this case the town, is when Frans, the family patriarch, visits the small town to stock up on supplies or to socialise at the local pub. In contrast to the farm, the town is a place of ill virtue; Frans's wife, Koba, expresses her concern when he goes to town. The town is metonymic to the city in the Eden film in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux.* In the town Frans drinks and likes to remind the men in the pub of the rugby try scored by the Afrikaner *volk* hero, Mannetjies Roux. Aesthetically the city is also contrasted with the farm as scenes of the city are mostly filmed inside, where the farm consists of predominantly outside scenes. The scene where Frans reminds the men at the pub of Mannetjies Roux's try is more tighly framed as compared to images set on the farm as it consists of a medium long shot of Frans, surrounded by men, creating an image of confinement. The film establishes that Frans did not see the rugby match live, as he so often expresses, but instead, was in bed with Koba's sister, Anna, at the time of the match. Frans's betrayal – his infidelity – is associated with the ill virtue and illicit temptations of the city. The city is associated with that which compromises the morality of the Afrikaner nation.

The film opens with the voice of a radio commentator describing the try of Mannetjies Roux as the camera follows a woman undressing and getting into bed with a man. The next scene is a flash forward to the current day, where Engela, Frans' daughter and Koba's niece, is packing up belongings at the farm house. Engela finds a letter addressed to her and written by Frans. The letter is then read out by the voice of Frans and this voice-over commentary leads the audience to the next flashback scene in 1979.

The film introduces numerous perspectives through its atemporality. The very first image is a medium long shot of a voluptuous woman, Anna, getting undressed and approaching a bed with a radio in the foreground. The next scene is set in the future where the older Engela, played by Laurika Rauch, enters a room at the old farm house and reads a letter addressed to her that is written by Frans, as seen in the images below. Through these opening images the film introduces various perspectives that shape what the film shows us, such as that of the woman getting undressed, the radio commentator who celebrates Mannetjies Roux's rugby prowess, the older Engela, and Frans.



Figure 2: Anna undressing; Older Engela; Frans' letter

Director Paul Eilers is conscious of the importance of perspective, not only through the constant shifting perspectives, but also through the dialogue. Toemaar, the nomadic coloured worker staying on the farm, even advises Engela against a single perspective by stating "*dis soms partykeer beter om dieselfde ding in 'n ander lig te sien*" ("*it's sometimes better to look at the same thing in another light*"). These shifting perspectives are unlike the use of perspective in the heroic narrative, where the events in the film are mostly seen through the eyes of a hero, or of an admirer of the hero. In *Roepman* the audience views the hero, Joon, through the perspective of his admirer, Timus. Despite

Joon's disability, Timus views him as a Christ-like figure, a *volk* hero, who becomes the saviour of the community through his self-sacrifice, as explained in Chapter Two.

In *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* the numerous perspectives remind the audience that the screen is not a mirror of reality, typical of a heroic narrative, but is instead a surface of flux. The film's sense of atemporality and multiple perspectives operate similarly to a postheroic narrative in *Beau Travail*. In *Beau Travail*, the nonlinear temporality is achieved through flashbacks and flash forwards. The atemporality in the film creates the perception of the past being omnipresent. The differential temporality visually manifests itself in the film, such as in a scene where a former French Foreign Legion officer, Galoup, is reminded of his past and how he jeopardised the life of one of his subordinates and was eventually discharged (Elsaesser 2012:716). The audience's perspective of the hero is neither one of the traditional hero, nor anti-hero, but instead a posthero, where the audience is not encouraged to identify with the hero, but is offered numerous perspectives (Elsaesser 2012:723). From the beginning of *Beau Travail* the audience views the protagonist through various perspectives. There is voice-over commentary offering a seemingly objective perspective, while the hero Galoup, keeps a diary, which privileges the hero's perspective (Elsaesser 2012:717).

The awareness of the hero's story provides a perspective of not only the present, but also the past and what is still to come. The audience is reminded of a nonlinear temporality, which points to the continuous movement from birth to death. In *Beau Travail* the hero, Galoup, also turns out to be the villain in the film, for taking revenge (Elsaesser 2012:717). The posthero is then bound to his regiment, the community in the film, both by antagonism, because of his revenge, and mutuality, as his position as a soldier (Elsaesser 2012:722).

The dynamic interchange between past and present, present and future, breaks the chain of cause-and-effect, typical to the classical codes of narrative associated with heroism. Instead of creating a representation of reality, where the audience is encouraged to identify with characters, a postheroic narrative allows for a diversity of fluid antagonistic and heroic identities, such as Galoup's shifting identity from past to present. This

atemporality of past and present, suggesting a multitude of identities, allows for pluralism. The audience is not asked to identify with one main protagonist's linear narrative as with a heroic narrative, but is given numerous identities to consider and perspectives to shift between. The screen as surface of flux allows for plurality, in that one is introduced to a plurality of identities and perspectives (Elsaesser 2012:713). The film provides shifting social configurations where the characters form an inoperative community.

This sense of community would require *dasein* (being together) to shift to *mit-sein* (a being of togetherness) in Nancy's terms (Elsaesser 2012:712). 'Being together' would imply that a community is bound by commonality, such as a shared religion, language, culture and race, typical to nationalism. A 'being of togetherness' implies that a community can share the same undifferentiated space, without suggesting any commonality. The film thus suggests that one needs not relate with a singular hero, as with a heroic narrative, but is given the freedom of association by these numerous perspectives, accommodating the unsocial sociability of humankind.

The numerous perspectives are partly accomplished in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* by the film's atemporal structure. The film is set in the 1970s as the present day, then the future, then back to the 1970s. The film cuts between these times. A linear narrative structure would be typical of heroism, where the classical codes of narrative encourages audience-hero identification, implying a primary identity for the audience to align with. This is because the hero has agency in the cause-and-effect chain and his actions lead to a seemingly self-created resolution (Cook & Bernink 1985:40). Afrikanerdom justified a claim to power as it is seemingly self-created, which is reflected by the self-created resolution of a heroic narrative. A heroic narrative would ably suit the interest of the Afrikaner nationalists as the hero has agency in the plot due to his admirable characteristics and this reasserts how his power is self-created. Furthermore, the linearity of a heroic narrative depicts the screen as a window, or mirror to reality which creates a sense of temporal exactness, since the events are represented chronologically. Social trauma, caused by events such as the South African War, apartheid, the Border War and, in the case of *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux,* the 1970s liberation

movements in South Africa, also has a sense of non-representability, because of a delay in memory where the gaps in time are filled with distorted meaning (Elsaesser 2001:197).[60] This chronological narrative structure is additionally problematic as the represented events – if they are represented – may be distorted, making the ostensibly 'realistic' representation unreliable (Elsaesser 2001:197).

*Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*'s atemporal structure does not in any way suggest a heroic narrative in that it aims to represent the social trauma experienced by South Africans during the 1970s liberation movements. It suggests a cinema of non-referentiality, as it does not directly refer to the social trauma of the unstable political structures of the 1970s, but instead indirectly portrays this social trauma, such as the inclusion of marginal communities, against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa. The film's atemporality and non-referentiality positions it within the postheroic narrative framework.

The atemporality presents the screen as a surface of flux, without suggesting any accurate, realistic representation. It is therefore a film implying the referentiality to the traumatic event, apartheid and the family's betrayal of one another, suggesting a failure of memory instead of recovered memory. The atemporal structure also implies the mortality of the human body, referring to a continuous movement from birth to death. The mortality of the human body is emphasised by the film's constant flashbacks and flash forwards. The end of the film shows the older Engela visiting the graves of her parents, Anna and Frans. The long shot of the graves reveals that Anna and Frans are buried next to one another on the farm explaining that Koba finally found a way to forgive her sister. The awareness of the mortal body is here due to the age gap created by images of a

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[60] The 1970s are characterized as a politically tense time in South African history due to the extremity of conflicting political action. Some of these events include the passing of the Bantu Laws Amendment Bill in 1970, as an intensification of separate development of black people in 'homelands', various sanctions in South Africa, such as being denied participation in the Olympics, and, most notable of the 1970s, the Soweto uprisings in 1976, where black students such as Hector Pieterson are shot by police after protesting against Afrikaans as compulsory language of instruction (South African History Online [sa]:[sp]).

younger Engela, as teenager, in contrast to the older Engela, as well as the death of Frans and Anna and the image of their graves, as seen in the images below.



Figure 3: Teenage Engela; Older Engela; Anna and Frans' graves (Eilers 2013)

This awareness of the mortal body's continuation from birth to death suggests an inoperative community, where the human body is not defined as an individual, bound by racial, gendered, cultural and religious constructs, but instead as mortal entity (Nancy 1991:15). Whereas nationalist rhetoric would construct a national identity around a shared race, culture, language, religion and, at times, gender, and exclude individuals based on these constructs, an inoperative community is bound together by this awareness of humans as 'finite beings'. In this sense, an inoperative community allows for plurality, where individuals have freedom in social configurations. The audience is introduced to a multitude of singularities, such as the immaturity and innocence of youth, as seen through the teenage Engela, and the wisdom of age, as seen through the self-reflexive older Engela. This representation of singularities thus accommodates the unsocial sociability of humankind, as the antagonism amongst the family leads to competition and unsociability, but the awareness of the mortal truth, which is the finality of death, leads to them resolving the social contradictions.

The characters seem to gravitate towards this notion of the unsocial sociability of humankind, as they seem to form a community without forcing commonality, a process characterized by occasional antagonism in a shared space. An example of this antagonistically mutual relationship that the characters have with one another is in a scene where Katie, the coloured domestic worker, expresses her excitement at Anna's return. Katie has worked for Anna before she started working for Koba and seems to be loyal to both the women, despite Anna's betrayal. Upon Anna's arrival on the farm, Katie

joyfully hugs Anna behind Koba's back, yet warns Anna not to get involved with Frans again. Her relationship with Anna may then be described as antagonistically mutual, as she antagonises Anna, yet finds mutuality in years of loyalty. This relationship may thus be described as that of commonality-within-difference, where characters are bound by one another by antagonism, without suggesting any shared beliefs.

The role of coloured or black people in Afrikaans cinema under apartheid was mostly stereotypical, as they were either cast as the obedient slave, or as the savage (Strebel 1979:26). The presence of the two coloured characters, Katie and Toemaar, suggest that they are political others, in this white Afrikaner community, provided that the film is set in 1970s South Africa. Although these two characters are cast as political others the film's treatment of them is significant as they do not merely represent the stereotype of the obedient slave or savage. Katie is somewhat included in the family as she is a confidant to Koba, Anna and Engela, yet still acts as the stereotype of the loyal servant, similar to Toemaar. However, these stereotypes are not relayed in the same sense as traditional historical Afrikaans cinema would, as they are stereotypes of eccentricities, which serve to emphasise the historical exclusion. Given that the film is a historical drama, set in apartheid South Africa, the film acknowledges the social exclusion of coloured and black people, as seen in scenes such as where Toemaar sleeps outside, despite the insightful advice into family matters that these characters share. The setting is then a doubly occupied space, as it acknowledges the exclusion which occurred in history.

Similarly, Elsaesser (2014:99) states that the absence or failure to include Jewish protagonists in German cinema "confirms, mirrors and in this sense, truthfully records (the enormity of) the fact that their presence in the public and private life of West Germany in the 1960s to 1970s was not missed." German protagonists fail to demonstrate regret, or show signs of disillusionment towards historic exclusion and social trauma (Elsaesser 2014:99).

Elsaesser (2014:12) argues that these traumatic events surrounding Nazism are then always present in New German Cinema, despite its absence. For Robnik (2012:[sp]) this repeated failure to accurately include the other may then serve as the alternative to the

mere success stories of identity politics often present in media. He (2012:[sp]) explains that these success stories of survivors of trauma universalises trauma and in effect lead to a culture of victimhood. Parapraxis is the repetition of the nation's failure, i.e. inclusion of all citizens, which reflects the failure of nationalism (Robnik 2012:[sp]). In that sense, despite the absence of the other, a cinema of repeated failure always contains the presence of the traumatic event. Parapraxis then remains true to a doubly occupied nation as it does not forcefully include people of all diversities in the nation, as with multiculturalism, but instead acknowledges the social exclusion in history. It therefore acknowledges and repeats history's failure.

As with multiculturalism, one cannot merely suggest commonality between citizens, as it would be imposed given social trauma set in history and double occupancy suggests an acknowledgement of this unsociability. Double occupancy refers to spatial displacement, where the space is already occupied by power structures associated with history (Elsaesser 2008c:50). *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* includes shots of bodies making physical contact with the space, the farmland, such as a close-up of Katie leaning against a table kneading dough and a close-up of Toemaar's feet walking on a dust road approaching the farm, as seen in the images below. In the latter shot, Toemaar is immediately cast as an outsider, the other, who is not included in the farm community. The coloured people in the film are displaced as they are working on a white-owned farm during apartheid. These characters are further displaced because they are away from their homes. As such, their presence at the farm signifies space that is doubly occupied.
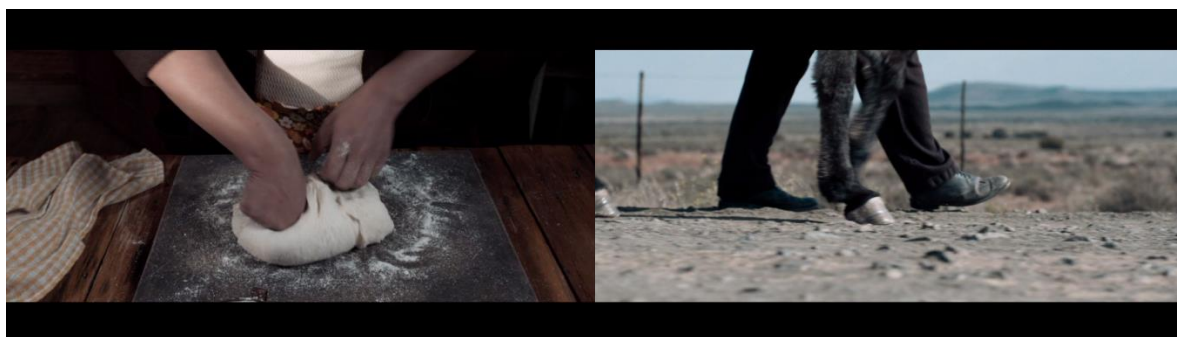


Figure 4: Katie kneading dough; Toemaar's feet alongside his donkey (Eilers 2013)

These shots of bodies making contact with space is similar to how postheroism manifests itself in *Beau Travail.* The film often contains close-ups of the protagonist, Galoup, performing mundane tasks, such as ironing, writing and washing, and the camera remains in close proximity to his body, revealing detail such as his pockmarked skin, the veins of his muscles and his unruly hair (Elsaesser 2012:717). The camera is then intimately placed in relation to the protagonist's body, without getting to know his inner thoughts (Elsaesser 2012:717).

In Nancy's (1991:13) thinking around an inoperative community, he emphasises the mortality of the human body, where the body is in constant movement from birth towards death. A harmonious community is created not by suggesting any shared mutuality between individuals, because the film does not present the hero's inner thoughts, but through the emphasis placed on mortal bodies by the visual foregrounding of physical intimacy. Space, inhabited by mortal bodies, becomes undifferentiated (Elsaesser 2012:718). This undifferentiated space inhabited by bodies which do not share mutuality signifies a doubly occupied space.

The inclusion of the other in this doubly occupied space points to the paradox of a national identity, where the nation is supposed to be unified, yet represents the other in a stereotypical manner (Elsaesser 2009:28). While Toemaar and Katie are not stereotypes, the characters are limited by the parameters of their social roles during apartheid, and they operate necessarily within these confines. This stereotypical portrayal of the other, such as the loyal servant, is then a repetition of the nation's failure to adequately include the other. *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* as a historical drama set in apartheid may be seen as a kind of memory work. As mentioned in Chapter One, Jameson (1981:79) explains that cinema may serve as a socially symbolic act which could address social trauma.

For Elsaesser (2008a:113) the only way in which to properly mourn the trauma of the past is through the necessary repetition and mimicry of failure, or parapraxis. Parapraxis, an element of postheroism, relates to memory work. As discussed under Chapter Three, trauma causes a gap in memory, and this gap is often filled with a false perception of

meaning. A heroic narrative of memory work, as a 'true depiction' of historic events is then incapable of mourning the past, due to the non-representability of trauma. Trauma cannot be accurately represented as it subjectively fills gaps in memory with a distorted meaning. Parapraxis, as an element of a postheroic narrative, may then be a plausible means of mourning the past, as it does not merely substitute a void in time with false meaning, but instead successfully repeats history's failure (2001:199) In terms of Freud's phases of mourning, "remembering, repeating and working through", parapraxis, as a repeated failure, then takes on the first two stages of mourning (Elsaesser 2008a:110).

In *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*, the repetition of the nation's failure, to include the other, such as coloured and black people, falls into the first two stages of Freud's mourning work – remembering and repeating. This repetition of the nation's failure to fully represent the other, in cinema, may be read as parapraxis. Parapraxis is derived from the German *fehlleistung*, meaning both absence and failure (Elsaesser 2008:109).

Parapraxis describes a cinematic occurrence which is derived from Freud's *fehlleistung* (Elsaesser 2008a:109). This German term consists of two aspects: "fehl", which means both absence and failure, and "leistung", which refers to undergoing some sort of action with effort, the performative aspect (Elsaesser 2008a:109). Parapraxis then implies a performed failure, or an action, which, unintentionally, leads to failure or the absence of the other. Performance and failure are seemingly contradicting terms as it implies that the result of an intended action is a failure and that the failure then has the possibility to mock the intention (Elsaesser 2014:9). This paradox is evident in Frans, as he made a mistake in his past, by sleeping with Anna, but despite his active efforts to change his past, he repeatedly fails. Frans as the parapractic posthero conforms to Elsaesser's (2014:102) description of parapraxis as the "the right thing at the wrong place, or the wrong thing at the right time". The portrayal of the hero in the film is also not that of a traditional hero, but instead a parapractic posthero. In many ways the hero of the film, Frans is the traditional Afrikaner nationalist hero. Firstly, Frans is played by actor Ian Roberts who is known for playing the masculine Afrikaner patriarch, such as the trigger-happy Rossouw in *Die Windpomp* (*The Windmill*, Fourie 2014) and the rugged pilot Den Bravers in

*Tremors 5* (Paul 2015).[61] In *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux,* he is the Afrikaner patriarch who excludes Toemaar from his community, stating that there is no work on the farm. Frans keeps the borders of the space intact, and controls these borders. Later, however, he accepts the coloured presence, Toemaar, on his farm, failing to conform to the exclusivity of Afrikaner nationalism. It is Frans' inability to be the traditional Afrikaner hero which makes him parapractic.

On a temporal level, Frans is always too late, despite his active efforts, as the flashback of the time he slept with Anna is always evident in any reference to Mannetjies Roux. Frans's failure in the past is always catching up with him, specifically when Anna arrives at the farm, years after his adultery. These flashbacks and omnipresence of his betrayal imply a reversal of the cause-and-effect chain, associated with heroism.

Frans then fails to conform to the traditional heroic figure of being the saviour of the community and undoing his past adultery and is instead haunted by his repeated failure, the memory of his antagonism. It is the failure of this cause-and-effect chain, mostly associated with heroism and the classical codes of narrative, which made Elsaesser (2014:9) recognise its narrative potential. This is the opposite of the cause-and-effect chain of heroism in Afrikaans cinema, as explained in Chapter Two. The agency of the Afrikaner hero and linearity in the narrative structure serve to reassert nationalistic ideals, dictating that one needs to speak Afrikaans, be Christian and white, like the hero, to be included in a nation. The Afrikaner hero, as the identification figure, only succeeds in securing a victory against the enemy in the plot of the play due to his characteristics. These characteristics are part of the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric, as the hero is the myth of the idealised Afrikaner. The agency of the hero cause-and-effect chain of traditional heroism in Afrikaans cinema thus aids Afrikaner nationalism.

Frans' lack of agency separates him from the heroes in traditional historical and other contemporary Afrikaans films. In comparison to the historic figure Piet Retief in *De*

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[61] In *Die Windpomp*, the windmill motif is used differently to that of *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*, as the windmill in *die Windpomp* is a nostalgic, mythical object that characters bathe under to restore their youth, but in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* it becomes a representation of death and failure, as explained previously.

*Voortrekkers* (Shaw 1916), who nobly secures a land treaty in the film, Frans displays a contrasting lack of agency and nobility, due to his adultery. In the Border War film *Kaptein Caprivi* (Venter 1972), Captain Caprivi bravey rescues South African citizens from the communists, whereas Frans' active efforts to hold his community together fails. Eugene Marais' agency in magically restoring peace to the community in *Die Wonderwerker* (Heyns 2012) is also in contrast to Frans, whose efforts to hide his adultery by his reference to Mannetjies Roux only causes more antagonism amongst the family.

In *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies* Roux, despite the hero's active effort, Frans does not have any agency in the cause-and-effect chain. As stated previously, the traumatic event, his betrayal of his family, is omnipresent, suggesting that the past cannot be changed and that the present is as fragile as the future. Instead, the failures of the past can be remembered and repeated, serving as the first two stages of Freud's memory work.

Frans does conform to the traditional hero as it is only through his seemingly self-sacrifice and death (by falling off the windmill) that the family can resolve their disputes. The windmill also serves as a significant object in the film, as Frans goes there throughout the film to be separate from family disputes. His ritual of sitting on the windmill to gain insight into the family problems never leads to any action, as he never returns with a solution. Ironically, Frans's falling off the windmill, which is an object of isolation and social impotence, leads to an active solution to the family problems. In death, Frans is positioned as saviour of the family and the immediate community. However, his death is not self-sacrificial as it is Anna who accidentally pushes him off the windmill.

Frans, however, does not willingly sacrifice his own life and therefore fails to conform to the traditional hero. His failure to conform to the traditional hero, both by his unwilling sacrifice and to have agency in redoing his past's failures is parapractic. To Elsaesser (2008b:122) parapraxis is therefore a successful failure as it recognises the past's mistakes, such as social exclusion and in doing so stands for the other.

Furthermore, unlike the Christ metaphor created in *Roepman*, *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* for the most part remains secular, with little reference to Christianity.

One of the few references to God in the film is a conversation between Koba and the farmworker, Toemaar. When Koba leaves the farm to stock up on supplies, Toemaar asks her for matches and coffee, to which she responds: "*Jy't 'n probleem, Toemaar. Jy moet daaroor bid*" ("*You have a problem, Toemaar. You must pray about it.*") He answers her with a significant reference to the absence of God: "*Maar die Here is dan so ver en Mevrou is dan net hier langs my*" ("*But the Lord is so far away and Ma'am is right here next to me.*") Christianity is one of the major cornerstones in Afrikaner nationalism and Toemaar here suggests that God is absent. This scene is parapractic as parapraxis not only refers to a performed failure, but also absence by referring to the absence of God, Toemaar also suggests a larger political failure, that of Afrikaner nationalism.

In the absence of God, the most divine figure in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* is the rugby *volk* hero, Mannetjies Roux. Frans idealises Mannetjies Roux and Koba threatens to chase Frans away for constantly reminding her of "the holy" Mannetjies Roux (Eilers 2013). When Frans tells the tale of Mannetjies Roux he mythologizes the rugby player for doing the humanly impossible, by explaining how all odds were placed against him in the match, such as the strength of the opponents and the time limitations of the match. Frans's story of Mannetjies Roux's try is also used whenever he consciously distracts himself from his adultery, positioning Mannetjies Roux as the morally pure.

Frans's constant reference to Mannetjies Roux's infamous try is not only significant as he uses it as an alibi, but also due to the historical political connotation of rugby. Muller (2001:20) argues the historical political connotation of the sport by referring to certain events throughout South African history, where rugby symbolically stood for group cohesion and a collective dominance of Afrikanerdom. Historically, rugby players were thus symbolic *volk* heroes of Afrikaner nationalism and a victory on the field signified the victory of Afrikaner nationalism. Provided that Christianity is such a significant element of how the Afrikaner nationalists have justified their dominance, Mannetjies Roux's victory on the field symbolically enables the Afrikaner nation to justify their dominance, much like their faith in God does. However, Mannetjies Roux as *volk* hero and God-like figure is never physically present in the film, but rather an absent character. Parapraxis signifies

absence and Mannetjies Roux underscores Frans' parapractic status as Roux's accomplishments are mostly present only in Frans's reminiscing. Provided that rugby and religion historically symbolises Afrikaner nationalism, the failure of the great *volk* hero and divine figure, Mannetjies Roux, also suggests the failure of Afrikaner nationalism.

In conclusion to this section on the postheroism of *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*, I have identified how the film contains elements of a postheroic narrative. The film seems to conform to the nostalgia associated with heroism in the ways in which the extreme long shots incorporate the beauty of the untouched Karoo and the *volk* songs as the soundtrack for the film. However, the film mostly suggests a presence of postheroism, in its depiction of a doubly occupied space which is inhabited by a community bound by unsociability and antagonism. The film can be positioned as a type of memory work which remembers and repeats failure. *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* clearly demonstrates parapraxis as the pothero unintentionally, repeatedly fails to right his wrongs and save the community.

## 4.3 Postheroism in *Verraaiers*

*Verraaiers* is another contemporary Afrikaans historical drama, like *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*, which situates itself around a traumatic event in South African history - the South African War. Based on a book by Albert Blake, *Boereverraaier* ("*Boer Traitor*"), *Verraaiers* depicts a specific part of South African history which is taboo to the Afrikaner *volk,* high treason, as explained in Chapter One. It is precisely due to the taboo nature of the plot that *Verraaiers* was praised by cinephiles for its fascinating and uncompromising storyline. Leon van Nierop (2016:332), a leading South African film critic, praised *Verraaiers* for avoiding any reference to the documentary genre, which proclaims to accurately portray history, as in *De Voortrekkers.* Instead, *Verraaiers* follows an intricate plot of the untold stories of the South African War. As stipulated in the plot synopsis, the film follows the journey of *Boer* soldiers in the South African War who are placed on trial for high treason after signing a neutrality oath. The film was not well received by the public, despite mostly positive reviews, as it lost money at the box office, possibly because

the Afrikaans public did not want to be reminded of their mistakes in history (Jansen van Vuuren 2014:[sp]). The placid response from the Afrikaans community to films challenging the white identity could reflect what Wasserman (2010:32) labelled a we-are-not-like-that mentality, indicating audience's avoidance of being confronted with any confrontation contradictory representations of the Afrikaner. Indeed, *Verraaiers* may be said to represent and repeat a re-envisioning of the South African War, which is far from the heroic narrative of Afrikaner nationalists as *volk* heroes present in earlier war films, such as *Die Kavaliers*.

Similar to *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux*, the film introduces the audience to multiple characters' perspectives from the very start of the film. *Verraaiers* accomplishes these multiple perspectives by way of its temporality, through its shift from 1950s Pretoria to the 1900s. It opens in 1953 in the Magistrate's Court in Pretoria, then shifts the perspective as the judge remembers events in 1900. This interplay between flashbacks set the temporal pattern for the rest of the film to shift between 1953, 1900 and 1901.[62]

Unlike *Roepman,* where the story is told through a singular perspective - that of Timus's account of Joon's heroism - *Verraaiers* positions the screen as a surface of flux, through fluctuating perspectives. There are also various characters who in their intimate conversations deliberate on matters of war and high treason, providing various perspectives on the same events. Although the film positions Jacobus van Aswegen and

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[62] Another historical Afrikaans war film, which I mention here for comparative purposes, and which also follows a similar atemporal pattern, is *My Father's War* (Gardner 2016). The film follows the journey of a teenager who learns to forgive his father for being absent in his upbringing as he was fighting the Angolan Border War. The teenager comes to terms with his father's absenteeism only through dreamlike flashbacks of fighting alongside his father. The film is similar to *Verraaiers* as it serves as memory work to mourn a war stricken history and utilises an atemporal narrative structure to reflect on the past. However, it is only after the father's prayer that the son can envision himself alongside his father in combat, in a dream sequence. The son also learns to admire his father through these flashbacks until he becomes a heroic figure to the son. Although the atemporality in the film is suggestive of a postheroic narrative, it accomplishes precisely the opposite as it positions the father as the traditional hero, where the character's heroism is fueled by and positioned in the character's faith. The atemporality in *Verraaiers* serves to accommodate an amalgamation of various characters' perspectives, but in *My Father's War* is serves to emphasise the power of religion, echoing the emphasis on religion in Afrikaner nationalism evident in previous decades' Afrikaans films (see Chapter Two).

his sons as the protagonists, it also includes the perspectives of those characters who view the Van Aswegens as traitors. In this regard, the relationship between the Van Aswegens and these other characters can be described as antagonistic. The protagonists are ironically viewed as traitors by other characters and the antagonist, Gerrie. Gerrie is a crippled traitor who worked for the British and warned them that the *Boers* are planning an attack on them. After the British have fled, he then shifts sides once more and works for the *Boers.* The protagonists who have fought for the *Boers* in the war are tried for high treason, yet the traitor to the *Boers* is praised for his hard work and loyalty.  It is this complex interplay between the Afrikaner community which creates an antagonistically mutual relationship between characters. The Afrikaners' mutuality is due to a shared enemy, the British, yet also bound by antagonism. Amongst this seemingly unified *volk* the Afrikaners antagonise one another for being traitors despite years of comradery in war. The relationship between some characters are thus antagonistically mutual.

The film deliberately reminds the audience of the importance of perspective when Gerrie, the young lawyer and soldier acting as confidant to General De La Rey, explains that "*verraad lyk heelwat anders elke keer as jy van 'n ander hoek na dit kyk"* ("*treason looks different every time you view it from a different angle"*). Through these various perspectives, the audience is not manipulated to associate with merely one, as a heroic narrative would, but is instead offered freedom of shifting association, typical to a pluralist thinking.

Degenaar (1980:109-110) explains that pluralism may counteract the one-man-one-voice model of Afrikaner nationalism. Pluralism offers an alternative to the one-man-one-voice model by allowing for freedom of social configuration. *Volksnasionalisme* (Afrikaner nationalism) socially includes and excludes individuals based on race, language, religion and a shared culture, viewing the nation as a static construct (Degenaar 1980:133-134). Pluralism positions a nation as a dynamic identity, with fluctuating social associations. *Verraaiers* indeed propagates a multitude of ever fluctuating social configurations through the variety of characters' perspectives. These fluctuating perspectives accommodate a sense of the unsocial sociability, which Kant (1963:20-21) refers to. Here the unsocial

sociability refers to individuals both wanting to form part of a society but also disassociate themselves from other societies. The unsocial sociability of humankind is accommodated by offering the audience a multitude of social identities with which to associate or dissociate.

*Verraaiers* further positions the screen as a surface of flux through the characters' reflections in mirrors. This occurs in numerous scenes throughout the film, such as General De La Rey and Gerrie's reflections in a mirror whilst passing by in the military court. It also occurs quite regularly with Jacobus's wife, Gerda, whose reflection is visible in mirrors or windows. These mirror reflections function as *mise-en-abyme*, which stimulates an awareness of the screen by creating an inside-outside relationship between the audience and screen (Elsaesser 2010:56). This awareness is far removed from the screen as mirror or window to reality as is typical of a heroic narrative. The awareness of the screen created by this cinematic reflexivity (the use of *mise-en-abyme*) impede the audience-character identification process and is counter heroic.



Figure 5: Gerda's reflection in a window (Eilers 2013)

The fluctuation between various times, its atemporality, is also atypical to a heroic narrative, which follows a linear narrative structure. As stated previously, the cause-and-effect chain dominant in the heroic narrative stimulates audience-hero identification, where the hero has agency over the resolution of the plot. In *Verraaiers* the hero, Jacobus van Aswegen, has no agency in the resolution of events, as he and his sons are finally executed for high treason, despite Jacobus's plea with General De La Rey and the military

court to save his sons and execute him instead. He thus offered to be the self-sacrificial figure as the hero would be in the heroic narrative as seen in *Roepman,* but fails in sacrificing himself to save the rest of the community. It is his repeated failure to undo past events and mistakes, signing and encouraging his sons to sign the neutrality oath with the British, which positions him as the parapractic posthero.

Elsaesser (2014:102) explains that the posthero is parapractic when the hero's active efforts to accomplish something (even something praiseworthy or otherwise laudable) lead to unintended politically positive results, by doing "the right thing at the wrong place, or the wrong thing at the right time". Parapraxis then entails a reversal of the cause-and-effect chain. Jacobus is precisely the parapractic posthero whose active effort to sign the neutrality oath (cause) leads to the unintended result, the executions (unanticipated effect). After they are tried for high treason, he also fails to conform to the traditional hero as he is incapable of self-sacrifice, despite actively offering himself up. His actions are well intended, even noble, as he wishes to remain on the farm to protect his wife and children against Lord Kitchener's scorched earth policy.[63] However, his actions lead to unintended results which, in retrospect, mock the good intention. Parapraxis as performed failure is that which occurs when the failed result of an active effort mocks the very intention (Elsaesser 2014:9).

*Verraaiers* not only positions the traditional male hero as a parapractic posthero, but also introduces the figure of the traditional *volksmoeder.* As explained in Chapter Two, the *volksmoeder* in traditional historical Afrikaans cinema is a heroine who serves as a moral beacon of hope to unify the Afrikaner nation (Tomaselli 2006a:148). The *volksmoeder* in *Verraaiers* is Jacobus's wife, Gerda, who initially reminds the men of Afrikanerdom's faith in God:

> "*Moet ons dit nie vir ons Hemelse Vader oorlaat om die besluit te neem wanneer hierdie stryd oor is nie? Ek glo vas die Here sal vir ons 'n oorwinning gee. Ons moet hom net vertrou."* ("*Must we*

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[63] During March 1901, Lord Kitchener, a commander of the British during the Sotuh African War, initiated a scorched earth policy, which lead to an estimated 30000 Boer farmhouses and 400 towns being burnt down in an attempt to weaken the Boer forces (SA History Online [sa]:[sp]). Women, children and black people supporting the Boer soldiers were consequenty placed in concentration camps (SA History Online [sa]:[sp]).

*not leave it to our heavenly Father to decide when this struggle is over? I believe that He will give us a victory. We must just trust Him."*)

The youngest son, Karel-Jan, responds to this by reminding her that Christianity and faith is not only reserved for the Afrikaners:

"*Ma, voor elke veldslag bid ons in Afrikaans en hulle in Engels vir dieselfde God en dieselfde verlosser en net daarna moor ons mekaar uit. As ons wen het God vir ons 'n oorwinning gegee, maar as ons verloor was hulle te veel of iemand het ons verraai, of die omsingeldes wat opgegee het is lafaards, of iets. Daar's altyd 'n verskoning. Maar die hemele verbied ons as God sy ander kinders se kant kies.*" ("*Mother, before every battle we pray in Afrikaans and they pray in English and just thereafter we kill each other. If we win God gave us a victory, but if we lose they were too many, or somebody betrayed us, or the surrounded men who gave up are cowards, or something. There is always an excuse. But the heavens forbid if God chose his other children's side.*")

This dialogue demonstrates the Afrikaner family's faith in God, a cornerstone in Afrikaner nationalism, positioning Gerda as the traditional *volksmoeder.* It also reveals the inadequacy of religion as an agent of war. Indeed, *Verraaiers*'s stance on religion deviates from the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric. Despite the characters' strong faith in God and constant reference to God as their saviour all the men are executed, suggesting that their God has abandoned them on earth, even if he may welcome them in the afterlife. Towards the end of the film, in an extreme long shot of the veld, Gerda also removes her dress, burn s it a nd walks naked into the veld leaving her burning dress in the foreground.



Figure 6: Gerda walks into the veld (Eilers 2013)

This scene suggests how the news of her husband and sons' execution has driven Gerda to give up all her duties as wife and mother and relinquish herself to a self-imposed isolation or death. As the *volksmoeder* and heroine she fails in her duties to be a moral beacon of unification through her self-imposed isolation, despite her active efforts to forge cohesion amongst the community. Parapraxis occurs precisely when the hero fails despite active efforts to accomplish something admirable (Elsaesser 2014:102). This failure leads to politically positive results (Elsaesser 2014:102). Gerda demonstrates parapraxis, because despite her active efforts, she fails in her duties as the traditional *volksmoeder*. In her failure she also stands for the failure of Afrikaner nationalism and the exclusivity which comes along with it, such as the justification of dominance through religion.

*Verraaiers* is further parapractic as Gerrie is tasked with rescuing the men from execution. In an extreme long shot Gerrie comes galloping toward Commandant Pearson (Ivan Zimmermann), who is responsible for the execution, just as the men are shot one by one.



Figure 7: Gerrie galloping to the execution in the background (Eilers 2012)

Gerrie arrives just as the men are executed and only gets to prevent the execution of the youngest son, Karel-Jan. General De La Rey is the man who commissioned citizens to be tried for high treason for declaring neutrality, to prevent the *Boer* troops from

weakening. It is thus his active effort, with good intentions, which lead to unintended results. It may thus be read as parapraxis, as his efforts, to fight for the freedom of Afrikanerdom, lead to failure, the execution of citizens of the nation he is trying to protect. The failure of his efforts, associated with the Afrikaner hero's protection of the *volk*, points to the failure of Afrikaner nationalism, as he fails to conform to this traditional hero.

General De La Rey's decision to pardon the men for signing a neutrality oath is in contrast to that of General Jan Smuts, who decides that they should be executed for high treason and who only pardons Karel-Jan. Smuts' involvement is quite significant in relation to the myth behind Smuts created by Afrikaner nationalists. As explained in Chapter Two, Jan Smuts is quite a controversial character to Afrikanerdom, as he first fought alongside the *Boers,* but was also responsible for establishing unity between the British and Afrikaners (Willis 2016:[sp]).  Smuts has mostly been portrayed in cinema as a hero to the Afrikaner *volk,* at times referred to in the propaganda films of the Second World War, as he symbolically represents South Africa's decision to fight alongside the Allies (Chetty 2012:119). Smuts as hero should here be understood in a mythical sense which represents the Afrikaner nation's collective ideals and beliefs in relation to Reid's (2012:46-48) explanation of hero as myth.

*Verraaiers* problematizes Smuts' mythical status, given the history of his role in uniting with the British. It is ironic that in the film he condemns the characters to execution for declaring their neutrality, when he is also the symbolic representation of the Afrikaner-British unity. Although, in this film, he is not presented as an antagonist in a direct way, Smuts is demythologised as the great Afrikaner *volk* hero. Smuts becomes the embodiment of contrasting mythologies, one positioning him as *volk* hero and saviour to the Afrikaner nation and the other positioning him as a betrayer to the *volk* for forming an alliance with the British. The former mythologizes Smuts as the ideal Afrikaner nationalist, yet his failure in *Verraaiers* to conform to the traditional hero as saviour by allowing the execution, also implies the failure of Afrikaner nationalism.

*Verraaiers* differentiates itself from most South African War films, through its unique repetition of failure. One such failure is the failure of a saviour figure, the failure to support

the Afrikaners in the war and thus the failure to conform to the traditional hero. *Modder en Bloed* (*Mud and Blood,* Else 2016) here serves as a significant point for comparison, as it is also a historical drama about the South African War and thus serves as impetus for memory work. *Modder en Bloed* mostly conforms to the classical codes of narrative in its assertion of the Afrikaner *volk's* heroism, such as its linearity, the clear antagonist (the British Colonel Swannell) and an unambiguous hero (Willem Morkel, whose character is based on the captain of the first Springbok rugby team, Douglas 'Sommie' Morkel), whose agency in the plot secures a victory. The film conjures a nostalgia for the past in its depiction of a unified Afrikaner *volk,* which, through their obedience to the nationalist rhetoric (the hero's refusal to participate in English activities, the unwillingness to include other racial groups and their faith in God) secures a victory over the enemy. As with rugby's significance in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux,* rugby symbolically represents cohesion amongst the Afrikaner *volk* (Muller 2001:20), but here also serves as a beacon of hope for a victory for the Afrikaners in the South African war. In the film, the team (soon to become the national rugby team - the Springboks) have the ability to secure a victory on the field and provides hope for the Afrikaners to prevail against imperialism. The symbolic defeat over the British through rugby is significant, as rugby has historically often been associated with an Afrikaner dominated sport and an Afrikaner nation builder (Muller 2001:20-21), reasserting nostalgia for a nationalistic past. *Modder en Bloed* thus fails to adequately mourn trauma, as it does not repeat history's failure, in Freud's terms, but instead glorifies the success of the Afrikaner nation.

The repetition of failure in cinema successfully mourns trauma, such as that which occurs in time of war, by remembering and repeating, in relation to Freud's first two stages of mourning (Elsaesser 2008a:210). As stated previously, trauma has a sense of non-representability due to the individual's cognitive-emotional hesitancy (Elsaesser 2001:195). This would make a linear depiction of a traumatic event, such as the South African War and as seen with *Modder en Bloed*, inadequate, as the gaps in memory would be filled with distorted meaning. Given that *Verraaiers* is a historical drama, which is thus

a sort of memory work, the atemporal structure accommodates this cognitive-emotional hesitancy in a way that *Modder en Bloed* does not.

In *Verraaiers,* the non-linearity created through the flashbacks, also points to the omnipresence of the traumatic event. Elsaesser (2009:28) explains how double occupancy acknowledges that a space is already inhabited by past power structures. The depiction of space in *Verraaiers* is then doubly occupied, as the atemporality reminds the audience of the omnipresence of the traumatic event. This is seen in a scene where the older Gerrie and Karel-Jan sit in Church Square in Pretoria reminiscing about the South African War and the events which unfolded.[64] Partially due to the time leap from 1900 to 1953, the space depicted is doubly occupied as the British and Afrikaners have long since resolved contradictions forming a unity, but the violence of the past remains present.

The significance of the military court being set up at the Prinsloo farm, also points to the space being doubly occupied. In the film, the farm was first inhabited by Afrikaners who moved to the Cape Colony, then taken over by the British as an administrative base, and then finally by the *Boers* as a military court. It indicates that the space has been occupied by opposing power structures, acknowledging the social exclusion associated with it. The doubly occupied spaces pose a paradox in a national identity, as it aims to appear unified, yet acknowledges social exclusion, problematising nationalism (Elsaesser 2009:28).

Furthermore, the atemporality of the film also signifies the presence of an inoperative community. The audience is made aware of the continuation of time, such as from birth to death, implying the mortal truth of human existence as inevitably bound by time. This awareness of the human body's mortality is referred to in several scenes throughout the film. Early in *Verraaiers* this mortal truth is expressed through the death of General De La Rey's son; the scene captures extreme detail of his mortal body, such as chapped lips, red eyes and sweat. Martha, Jacobus's daughter, is also pregnant with her first child and

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[64] It is significant that the characters meet at Church Square given that it is a historical site which commemorates Afrikaner heroism in the South African War and the bravery of the Voortrekkers, but it is also the site of numerous anti-apartheid protests (Davie 2012:[sp]). It is therefore a historically layered site, suggesting a further omnipresence of power struggles, not only by the statues and buildings, but also by the association to the memory of a traumatic event, apartheid.

the audience is made aware of the new life throughout the film with her growing belly. This expectancy of new life is then placed in stark contrast to death when Martha loses the baby upon hearing about the executions.

Not only does the death of her unborn child refer to the mortality of the human body, but it also suggests the failure of the traditional *boeredogter* heroine. In traditional historical Afrikaans cinema, the *boeredogter* is involved in a love triangle between the *uitlander* (outsider) and *boereseun* and is ostracised from the Afrikaner community for falling in love with the *uitlander* (Tomaselli 2006a:143-144). It is only after she rejects the *uitlander* that she becomes part of the community again and takes on the role of the *volksmoeder.* Unlike the *uitlander* in traditional historical Afrikaans cinema that was in the interest of Afrikaner nationalism, the *uitlander* in *Verraaiers* is included in the community. Robert Machlachlan (Jacques Bessenger), an Irish accountant, is welcomed to the Afrikaner family and is also tried for high treason alongside the Afrikaans men. *Verraaiers'* treatment of the *boeredogter* is significantly different from traditional Afrikaans cinema as she not only marries the *uitlander*, but is also incapable of taking on the duties of *volksmoeder* by continuing the family bloodline, due to losing the baby.

The audience is further made aware of the mortality of the human body, through the gradual decay of the characters' bodies – abjectification. Jacobus and his sons first seem like physically fit men, but after being jailed, the audience witnesses the gradual decay of their bodies. The extent of the decay of the human body is most notable right before their execution. Extreme close-ups of the men's bodies reveal their skin smeared with dirt, pores, wrinkles, veins, sweaty foreheads, burnt skin, chapped lips, and dirty fingernails.



Figure 8: Dirty fingernails, veiny hands, chapped lips and dirt smeared faces (Eilers 2013)

Over time, their bodies have become abject; physically, the men had become strangers to their former selves. Put differently, the men had become othered as a result of the physical degradation of their flesh. Elsaesser (2012:723) explains that in becoming the other, one is forced to confront the other within the self and thus overcome the binary between self and other. In *Beau Travail* Galoup's antagonism and abjectification, that is the becoming of the other, the posthero fails to conform to traditional heroism, in that he is no longer the saviour of a community, but in his acceptance of the other within himself, he overcomes the binary of self and other (Elsaesser 2012:723).

It is only through confronting the other within the self, that these white men, associated with an exclusive Afrikaner nationalism, accept the other and thus overcome the self-other binary, embracing antagonism. In *Verraaiers* this self-other binary is set in time of war, where the self is the Afrikaner nationalists, protecting their colonial space, and the other is the British. Considering the history of the characters as right-wing Afrikaner nationalists who originally fought with pride in the war, the gradual decay of their bodies also suggests the gradual decay of the nationalist ideology. As explained in Chapter Two, a physically strong masculine body is also associated with the super soldier and the manifestation of Afrikaner nationalism. The decay of the characters' physical bodies thus become the biological manifestation of the decaying Afrikaner nationalism ideology. It is only after one confronts the stranger, or the other in oneself that one can overcome the binary of self and other (Elsaesser 2012:723).

Postheroism in *Verraaiers*, in relation to physicality and mortal bodies inhabiting the same undifferentiated space, operates quite similarly to that which Elsaesser identified in *Beau Travail*. To Elsaesser (2012:718), what is striking about the film is that the characters are constantly bumping into one another, with a close emphasis on physical touch, bodies and contact with the earth. Whilst some of the characters rarely speak to one another, the audience is brought into close proximity to their bodies. The film's space can be said to be a doubly occupied space, as it does not suggest any commonality between characters and is therefore not a multicultural society. Given the historical context of *Beau Travail,* which is that of French legionnaires stationed at the Eastern African country of Djibouti,

the space is already occupied, firstly by the country's indigenous people, but also by the French. The space is a colonial city, which would make any suggestion of a collective national identity imposed and problematic. The film does thus not suggest any commonality between the characters, but instead focuses on mortal bodies inhabiting the same space.

In *Beau Travail* the audience is made aware of physical contact with bodies constantly bumping into one another (Elsaesser 2012:718), but in *Verraaiers* the physical touch of bodies occurs less. Both films, however, emphasise and abjectify the body as central to the mortal truth that all bodies must and will die. This continuation from birth to death implies that a community can inhabit the same space, without finding commonality with one another. To Nancy (1991:13), the body shifts from an individual, defined by racial, religious, cultural and gendered constructs, and associated with nationalism, to a mortal entity, defined by its limits, which is death. The body enables a community to share a common space, without finding commonality with one another. As such, the body implies a shift from *dasein (*being together), to *mit-sein (*a being of togetherness). It thus implies that a community can live in harmony, a co-existence of the other and the self.

*Verraaiers* thus contains various elements of a postheroic narrative structure, but does constantly reference Christianity, as an Afrikaner heroic narrative would. Jacobus is the traditional hero in the sense that he constantly reminds the other characters that he is a God-fearing man and the other characters also refer to God, such as Gerda praying for the safe return of the men. As indicated earlier, religion is a major cornerstone of nationalism and Afrikaner nationalism has specifically used Christianity to justify its claim to land and power as "God's chosen race" (Degenaar 1980:15).

The Afrikaner's connection to land is also particularly evident in the film, with extreme long shots of Jacobus and his sons riding horses through the veld, or taking long walks on the farm. However, the film's representation of the Afrikaner's connection to God, is not like that in the early nationalist films, as explained in Chapter Two, where Christianity serves to justify a claim over land. Instead, the audience is once again reminded of another perspective in relation to religion, when Karel-Jan states that before every battle

they pray in Afrikaans and the British in English, suggesting that neither side can justify a claim to the land by religion, as quoted previously. His statement is a counterargument for the myth of Afrikanerdom as God's chosen race who naturally ought to be empowered. The film's reference to religion is then ambivalent, much more so than other Afrikaans films such as *Roepman*, in which the nationalistic and counter nationalistic role of religion is foregrounded. Demythologising Afrikaner nationalism may then point to an element of a postheroic narrative unique to a contemporary Afrikaans context.

*Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Veraaiers* are thus postheroic as they contain the following postheroic elements:

- Atemporality: The atemporality in the films allow for various perspectives and point to a doubly occupied space.
- Double occupancy: Double occupancy is demonstrated by the spatial inclusion of the other which acknowledges historical exclusion.
- Parapraxis: The heroes are positioned as parapractic as they repeatedly fail as traditional heroes
- Abjectification: The decay of the physical body or the reminder of humans as mortal entity accomplish as inoperative community which accommodates the unsocial sociability of humankind, or pluralism
- Screen of flux: The shift between times, which signifies a reversal of the cause-and-effect chain, and the layering of images, *mise-en-abyme*, both creatingg an awareness of the cinematic apparatus.
- Dismantling of Afrikaner national rhetoric: The heroes' failure to save the community, despite their religion, self-assertion, race and traditional Afrikaner culture, signifies the failure of Afrikaner nationalism.
- Stronger female presence than in earlier Afrikaans films: Whereas heroines in traditional historical Afrikaans cinema, such as the *boeredogter* and the *volksmoeder*, serve Afrikaner nationalism, the prominent female characters in these postheroic films dismantle Afrikaner nationalism.

- Historical dramas that reflect the socio-political crises of the present: these postheroic historical dramas do not suggest a factual portrayal of history and repeats failures of history. The repetition of failure falls into the first two stages of Freud's mourning work, thus ably grapples with socio-political issues.
- The mutually antagonistic relationship of contemporary Afrikaans cinema: The political economy suggests an antagonistically mutual relationship between the cultural prestige of the films and box office failure. Despite the socio-political themes in the films, both films were financially unsuccessful at the box office, whereas heroic narratives, such as *Roepman*, are financially successful.

Postheroism for contemporary Afrikaans cinema is similar to, yet different from Elsaesser's notion of a postheroic European cinema. A final aspect that I also position as postheroic, and which is unique to contemporary Afrikaans cinema, may be the demythologising of heroes who have traditionally served as symbolic representations of Afrikaner nationalism, as identified in *Verraaiers.* The demythologisation of the hero also humanises the hero, where heroic cinema shapes a mythological hero. Crucially, postheroic cinema suggests a shift from mythological cinema to humanistic cinema. The characters in Afrikaans postheroic cinema are flawed beings who grapple with their own desires against the backdrop of socio-political change, even war; they do not toe the line of Afrikaner exceptionalism. It is, however, not the first time that South African films have sought to demythologize heroes as the courageous saviours of the Afrikaner nation, as films such as *Shot Down* and *The Island* have also cast Afrikaners in this non-heroic manner. The ways in which demythologisation occurs may thus differ across genres and narratives, whether it be through a posthero in historical dramas (such as in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers)* or an antihero in comedies (such as in *Shot Down*).

Another contemporary Afrikaans film which has successfully demythologized the Afrikaner patriarch as the hero of the *volk* is *Skoonheid* (*Beauty* Hermanus 2011), as it locates its hero as the typical Afrikaner nationalist, yet also locates him as the antagonist as he molests him friend's 22-year-old son. Despite positive reviews, the film causes quite

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a controversy among Afrikaner moviegoers, who deny that such events of molestation and homosexuality occur amongst Afrikaners (Van Nierop 2016:296). Leon van Nierop (2016:296-297) praises *Skoonheid* precisely because it portrays the taboo nature of a sexuality identity crisis amongst an Afrikaner public and thus successfully interrogates the conservatism of Afrikaner nationalism. The film has a voyeuristic quality to it, through the perspectives created with effective camera work, such as the perspective of a man who looks at his wife meeting another man outside a house, or the hero observing a house where a male orgy will occur (Van Nierop 2016:297). The film's emphasis on perspective is postheroic as it positions the screen as a surface of flux, thus suggesting a variety of different social configurations and identities.[65]

A framework for contemporary Afrikaans postheroism would thus consist of redefining the screen as a surface of flux, through any possible manner, be it shifting perspectives, atemporality, or *mise-en-abyme.* The purpose of the fluctuating elements not only serves as counter-heroic, through a reversal of the cause-and-effect chain, but also constructs a plurality of identities. It shifts the understanding of a community from *dasein* to *mit-sein,* expressing that a community may be bound by mutual antagonism, but still live in harmony. Incorporating a multitude of possibilities for social configuration, through its numerous fluctuating elements, is one aspect which forms part of a framework of postheroism. In a contemporary South African context, the multitude of possibilities and social configurations also allows for a pluralist community, as suggested by Degenaar (1980:133). Pluralism refers to a society which provides freedom of social and spatial association and disassociation, combating the one-man-one-voice model of nationalism (Degenaar 1980:133-134). Pluralism is thus unique to a contemporary Afrikaans postheroic narrative, which manifests through the construction of a doubly occupied

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[65] Skoonheid's postheroism more explicitly addresses the racial dimensions of inclusion and exclusion in relation to a community. This is vividly indicated when a group of men have sex with other men from different races, despite initially wanting to exclude a black man, thus forming a community. It creates a postheroic dynamic in its interrogation of a multiracial community and the contemporary white Afrikaans male identity, yet differs from *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers* which explores historical events. The postheroic narrative thus operates in two modes, the present and the past.

space. In addition to Elsaesser's framework of a postheroic narrative I have proposed that double occupancy for a contemporary Afrikaans context translates into pluralism.

A further aspect unique to a contemporary Afrikaans postheroic narrative is its reconstruction of female heroes. A European postheroic narrative does not contain female heroes and mostly explore masculine heroes. As explained through the analyses contemporary Afrikaans postheroic narratives position the traditional *volksmoeder* and *boeredogter* as parapractic, failing in their duties. Given that these heroines traditionally stood for Afrikaner nationalism, their failure to perform their traditional duties successfully suggests the failure of Afrikaner nationalism.

Postheroism in a contemporary Afrikaans framework may then serve as a reflection on historical events and mourn social trauma which occurred in the past. A postheroic narrative for contemporary Afrikaans cinema must also have certain limitations in the way in which it engages with the past, as it cannot merely overlook social exclusion set in history. It must acknowledge the power struggles which have occurred in history to cast its setting as doubly occupied. Double occupancy for a postnational South Africa suggests a community bound by commonality-within-difference, suggesting that all citizens do not necessarily relate to one another, due to the social exclusion set in history, to live in harmony. It ultimately points to the paradox in a nation wanting to seem unified, yet constructed upon numerous power structures and exclusion. Double occupancy thus problematizes nationalism.

The final aspect of a postheroic narrative for a contemporary Afrikaans cinema, would be this exact problematising of Afrikaner nationalism. It may be through means of demythologising the Afrikaner as *volk* hero, by pointing to his failures throughout history, or failures diegetically. Demythologising the hero may operate as a failure of his actions, his failure to conform to traditional nationalism, or his failing body, becoming the abject. It is only once the posthero can conform the stranger within the self, that he can stand for the other. The demythologisation of the hero in Afrikaans postheroism suggests a cinema of humanism, instead of a mythological cinema as evident in traditional historical Afrikaner heroic narratives.

All of the above-mentioned elements suggest a cinema of postheroism for contemporary Afrikaans cinema, as it implies a harmonious community, without forcing commonality between citizens. It does not exclude and include based on constructs such as race, language, religion and culture, but instead allows for free social configurations and fluidity of identity. A postheroic narrative could be of particular significance for a contemporary Afrikaans cinema, as Afrikaans cinema has mostly been that of exclusive nationalism, explained in Chapter Two, and this postheroic narrative may aid the shift to a postnation - a nation which comes after the collective "we" and thus acknowledges individuality in a nation.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Summary of the study

Traditional historical Afrikaans cinema has mostly maintained heroic narratives to reassert the Afrikaner *volk*'s nationalistic ideals. These ideals only allow admission to be included in the Afrikaner nation based on the individual's language, religion, race and culture. Narratives focus on Afrikaner exceptionalism and justify the Afrikaner's claim to land and power through self-assertion. The exceptionalism is emphasised through an Afrikaans speaking hero, usually a physically strong male, who through his agency in the plot, due to his admirable characteristics, is victorious in the resolution. These heroic narratives are evident in films shortly after the South African War, during the 1930s and 1940s, during the Second World War and throughout apartheid and the Border War.

With the demise of apartheid, South African cinema has grown in its inclusion of marginal voices, such as black voices. Unfortunately, a majority of contemporary Afrikaans films have shown little to no progress in undoing the exclusive narratives of Afrikaner exceptionalism, despite some films, such as *Fokofpolisiekar: Forgive them for they know not what they do* (Little 2009), where directors have aimed to isolate themselves from these diasporic narratives.[66] Contemporary Afrikaans films mostly either conform to the values of Afrikaner nationalism, such as casting a mythological hero as the saviour of the *volk,* or avoid any sociopolitical issues, such as the involvement of Afrikaners in apartheid, through pleasurable light comedies, *verstrooiingsvermaak*. The financial success of these Afrikaner comedies prove that the Afrikaner nation would much rather be entertained in the movie theatre, than be questioned with their own identity.

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[66] *Fokofpolisiekar: Forgive them for they know not what they do* is a film based on the journey of an Afrikaans band, *Fokofpolisiekar* (*Fuck off police car*) who have largely been criticized for their controversial stance on religion and for questioning the Afrikaner nationalist ideals. The band have developed a cult following, mostly consisting of young Afrikaners, who do not identify with the conservatism and ideals of Afrikaner culture. Nel (2010:126-128) positions the film and the band as a counterculture rebellion against the popular Afrikaner nationalist narrative of previous decades. Nel (2010:128) argues that *Fokofpolisiekar* have become heroes to a rebellious counterculture of Afrikaner youth by taking pride in oppositional identity formation of Afrikaners.

Although I have identified the postheroic possibilities of certain Bosbok Ses films, the recent Bosbok Ses film, *Jonathan* (De Jager 2016), is one such contemporary Afrikaans comedy. The film follows the journey of a young Afrikaans speaking comedian whose failure to act appropriately in the work place leads to him becoming a car guard. Although the hero, Jonathan, does not necessarily conform to the traditional heroic figure in Afrikaans cinema, the film still conforms structurally to the heroic narrative in its linearity and the hero's agency in the plot. Thematically the film does not delve into any sociopolitical issues in South Africa, despite partially confronting poverty through the characters of the other car guards, as there is no recognition of an Afrikaner identity post-apartheid. *Jonathan* can be positioned as *verstrooiingsvermaak* as the film serves as a pleasurable light distraction from the everyday issues faced in South Africa post-apartheid.

Other than *verstrooiingsvermaak* in contemporary Afrikaans cinema, it is unfortunate that films mostly conjure a nostalgic, nationalistic remembrance for the past, showing little to no development from the narrative structures during and prior apartheid. These heroic narrative structures are problematic in a democratic South Africa as they mostly reassert Afrikaner superiority and exceptionalism. *Treurgrond* is a contemporary Afrikaans film which maintains such a nationalistic narrative. The film follows the journey of a *Boer* who is threatened by a land claim and whose family is finally murdered in a farm murder, despite his admirable character and stature in the community. Steve Hofmyer, which plays the Afrikaner *volk* hero in this film, has become a controversial figure in South Africa due to his stance on the position of white Afrikaners in a democratic South Africa.

Hofmyer's performance in media, as evident in news and in cinema, has led Broodryk (2016:63) to the conclusion that Hofmyer promotes a culture of white victimhood and Afrikaner superiority. This culture of victimhood is a result of the Afrikaner's domination being threatened by the inclusivity of a democratic South Africa, which leads to a self-imposed isolation or "frontier mentality" (Broodryk 2016:67). This "frontier mentality" is similar to what Wasserman (2010:23) has labelled the "we-are-not-like-that" mentality, as the denial of any political involvement, but instead implying that the Afrikaners are victims

in a heightened racially motivated political environment. Elsaesser (2001:194) warns against a culture of victimhood, which may be created by narrative structures which shift blame of social trauma to other ethnic, gender and sexuality groups. *Treurgrond*'s heroic narrative speaks to a culture of victimhood which is further emphasised by Hofmyer's public persona which he personally performs as the representative of a minority group (Broodryk 2010:71).

As I explained in Chapter Three, European cinema and contemporary Afrikaans cinema share many similarities in its narrative structures and themes. There are similar norms in European cinema to that of Afrikaans cinema in its promotion of a national European identity and even creating a culture of distraction, *angestelltenkultur,* which is also present in the *verstrooiingsvermaak* films of contemporary Afrikaans films. Not only does European cinema have a doubly occupied relationship with the American film industry, as stated by Elsaesser (2012:704), in that it positions itself as superior to American cinema, in having 'good' interest that are not only monitory gain, but it also seeks to promote a national identity. Contemporary Afrikaans cinema has similarly aimed to promote an exclusive national identity of a unified *volk* in its heroic narrative structure.

Traditional historic Afrikaans cinema has also had a doubly occupied relationship with British cinema, as identified by Gutsche, as AFP, a British production company, was responsible for the majority of the films in South Africa during the early stages of South African cinema (Gaines 2013:302). AFP's aim was to promote South Africa as a resourceful country for British interests, but also to promote imperialism. The result of the AFP films were in fact opposite to the aims of the British imperialists as it aided Afrikaans mass consciousness and at times even antagonised the British for its role in the South African War. Afrikaans cinema was thus dependent on British cinema as it is the British production company, AFP, which aided the Afrikaans film industry, but also thematically antagonised it casting the British as the *other* and coloniser.

French national cinema has similarly promoted a national identity in thematically representing its codes of inclusion, such as its purity of race, language and culture (Faulkner 2009:67). Perhaps one of the strongest similarities between French cinema and

Afrikaans cinema's reassertion of nationalism is its representation of geographic space. Higson (2000:67) situates nationalism as an ideological and spatial tension between 'home' and 'away'. This tension is evident in French cinema in its representation of the *banlieue* population, where the depiction of this marginal community of immigrants is spatially displaced from the city, but also ideologically cast as the others (Gavarini 2013:157-158). French cinema's codes of inclusion ideologically exclude this population in casting them as criminals and drug users, and not to be included in a French national identity of racial, linguistic and cultural purity. Similarly, Afrikaans cinema has often played on tensions between the city and the farm, a tension which has been used to firstly justify the Afrikaners' claim to land, but also how he who is deemed the *other* should be excluded from the *volk* due to the threat of corrupting the purity of the *volk.*

Silberman (1996:297) argues that German national cinema has also set a category of admittance to the German nation, which is largely based on notions of Germanness. This national identity of Germanness is based on a shared culture, a self-proclaimed *kultur-nation* (Silberman 1996:297). The theme of a self-proclaimed cultural superiority has been evident in German cinema from as early as the Weimar films, before the Second World War, as well as during Third Reich cinema, as identified by Kracauer's analysis of Weimar films (Hake 2002:29). The assertion of cultural superiority already indicates an antagonistically mutual relationship which German cinema maintains with other film industries, more specifically, the American film industry. When considering New German cinema and contemporary German cinema, Elsaesser (2012:704) points to this antagonistically mutual relationship in which German cinema aims to position itself as culturally superior to American cinema while acknowledging its operational and financial dependence on American cinema. German cinema, similar to other European film industries, such as British and French, no longer has a traditionally exclusive national identity: the globalized space in which it exist, render heroic narratives for national identities unnecessary and problematic. Nationalism as a criterion of inclusion into a specific social group is problematic in cinema, such as it has been with traditional historical and contemporary Afrikaans cinema. However, It often leads to a culture of

victimhood or excludes individuals based on race, language, culture and religion. Elsaesser (2012:708) argues that European cinema has failed to consider an alternative to this heroic narrative of a national identity, such as a postheroic narrative for a post-nation.

A postheroic narrative is part and parcel of a cinema of failure, which may hypothetically lead to successful social dialogue and collective mourning work. Through its various elements, atemporality, an emphasis on bodies and space, and a failed hero which becomes the abject, standing for both the other and the self, a postheroic narrative may overcome the social exclusion of nationalism. A postheroic narrative then moves towards a postnational community, an inoperative community, which embraces difference through its acknowledgement of antagonism and the unsocial sociability of humankind.

Elsaesser's (2014:111) intentions of shaping a narrative structure of failed heroism and a cinema of mourning trauma, yet also allowing for antagonism, is firstly a step towards a European national cinema. Secondly, this idea can be applied to other non-European national cinemas which have suffered similar historic traumas. One such non-European national cinema is that of South Africa, with its colonial and apartheid history, or, specifically, contemporary Afrikaans cinema. A postheroic narrative in a contemporary Afrikaans context, which is mostly based on nationalistic values of exclusion due to race, language, religion and other such binaries, may then serve to overcome exclusion towards a postnational state. The envisioning of a postnational state should not be one of multiculturalism, where individuals are forcefully included despite difference.  Instead, this postnational state should acknowledge its own double occupancy, a doubly occupied state which in turn acknowledges the failures of its history.

In contemporary Afrikaans cinema, as I have identified in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers,* a postheroic narrative would not assert this exclusive national identity as a heroic narrative would, but would instead embrace antagonism and suggest an inoperative community. An inoperative community proposes that members co-exist in harmony without finding any commonality with one another. Given the tensions between different peoples in the South African history, such as evident from the South African War,

the Border War and apartheid, it would be misguided, naive and even arrogant to suggest commonality amongst all South African citizens, as a heroic narrative would. Instead, a postheroic narrative accommodates a doubly occupied space, acknowledging the social exclusion of history, yet still suggests that citizens can co-exist in harmony. The elements of a postheroic narrative which make possible this inoperative community are atemporality, positioning the screen as a surface of flux, the positioning of space, abjectification and the construction of a parapractic posthero. Here I will point to certain moments of postheroism in the selected contemporary Afrikaans films to concisely explain the elements of a postheroic narrative

In *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers* I have identified how the narrative structure positions the screen as a surface of flux in its atemporality, through flashbacks and flash-forwards. Unlike the heroic narrative, the screen is not a mirror or window of reality which motivates audience-hero identification, but instead a surface which houses a variety of perspectives. *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* successfully introduces its audience to a variety of perspectives from the very beginning of the film. Its atemporality introduces the audience to the traditional antagonist, Anna, the traditional hero, Frans and the *boeredogter,* Engela, blurring the lines between hero/enemy, *boeredogter/uitlander,* as all characters, at one stage or another are antagonised or abandon their traditional roles. Through its atemporality, the audience is given a variety of characters to associate or disassociate with, suggesting a pluralist society, where individuals have the freedom of social configurations.

A postheroic narrative further suggests a pluralist society in the characters' relationship with one another. Toemaar, in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux,* serves as an example of an antagonistically mutual relationship with the *Boer* family. The first shot of him is his feet walking on a dust road approaching the farm, which immediately casts him as the outsider. He is the other in that he sleeps outside and answers to the patriarch, Frans, but he is also a confidant and provides Engela with insight into her family matters. He thus has an antagonistically mutual relationship with the family, which adequately acknowledges the social exclusion of South Africa during the 1970s. It is the awareness

of a doubly occupied space, which acknowledge social exclusion stating that a space is already occupied by power structures, which allows for this pluralist society.

The construction of this doubly occupied space is successfully shaped in *Verraaiers* as the setting is the Prinsloo farm, a space which was first occupied by a *Boer* family, then a British administrative base and then finally the *Boer*'s military court. It implies a space which has previously been inhabited by opposing power structures, pointing to the paradox in a national identity which seeks to be unified, but is constructed on antagonism and opposition (Elsaesser 2009:28). The Prinsloo farm is also a space of physical decay and abjectification as van Aswegen and his sons noticeably become the abject in this space.

Abjectification of the mortal body suggests the existence of an inoperative community, because it is only through physical decay and becoming the other through this deterioration that the audience is confronted with the mortal truth of human existence, which is death. This physical decay of the mortal body is further emphasised through nonlinearity, as the audience is provoked by the characters' constant change in physicality before, during and after abjectification. The mortality of human beings makes national constructs of inclusion and exclusion insufficient, such as race, language, culture, gender and religion, as human beings inevitably face death. It instead suggests a community which co-exists in harmony, not because of racial, linguistic, cultural, gendered or religious commonalities, but instead as mortal beings in continuation from birth to death.

A postheroic narrative would also accommodate for this inoperative community in its construction of a heroic figure. This heroic figure is neither the traditional hero, as seen in traditional historic Afrikaans cinema, nor the antihero, as seen in apartheid resistance films such as *Shot Down,* but instead a posthero. The posthero is constructed as a character which aims to be the traditional heroic figure in his actions to save the community, yet fails, despite his intentions. In Chapter 4 I have positioned Frans in *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and Jacobus in *Verraaiers* as parapractic postheroes as their active efforts to undo their decisions in the past only lead to unintended results, a

performed failure. Parapraxis, as performed failure, is particularly relevant to historical dramas and mourning work as it repeats the failure of a nation to adequately represent all citizens. In cinema, this repeated failure may ably mourn social trauma when considering Freud's three stages of mourning, as it remembers and repeats the traumatic event. It is unlike the heroic narrative which seeks to represent an event, but instead is a cinema of non-referentiality, as Elsaesser (2001:195) explains that trauma cannot adequately be represented due to the gap in memory caused by the traumatic event.

This study has aimed to create a framework for a postheroic narrative for contemporary Afrikaans cinema, after I have identified that contemporary Afrikaans cinema is largely nostalgic and thus does not adequately grapple with South African history. A framework for a postheroic narrative for contemporary Afrikaans cinema is directly applicable to historical dramas, as historical dramas may serve as memory work, which has the capacity to mourn social trauma due to events in the past. I have selected the Bosbok Ses films, *Stuur Groete Aan Mannetjies Roux* and *Verraaiers* to locate a postheroic narrative, but there are other moments of postheroism in South African cinema.

The television series, *Feast of the Uninvited,* may adhere to a postheroic narrative structure as it is also a historical drama which may suggest an attempt at grappling with trauma set in South African history. It follows a nonlinear structure in which characters reminisce the realities of the South African War, rather recalling memories, instead of aiming to represent the trauma of the past. This type of memory work adheres to that which is suggested by the postheroic narrative as it is a cinema of non-representability accommodating the gap in memory which is caused by the traumatic event. The series is also anti-nostalgic, as it rather suggests the failure of history, instead of romanticizing it, and may then also be read as a sort of parapraxis. Although *Feast of the Uninvited* is a noteworthy attempt of an alternative narrative structure and may contain elements of postheroism, it falls outside the scope of this specific study which focuses on postheroism in contemporary Afrikaans cinema and not in television.

## 5.2 Limitations of the study

In reflection, after conducting this study of postheroism in the selected Bosbok Ses films, I have found that a limitation of the study is that it does not fully delve into other moments of postheroism in South Africa, such as *Feast of the Uninvited,* but merely considers its postheroic possibilities. Although the study is seemingly limited in this sense, I have found that locating postheroism in the selected contemporary Afrikaans dramas is more relevant. The relevance of the study being located in a framework of contemporary Afrikaans cinema is due to the norms of contemporary Afrikaans narrative structures, which is either heroic narratives which nostalgically reassert Afrikaner nationalism, or which rather avoid socio-political issues through *verstrooiingsvermaak.* A postheroic narrative is then specifically suitable for contemporary Afrikaans cinema, instead of other modes of representation, such as television.

A further limitation of this study is that I have transposed a European narrative structure, as identified by the German film scholar Thomas Elsaesser into a contemporary Afrikaans cinema. I am cognizant that one cannot merely impose a Eurocentric gaze unto a South African film industry. However, I have demonstrated that a European postheroic narrative is more relevant to a study on contemporary Afrikaans cinema, as Afrikaans film operations, such as the heroic narrative structure, align more with European film operations than with other South African narratives. I have identified Johan Degenaar's work on nationalism as the bridge with which to compare a European film industry to an Afrikaans film industry, due to the similarities in narratives in its reassertion of nationalism.

## 5.3 Strengths of the study

The study focuses on postheroism in cinema, a framework on which there are only limited publications. The study also fills a gap in research by introducing a postheroic narrative to contemporary Afrikaans cinema. A strength of this study is thus its uniqueness in contemporary Afrikaans film scholarship, which aims to fill some of the gap in research on means with which to counteract the exclusion of nationalistic cinema.

A further strength of this study is that I have found an Elsaesserian conceptual theoretical framework to be particularly relevant to contemporary Afrikaans cinema, because a postheroic narrative is specifically relevant to film industries which are nationalistic and aim to represent a country's traumatic history. Contemporary Afrikaans cinema aligns itself to that which a postheroic narrative seeks to overcome in its political economy and also thematically through narrative structures. I have identified how the political economy of traditional historical and contemporary Afrikaans cinema is to maintain hegemonic rule of the Afrikaner nation and therefore themes are mostly nationalistic and reassert exclusion.

This study has demonstrated that the visual representation of South African history through a postheroic narrative ideologically endorses an inoperative community and the unsocial sociability of humankind, which does not force citizens to find commonality with one another after a history of social exclusion, but instead suggests that a diversity of people can co-exist in harmony through pluralism.

## 5.4 Suggestions for further research

A suggestion for further research which is made possible by the current study is to further locate the spatial representation of pluralism in contemporary Afrikaans cinema. A comparative study between a film such as *Treurgrond* and a film which also deals with social trauma, such as *Dis Ek, Anna* (*It's me, Anna* Blecher 2015) may reveal tensions between 'home' and 'away' both geographically and ideologically. Identifying means in which *Treurgrond* represents the so called 'border-mentality' and self-imposed isolation of Afrikanerdom in a post-colonial framework may induce a counter-argument of how a postcolonial space is represented in an alternative narrative structure. Such a comparative study between *Treurgrond* and *Dis Ek, Anna* may also emphasise a unique tension between protagonists and their heroic possibilities as the former may conform to the traditional heroic figure, where the latter may reveal some tendencies of the classical *boeredogter* figure and a possible ideological shift in her representation. The representation of space and the protagonists' response to it could either suggest the conformity to, or rejection of doubly occupied spaces in relation to social trauma.

A further suggestion for research which is made possible by the current study on postheroism is to locate the representation of a traditionally heroic figure, such as the controversial figure Jan Smuts, in new media and cinema. Jan Smuts as an example of such a possible historic figure has been represented in numerous ways in cinema, such as in the film, *Gandhi* (Attenborough 1982) where Smuts was portrayed by the apartheid resistance playwright Athol Fugard. This study on postheroism in contemporary Afrikaans cinema has already revealed how a film such as *Verraaiers* has cast great historical figures, who had a hand in shaping the exclusive political processes in South Africa, as postheroic. Locating the representation of such *volk* heroes in new media and cinema may reveal means through which cultural memory on traumatic events are shaped in a post-colonial environment and may aid or counteract the growth of a postcolonial Afrikaner identity, by either demythologising *volk hero*es or maintaining the myths.

## 5.5 Conclusion

A framework for postheroism in contemporary Afrikaans cinema adequately demythologizes the exclusive nationalistic Afrikaner *volk* identity. It is problematic that contemporary Afrikaans cinema has relied on these nationalistic narratives to refer to history as it maintains hegemony and Afrikaner exceptionalism. This study has offered means with which to solve the ideological reassertion of exclusion, by reinventing the traditional heroic figure and suggesting a harmonious community bound by antagonism and unsociability. The postheroic narrative in contemporary Afrikaans cinema suggests a pluralist society free from imposed social association, which may aid the successful mourning of social trauma after South Africa's complex past.

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