

Representing Nation in Post-apartheid South Africa film: *Invictus*, *Jerusalema* and *A Small Town Called Descent*.

Thesis

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Declaration:

I declare that the work submitted is my own and all necessary citations used have been properly acknowledged.

Student's Signature:

Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

Acknowledgements:

Firstly and most importantly, I thank God for granting me the faith to believe that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

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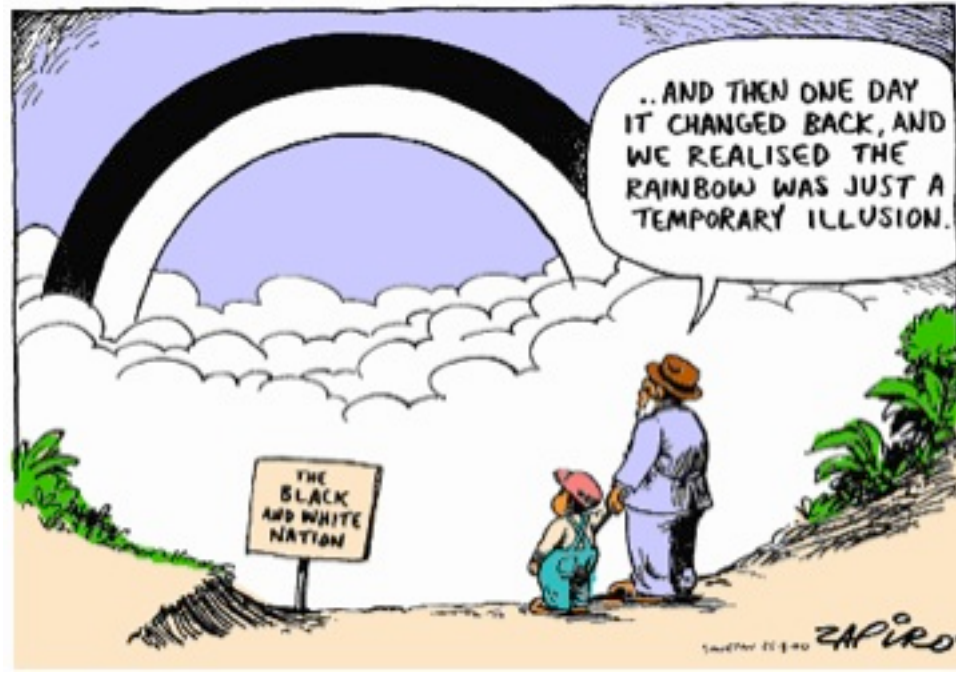
Abstract:

This dissertation explores three South African films, *Invictus* (2009), *Jerusalema* (2008) and *A Small Town Called Descent* (2010), as representative of the post-apartheid socio-political and economic South African context. I suggest that these films infer, through narrative portrayal, a change from the celebrated moment of South Africa's political transition in 1994, with hopes of peace and unity as well as equality, to a time of greater anxieties about South Africa's difficult realities. The latter include contemporary issues of crime, poverty and the dispossession of hundreds of foreigners in 2008, which are symptomatic of economic inequalities and socio-political instabilities. I follow the narrative journey, and use the film's respective contexts, as a way of discussing the socio-political and economic problems reflected in the films. Clint Eastwood's *Invictus* sets the idea of national unity in motion, highlighting strongly the 'rainbow nation' image of South Africa and the notion of the post-apartheid context as an imagined space for equal opportunity. Ralph Ziman's *Jerusalema* continues from the ideological optimism set up in *Invictus*. The film depicts the pragmatic failures of economic equality and (therefore) national unity, suggesting a causal notion that poverty paired with a strong desire for economic success results in crime. The film also deals with issues of xenophobic tensions, reflecting the time of its release and anticipating the xenophobia-centered narrative in Jahmil Qubheka's *A Small Town Called Descent*. The latter film resonates with the notions set up in *Invictus*, tying in to the context depicted in *Jerusalema*, leading me to conclude that the South Africa in *Invictus* is gruesomely different from the one in *Descent*, showing thus a clear move away from the ideology of unity, peace and equality.

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Introduction



“...And then one day it changed back, and we realized the rainbow was just a temporary illusion” (Zapiro, 25 August 2000)

This thought, illustrated by Zapiro, underpins the entirety of this dissertation. If I could illustrate the trajectory of the South African post-Apartheid nation as seen in the films I have chosen, it would take the shape of an arc whose high point was at the advent of democracy, and whose low point follows a downward spiral from glory to pudency. South Africa is nearing its second decade as a post-Apartheid democratic nation. Robert Mattes notes the achievements of the country and highlights that “South Africa successfully emerged from the shadow of [an] apparently irreconcilable conflict and unavoidable racial civil war to create a common nation”; the country has avoided “triple digit inflation” and has “a growing black middle-class” (2002:

23). However, South Africa's internationally celebrated democracy "appears in form to be relatively healthy, but in substance shows signs of early decay" (Mattes, 2002: 23). In starting with this reflection on the new South Africa, I hope to foreshadow the main theme of this dissertation which reflects further on the post-Apartheid socio-economic and political landscape using three contemporary films released between 2008 and 2010: *Invictus* (Clint Eastwood, 2009), *Jerusalema* (Ralph Ziman, 2008), and *A Small Town Called Descent* (Jahmil Qubheka, 2010). I tie together these three films, the combined narratives of which present a fictional plot of the new South Africa, reflecting its recent history from the advent of democracy in 1994 to the major outbreaks of xenophobic violence in 2008.

Jerusalema and *A Small Town Called Descent* are cinematic reflections of the decaying mentioned by Mattes; they depict crime and xenophobic violence in the context of the new South Africa. *Invictus* portrays the 'miracle' nation and becomes a backdrop for the other two films as it re-counts Nelson Mandela's attempts at using sport in the service of establishing a peaceful and racially egalitarian nation. These three films depict, through fictional narratives, the journey of the new South Africa from the euphoria of winning the Rugby World Cup and overcoming decades of formalized Apartheid, to the shock of xenophobic attacks in the name of resource repossession. These films relate to one another as a cinematic collage revealing the realities of the new South Africa. They reveal the complexities of nation building and establishing a post-Apartheid national identity. They also depict the disillusionment suffered in the wake of socio-economic disparity, especially that of black identities, most of whom expected financial success in the new South Africa. A thematically linked narrative, one that addresses pertinent socio-

economic and political issues in the greater South African context (the national), is documented in these films.

The cinematic narratives of South Africa are entangled within the web of South African contemporary politics, racial history, and the hope for a unified yet diverse national identity. I will discuss these three films as narratives depicting the South African national landscape, highlighting the themes, identities, and socio-political issues that problematize the post-Apartheid nation. Philip Rosen defines “national cinema” as “a large group of films, a body of textuality... given a certain amount of historical specificity by calling it a *national* cinema” (2006: 17). I address the three films in this paper as national because of the weight I place in the historical contexts they present. Rosen states, “If there is anything particularly ‘national’ about a set of films, such as German films of the early 1920s or Japanese films of the 1930s the nation would appear as a construction of that cinema’s discourse, and its address.” (2006: 25) This is to say the South Africa projected and portrayed by these films is the nation I seek to address in this paper.

Anderson views the nation as “an imagined community,” a “comradeship” that identifies a people as belonging to a nation; one they are willing to die for (2006: 7). Nation then, as I deduce from Anderson, is that which people believe in common about themselves as belonging to a certain culture, history, memory, and values, with language and religion often playing a major defining role. I use this understanding to frame my use of this word nation. Furthermore, the establishing of a new South Africa in 1994 brought a new imagined concept of what the nation is. Socio-economic disparities and the racial past, which separated people according to race, still problematize unity in the country. The pursuit of nation building in the country is to

create racial and economic unity and equality. Having made the “grave mistake” to “confuse race with nation” (Renan 1990: 8) during Apartheid, one of the key values of the new South African nation is unity in diversity and rejecting discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, or sexuality. For Renan:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or this principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is the present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. (1990: 19)

Renan’s definition strongly influences the way in which I approach this thesis, discussing rather the principles that seem to matter to the peoples of South Africa such as racial unity, economic equality, our identification as Africans, and also considering the shared memory of the past and the value of freedom and equality that is our present heritage. I will not be doing a formal analysis of the films nor delving into issues concerning the film industry, but instead through a qualitative analysis discuss the narratives, context, and themes as reflective of South Africa and its identities. I will examine the narratives of the main characters, the predominant tensions, the overarching themes, and the socio-political context set in the film as well as its release. The three films were released within three years – *Jerusalema* was released in 2008, *Invictus* in 2009, and *Descent*¹ was released in 2010. They depict three major contexts in the new South African history. I have shuffled the order of the films in this paper according to their

¹ I will be using *Descent* as a shortened version of Jahmil Qubheka’s film title: *A Small Town Called Descent* from this point onwards.

context, placing *Invictus* before *Jerusalema*. My aim is to consider how these films depict a national South African narrative by addressing issues pertinent in our contemporary national consciousness. I will explore the socio-economic and political issues presented through these narratives.

Ruby Chueng and D.H. Fleming write “every film is political” (2010: 3). Chueng and Fleming’s observation about cinema echoes Ivor Chipkin’s idea that “the South African people came to be defined and produced in and through the politics and culture of nationalist struggle” (2007: 2). Film in post-Apartheid South Africa has offered society a vehicle through which to engage with and view the socio-political realities of the country. Martin Botha and Adri van Aswegen, quoting Otto (1983), write that “film should, as a cultural artefact, reflect, interpret and evaluate the values and culture of the time as well as the society in which and from which the film evolves” (1992: 2). In this way, films are relevant and critically engage with their socio-political contexts, offering audiences more than fictional stories and entertainment. Botha and van Aswegen also claim that before the rise of an alternative cinema that was not dependent on state funding, Apartheid cinema disavowed the sociopolitical realities of South Africa (1992). Cinema during the Apartheid period has always been entangled with South African realities, and the realities mentioned in earlier discourse make this entanglement a crucial opportunity for political discourse.

Mark Currie argues that narratives are stories that imitate people’s lives (1998) and are thus a constructed reflection and representation of that which is real. Abbott further makes three distinctions about narrative: narrative is the representation of events, consisting of story and narrative discourse; story is an event or sequence of events (the action); narrative discourse involves those events as represented (2002: 16). Narratives, therefore, are based on something

that took place, like the Rugby World Cup and the end of Apartheid in *Invictus*, an event that stands out, such as the killing of hundreds of foreigners by South Africans in *A Small Town Called Descent* or an action or series of actions shifting identities and affecting realities – for example the lack of money to provide for school education leading Lucky to be one of the most powerful criminals in *Jerusalema*. Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi* (2006), Ian Gabriel's *Forgiveness*, Ntshavheni wa Luruli's *The Wooden Camera* (2003), John Boorman's *In My Country* (2004), and Jason Xenopoulos' adaptation of Karel Schoeman's *Promised Land* (2002) are a few of the poignant works which deal with South Africans trying to identify themselves within the realities of a post-Apartheid South African society. Narratives like these become fictional evidence of the condition of the new South Africa as a nation. These films show the effect of Apartheid on the contemporary experience, and the three films I will be discussing in this thesis are part of this wide context of socio-political narratives.

Invictus, *Jerusalema*, and *Descent* are visual critiques and narrative representations of post-Apartheid South Africa. These films poignantly reveal aspects of post-Apartheid South Africa as well as collectively represent the changes since the establishment of a non-racial nation-state. *Invictus*, *Jerusalema*, and *Descent* were released at a time of great international interest in the South African nation. Post-Apartheid South Africa is infamous for the high crime statistics, and with the preparations for the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup underway the fear that crime would deter the international community from coming for the world cup was great. The race for the position of third South African president was also underway, and former president Thabo Mbeki and current president Jacob Zuma were the highly competitive candidates for the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), an organization credited for playing a major role in

ending Apartheid. Also in 2008, a sudden onslaught of violence against African foreigners, many of whom had lived in South Africa for decades, shocked the nation and the world. This sociopolitical landscape of the new South Africa shapes the narrative context of the selected films.

For this reason then, a political post-Apartheid cinema is crucial. As Masilela argues, “it is therefore necessary, and perhaps unavoidable to discuss South African film as a tool which critiques the socio-economic and political spheres of this country. Quoting Haile Gerima, a Pan-Africanist filmmaker, Adrey Thomas McCluskey writes: “our cinema should transcend [and]... demystify ...politics” (2009: 8). In my discussion of the cinematic narratives of the chosen films, the sociopolitical landscape will be a primary point of exploratory reflection as it underpins the way identities are shaped and persons understand their lives.

Cinema is an important medium for transmitting the stories of people, events, and the histories of nations (Abbott, 2002). Dudley Andrew argues that “without stories, cinema is condemned to a surface view of life” (1976: 119). Film, as a form of representation, has been a powerful way of engaging and participating, through narratives, in the negotiation, framing, and understanding the South African nation and its identities. Film is a narrative language used to depict “something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people” (Hall, 1997: 15). Hall describes “representation [as] an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture” (1997: 15). Film therefore is deeply rooted in realities, no matter how abstract the context or content of a particular film. Andrew proposes “No matter what appears on the screen, audiences will instinctively shape it into a representation of something familiar to them” (1984: 47). Thus, regardless of whether a film is

an entirely foreign product, if it is about this country and its people, it is possible for South Africans to relate to it. Director Clint Eastwood adapted John Carlin's book *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela And The Game that Changed A Nation* into *Invictus*. Ralph Ziman heard of the illegal apartment building takeovers in Hillbrow, tied it to the problem of hijacking (for which Johannesburg is famous) and made *Jerusalema* (*Screen Africa*, August 2006). Jahmil Qubheka shares, in a self-interview on YouTube (MrJahmilXT, 14 Jan. 2010) that he was concerned by the "sudden attack on foreigners" that swept throughout the nation in 2008, and fictionalized the events in *A Small Town Called Descent*.

Cinema captures the nation, represents national identity, and engages in concepts of national culture; cinema has the ability to convey 'nation' far more vividly than painting or sculpture (Smith, 2000: 50). It can be said that national filmmakers are concerned with the "project of popular representation and renewal, clothing the ideal of the nation and its historical myths, memories, and symbols in palpable, dynamic forms which are easily accessible to the mass of the 'national' membership" (Smith, 2000: 48). It is the role of film to "take on the responsibility of representing the nation to its citizens for the purpose of communicating what constitutes a national identity" (Flanery, *South African Film Cultures and the Transnational*). Therefore, before looking at *Invictus*, *Jerusalema*, and *Descent*, it is necessary to clarify that a distinct South African National Cinema has not yet been defined; however, cinema narratives about the country are regarded as national narratives. Jacqueline Maingard writes that "there is no national cinema in South Africa, even though some cinema might seem – or seek– to represent or evoke a sense of 'the national'" (2003: 115). These films specifically show that South African film is transnational because "cinemas established in specific nation-states are

rarely autonomous cultural industries and the film business has long operated on a regional, national and transnational basis” (Higson, 2000: 67). Most South African films have been made with the assistance of foreign producers (especially Hollywood), funding, and directors, often with leads performed by foreign actors. Clint Eastwood and Ralph Ziman, who are American, directed *Invictus* and *Jerusalema* respectively; though entirely South African in its production, *Descent* depicts the story of foreigners in the country using two non-South African actors from Zimbabwe.

The notion of transnational cinema can thus be applied to South African films. Higson further clarifies how the transnational occurs:

The experience of border crossing takes place at two broad levels. First there is the level of production and the activities of the filmmakers. The second way in which cinema operates on a transnational basis is in terms of the distribution and reception of films. On the one hand, many films are distributed far more widely than simply within their country of production. Occasionally, even the small, ‘home-grown’, indigenous film can become an international box-office phenomenon given the right backing and promotional push (Higson, 2000: 68).

What is meant by ‘South African’ film, therefore, is that the films are “made in or about South Africa” rather than that they represent a uniquely South African cinematic style and industry (Tomaselli, 1988: 271). Since South African films are so affected by foreign influence, the relationship between cinema and nation remains a politically complex one, if not more so in South Africa than elsewhere. Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie write: “Films [...] do not simply

represent or express the stable features of a national culture, but are themselves one of the loci of debates about a nation's governing principles, goals, heritage and history" (2000: 4). Maingard states that South African democracy is being "mediated through the images presented in film" (2007: 115). With the development of South African film from a state-controlled propaganda system to contemporary independent and State-assisted film industry, most films are reflexive of as well as represent and encourage a democratic nation. It is thus important to critically analyze the way in which these films represent South Africa and its identities, as foreign directors run the risk of imposing their own perceptions, enforcing their ideologies and depicting their perspectives about this country. On the premise that film represents reality, it is also true that through the construction of images, cinematically depicted 'reality' can be manipulated to create a particular image, send out a particular message or express a particular point of view. A stronger investment in South Africans making films about South Africa and documenting our country's narratives is therefore essential. Hence Higson asserts: "A government supported national cinema may be one of the few means by which a film culture not dominated entirely by Hollywood can still exist" (2000: 70). This is one of the primary objectives of the National Film and Video Foundation: "The vision of the NFVF is to strive for a quality South African film and video industry that is representative of the nation, commercially viable and encourages development" (Martin Botha, 2003: 1).

The intention of this dissertation is not to argue for a national cinema, but to explore how *Invictus*, *Jerusalema*, and *Descent* as narratives together represent the national journey of post-Apartheid South Africa. The films used in my exploration are not necessarily concerned with "homogenizing national myths," but are rather addressing "nationally specific materials"

(Higson, 2000: 72). Ian Jarvie quotes Anon's formulation that "national cinema is 'the realist project that ... would reflect the times, the lives and the culture of a country's population'" (2000: 75). This is not to say that the filmmaker, producer or sponsor need themselves be of that particular country, but that there is a certain required level of verisimilitude in depicting any nation and addressing its socio-political context, whether the filmmaker is an 'insider' or an 'outsider'. Therefore "a cinema that attempts to engage with the nationally specific need not be a nationalistic cinema" (Higson citing Paul Willemen, 2000: 72). The project of this dissertation is neither to define a distinct national cinema nor to discuss these films in terms of a national cinema style but rather to explore how they address issues relevant to the national narrative of South Africa.

The chapter layout attempts to be a chronological account of the new South Africa since the advent of democracy. The films themselves were not released chronologically but I will attempt to tie them together in a way that reflects a chronological narrative. The first chapter focuses on Clint Eastwood's *Invictus*, which deals with the concept of post-Apartheid nation-building, and in particular, building a 'rainbow' nation using the context of sport fanaticism. The film sets up the socio-political illusion of the post-Apartheid nation as racially reconciled and integrated, bringing to light the issues involved in establishing the new South Africa. The film focuses on the story of the 1995 Rugby World Cup, which took place in South Africa soon after the transition to democracy. The then President Nelson Mandela worked alongside Captain Francois Pienaar to inspire the nation to stand united. In light of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, what took place in 1995 was an important precursor and earlier example of how sport can break racial barriers, thus helping to forge a semblance of national identity, even if this is only 'temporary'. This film also sets up a very important aspect of the new South Africa, the idealistic illusion of a

‘glorious’ nation for all in which each can share in the promise of this country. *Invictus* examines the journey of nation-building in post-Apartheid South Africa, the use of rugby as a stereotypically Afrikaner sport, and the way in which black and white identities related to the advent of democracy. Also, in view of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, I will reflect on the relevance of this film for a South African audience experiencing the time of the Soccer World Cup as a similar moment to that of the Rugby World Cup in 1995.

The second chapter examines the very different view of the post-Apartheid context in Ralph Ziman’s 2008 film. By portraying crime in South Africa, *Jerusalema* strongly depicts and unmasks the socio-economic landscape and the distressing problems which arise because of the great economic inequality in the country. *Invictus* establishes the myth of a unified nation with a stable economy and equality for all; *Jerusalema* reveals the realities of poverty and crime in a disillusioned South Africa. Lucky Kunene is a hijacker-turned-organised-gang-leader, played by Rapulana Seiphemo, who robs landlords of their buildings. Set in what is often regarded as the crime capital of South Africa, Hillbrow, Johannesburg, *Jerusalema* depicts the dark reality of crime in South Africa and the post-Apartheid conditions and factors involved in this issue. Against the backdrop of *Invictus*’ rainbow nation message, *Jerusalema* reveals the grievances faced by the ‘rainbow nation’, such as poverty and crime. Ziman narrates and portrays the issue of crime in this country in order to reflect the ironic effects of the ‘Promised Land’ ideology on ordinary South Africans like the fictional Lucky Kunene.

The third chapter discusses *A Small Town Called Descent* as Jahmil Qubheka’s portrayal of the xenophobic violence and crimes that took place in May 2008, including hundreds of deaths, rapes, and lootings that resulted in the relocation of thousands of foreigners. The film juxtaposes contemporary South Africa with the violent images of Apartheid, unravelling the

illusion of the new South Africa as a nation of peace, reconciliation, and economic development. This film ties contemporary South Africa to Apartheid, inferring through its images that the contemporary state has failed and is perhaps no better than its oppressive predecessor. The xenophobic violence is symptomatic of the failure to fully realise the dream of equality and unity in the country. African foreigners found themselves being made into scapegoats for the issues which have concerned South Africans from the days of Apartheid. This film was released just two years after the major events that it depicts, and was thus an immediate critical representation of South Africa's recent history.

Filmmakers need to continuously engage with the development of this nation but also, as these films show, reflect on the effects of history and the issues of the present in order to foster real change and growth as a tool for building this nation. "Telling and re-telling stories, histories/her-stories, is the stuff that the new cinema, post-1994, is about" (Maingard, 2007: 156). The three case study films locate their narratives more generally against the backdrop of South Africa's Apartheid history and within the context of a nation forging itself. They serve as commentary on the country's socio-political condition and critically reflect on the nearly two decades of the existence of South Africa's democratic nation. Since cinema is 'the art of the real', a cinema which interrogates everyday life and prevalent issues represents contemporary reality through new narratives, and is therefore a necessity. I agree with Martin Botha that South African film "has provided viewers with filmic experiences of South African identity and identities" (2007: 7); it also evaluates the national condition of this country and its people.

Chapter One: Clint Eastwood's *Invictus*



Shapiro, J (Zapiro). South Africa's All Black Supporters. *Sowetan*. 21 August. 1996.

Clint Eastwood released his Oscar-nominated South African film, *Invictus*, in 2009. The film movingly recaptures the national triumph of the 1995 Rugby World Cup. In terms of the earlier arc metaphor, *Invictus* depicts the highpoint of post-Apartheid South Africa during 1994 and 1995. The film is set during the release of the future first black president of a democratic South Africa, Nelson Mandela. *Invictus* captures a powerful turning point in the country's political history. The film narrative reflects the transitory construction of the new South Africa and the use of rugby as a tool for projecting national unity between blacks and whites. The film itself exemplifies the ideal of the new South Africa as a united nation. At the time of the film's release, the reality was far from ideal. Returning to Zapiro's notion of the "temporary illusion," I argue in this chapter the attempts to racially unify the nation and set in place an integrated national identity was only the start, and much needs to be done to fully establish a unified nation as a reality. One cannot ignore that the integrative message of the world cup was a necessity, but a greater ignorance would be to assume the portrayal of unity to be the reality, as the historical class chasm created by racial oppression cannot be glossed over through the showmanship of integration. Chipkin quotes Biko (1996): "The myth of integration ... must be cracked and killed because it makes people believe something is being done when in actual fact the artificial integrated circles are a soporific on the blacks and provide a vague satisfaction for the guilt-stricken whites" (2007: 111). The optimistic and nationalistic mood of the world cup was a temporary reprieve from normal life; it was also, as we see in *Invictus*, an environment in which identities engaged in the discourse of re-imagining nation in the new South Africa.

The principal imperative of post-Apartheid South Africa in its early years of democracy was to establish a new, integrated national identity. Through nation-building programs, the rainbow nation ideology, and a shared sense of memory through the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission, the propagation of a united nation was underway. Regarding this time, Chipkin writes of “an urgent drive to define the basis for South Africa’s unity as a people” (2007: 174). This drive was expressed through the South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) television tagline, “*Simunye!* We are one”, the Proudly South African company, product and service branding campaign, and the “One Team, One Country” sports slogan. These slogans helped in rallying blacks and whites to support the national rugby team in 1995. *Invictus* shows how President Nelson Mandela used the opportunity provided by the Rugby World Cup in 1995 to build rapport with white South Africans and encourage the black population to lay aside their resentment of the past.

Invictus was released fourteen years later, at a time when a renewed sense of nationhood was needed. A film that could inspire national reconciliation was appropriate at this time for it was only a year after the xenophobic violence outbreak of 2008. The unexpected political break in the African National Congress (ANC) in November that year was also a factor in the country’s sense of division. The preparations for the FIFA Soccer World Cup, to be hosted by South Africa in 2010, required national support similar to that of 1995. The narrative of *Invictus* encapsulates some of the major factors that were pivotal in shaping nationhood in the new South Africa. *Invictus*’ release in 2009 also coincides with the inauguration of the first black President of the USA, Barack Obama. *Invictus* works as “some form of subliminal message about current American opinion, as if Mandela is a ‘body double’ for Barack Obama, the other president dedicated to the pursuit of a new world order with more humanity than others so far” (Benoliel, 2012: 92). The phenomenon of the South African miracle of a peaceful transition to democracy and the change from white to black leadership are framed as exemplary for the countries of the world. The film serves a similar purpose to that of the rugby in 1995, this time for American

audiences in 2008; it ushers in a new way of thinking about nationhood under the leadership of a first black President. Academy Lifetime Award Winner Morgan Freeman, alongside Matt Damon as Francois Pienaar, performs in the heroic role of Nelson Mandela.

In this chapter, I look at and discuss the ways in which the film depicts Mandela's efforts to unify the post-Apartheid South African nation by taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the 1995 Rugby World Cup. My stance is that even though the world cup was successful, Mandela's vision of an ongoing journey to transform racial differences was only temporarily demonstrated in 1995.

Throughout the plot, *Invictus* shows the racial divisions that have characterized this country's history. The film also highlights the various responses to the new black President, and the challenges that he and his administration face in their use of rugby, widely seen as a typically Afrikaner symbol of dominance, to intervene in longstanding notions of race. The opening scene provides a vivid portrayal of Apartheid South Africa. A group of white boys play rugby at a stately school with manicured grass fields and high fencing. Across the road from the school, in the same scene, is a group of black boys playing soccer on tattered and ill-kempt grounds. For knowing audiences, this juxtaposition provides an important reference to the notions, which had continued throughout Apartheid South Africa, that rugby is a white sport and soccer is the game of blacks. The scene significantly alludes, also, to the unequal distribution of resources traditionally allocated for the development of these sports.

Apartheid secured the dominance of whites over blacks, claiming that whites and blacks belonged to vastly different cultures and that this difference necessitated segregation (MacDonald, 2006: 11). Rugby was understood as part of white Afrikaner culture and thus not a

sport for the blacks, while soccer became the predominant sport for blacks. Booth records that “until the mid-1970s the Springbok was an exclusive white emblem, reserved for representatives of the white nation” (1998: 212). Booth further cites a white parent who prevented black pupils from playing against white pupils, saying: “These little kaffers can’t play rugby” (Booth, 1998: 94). Mandela was aiming to use the rugby World Cup to change the way in which black and white South Africans viewed and related to rugby. Racial segregation had been experienced in every area of South African life – from beaches, lavatories, busses, suburbs and, in this case, sport. What was problematic about rugby was its historical association with Afrikaner nationalism; it was loaded with the memory of Apartheid.

Also interesting in the opening scene is that the vehicles that usher Mandela back from prison pass through this particular street in a wide shot placing both the white and the black school in the frame, with the cars going through the middle. The cars in the middle represent a kind of link, in the form of Mandela’s release from prison that will bring these two politically separated identities together. The black children celebrate the arrival of their legend and the white children across the road are confounded; both groups engage in a consideration of the nation through their conversations about Mandela in that moment. The black children run to the threadbare fence celebrating and singing at the return of their long awaited hero; they chant, “Mandela, Mandela” (*Invictus*, 2009). On the opposite side of the fence, the white children pause their game for a moment and then return to it as they are not as aware of the significance of that moment. One does ask, “Who is that man, Sir?”, and the white high school coach who views Nelson Mandela’s return as the end of white privilege replies: “It’s the terrorist, Mandela; they let him out. Remember this day, boys; this is the day our country went to the dogs” (*Invictus*, 2009). Throughout South Africa, these kinds of differing reactions to the news of Mandela’s return were

part of daily chatter during those final weeks leading up to the first ‘non-racial’ vote on April 27, 1994, in which all demographics took part as a nation for the first time.

The reactions to Mandela’s presidential appointment also differed along racial lines. The coach in the opening scene, who described Mandela as a terrorist, represents a group of white people who saw the black presidency as a threat to their place and status in this country. Francois Pienaar’s father is portrayed as one of the least optimistic whites. He tells Francois, after a news broadcast of Mandela’s inauguration: “I never thought I’d see the day. I feel sorry for you, son; you’ve got your whole life here... what’s it gonna be like now?” (*Invictus*, 2009) Many white South Africans were afraid of black leadership, in this case the new leadership of Mandela, whom they believed lead a group of terrorists. President Barack Obama faced similar fears during his first run as president of the United States. He was not believed to be a terrorist or leading a terrorist group, but faced questions as to whether or not his decisions regarding the war in Iraq were safe for the country. The film infers these anxieties to be related to the change in racial representation within the national leadership, as we will see in the newspaper headline appearing in the film which I will discuss in the following paragraph.

The film also shows another fear, depicted in an early morning walk scene after Mandela’s inauguration. The shot is darkly lit, indicating the early hours of the morning; the president is with two of his bodyguards. The scene uses the conventions of visualizing omen in a suspense thriller. An anonymous vehicle appears, fast and screeching in the dark. The film cuts to Mandela and his two bodyguards, unaware of the van. This alternation between the fast coming van and Mandela with his bodyguards continues for at least three more shots. The musical score intensifies, the anonymous vehicle takes a sharp turn, and then one of Mandela’s bodyguards looks around, as if sensing that something is wrong. They are still unaware of the approaching

vehicle. The spatial uncertainty increases the intensity of the scene. The vehicle turns into the street where the presidential party is walking. There is much closer back and forth cutting, increasing the intensity of the scene. The bodyguards assume the vehicle is transporting a possible assassin sent to kill Mandela. In a panic, one of the bodyguards runs in front of Mandela shouting his name. The van gets closer and stops at the corner shop in front of Mandela and his guards. The deliveryman quickly gets out, puts a stack of newspapers on the floor, and drives off.

The scene continues with Mandela reading the headline of the newspaper at the top of the stack: “He can win an election but can he lead a nation?” The headline reflects the anxieties of those who question whether Mandela is fit to successfully lead the country. The comment of the coach in the opening scene is echoed in the headline in a softer and less certain expression of the idea that the country may have ‘gone to the dogs’ because it is in the hands of a black leader. One of the bodyguards responds: “Not even one day on the job and they’re already after you” (*Invictus*, 2009). It is not clear who ‘they’ are, but the most likely candidates would be white people, probably Afrikaner nationalists, who would not want a black president. In another scene in the film, Pienaar’s father likens the country’s political change to that of other African countries, claiming that “they’ll throw us all into the sea” as was the case “in Zimbabwe and Mozambique” (*Invictus*, 2009). This statement suggests that the black South African leadership will dispossess whites, leaving them with no real claim to the country or the economy. These scenes show that there were many uncertainties as to what the prospect of a post-Apartheid South Africa meant for white South Africans, some of whom feared they would be thrown into the sea and that their wealth would be taken by black people. Like in the scene with the van, these anxieties were based on assumptions and only exacerbated the tension between blacks and whites.

The film shows Mandela's attempt to demystify these fears and assumptions. *Invictus* portrays the way in which Mandela reassured South Africa's white populace, most powerfully with the office scene. Mandela finds most of his white staff packed and ready to go in fear that they will get fired. Mandela invites them to keep their jobs and those who want to leave to do so of their own freewill and not because of any form of racial prejudice. He informs them that he does not hold the atrocities of the past against white people. Mandela assured his white staff, and the rest of South Africa's whites, that "what is past is passed, *wat is verby is verby*"; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which began in 1995, became an exemplar of this forgiveness mandate. To set up the new South Africa, Mandela wanted everyone to start off on a clean slate as "we look to the future now" (*Invictus*, 2009). The new South Africa envisioned by Nelson Mandela required a more futuristic perspective, one that embraced that the past was past and that the future had so much more to offer the nation as an integrated society. The film itself does not dwell on the past but reflects the divisions and challenges faced in the establishment of a new South Africa.

Invictus is not a film about white remorse and black resentment. The film shows how the various identities in the country encountered the political change. Tony Kgoroge's character, Jason, gives a sense of the black people's expectation of the new South Africa in relation to white people. Jason fails to understand why the president would place white people as part of presidential security; for him, these men, previous Secret Security for the Apartheid government, could have been responsible for the killing of thousands of blacks in the past. He struggles throughout the film to come to terms with having to work side by side with white people, cheer their sport, and so easily forgive and forget the past. He represents the group that was of the opinion that, in order to ensure continued freedom from Apartheid, South Africa should be

entirely under the authority of black South Africans. Mandela tells Jason that “the rainbow nation starts here, reconciliation starts here,” and that his staff ought to embody the message of integration and peace as a model for the rest of the nation. Mandela further exhorts him, saying “forgiveness starts here too; forgiveness liberates the soul, it removes fear... that is why it is such a powerful weapon” (*Invictus*, 2009). In this moment in the film, Mandela re-imagines nation and identity in the new South Africa, breaking the high walls of division set up through years of formalized racism that has caused hostility between blacks and whites. Thus, “without the grand unifier of Nelson Mandela it is likely that there would have been a bloodbath in this country” (West, 2006: 16). There was an urgent need to change attitudes like that of Jason; the country needed a new means of social engagement beyond racism. The rugby World Cup was used as a means toward this end. The Rugby World Cup also provided a platform on which to present this new identity to the rest of the world. For example, when Sports Minister Steven Tswete informs Mandela in *Invictus* that “a billion people from all over the world” will be watching the rugby final, Mandela responds, “this is a great opportunity” (*Invictus*, 2009).

The work of framing nation in post-Apartheid South Africa required a process of abandoning longstanding ideologies of segregation and simultaneously integrating all peoples of South Africa under one concept of a reconciled nation. Aware of the racial tension in the country, white hostility and black anger, Mandela worked to project his image of the new South Africa as he envisioned it. “Mandela’s main concern” was “equality among people, the regaining of human dignity and the building of a peaceful nation, in which all people can live together” (Mayer, 2005: 104). His aim in using rugby was “to lay the foundations of reconciliation between blacks and whites...” (Benoliel, 2012: 92). The 1995 Rugby World Cup was the first major international event of the newly established democratic nation. As Charles Greyvenstein noted,

“that the World Cup was held in South Africa was in itself a dream come true” (1995: 276). The world that had imposed sanctions against the country and seen protests against the national team on tours now also believed that this was a momentous time in South Africa’s history because of the liberation from the oppression of Apartheid. Rugby, which was previously recognized as the symbol of segregation, was being transformed to serve as a vehicle for transformation.

The film depicts, in three significant scenes, the racial identity imbued in this particular sport. The first scene takes place at the first rugby match. Mandela greets each player as “son”, while Chester William, who is the only coloured player in the team at that time, is treated differently through being addressed by his name. This is a poignant moment in the film; the use of ‘son’ for the white players becomes exemplary for the whole nation; Mandela includes them as part of a family, a South African family. Also, calling Chester by name is evidence of Mandela’s previous deliberate ignorance of the white players. Mandela has in common with Brenda, his personal assistant, the fact that during his years at Robben Island prison he only cheered for the Springbok’s opposition. This was a common practice amongst black people; they blatantly rejected the Springbok, though it was the national team, and cheered for the opposition. Later in the film, Mandela learns the names of the white players and in a later scene calls each one by name. The film also shows that white rugby supporters were not yet willing to yield the Afrikaner nationalism that they attached to the Springboks. At the first rugby game that Mandela attends in the film, many white spectators waved their old South African flags and ‘booed’ the new black President as he walked onto the field. Mandela isolates one man amongst a few who is waving a South African flag and congratulates him for representing the new South Africa. For Mandela this was a sign of hope that this country can change, despite the rude gesture by one of the spectators who throws a beer can at him and misses.

The second scene reflects how black South Africans viewed rugby. The scene shows two women, one white and the other black, handing out clothes in a small church in the township. The white woman excitedly hands out a Springbok jersey to one of the black boys:

White Woman: “You’re a very lucky boy; it’s a real Springbok practice jersey. I know it’s a bit big but it’s warm and it will last forever. Come, come on take it; it’s yours”.

[The boy looks at the woman horrified and runs as fast as he can out of the small church. The white woman is somewhat oblivious to the reason that would lead to such a reaction from the boy, on what she knows as her national team.]

White Woman: “Why won’t he take it?”

Black Woman: “If he wears it, the others in the community will beat him up”.

White Woman: “Oh I see. It’s ’cause the Springboks are playing so badly”.

Black Woman: “No. For them the Springboks still represent Apartheid” (*Invictus*, 2009).

Eastwood places this scene as a very simple but poignant indicator of the way in which black people in this country perceived rugby. One was deemed a traitor for supporting rugby; it was blasphemous to be black and show any support of the Springboks, and one had to avoid this even to the extent of rejecting a much-needed jersey. Here, Eastwood shows how strongly emblematic of Apartheid the rugby jersey was to an ordinary South African young man who grew up seeing the green and gold colours as a signifier for Afrikaner dominance.

The third image then shows how the new national sporting committee deals with rugby as a problem to be rid off. The committee has a private meeting, without the President’s knowledge,

and members unanimously agree to change the jersey colours, emblem, and name of the national rugby team. This was an attempt to remove the historical baggage attached to the Springboks and to rugby as an 'Afrikaner' sport. Mandela arrives just in time to oppose the vote. He justifies this act by stating that changing the name, jersey colours, and symbols of the team will alienate the Afrikaans people. He pleads with the sporting committee in the following speech:

Brothers, sisters, comrades, I am here today because I believe you have made a decision with insufficient information and foresight. I am aware of your earlier vote. I am aware that it was unanimous. Nonetheless, I believe we should restore the Springboks. [*People shout "haaibo" and whisper that the President's request is as unacceptable as it is unbelievable.*]... Restore their name, their emblem and their colours immediately! (*Invictus*, 2009)

The above scene resembles a real life event that took place ten days before the 1995 rugby final in commemoration of June 16, where Mandela addressed a group of black South Africans: "you see this cap I am wearing?" including the Springbok badge, "this cap does honour to our boys who are playing France. I ask you to stand by them because they are our kind" (Booth, 1998: 212). The last phrase, "they are our kind", refers back to calling the players 'son' in an earlier scene; Mandela thus emphasizes that not only should the nation accept rugby as its national sport and support it, but also black people need to accept their white compatriots as family and honour rugby as part of their cultural heritage.

All three images reflect the deeply ingrained racial association that rugby carried, and simultaneously foreshadow the triumph of the final as a national victory over longstanding racism. Mandela urges the nation to no longer relate rugby to just the Afrikaners and to accept

the Springboks as South Africa's national team: "Our enemy is no longer the Afrikaner, they are our fellow South Africans, our partners in democracy, and they treasure Springbok rugby" (*Invictus*, 2009). He places what once was deemed a tool of oppression as a nation-building block before the people, for "this is the time to build our nation, using every single brick available to us, even if that brick comes wrapped in green and gold" (*Invictus*, 2009). This scene reflects the challenging negotiations made, under Mandela's leadership during South Africa's transition, to work towards reconciliation.

The film also shows the difficulty that the team players had with the new transformation. Three significant moments reveal the trajectory of the Springbok players accepting their position as national representatives, a nation inclusive of the previously marginalized black community and culture. The first scene takes place in the gym with the president of the team announcing Mandela's message that the team is to "conduct coaching clinics in the townships all over the country" (*Invictus*, 2009). Their facial expressions and mutterings show their ill feelings regarding this. One player even remarks: "This is complete crap" (*Invictus*, 2009). Another angrily asks: "What are we, some sicker sack now?" (*Invictus*, 2009) Then there is a moment when one of the players asks what Chester, the only black player in the team, thinks about all this. He responds: "Well, I try not to think; it interferes with my rugby" (*Invictus*, 2009). Here, the players use Chester's blackness as the voice of reason and so what he thinks is meant to be the deciding factor; his response, however, plays into a racial stereotype – the token black just going with the flow. Chester's response is senseless and Francois ignores it rightfully. The white players' response to the news suggests that, firstly, they have never been to the townships and have unfounded fears about it, and, secondly, they feel that their national duty is to play as best as they can and thus they should be preparing for their games. The third suggestion made by their

refusal is that they do not want to associate themselves with blacks, or lose the racial exclusivity that they have so far enjoyed. Francois' final comment to them seems to support the latter; "you know times change, and we need to change as well" (*Invictus*, 2009). This is a reality that the players had to accept and could no longer ignore. They do end up going to the township, and the following scene briefly shows the socio-economic disadvantage suffered by the black majority.

The second scene is, for the players visiting the township, an encounter with the other side of South Africa. The camera establishes the sequence using a deep focus shot taken from behind a broken wood stand on the road, and through this we see the rugby team's bus arriving in the background. A black man is sitting on a white tin drum in the foreground in what looks like a ditch. Shacks tightly next to each other fill up the rest of the shot, and there is smoke in the air. The camera pans across and we see more of the ditch in which the man is sitting, as well as a woman and children sitting outside an old shack, looking at the passing bus. Inside the bus, the players are either sleeping or disinterested with only a few looking out the windows. The scene is quiet, except for the musical score and the sound of the bus tires on the road. The camera shows the cluttered township landscape with a slow pan, intercutting with the somber, contemplative look on the players' faces as they observe the reality around them. One of the players comments to another sitting next to him on the bus on what he sees through the window: "Shit," to which the other player replies, "Ja, glad I don't live here, hey" (*Invictus*, 2009). The two players reveal a common response: no one wants to live there, black or white. This can be seen as a poignant moment in the players' lives, and it is one of the longest scenes in the film showing the township and giving a sense of the poverty in South Africa. The players are removed from the comfort of their suburban lives and from their current excitement of the World Cup competition, and are momentarily placed in a world where the socio-economic effects of Apartheid are experienced in

the daily disrepair and fatalism of those in the margins. Thus, despite the film being about overcoming challenges and unifying the nation, it also does not omit the problems that the World Cup could not possibly resolve.

The following scene also portrays the players' attitude to Mandela's demands in the film. The players are sitting in what looks like a conference room, leisurely throwing around a rugby ball. The camera pans around to the door of the room, Francois enters with the team Coach and President, a sense of urgency in his walk. He is holding papers, which we soon find out are the lyrics to *Nkosi Sikelela*, the present South African national anthem, which at the time in which the film is set was still regarded as the black people's anthem. Francois gives the players a page each and, upon recognizing the song, their faces turn hostile. Francois is careful, preempting the response as he informs them, "guys we need to learn this song, we can't just mouth the words anymore" (*Invictus*, 2009). The responses go as follows: The first player retorts: "Nobody cares, as long as we're winning the matches". Francois replies to this by addressing the whole team: "You're wrong, they do care". Another player roughly scrunches the paper and throws it away, stating that "it's their bloody song, not ours". A third player also throws his paper on the floor, protesting, "flippen' terrorist song man, they used to arrest you for singing it". Francois attempts to calm them by saying, "right, and now its one of our anthems". One player quickly points out the language barrier posed by *Nkosi Sikelela* for the Afrikaans-speaking group. He tells Francois: "I can't even read it or pronounce the words". Francois at this point gives up and says, disheartened, "all right okes, it's optional; take it if you want to", and of course they all throw the song on the floor. At this point in the film there has been no clear indication of Francois' ideological position in all this. Thus far he has just served as a messenger for the President. When he turns around, however, and tells the team what the song means, one can attribute that

moment entirely to him: “It means God Bless Africa, which, you have to admit, we could use,” (*Invictus*, 2009) he mentions as he exits, leaving the players contemplating his words with slight nods of the head.

A few things are revealed in this scene, one being a clear understanding that be it rugby for the blacks or *Nkosi Sikelela* for the whites, the vehicles used for national transformation in this film, and its context, were negatively associated with the history of Apartheid. A change in the mindsets of the people needed to take place so that these historically distinct cultural and national signifiers would have new meanings. The white players are clearly not interested in associating themselves with blacks, be it in the township or in singing ‘their’ anthem, in the same way that the sporting committee and the young boy wanted nothing to do with the Springbok colours and emblem. The flag, the anthem, and the national rugby team all become symbols of the new national politic which represents unity. The new South Africa “posited the citizen as necessarily a member of a nation. [A] bearer, in other words, of some or other quality of population” (Chipkin, 2007: 99). Mandela’s concern in the film is thus to show the world a unified image of the nation using these symbolic forms, and simultaneously to politically integrate the people as one collective identity.

The third and final scene shows a change in the players’ attitude. The scene takes place the day before the final games of the World Cup, and thus foreshadows the final sequences of the film. In an overhead shot, from the point of view of Mandela on a helicopter, we see the players training in a secure field. Mandela lands and is welcomed by the players who, at this point, seem to have given up their antagonism toward his demands. Mandela greets as many of them by name as he can, wishing them good luck. The point of significance is when a player called Hennie, one of the names Mandela remembers, hands him a cup on behalf of the whole team.

Mandela thanks the team with an encouragement revealing a sense of unification; “your country supports you completely” (*Invictus*, 2009). The sequence of scenes thus far, from the opening sequence to the rejection of the anthem by the players, have revealed an ‘us’ and ‘them’ attitude treating black and white people as distinctly separate communities with nothing in common. Mandela’s use of the words “your country” in this scene includes everyone, whether black or white. The background song of this specific scene, titled “colour blind,” is noteworthy as it lyrically sets the mood for the scene and serves as a musical narrative about unity and change. The song starts in the previous scene, with Mandela giving an interview for a sport television show; he declares, “I am one hundred percent behind our boys. After all, if I cannot change when circumstances demand it, how can I expect others to?” (*Invictus*, 2009) These words are the diegetic ‘note’ that the song starts on. The final scenes are then reflective of this unity and change.

The final sequences are a series of lighthearted cinematic moments that culminate in the victory at the end of the film. The Springboks beat the Australian Wallabies, Mandela celebrates the victory dancing with a beautiful lady, and the players get drunk at a bar. The next morning, the players are taken on a trip to Robben Island, where Francois makes sense of the poem that Mandela had given him in an earlier scene, during their first formal meeting. The poem is William Ernest Henley’s “Invictus” (1875). The shots seem to infer that Francois gets to understand and connect with Mandela in this scene. He locks himself in Mandela’s cell, where Mandela spent most of his twenty-seven years during Apartheid, and measures its smallness by spreading his arms across it from the wall to the burglar doors. Francois walks to the window. A reverse shot from outside shows the imprisoned Francois framed behind the window bars. The film cuts back to Francois looking outside at a pile of rocks. A voice-over of Mandela slowly

reciting the words of the poem starts, and prisoners emerge like ghosts occupied in the menial task of breaking the stone; among them is Mandela. Francois turns his glance back into the cell and sees a ghost image of Mandela with his back turned from Francois and hunched over, reading the poem out of a book. Francois looks back out the window and the ghost figures, one of them Mandela looking back at him, dissolve into dust.

This sequence ends with Francois outside at the quarry, staring at a medium shot of Mandela's ghost image, looking pensively at him. The final words of the poem resound: "And yet the menace of the years finds, and shall find me, unafraid. [...] I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul" (*Invictus*, 2009). In a later scene, Francois reflects, in a conversation with his wife the night before the final: "I was thinking how you can spend thirty years in a tiny cell and come out ready to forgive the people who put you there" (*Invictus*, 2009). Until this point in the film, the country is depicted as divided and then brought together by Mandela's attempts to unify it through the message of reconciling the two racial groups. Through Francois' reflection on Mandela's non-violence approach to change from racial oppression, we make sense of the magnitude of Mandela's campaign to unify the nation. This moment highlights Mandela's heroic sacrifice and the powerful message of racial unity and national peace.

The following scenes in the film reflect the unity and change that Mandela envisioned. The Springboks continue to win and qualify for the finals. The presidential security guards play rugby together in the back garden of the presidential home, Mandela and Brenda watching them through the window. Mandela notes the significance of this moment: "Still think I'm wasting my time with the rugby?" (*Invictus*, 2009) Back in the Pienaar home, Francois brings an extra ticket home for their domestic worker to join his family in supporting the Springboks at the final match, including her in the Pienaar family. The young boy who had refused the Springbok jersey

journeys from the township to the stadium to support the Springboks as his national team, even if the only way he can support them is by sitting outside the stadium with a couple of white policemen drinking Coca Cola and listening to the game on the radio. The only figure in the film that remains unchanged, or perhaps not drastically changed, is Mandela's chief bodyguard, Jason. He is also the voice of reality in the film, as he does not buy into the mythicized unity between blacks and whites. In an empty stadium scene, Jason speaks to his white co-security guard: "Have I ever mentioned to you that I hate rugby?" We expect him to announce that he has changed how he feels but instead his concern is toward Mandela's safety: "I just wanna get him [Mandela] through tomorrow safely, that's all" (*Invictus*, 2009). He later presents the safety strategy to the security team and during his presentation further reveals that "the tickets sold out long before the team became popular. There's not exactly going to be the rainbow nation out there, and that's the reality" (*Invictus*, 2009). Jason is thus of the opinion that they should not fool themselves into believing that the stadium will be full of spectators reflecting the entire South African racial demographic. We see some of Jason's expectations come true in the final sequence. The crowd flocks into the stadium; most spectators are white and the few black people among them are vendors. This is not to say that there were no black people watching the game, for the young boy and probably many others were right outside the stadium. Some gathered around small television sets in the townships, taverns, lounges and bars, while others strained for a glimpse of the broadcast through people's windows.

The final images represent a sense of belonging and national unity. The last moments of the film portray excitement, optimism, and celebration. The crowds cheer in unison, black and white alike shouting "Nelson, Nelson", and singing "Ole, Ole, Ole-South Africa". (*Invictus*, 2009) A highflying jet labeled "Go Bokke" stirs the crowd to more jubilation, flags raised high; the

camera pans around the vast stadium and all that one can see is green and gold. As the game intensifies, the crowd starts singing *Shosholoza* to encourage the team; this famous Ndebele chorus about enduring hardship became a major South African labour and struggle anthem, which Mandela and comrades also sang in prison. In this moment, the song takes on a new meaning, as what once belonged to black people under the power of white supremacy is imbued with the cheering of the Springboks to victory. One can say that a cultural trade takes place in this scene. The black people share their songs and the white people share their sport, all for the sake of attaining national victory in what is now a post-Apartheid South Africa. Francois' words become a moving recognition of this milestone. He shouts to his team in a scrum: "Do you hear, listen to your country...this is it, this is your destiny!" (*Invictus*, 2009) This was a moment of national inspiration, the nation united, standing behind its team, and singing one anthem together, celebrating victory in a sport that was no longer racially defined, raising one flag and not holding on to the past.

The final kick sealed the victory of the world cup. "It was a moment of intense nationalism, a moment when South Africans formed a 'natural' community whose interests transcended individual differences and social conditions" (Booth, 1998: 218). The streets were crowded with people celebrating, blacks and whites shaking hands awkwardly (like the security guards), spontaneously, with no regard of race. The dream had come true, even if temporarily; the nation was together as one, the cup of victory was lifted, the country was celebrated by "forty-three million South Africans," and the rest of the world were witness to the miracle (*Invictus*, 2009). The last scene is a wide panning shot that takes us through the streets outside Ellis Park Stadium, where the game took place, the presidential party driving through the crowd, unhurried. Mandela sits in the back seat; he takes off his glasses and wipes tears from his eyes. He puts his glasses

back on, a smile crosses his face and the poem, *Invictus*, which, he told Francois, carried him through the years, is recited as the film fades to end.

Invictus is the story of a united nation that challenged its racial divisions and relinquished its fears for the sake of establishing a new national political identity under Nelson Mandela's leadership. Though the story is relevant to the South African audience, Eastwood uses Mandela, as the first black president of South Africa, to exemplify the sort of positive political change that the film's American audiences hope for. The film thus becomes an allegory with which to inspire the US nation during its transformation under the leadership of its first black president, Barack Obama. Bernard Benoliel writes: "Despite appearances to the contrary, it is clearly America that Eastwood's film *Invictus* (2009) wants to address. Released after the gloomy George Bush years the United States the film is talking to is cleared of its demons..." (2012: 90). As a national film, *Invictus* addresses two nations, the new rainbow nation of South Africa and the older multicultural nation of the USA for whom "Obama's election to the US presidency marked the dawn of a new era" (New Political Science, 2010: 627).

The challenges that Mandela's leadership faced went beyond that of unifying and reimagining the nation using a racially loaded symbol as portrayed in *Invictus*. Socioeconomic inequality remained the backdrop of the excitement about Mandela's election, the new era, and the Springboks' win. Poverty, determining a racially marked chasm whereby the rich are white and the black are poor, soon led to a hike in the crime statistics and a grave disillusionment about the new South Africa. Bernard Beck writes: "In the gritty world of ordinary life, our neat picture of a tidy cultural system is spoiled by the daily demands of survival." (2011: 24) These demands characterized the experience of the new South Africa, and the "imagery of the rainbow nation was no more than ornamental"; for it was soon clear that Apartheid has deeply scarred the nation

(Alexander, 2002: 82). I agree with Alexander that “there is no doubt that the attainment of a liberal democratic dispensation in the land of Apartheid was one of the most significant events of the twentieth century” (2002: 1). However, the political change itself, like the Rugby World Cup event, could not solve the problems of South Africa. The world cup posited an image of what racial national unity can be. What the film does not explore in its representation of the glamourized Rugby World Cup at a pivotal time in South Africa’s history is the propensity for violence and the still pervasive issue of poverty which lurked beyond the stadium walls and could not be dealt with through one event or the problems around ideas of nation. Rather, what takes place in the film should be seen as a starting point.

Despite the reconciliation efforts of the 1990s, racial antagonism “haunts [...] the twenty-first century” of South Africa (Alexander, 2002: 82). For example, one of the aims of the 2010 FIFA World Cup was to reinstate a sense of multiracial and multicultural unity, and the film was released a year after African foreigners, regarded as ‘outsiders’, suffered violence at the hands of black South Africans. The unity that Mandela is shown in the film to have achieved was a ‘temporary illusion’ as divisions spread throughout South Africa, mostly rooted in the need for socio-economic equality. Alexander further argues that “the notion of the rainbow nation, [was] undoubtedly a well-intended attempt to gloss over the contradictions that characterize post-Apartheid South Africa but the illusion of coherence and unity which it is intended to convey dissipates at the first touch of the bitter reality of racial, class and caste divisions” (Alexander, 2002: 106). The following chapters reflect this understanding, as in Ralph Ziman’s *Jerusalema* in which we are shown the social conditions and problems of post-Apartheid South Africa, and in Jahmil Qubheka’s *Descent* the images of xenophobic violence darkly contrast Mandela’s final shot in *Invictus* where racism and economic disparity were temporarily forgotten. What

Jerusalema and *Descent* provide is a cinematic narrative about the marginalized from the moment of glory at the advent of South Africa's democracy to the present. *Jerusalema* and *Descent* reflect Chipkin's argument: "It is necessary to liberate the people from political and economic bondage" (Chipkin, 2007: 106). While *Invictus* focuses on political liberation, Ziman and Qubheka's films focus on the results of economic bondage on South Africa's post-Apartheid peoples and identities. As Robert Ross stated, "there are fairly short limits to the length of time that a country can live on euphoria, even one as great as that South Africa experienced in 1994" (1999: 198) and during the sports victory in 1995. *Invictus* hints at the socio-economic problems during this time but focuses on showing the same image that Mandela showed to the world, effectively a romantic vision of a once divided nation being united in a moment of glory. The following chapter, in which the film *Jerusalema* is discussed, contrasts this idyllic image of South Africa with the disillusionment of the marginalized who are still subject to the economic inequalities entrenched by the Apartheid regime.

Chapter Two: Ralph Ziman's *Jerusalema*



Jerusalema. (2009). Lucky and Zakes by a Hijack Spot in Soweto: Screenshot

Between April 2008 and March 2009, 14915 car hijackings occurred throughout the country, as well as 1437 truck hijacks, 18438 burglaries in residential premises, 13920 at non-residential premises, and 18148 murders. In Gauteng alone, 7662 cars and 906 trucks were hijacked, 8190 homes were burgled, 6244 businesses were robbed, and 3963 people murdered (South African Police Service). I chose the statistics from 2008 to 2009 because *Jerusalema* was released within this temporal context, and the film highlights crimes such as hijacking and burglaries. One of the major issues that characterize post-Apartheid South Africa is crime. Because of the vast poverty gap, a strong sense of entitlement and conditions of hopelessness, South Africans have increasingly become either perpetrators or victims of crime. Since the advent of democracy

attempts to alleviate poverty have been set in place, yielding with the establishment of black economic empowerment (BEE) an increasing number of black economic successes. More black people attend universities, hold non-domestic positions in highly ranked corporations, run official departments and engage in international relations. However, the need for jobs, finances to pay for university, or feed their families has not dwindled much. The new black working class and elite group usually migrates from villages and townships in smaller towns to the city for better chances at success. It is therefore poignant that a film like *Jerusalema* should mark a similar journey from the township to the city. This film, Ralph Ziman's 2008 debut feature film, captures the new South Africa since the advent of democracy through the recollection of Lucky Kunene, the film's main character. *Jerusalema* brings crime, success, and cities together in a fictional narrative about a young man whose desire to further his education fails due to the lack of finances. He joins one of the local car hijacking gangs in the township, but is soon driven away from his Soweto home and runs to Johannesburg as a way of escaping the police and starting a new and better life.

This chapter discusses how the film reflects the problem of crime through the fictional narrative and character of Lucky Kunene. By using Lucky's story of crime as a means to an end, the film highlights one of the major socio-political issues keeping the crime rate up, namely, poverty. This is not to suggest that poverty is the reason for crime, instead, in my opinion, that the lack of opportunities, as seen in the film, is often what causes people who are poor, and have no other immediate means to meet their needs or progress, to commit crime. I will also be looking at the use of the cinematic landscape, moving from the township (Soweto) to the city (Johannesburg). I will shortly discuss how landscape and location work as allegorical spaces, Soweto as a space of lack and hopelessness, Johannesburg as a Promised Land where dreams

come true and there is no more lack. In this way, the film plays with the notion of a South African dream – the idea of a Promised Land and a new Jerusalem, as the film title reveals. The film starts at the end, with Lucky in Johannesburg, then goes back in time to Soweto and returns to Johannesburg before the final scene of Lucky at a beach in Durban. I will follow this sequence in discussing the film, first looking at the opening scene, then the township narrative, to end with Johannesburg.

If *Invictus* illustrates the ideological promise of the new South Africa, *Jerusalema* reveals the expedient pursuit of attaining the material promise of equality. *Jerusalema* is a cinematic testimony reflecting that democracy has failed to bring a better life for all. The film brings to the fore the issue of socio-economic disparity and comments on the “fragile stability”² of the rainbow nation. Shaw and Gastrow write: “In the meantime, high levels of crime have important political consequences. For whites, they are a key factor eroding confidence in the new democratic order;” and given that it is mostly poor black communities who carry this heavy burden, “crime undermines the promise that democracy brought of a better life” (2002: 255). *Jerusalema* shows a South Africa in need of urgent pragmatic socio-economic change, without which the epidemic of crime, seen as the only way out of poverty, and thus exacerbating poverty, will persist in greater measures. The film’s image of a socially conscious criminal who might contribute to social transformation is only a mirage in the same way that the new South Africa is a socio-economic illusion. One of the main themes of the film is the disappointed hope suffered by the masses that believed in this illusion.

² Belongs to title of Jo Beall, Stephen Gelb and Shireen Hassim’s journal article “Fragile Stability: State and Society in Democratic South Africa”. Citation: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 31. Number 4. December 2005.

Jerusalema was released a year before *Invictus*, yet its narrative is set as a continuous counter-narrative to the themes portrayed in the latter. In contrast to the colourful images and euphoric ending of *Invictus* in which the rainbow people are shown dancing in the streets, *Jerusalema* shows the dark side of the new South Africa. The promising rainbow nation celebrated at the end of *Invictus* seems a fallacy in light of the images presented in *Jerusalema*, as the socio-economic reality of many black South Africans becomes the focus of Ziman's narrative. *Jerusalema* reveals the material desires and needs of South Africa's poor majority, reflecting the slow economic change since the advent of democracy. *Jerusalema* is "a timely political critique of economic imbalance in the second decade of South African democracy" (Lehman, 2011: 114). Thus, according to Lehman, Ziman "intends a deeper exploration of the nation's promise in 1994" (2011: 123). Ziman ties the present to the past, inferring, through the scene in which the journalist asks Lucky to tell his story from the beginning, that his problems and present condition is a direct result of that time in South Africa's history. Lucky reflects back to 1994.³ He begins his story soon after the advent of democracy, during the turn from Apartheid South Africa where white South Africans enjoyed privileges that were prohibited for blacks, to the new South Africa that black people expected to be the answer to all their problems. Lucky says the following about this glorious moment: "The beginning. Soweto, 1994. Freedom. A new South Africa. A new dawn, a new day, a fresh start, a clean page. A new beginning, and I had dreams" (*Jerusalema*, 2008). He recollects the streets filled with people celebrating the release of Mandela, carrying large posters of Mandela's face, and waving high the ANC flag. This was a great moment of optimism in South Africa. The new South Africa was a time for "dreams" to come true (*Jerusalema*, 2008). The South African dream started with the end of Apartheid (Hunt

3 In 1994, April 27th was the first democratic election in South Africa. Nelson Mandela was elected the first black President of the country and the leader of a non-racist South Africa.

and Lascaris, 1998: 23). The South African dream is concerned with “creating a better society and brighter future for the nation as a whole” (1998: 23). “The dream is important to South Africans. It consists of racial harmony, democracy, equal rights, equal employment opportunities, and better access to education. The biggest single threat to the Dream is the growth of crime” (1998: 44). Ziman uses crime being the means by which Lucky attains his dream to make a critical commentary on the lack of legitimate opportunities for people in Lucky’s condition. Poverty is the greatest threat to South Africa’s dream because it is the poor who do not have access to the dream of a better and brighter life and often compromise by committing crime in order to share in the promise of equality. Lucky’s own dream was to become a prominent business man, owning a beach house in Durban and driving a BMW 7 Series. The beginning of *Jerusalema* in 1994 connects to the ending of *Invictus* in 1995. The subsequent reality of the new South Africa represented in *Jerusalema* shows that the end of Apartheid did not mean an automatic provision of equal resources and privileges for all South Africans.

The film opens with a wide skyline shot of Johannesburg, the iconic Hillbrow tower centering the image. The fast pace sunsets and sunrises over the skyline illuminate the image and give it a dream-likeness, like an illusory pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The film is titled *Jerusalema*, also known as *Jerusalema Entsha*, which means ‘the new Jerusalem’. Because of the title, one can infer that Johannesburg, and specifically Hillbrow, represents the idea of a Jerusalem, a Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. The other title for the film is *Gangster’s Paradise*, which further confirms the paradise/Promised Land motif running through the film. *Jerusalema* producer, Tendeka Matatu, writes:

Many people from all over the continent travel to Hillbrow as they see the possibility of a better life: is it not strange that in such a world there can still be hope? But a feeling of deprivation invades the senses, as in this world the best that

most people can hope for, is to make a quick buck selling crack, their bodies or cheap orange chips (Karen van Schalkwyk, 2006).

Ziman also declares, “South Africa post-apartheid was a kind of New Jerusalem. It was a beginning. A new kind of Promised Land” (Lehman, 2011: 122). Later in the film when Lucky and his best friend Zakes move to the city of Johannesburg from Soweto, we understand that it is in pursuit of a better life where their dreams are most likely to come true. To start the film with this fantastical skyline image sets up the idealistic notion of Johannesburg as the imaginary paradise, a place of economic freedom and progression. The city of Johannesburg is the economic hub of the country. The time-lapse of the title sequence alludes to the daily business and fast life of the metropolis. Ziman juxtaposes the dreamlike skyline shots with less appealing shots of the inner city of Hillbrow, particularly the residential area where Lucky will later live. Shots of rundown buildings, broken windows, dirty clothes hanging on fences, and filthy, cluttered streets, all give the sense of inescapable poverty that characterizes Hillbrow. Already, the beginning of the film reveals that Hillbrow as the “Promised Land” is an illusion – an unrealistic dream. What the closer shots of the dilapidated buildings and polluted streets provides is a more realistic depiction of Hillbrow that unmasks the idea of a Promised Land. For Lucky, Hillbrow is “the new Jerusalem, [...] just the place where poor black people come to make a living” (*Jerusalema*, 2009). For Leah on the other hand, the Jewish girl who becomes Lucky’s girlfriend in Johannesburg, Hillbrow “looks more like a Sodom and Gomorrah” (*Jerusalema*, 2006). *Jerusalema* presents an un-romanticized image of the new South Africa, showing, as Ziman calls it, the “non-tourist” (*ScreenAfrica*, Aug. 2006) side of the country.

As a critical commentary on the new South Africa, the film illustrates that there is no Promised Land, at least not one without a gangster’s paradise in which crime rules. Hillbrow is

therefore a very apt location for a film that addresses crime as a means for success. Famously known as South Africa's crime capital, Hillbrow is also one of Johannesburg's busiest business centres. The significance of Hillbrow within the narrative context of the film is to show what Lesly Marx describes, that "the brave new world has given birth to mutations of poverty, [...], crime and rampant violence" (2010: 261). I would like to claim therefore that through the use of Hillbrow as both an idealistic Promised Land and realistic crime centre, *Jerusalema* makes no clear distinction between success and crime inferring that in South Africa, at least, crime and success are linked. The idea of a "gangster's paradise" further alludes to this idea, that the Promised Land exists as a constant negotiation between success and crime.

The opening sequence also sets up the gangster narrative. An overhead shot shows Lucky lying on a bed, blood covering his waistline and the area of the bed where he is lying, indicating that he has been seriously wounded perhaps by being shot. The room is small and unkempt. A closer cut to his bedside table shows a gun, confirming that he may have been shot, although at this point there is no direct evidence of that except for the gun and his wound. The police find him in this state and he is soon in prison. This is followed by a news report announcing that he, famously known as the "hoodlum of Hillbrow", had been captured. At this point in the film we do not know who he is and why he was shot. The audience only gets the details of his criminal association through the police and news report. Therefore, even though the film starts at the end, we already associate Lucky with crime, and possible imprisonment as his end, thus "failure" frames his dreams and aspirations.

Lucky's beginnings are similar to those of the protagonists of classic gangster films like *Scarface* (Howard Hughes, 1932) and *Goodfellas* (Martin Scorsese, 1990), in which the 'dead end' prospects of lead characters, and an even greater desire to make a lot of money fast, lead

them to a life of crime. In his volume on Martin Scorsese's films Casillo writes, "Not infrequently, gangster films imply that a gangster chooses his career largely or partly through the influence of a flawed social and familial environment" (2006: 275). In Lucky's case, the inability to pay for university fees hastens his involvement with Nazareth (which he rejected earlier in the film) who starts him up as a car hijacker. The gangster figure thus executes a social commentary of his conditions, and yet, in his pursuit of 'success', also represents the ideals of the very society that he rebels against. Gabree further notes: "If he [the gangster] is the personification of much that is wrong with America, he is also an expression of American ideals. He achieves many of the goals – power, money, fame, status – that are held out by society as symbols of success" (1973: 14). For Lucky, the ideal was being able to provide for his family, a house in the suburbs, and a fancy, expensive car. As director, Ziman does not attempt to create a South African gangster genre but works with the already existing forms to tell a uniquely South African story. John Gabree gives a viable and succinct definition of the gangster film as "films about organized criminal activity and those that have been deeply influenced by gangster film iconography" (1973: 10). Iconography points to the "generic qualities of the whole film", the "dress-code of characters in the film" – for example Nazareth's long leather coat is reminiscent of John Travolta's character in *Pulp Fiction* – and the "historical period of the film" (Hayward, 2006: 214). *Jerusalema*'s use of the urban space, guns, cars, and the final face-off that takes place in Tony Ngu's bar are all signs of its belonging to the gangster film genre (2006: 214).

The film also comments on the potential influence of gangster films on crime in South Africa. Nazareth is obsessed with Hollywood gangster films, from which he draws his heist plans. Lucky retrospectively mentions in the voice-over: "If Hollywood could teach you to knock over cars, bank robberies were a walk in the park" (*Jerusalema*, 2008). This statement infers that

Hollywood gangster films were treated as tutoring materials, for gang leaders like Nazareth, with strategies on how to commit ambitious crimes and get away from the police. Heist sequences from these movies were so detailed that they provided enough information for Nazareth and his gang to be highly creative and skilled criminals. However, the film does not suggest that the problem of crime is caused by the influx and mimicry of gangster films. *Jerusalema* draws attention to the influence of gangster films in the practice of crime, and the film also reflects on itself as having the same potential. Ntongela Masilela denounces the idea that gangster films should be held responsible for crime: “A healthy mind in a healthy body in a healthy home in a healthy environment can see hundreds of gangster films and think nothing of them as exciting or dull entertainment, without once thinking of emulating them. It is the social conditions that produce the criminal” (Masilela, 2003: 22). It is not clear that crime in the township is directly related to mimicking gangster films, but it is very possible that the romanticization of gangsters in Hollywood movies, and the detailed action sequences, have had an impact on how gangsters operate in this country. Masilela is right, however, in pointing out that the social conditions are what produce criminals, and this is what *Jerusalema* emphasizes. This is not to say that every poor person turns to crime and that only those living in squatter camps and townships are criminal, but rather that gangster films cannot be held responsible for crime in this country in the same way that poverty is not to be blamed for every criminal in the streets.

The opening sequence of the film ends with Lucky jailed. A journalist by the name of Loretta Dlamini visits him and asks Lucky to start his story from the beginning. The film goes back in time to 1994 in Soweto and follows the journey of how Lucky went from being a schoolboy with dreams to a criminal running to Johannesburg to escape the police. This part of the film deals

with three key aspects of Lucky's life: his dream, his condition, and his relationship with Nazareth.

1. His Dream (The Entrepreneurial Dream)

“Jerusalema explores the will of the entrepreneurial spirit to assert itself in the face of degradation and decay” (Ziman cited in Monenyweb.co.za: 07 September 2008).

In the first image we see of the young Lucky, he is with his best friend Zakes, and both are dressed in their school uniform, riding a fast train, selling chips, sweets, and cheap perfume. Through this scene we already associate Lucky with business, or some form of entrepreneurship. We do not know why he is selling things on the train; it could be to feed his family like so many young people of his age from underprivileged backgrounds, or as a way of getting extra pocket money. Lucky and Zakes are tapping into this informal business culture as start-out entrepreneurs. This could also be a comment on the black entrepreneurial boom that took place after 1994, and increasingly with the establishment of Black Economic Empowerment.

The ideal of many young black South Africans was to own a business, make enough money to get out of the township and live in the suburbs, possibly driving a fancy car. Lucky personifies these ideals in the following scene. This scene shows Lucky and Zakes, still in school uniform, walking through the dusty streets of Soweto. Zakes admires a red sports car that drives past them. The dialogue between Zakes and Lucky sets up the dichotomy between dreams and reality that is a thread throughout the film:

Zakes: “Shit. That’s what I call a car”⁴

Lucky: (gives a look of indifference) “You’re crazy. I’m telling you my friend I’m going to have a seven series, a BMW. I’ll park it outside my nice house in Durban.”

Zakes: “*Uthatha ma chance*, you wish. You’d have to win the lottery to get all that” (*Jerusalema*, 2008).

Zakes admires the car with the understanding that he would have to be rich to drive one like it, whereas Lucky tells him with certainty the kind of car he will own. Lucky is presented as more optimistic than Zakes; he believes he will own a beach house and insinuates that winning the lottery will have nothing to do with it. Lucky’s rejection of the lottery as a means to fulfill his dream suggests that he wants to work for it, achieve his success through legitimate means and not rely on luck. Crime as a means to this end later on in the film thus becomes a contradiction of this early stance.

2. His Condition (Poverty and Desire)

The township environment in which this part of the film is set indicates poverty through the aridness of the dusty streets, the small government homes with peeling paint walls and torn fences, people playing dice in the street corner hoping to win a few Rands, and children running around in ragged clothes. The scene in which we see Lucky’s mother running out of a blue painted RDP⁵ house waving a letter becomes a poignant moment in the film. The effects of Lucky’s condition as previously disadvantaged and poor are reflected strongly in this scene. She gives the letter to Lucky, who gives her a loaf of brown bread and a small box of milk. His

⁴ All direct quotes by the characters are taken from the film and not a screenplay of the film, and thus quoted as performed.

⁵ Houses built as part of the government’s Reconstruction and Development Program

mother smiles with expectant urgency as he opens the letter and reads it aloud, “it is our sincere pleasure to offer you a place in our School of Business Studies. (High-fiving Zakes) *Mfethu, ndingenile baba* (I got in, my friend)” (*Jerusalema*, 2008). This excitement is followed by a cut to a close-up of Lucky, his face saddened. He purses his lips tightly. The camera cuts to Lucky’s mom, her smile changed to a look of confusion. A shot reverse shot between Lucky and Zakes follows:

Lucky: “there’s no scholarship.”

Zakes: “what does that mean?”

Lucky: “It means I have to pay my own fees” (*Jerusalema*, 2008).

Education is one of the key tools for transforming the economic situation of our country’s poverty-stricken societies. The government established a financial aid system that would assist individuals like Lucky who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and show good academic potential to further their studies. The National Financial Aid System’s (NSFAS) goal is to provide the means for financially needy students to achieve their dreams and in turn contribute toward the development of the country.

The letter thus marks a significant moment in the film and in Lucky’s life. He does not get any financial aid and so his hope for a better life does not seem realistic. Also, it indicates that even though avenues like NSFAS are available, not everyone who is disadvantaged gets to benefit from these opportunities. The lack of finances to pay for his education becomes a problematic factor for Lucky and many like him who dream of escaping poverty.

The scene that follows emphasizes the impact of Lucky’s inability to go to school as a loss, not only to him but also to his whole family whose hope for a better life rest on his success. The film cuts to an evening scene inside of the Kunene kitchen. The canted angle shot frames the kitchen in such a way that it is claustrophobically small. Lucky, his mother, Zakes, and four little

children are seated around a dinner table. The smallness of the space and the old furniture, along with the dry bread passed around the table, give a clear image of the extent of their lack. It is as though the film is giving us enough justification for the choices that Lucky will make in order to achieve his dream, by portraying the practical reality of his financial lack. On the table is a paraffin lamp, an enamel jug (filled with black tea, and seen when Lucky's mother pours the tea into her cup) with different coloured enamel cups, a loaf of unsliced white bread, and an open can of beans. One of Lucky's younger siblings complains about Zakes eating with them all the time because this results in less food for them. What this infers is that Zakes possibly eats with the Kunenes all the time because he has no food in his own home. Having grown up in a community and home similar to Lucky's and Zakes, I have witnessed that it is often the case that the poor become a burden, and also the only refuge, to each other in townships like these.

The kitchen table becomes an interesting way of reflecting the economic change that comes when Lucky starts out as a hijacker later on in the film. This is a trope Orson Welles used in *Citizen Kane* to reflect the loss of intimacy between he and his wife. Welles starts out with a small table for two and, keeping the space the same, changes the length of the table, as well as the height of the flower arrangements, to show the distance in their relationship. Ziman uses a similar idea. He uses a montage sequence that shows the change in the food that the Kunenes start to eat when Lucky brings money home. Instead of the dry bread, black tea, and an uncooked can of beans from the earlier scene, pap and beef fill the plates. His mother smiles and the children do not complain about Zakes's presence. This is followed by a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken after the second hijack. This montage of images shows the material changes that Lucky makes possible as he progressively gets richer with each hijack. In the montage, he is shown bringing home groceries, TVs, presents for the children, clothes and shoes, and new furniture.

The film thus calls attention to the need of the poor for material provisions. MacDonald writes that “many black people are merely interested in satisfying their material demands: housing, education, job opportunities, clothing, bread and butter, etc.” (2006: 69). This is a moot point, but what is shown in the film through this montage is the drive for the provision of basic material needs. Lucky’s pursuit of business success and a stable economic future; despite the corrupt means, is evidence that black people also want the security enjoyed by most whites. The only reason why poor black people would be seen as “merely interested in satisfying their material demands”, as MacDonald claims, is because the white people who judge this materialism already have access to those demands and therefore do not need to act in desperate ways. Beal’s words reflect the economic condition more clearly:

South Africans are not yet one nation, but two nations . . . the one black, the other white . . . [The latter] is relatively prosperous and has ready access to a developed . . . infrastructure . . . The second, and larger, nation of South Africa is black and poor, [and] lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped infrastructure . . . we have not made the extra effort to generate the material resources we have to invest to change the condition of the black poor (2005: 692).

Jerusalema shows an even bigger problem: the further narrowing of options caused by Lucky’s lack of funds to attend university. Lucky tries his hand at entrepreneurship by washing cars, but the tediously slow income renders nothing but useless coins. Zakes offers a quicker solution, as shown in the following scene when they rob a convenience store, owned by an Indian man, by emptying its cash drawer. This moment becomes significant as from then on they turn to Nazareth for provision, a man who had earlier proposed that Lucky join his gang. Lucky narrates: “When financial aid for university proved problematic, Nazareth organized us an apprenticeship” (*Jerusalema*, 2008). The fact that Lucky calls the hijacking instruction an ‘apprenticeship’ reflects the notion of many, that crime is a job and thus a valid means of income

the same way a legitimate occupation would be. To provide for his family, and find a way to educate himself, Lucky becomes the criminal he despised in Nazareth earlier in the film. His socio-economic condition thus defeats his desire for an upright way of attaining success and escaping poverty. I will continue to discuss the character of Nazareth in the next section, and Lucky's relationship to him.

3. His relationship with Nazareth

One of the strong influences in Lucky's life was Zakes's older brother, Nazareth. He is a former uMkhonto weSizwe⁶ freedom fighter who, according to the film, was exiled to Russia where he trained as a guerrilla fighter for the liberation of the country. Nazareth represents the disillusioned that fought the struggle for 'freedom' with the hope of attaining economic prosperity and political power at the end of Apartheid. For Nazareth, the fight against Apartheid was aimed at more than thwarting racial injustice; it was also about gaining material wealth. He strongly expresses to Lucky, "I did not fight Apartheid to be poor" (*Jerusalema*, 2008). Nazareth is one of thousands of South Africans who believed that the new South Africa would belong to black people, who would move into the homes owned by whites and take over the economy. He tells drug lord Tony Ngu later in the film: "They told us we were going to punish these whiteys and take from them... All I want is a house in Sandton⁷ and a Mercedes convertible" (*Jerusalema*, 2008). Nazareth felt that the black government led by elite ANC members had failed its soldiers. What Nazareth expected was an economic paradise; what he and many like him found was a nation faced with the bitter reality of poverty.

⁶ 'uMkhonto WeSizwe' means 'the Spear of the Nation'. It was set up during Apartheid as the military wing of the ANC and was meant to help overthrow the Apartheid regime.

⁷ Sandton is an upmarket suburban area near Johannesburg.

Nazareth typifies the township gangster by wearing a long black leather coat, a gold earring in one ear, a black polo neck, and a gold chain around the neck. He also, according to Lucky, had “the biggest cars, the most money, and any woman he wanted” (*Jerusalema*, 2008). Nazareth’s material condition and lifestyle are the subject of a particular fantasy of power and wealth, and this fantasy expresses the sense of entitlement that some South Africans have. For Nazareth, stealing from the whites and the new black elite was merely a form of “affirmative redistribution” (*Jerusalema*, 2008). With racial reconciliation at the advent of South Africa’s democracy came an expectation of equal possession of wealth and resources, and a great sense of entitlement. Lucky shows that he buys into the same ideology when he states: “In the new South Africa, everyone deserves their entitlement, preferably in this lifetime” (*Jerusalema*, 2008).

The relationship between Lucky and Nazareth brings to the fore the negotiation between, on the one hand, legitimate means of success that usually require the opportunities that they do not have, and on the other, illegitimate means that mean breaking the law. In the scene in which Nazareth first talks to Lucky in the car, they discuss what the new South Africa means and it is clear from there that Nazareth and Lucky have differing views about it. For Nazareth, post-Apartheid South Africa did not yield the results that he expected, thus hijacking and bank heists are his way of partaking in the South African dream. Lucky, on the other hand, believes that “we didn’t fight Apartheid to become criminals”, which is the only option that Nazareth seems to feel is left for those who did not make it into the new black privileged elite; Lucky later turns to this option when he realizes that he, too, has no other option.

It becomes evident that Ziman is a Hollywood director through his consistent use of American gangster film motifs. He positions Nazareth as the crime boss who offers Lucky an alternative ‘opportunity’ from the ‘difficulties’ of paying for an education. Nazareth proposes a

return to crime as a form of salvation for Lucky. This opportunity, however, is in line with Nazareth's own ideas of attaining wealth and move Lucky away from his original dreams of higher education and legitimate class mobility. Lucky's decision to join Nazareth, and what he calls "the school of life", results in him dropping out of school, rejecting the Bible that his mother offers him for guidance, and instead choosing to read self-help prosperity books like *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie and *Trump: How To Get Rich* by Donald Trump (later in the film). The fact that he accompanies his criminal life with self-education allows the idea of crime being given an equal legitimacy to education as a means to the same end. Education is a legal means to economic success, and Lucky's "school of life" and self-help books make crime seem as equally valid although yielding faster results. The film, therefore, suggests that there are few options for the poor in post-Apartheid South Africa. According to Lucky, and as the narrative of the film reflects, in the new South Africa, "everyone pays their way" (*Jerusalema*, 2008); those who cannot afford to do so steal from those who can.

Throughout the film, Lucky is portrayed as a sympathetic character, and even his attempt to look tough in this scene is a transparent act. Another factor of the gangster film is being applied by Ziman: "The outlaw has always been an attractive figure," (Gabree, 1973: 13) and despite his violence, we relate to his goals and his redemptive attributes, thus never truly despising him. The outlaw is usually seen as a Robin Hood figure who repossesses from the rich what ought to be equally distributed with the poor. "In a world where few enjoy wealth and fewer power, the outlaw has frequently been a hero, a man who beat the system, who made everyone at the bottom feel better by taking a bit off the top" (1973: 13). Lucky maintains this image in his idea of clean crime in which he treats every act as a business transaction that does not require the spilling of blood, or if it does, he is not the one doing the killing. As a landlord,

Lucky shows concern for his tenants by evicting drug pushers, prostitutes, tenants who do not pay their rent, and other kinds of transgressors of residence protocols. Lucky's insistence on maintenance for the buildings and the removal of the 'problems' (drugs pushers and prostitutes) is perhaps unexpected in a gangster character but not entirely incredible. Lucky's heroism is further emphasized when his character is pitted against that of Tony Ngu. Ngu runs a drug dealing business and has been trying to sell his drugs to Lucky's tenants, but Lucky has refused. Lucky views Ngu as a dirty criminal because of the drugs and prostitution, and charges him and 'his kind', a derogatory reference to the presence of foreigners, with ruining the entire nation.

Gabree says that "Almost every successful revolution of modern times has been led by men who were outlaws one minute, statesmen the next" (1973: 13). Such a description suits a few familiar figures in South African political history, and also suggests the style of Lucky: he runs away from Soweto as an outlaw, and in Hillbrow, he starts a company that fights for the rights of tenants who live in old and neglected apartment buildings. His activism is, of course, a mask for the fact that he is stealing from the tenants and the owners of the buildings; his 'statesman' persona is in fact a way of embezzling the people's money. The scene in which Lucky addresses the Don Vista crowd opens as a crane shot, then cuts to a downward tilt of Lucky, presenting him as a civil rights speaker ready to lead the people to freedom from corrupt landlords.

Nazareth, on the other hand, is depicted as angry and not hesitant to kill; for example, he shoots a landlord and his lawyer in broad daylight in the streets of Hillbrow. Zakes is usually the one terrorizing hijack victims or shooting people, whilst Lucky is shown being violent only once at the end of the film when he kills Tony Ngu.

The film also recurrently reminds us that Lucky's choices are framed by circumstances and a persistent need to better his life. When Lucky realizes that crime could lead to his death, he takes up a job as a petrol attendant; the voiceover says: "I decided to quit before I was forced into an early retirement." Nazareth, however, interferes with Lucky's decision by using, first, the promise of fast money, then by the use of emotional blackmail to compel him to come back.

Nazareth: "I hear you're reapplying to university"

[*Silent nod. Lucky starts to clean Nazareth's car*]

Nazareth: "Serious? What are you gonna eat – books?"

[*Lucky gives him a cheeky look. No words.*]

Nazareth: "You can't quit from a life of crime. Crime is the biggest growth industry in the country."

Lucky: "Correction comrade Nazareth. It's private security. Last year it surpassed mining."

Nazareth uses manipulation when he realizes that Lucky's mind is set:

Nazareth: "I helped you [...] I bought you nice clothes, food, and I never asked you for anything. Today I'm asking you... are you in?"

[*Lucky takes time to think.*]

Lucky: "And I suppose this will be my last job."

[*Nazareth gives a deceptive nod. Lucky hesitantly nods, agreeing to do the job.*]

This conversation sequence highlights Lucky's desire to drastically change his life. It is also important in understanding the negotiation between crime and honest work. Nazareth asks a very important question ("What are you gonna eat – books?"), and unless Lucky gets some form of financial aid, working as a petrol attendant will not cover his university fees or allow him to feed his family. The scene also shows different factors at play in Lucky's decision. The first is the choice between working for years to gather money for university, with the danger of ending up

in that job for the rest of his life, or taking the chance to make enough money with one crime job at the risk of getting caught by the police. Secondly, there is loyalty to Nazareth who set him up in the first place. Whatever Lucky decides, it is clear that the line between an honest life and crime is a very complicated one for the poor. Lucky's hopes of going to school are no longer just about attaining a better life with a fancy house and car, but also about finding a means with which to cut ties with the likes of Nazareth. However, he decides to do this 'last' job and unfortunately the break-in ends badly as the police arrive and a bloody shootout takes place. Nazareth is arrested and Lucky escapes with an injured leg. Lucky and Zakes burn their car in the outskirts of Soweto at a car tire dump, and after bidding farewell to his mother and girlfriend, they take a train from Soweto to Johannesburg where the rest of the film takes place. The train is symbolic in reflecting their transition from being two optimistic schoolboys, innocently selling sweets and cheap perfume on the train at the beginning of the film. Now they are running from the law with the hope of finding new opportunities.

People move from various parts of the country to make a life in the city known as eGoli (Johannesburg), the 'place of gold', due to the importance of mining in the city's economic and industrial history. Lucky and Zakes escape the police in Soweto and make their way to Hillbrow, where they will start a new life. The film cuts from Soweto to ten years into Lucky's life in Johannesburg. He is now a taxi driver, and Zakes is his assistant. Hillbrow is an urban area in inner city Johannesburg, previously a whites only neighbourhood, now a hub that people from various parts of the country and the continent call home. However, within the city it is as if the decrepit look of the township has been transferred to the high-rise buildings and the busy streets of Hillbrow. Lucky opens his apartment window and the camera shows us the sights: prostitutes, gamblers, drunkards,

street children, vendors and loiterers. The socio-economic context of the film is portrayed by the documentary-style shots of Hillbrow – slow pans and overhead views of the grittiness and shoddiness of the ‘Promised Land’. Despite the unpromising atmosphere of Hillbrow, for Lucky it was “an empire waiting to happen” (*Jerusalema*, 2008). Lucky evaluates:

Johannesburg, a city fathered by gold, mothered by money and then commandeered by white men with cruelty and greed. Al Capone said ‘you can go a long way with a smile. You can go much further with a smile and a gun’. But if I was meant to graduate from this shithole to my beach house, it would take a gun in one hand, a briefcase in the other, and my best shit-eating grin (*Jerusalema*, 2008).

The image of Lucky in a suit, with a briefcase in one hand and a gun hidden on his person reiterates the earlier mentioned idea of legitimate success in the country being often mixed with crime. Lucky sets up a legitimate trust, The Hillbrow People’s Trust, as a front with which to swindle apartment buildings from the owners, rob the tenants and rent out empty high-rise buildings. This kind of theft has been a problem in the area of Hillbrow, which is what drew Ziman to the story. The film thus fictionally documents what really happens in that part of the country.

These high-rise buildings are conducive for the activities of drug pushers and prostitutes, another grave problem in Hillbrow. Lucky and his gang get rid of them first. Somehow, this transformation of the buildings suggests some pragmatic ways of dealing with some of the problems in the Hillbrow area. Lucky takes over unused empty buildings and renovates them into cheap apartments for new people. South Africans need homes, and thus, even though what he is doing is criminal, Lucky is seen to be contributing positively to society. He is even going to

the extent of actively getting rid of drug pushers and prostitution, problematizing his presence in a gang-run and crime-ridden Hillbrow. Is it possible that Ziman's portrayal of Lucky as a good, socially transforming gangster is a way of claiming that perhaps not all gangsters are bad? By juxtaposing Lucky's already contradictory identity with the straightforward Tony Ngu, another gang leader in Hillbrow who runs a club, deals drugs and handles prostitutes, Lucky's redeemable features are emphasized. Not only is his poverty blamed for his change, but, also, he is depicted as kindhearted and never really shown killing anyone except in the end when he gets rid of Ngu who, by that point in the film, Lucky has "good" reason to kill. Ziman justifies Lucky's actions throughout the film. This is problematic because Lucky represents most criminals in the country, and it would be difficult to find a criminal whose intention is the kind of social transformation that Lucky is ostensibly interested in. Just like the Hillbrow tower appears like a dream in the title sequence, Lucky's character is also an unrealistic ideal that Ziman works into the film. Ziman successfully portrays the contradiction of Hillbrow as an idealistic yet crime-ridden space, and further characterizes such contradiction in Lucky.

When one compares the images of Lucky's suburban home with those of his family home in Soweto, the two environments seem at polar ends. His suburban home is a large double storey white house set on a hill in a beautiful neighbourhood, around which the ambience of singing birds forms part of the diegetic soundscape. Lucky drives his Mercedes Benz convertible through electric gates whereas the house in Soweto has an incomplete wire fence with no gate. The Soweto house is much smaller and unmaintained; it is a makeshift attempt to create a home. These differences represent the economic chasm, between black and white South Africans, which is one of the effects of Apartheid. Ziman contrasts the suburbs with the township and Hillbrow slums using wide expository shots. He uses other visual techniques to further

emphasise the chasm between the rich and the poor. For example, the beautiful wide lens shot of the suburbs, when Lucky and Zakes visit the Don Vista landlord, with its luscious green, towering roofs and cleaner tarred roads, is an emphatic contrast to the Hillbrow apartments. Lucky notes, “ja this is how the other half lives,” to which Zakes replies, “the grass sure is greener on the other side” (*Jerusalema*, 2008). These comments further emphasise the great disparity between the wealthy and the poor. It is also very characteristic of South Africa that the people who live in elite areas are by majority white. The film captures the socio-economic conditions of the new South Africa, and shows how hopes like Lucky’s and expectations like Nazareth’s are stifled by the disadvantages of the past.

Lucky’s dream of success and material possession does come true, without the legitimate way of education and perhaps a corporate job. His building hijacking makes him a profit in the millions, allowing him to be clothed in expensive suits, owning a Mercedes convertible and moving into the suburbs with his girlfriend Leah, who happens to be white. Lucky’s new identity resembles that of the new black South African ‘BEE’ (Black Economic Empowerment) elite, often stereotyped as ‘new monies’ showing off their wealth with fancy cars and expensive houses in previously white suburbs.

In the Soweto part of the film, Lucky’s moral decline is far better portrayed. His mother features as a religious figure who keeps reminding Lucky and the audience that crime is bad. Also, Lucky’s change from being a naïve young man full of grandiose dreams common to many people of his age, through the strong influence of Nazareth as well as the pressure of his social and economic condition, result in Lucky’s decision to move away from the “righteous” life he had envisioned for himself and take up crime. In Johannesburg, he is a more romanticized criminal, an ideal that is unrealistic. Ziman’s romanticized idea of Lucky is strongly reflected in

the ending of the film: Lucky's life ends well thus suffering no real consequences. The gangster rises to glory but his story often ends with losing his place in society, getting caught, or being killed. Casillo asserts: "The rhythm of the classic gangster film is one of 'enterprise and success ending in precipitate failure'" (2006: 271). *Jerusalema*'s ending sequence starts off with Lucky wounded by Ngu during the shootout, and then arrested. What follows is a cleverly planned escape from the prison hospital with the help of Anna-Marie van der Rensburg, who is a sort of financial account holder for Lucky. He leaves the hospital wearing the police guard's uniform and changes into a freshly ironed suit left for him in the boot of his Mercedes convertible along with a bag of money. Instead of facing any consequences for his crimes, except for a bullet wound and the death of friends, Lucky ends up at a beach in Durban, which he earlier described to Zakes as his dream city. Here, a new empire awaits him, as Lucky smugly informs us: "Who knows, I might even talk Leah into moving to the coast, after I've moved into a building or six" (*Jerusalema*, 2008). We thus gather that he is planning to carry on stealing buildings and living on as the "hoodlum of Hillbrow" in Durban. According to Casillo's assertion, Lucky's gangster narrative does not have a traditional ending. His narrative ends with an optimistic outlook, yet no radical change has taken place in Lucky's trajectory.

In the same way that Ziman is drawing from real building hijacks, it is possible that Ziman is attempting to show that many South African criminals whose operations have been disturbed by the police get away and start elsewhere, while others continue to operate even from inside the prison walls. The film thus represents what goes on in the real world of crime. Despite its depiction of the country's social reality, I would argue that the film is weakened by its lack of a moral criticism of Lucky. As a film about one of South Africa's most devastating and troubling social scourges, *Jerusalema* could have shown the serious consequences of a life of crime

regardless of the social conditions influencing the decisions leading to a criminal life. Throughout this film one gets the idea that crime pays. This is concerning when presented in the context of a country where this is a reality, a country with a failing criminal justice system, and so the film contributes to the idea that crime is un-punishable.

Jerusalema is a fictional portrayal of the new South Africa and the social realities that make political liberation and the celebration of it seem insubstantial, since the coming of democracy has had little effect on the lives of the people. The film is a cynical critique of the promise of change and yet a sensitive depiction of the condition of poverty in the country. This film is a relevant way of understanding the material conditions for post-Apartheid black subjectivities, focusing on the effects of the still pervasive disparities of the past.

The film does not exalt or excuse crime but gives a socio-economic and political context for it. Lucky's final words, "what's important in life is to set goals and go after them," (*Jerusalema*, 2008) encourage South Africans to pursue their dreams at any cost. The danger with his words is that, paired with his story of pursuing his dreams through crime, they become a justifying message for criminal means of 'success' if all other avenues fail. In closing, I would like to introduce the issue of xenophobia, tackled in the next chapter. Although *Jerusalema* does not show any outright xenophobic violence, it hints at the issue of viewing African foreigners as a 'problem' in South Africa. Tony Ngu is a Nigerian refugee who came to South Africa with the hope of building a life for himself in the 'Promised Land'. Ngu and Lucky both run gangs yet do not share the same principles on how their illegal activity is executed and what it consists of. For Lucky, Ngu is a bad criminal because of his drug dealing and pimping. He later also holds Ngu responsible for the fate of Leah's brother, Josh, who dies after an overdose of a drug that Ngu supplied, and for the death of Lucky's best friend, Zakes, who is killed in a shootout with Ngu's

men. The film never directly shows Ngu killing Zakes or Josh but leads us to infer his role in the killings. Josh is given drugs at the rehab center as a present from “Mr. Ngu”, and is later seen drugged up at Ngu’s office. After the shootout in which Zakes is killed, Lucky follows the car to find Nazareth, now connected to Ngu and the killers outside of Ngu’s club. This indirect blaming of Ngu for the murders, he is narratively responsible for though not cinematically shown committing, suggests the problem of passing blame onto foreigners. Lucky’s words in the following confrontation with Ngu reflects this idea of blaming foreigners for South Africa’s decline:

Lucky: “Just tell me this, why did you come here, I mean to South Africa?”

Ngu: “It’s fine to hate us, while you sit there on your arses waiting for your entitlement from Mandela. [*Laughs*] If you’re think he’s going to come and part the Dead Sea and lead you to a Promise Land, you’re wrong brother.”

Lucky: “So you fucked up your own country; now you want to fuck up this place too?”

Ngu: “I don’t want to fuck anything. I sell drugs; that’s business. They call us pushers but I don’t push. It flies off the shelf” (*Jerusalema*, 2008).

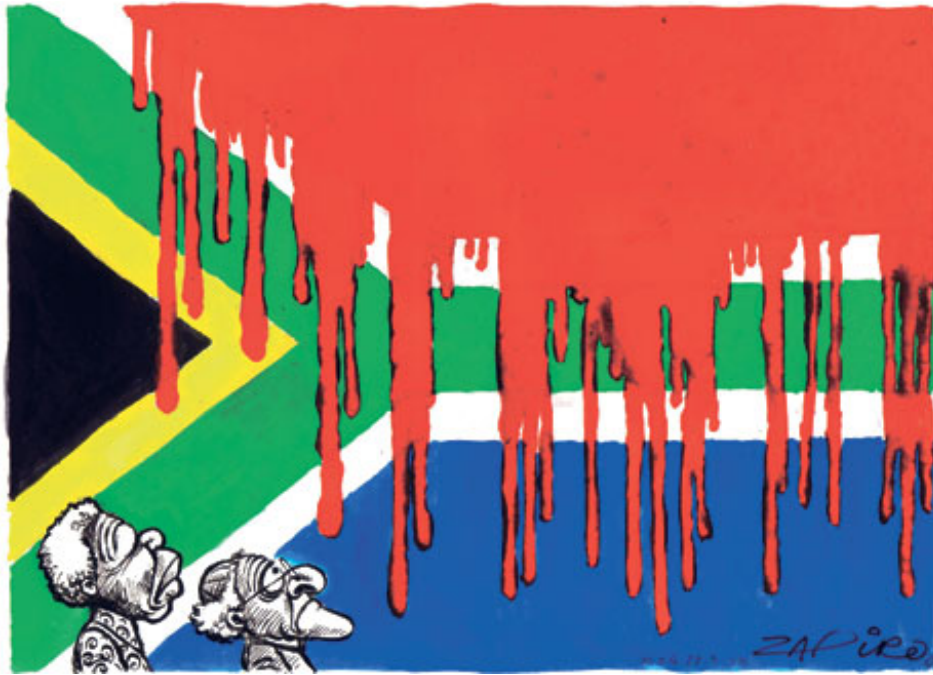
Ngu’s words highlight a really serious problem that I believe this thesis is getting at: that most South Africans rely on Mandela or the post-Apartheid government to fulfill their dreams. The new South African government cannot provide socio-economic equality but can provide opportunities in a non-discriminatory manner, especially by helping those who were previously disadvantaged. Ngu criticizes Lucky and all South Africans for expecting Mandela to be the savior and claims he and his people (African foreigners in this case) work for what they gain out of this country and should not be used as scapegoats for the failures suffered by South Africans. This conversation brings us back to the fictional arc I mentioned earlier, moving from the savior image of Nelson Mandela in *Invictus* as the highpoint, the dissatisfaction of Nazareth and failed education of Lucky in *Jerusalema* as reflecting the failures and inabilities of the savior idea and

starting the downward spiral, finally arriving at the treatment of foreigners as scapegoats which ultimately leads to the violence outbreak we see in *A Small Town Called Descent* as a low point.

To further emphasize the point of using foreigners as scapegoats, I would like to return to an early scene in the film, when Lucky first arrived in Hillbrow. One of his taxi customers blamed the entire HIV/AIDS pandemic on foreigners. Also, Ngu is demonized from the start in the film; he is introduced as the drug dealer holding Leah's brother hostage and about to kill his captive if he does not pay; then Lucky comes to the rescue. Ngu's vulgar treatment of women as mere property, like telling the girl giving a lap dance to a man in his office to "go make some money", and the fact that he is running a brothel of South African girls, does not work in his favour. The shots of his dwelling show a dark and dingy place. Ngu himself states, "we're being demonized in this society. They are calling us dirty, filthy *makwerekwere*"⁸ (*Jerusalema*, 2008). Released in May 2008, the year of the xenophobic attacks, *Jerusalema* here makes a timely point about the tension between South Africans and foreigners. Returning to the arc example, in *Jerusalema*, it is clear that the ideal nation shown in *Invictus* has fallen significantly from glory. Ziman's film portrays the new South Africa as a dream deferred.

⁸ "Makwerekwere" is a derogatory term used for Africans outside of South Africa. I will further discuss this word in following chapter.

Chapter Three: Jahmil X.T. Qubheka's *A Small Town Called Descent*



Shapiro, J (Zapiro). 10 April 2008.

In May 2008, just as during the days of apartheid, poor people in the townships were necklaced with tires, doused with petrol, set alight, and burned alive [...] immigrants from elsewhere in Africa [had] become targets of mob violence (Cole, 2010: xiii-xiv).

Jahmil Qubheka's *A Small Town Called Descent*⁹ (2010) recounts the horror of the xenophobic violence that swept across the country in May 2008 and reflects the problem of crime and

⁹ I will henceforth shorten the title to *Descent*.

corruption characterizing contemporary South Africa. The narrative depicts a fictional case in which a group of three Scorpion¹⁰ detectives – Lindelo, Liebowitz and Mayiti – arrive in a small Karoo town called Descent to find out the truth behind the murder of Charles Mutawarira and the rape accusation against him and his brother Lovemore. The Scorpions were deployed to Descent after Father Scully, the white local priest and the adoptive father of the Mutawarira brothers, called for an investigation regarding the night of Charles’ death and Lovemore’s imprisonment. It is important to note that the Mutawariras and Father Scully are Zimbabweans, and the brothers suffered antagonism from the local police captain and the mob because they were ‘outsiders’. Early in the film, Lovemore is being held prisoner for the rape of Funeka Heka, a South African Xhosa woman, and his brother Charles got burnt alive for alleged sexual harassment and partaking in Heka’s rape. We later find out that Heka was gang raped by the mob that brutally burned Charles to death and violently sodomised Lovemore, and it is the local police Captain Sikobi and his lawyer, Jackie Mbizo, who framed the brothers for the rape in order to ‘justify’ the mob violence. When Lindelo asks Sikobi to tell him what happened on the night that Charles Mutawarira died, Sikobi trivializes the gravity of the situation by stating the following: “well, that was a simple case of mob justice. Come on gentlemen you heard the report; two Zimbabweans have been giving us problems for a long time; the elder of the two had a history of sexual harassment; the attack on the girl was just the last straw. The community sort of banged them together and took the law in their own hands” (*Descent*, 2010). Sikobi’s nonchalance about the issue of mob violence suggests that he finds it justifiable for communities to “bang together” people and burn them to death as long as it is a case of taking the law into their own hands. This is problematic because, on the one hand, Sikobi is dismissing the fact that a murder was

¹⁰ Scorpions or Directorate of Special Operations was previously a unit of the National Prosecuting Authority, which was merged with the South African Police Service in 2008 and disbanded in 2009.

committed and, on the other hand, his character as an authoritative voice (Police Captain) runs the risk of making mob ‘justice’ seem normal and acceptable in South Africa. Mob violence in South Africa started out as a way for communities to take the law into their own hands because they had lost faith in the police’s attempts and means of dealing with crime. In 2008, communities got together and looted homes belonging to non-South Africans living in their townships; many victims lost their homes, and some their lives; women were raped, and hundreds of targets were beaten and threatened (Hassim, et al. 2008). There was nothing justifiable about what happened in the streets of South Africa during that time.

Xenophobia is “the intense dislike, hatred or fear of others perceived to be strangers” (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 5), and is viewed by Hassim et al. as the South African “society’s descent into barbarism” (2008: 93). The attacks were symptomatic evidence that the ideologies of peace, reconciliation, and equality that frame the new South Africa are not the reality. This section discusses the film’s representation of the new South Africa as being in a state of descent toward a social situation that is qualitatively no different from that of the Apartheid years. I will also look at how the national narrative within which the fictional narrative is positioned works as a relevant socio-political frame of reference.

Descent’s location, the film’s dark imagery, and the use of close-up shots for the violent images, portrays contemporary South Africa very much like “the arse end of the world,” to use Lovemore Mutawarira’s extreme description (*Descent*, 2010). Lovemore’s words are a contrast to Charles’ claim that South Africa is “the land of milk and honey,” which is interesting because in an earlier conversation Lindelo charges Liebowitz to leave South Africa and “set sail for the Promised Land” (*Descent*, 2010). It is clear that the notion of South Africa as the Promised Land varies for the people in the country because their realities are so vastly different. The idea of the

new South Africa as a Promised Land is problematized by the dismal reality of crime, poverty, violence, and corruption. The film is located in the Karoo, in a rural underdeveloped town that further contributes to Lovemore's idea that this is no land of milk and honey, only the backside of the world. Liebowitz also emphasizes the country's failures by invoking words used by some white South Africans when Mandela got elected in 1994; echoing a sentiment expressed by the rugby coach in the opening sequence of *Invictus*, Liebowitz believes that "this country's going to the dogs... the rule of law is overridden by partisan politics, it's only a matter of time" (*Descent*, 2010). In an interview, Qubheka states the following: "...looking at the film and the events in the film, we were basically using the town as a microcosm for where we thought South Africa was, and what the fundamental issues were that we were facing as a country" (Machen, 2010: 2). Therefore, the town of *Descent* becomes a symbolic space for an allegorical narrative, figurative of South Africa during the time of the xenophobic violence. Considering the message of *Invictus*, peace and racial unity as one of the fundamental principles of the new South Africa, and the narrative of *Jerusalema* where poverty brings to light the continuing disparities – especially along racial lines – *Descent* unravels the image of the "miracle nation" (Gevisser, 2009: 3). *Descent* depicts the senseless lootings and violence that led to the deaths and displacement of thousands of Africans by members of South Africa's previously oppressed black populace. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu's proclamation, "we of many cultures, languages, and races have become one nation. We are the rainbow people of God" (Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu cited in Alexander, 2002: 81), is not confirmed in *Descent's* depiction of South Africa. Rather, the film shows a masked mob with flaming torches, shouting "*hambani makwerekwere, hambani,*" which, roughly translated, means "go away, you foreigners" (*Descent*, 2010).

The South African past remains a backdrop of the contemporary issues, which challenge the new democratic nation. The film draws a parallel between Apartheid racism and post-Apartheid South African xenophobia, the only difference being that the latter is between black peoples instead of between white and black peoples. Qubheka frames the film narrative within the context of Apartheid news footage and contemporary news reports, inferring that historical memory and trauma are repeated in the present. The video footage provides flashbacks of the past while the film narrative relies on flashbacks of the rape and murder. The film opens with a video of Hendrik Verwoerd, accompanied by a documentary of the Great Trek, and then cuts to a wide-angle downward tilt shot of the town, Descent – the very dry and rural landscape in which the film is set. This shot is followed by a series of shots in a seamless montage of historical footage and contemporary political newsreels. The montage shows the first democratic vote, the inauguration planes celebrating the new South Africa, news reports on the disbanding of the Scorpions, the conflict for Presidency in Polokwane, the corruption charges against Jacob Zuma and Jackie Selebi, and dead bodies strewn on the streets. The film narrative is thus placed within a greater narrative scheme of current affairs between 2008 and 2009, and the historical moments that informed the direction of contemporary South Africa. This juxtaposition of the past with the present comments on the reality that the society of South Africa is not a “post-conflict” one but one that is very much still in “transition” (Cole, 2010: xiv).

The temporality of the film moves between the past (Apartheid images, news reports, and flashbacks of the crime) and the narrative present that is shaped by the past event. The opening sequence also brings together national and personal memory and trauma as one indistinguishable reality through the rapid editing of shots and the fragmented nature of the whole sequence. I would like to claim that the film altogether functioned as memory, bringing in images of

Apartheid, actual news reports, and politically specific contexts. As an example, the method of Charles Mutawarira's death is a reference to the "burning man" image that became front page news. On June 14th, 2008, 35-year-old Mozambican named Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave was stoned and burned alive near Pretoria. This is interesting because Qubheka's film places Charles' similar death on the 16th of June 2008, two days after the Mozambican's and on the day of commemoration for the Soweto uprising of 1976. This date is not only putting the film in the context of the actual historic event, but also suggesting that there may have been other burnings, other than the June 14th one, around the country that went un-published. Also, by using June 16, I strongly believe, the film provokes our national memory of human rights struggles, especially for black South Africans who fought on this day and saw many young lives lost for the sake of equality; thus the film further connects the present with the past.

Qubheka opens the memory of the murder and rape to the public by letting the flashbacks of that night play without directly being triggered by the people who were there and remember it. From the opening sequence, there is a close-up shot of a screaming Lovemore being sodomised but no-one remembering this particular moment that the film gets back to because up to that point there has been no narrative information given that would link that image to anything of significance in the film. The memory thus no longer belongs to the audience as well as the people who were directly present. This suggests that even though the xenophobic violence happened in specific areas in the country, memories of that time will remain in our national consciousness. Can it also be true then, as Lindelo suggests in the following quote, that the whole nation is guilty of the violence that threatened and led to the death of many foreigners?

Lindelo: There is nothing subtle about what happened here Mr. Liebowitz [...] now somebody saw what the fuck happened here, and as far as I am concerned everyone in this town had a hand in this killing. This whole goddamn town is guilty of murder. Am I the only one who sees the gravity of this whole thing? A man was beaten, stripped and set on fire; he did not spontaneously combust. Now I don't care what the provocation was. Fact is a crime was committed and our job is to find who is responsible and, by God, when we do find them we will unleash the full might of the law upon them. That gentlemen, is our mandate (*Descent*, 2010).

The tragedy of what happened in 2008 is that because these were mob killings it was difficult to take people in; these were 'community' acts and whole communities were guilty. People turned a blind eye and some claimed that they had no idea what was going on. The film shows this in the sequence that follows this scene. Mayiti and Liebowitz go from door to door, asking questions, and everyone claims that they do not know anything and they saw nothing at all that night. In the flashbacks, it is clear that this happened in the corner of a street and not in the outskirts, thus people knew something yet said and did nothing.

The scenes that played out in the streets of South African townships belonged somewhere else, anywhere but in post-Apartheid South Africa (Hassim et al, 2008: 28). Many asked, what could have led the 'miracle' nation to this point of violent outbursts? Michael Neocosmos poses the following questions: "How could such a thing happen in the 'rainbow nation'? How could Black South Africans act so callously toward their fellow Africans and brothers? How could people who have been living in the country for as long as 12 to 15

years be attacked by their neighbours?” (2010: 117). There are many possible reasons why the attacks happened, such as poverty, government failures, joblessness, and tribal or cultural tensions. The scene in which we meet the three Scorpion agents driving into Descent gives us a possible reason for the specific case that they are deployed to investigate. Mayiti is going through the pictures of the rape victim and is disturbed by the gruesomeness of the images.

Mayiti: “I hate to say this, but these Zimbabweans may have had it coming. Can you really blame these people? I’d also want to kill them if they did what they did to someone I cared about.”

By saying “these Zimbabweans”, Mayiti’s response becomes a problematic generalization with nationalistic racist/tribalist overtones that are reflective of the kind of rhetoric that was prominent during the xenophobic attacks and thereafter. Zimbabweans, and other African foreigners, were accused of stealing women and jobs, disrupting society and, even worse, bringing AIDS. A scene in *Jerusalema* that highlights this is when a man starts preaching redemption in Lucky’s taxi and declares that AIDS comes from the Congolese. The following words by Home Affairs official George Orr during a television broadcast are evidence of the rhetoric that led to the way foreigners were regarded:

We will grant a grace period for those who have been in the country for five years or more to apply for permanent residence; after which they (‘illegal immigrants’) will be

hounded, using police to trace them, prosecute employers, deny them health, education services and make life unbearable for them” (cited in Neocosmos, 2010: 86).

This kind of rhetoric by respected government leaders effectively legitimized the intensely negative attitudes of the public. “*Hambani makwerekwere, hambani*”¹¹ was like an anthem in the streets of South African townships, and this is what Demon and his friends used as a war cry in the film. The captain of police, Jongilanga Sikobi, hired Demon and his friends to round up all the non-South African black men and put them in prison, burning their homes with their wives and children inside. Sikobi viewed this as a form of solving “the immigrant problem” (*Descent*, 2010). Together with Sikobi, Demon and his gang represent the groups responsible for the violence, lootings, and homelessness of many foreigners. As Neocosmos writes, “Gangs were seen on television marching down the street singing ‘struggle songs’” (2010: 120). These songs were associated with a genuine fight for human rights; hence, the film and the Neocosmos quote suggest that what happened in this country in 2008 was against the notions of what it means to be a South African, especially because it was blacks repeating the historical atrocities that they had fought so hard to do away with.

In the film, however, Mbizo and Sikobi instigated the murders of Charles and Lovemore because they wanted to cover their corrupt plan to steal land allocated for the locals. Charles found out that Sikobi and Mbizo were in business with General van Niekerk (a white ex-Apartheid army general), building resorts and golf courses on the land given by the government to build houses for the locals. His attempt was to expose them and fight for the rights of the deserving parties. Charles is therefore depicted as an upright citizen and the South Africans as

¹¹ Directly translated it means: “leave you foreigners leave” but the word makwerekwere is as derogatory as the Apartheid terminology used for blacks (kaffir).

corrupt and not interested in the development of their own people. If we consider that Zimbabweans and other foreigners were accused of stealing and taking from South Africans what is due to them, Charles is here represented as an advocate on behalf of South Africans and Sikobi, Mbizo, and the General as thieves. The film serves as a strong critical portrayal of South Africans by positioning them in the very category that foreigners were placed in. The film also criticizes the rich for using the poor to do their dirty work, making the xenophobic violence more than just an issue of 'poor against poor'. Sikobi and Mbizo hire Demon, a school child who probably comes from a poor family in the township and works at a construction site to help out at home, along with his friends, to kill Charles and take the fall for their crimes. When the Scorpions kill Demon during a chase, Sikobi and Mbizo celebrate for this means that no one will ever link them to the death of Charles, the rape of Funeka, and the sodomy of Lovemore, as well as the burning down of the homes of the foreigners in the township. The film does not provide exact reasons for the xenophobic violence but implicates everyone, rich (Sikobi and Mbizo) and poor (Demon and his friends), black and white (General van Niekerk).

Throughout the film, Sikobi shows great disdain for foreigners and insists that they are the reason behind the country's problems. In one of the flashback scenes, Sikobi visits the Scully home in the middle of the night to inform Charles that he has been charged with defamation of character by Jackie Mbizo. Sikobi paints the following picture to the Mutawarira brothers and Father Scully:

You're all foreigners in this town; now, as guests in my house, I suggest you use the toilet and don't piss on my kitchen table, because I can make your lives a living hell. I don't have time for filthy foreigners! (*Descent*, 2010)

He sees them as filth and treats them as such. It is as if the image that Sikobi paints depicts South Africa as a pristine, perfect home fit for South Africans alone, and suggests that foreigners like the Mutawariras are ruining that home. Later in the film, Lovemore shoots Sikobi dead in a school toilet whilst Sikobi is relieving himself which is ironic because of Sikobi's earlier threat about foreigners 'pissing on his table'. The concept of defilement used by Sikobi in rejection of the Zimbabweans and other foreigners is turned around in this scene, suggesting that hatred is ultimately a defilement of the self. South Africans shamed their nation and defiled it with the blood of their foreign neighbours. Sikobi is an apt representation of xenophobic citizens; his words betray the territorialism that was one of the underlying reasons for the violence. The notion of stealing jobs and women was also another reason for the violence. In one of the flashback scenes, Demon, the leader of the mob that raped Funeka and killed Charles, calls the Mutawarira brothers "Congolese apes" to whom Funeka "whores" herself (*Descent*, 2010). Foreigners became the scapegoats for many of the issues already rampant in the country and were treated with disdain by their fellow Africans. Joblessness and lack of basic resources led to "compounding frustrations, and uncertainties", making it "easy to turn migrants and other minorities into scapegoats" (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 5). It is clear that, "'the foreigner' has become a site for the violent convergence of a host of unresolved social tensions" (Valji, 2003: 1). The "difficulties of transition, socio-economic frustrations, a legacy of racial division, and an inherited culture of violence are just some of the factors contributing to violent xenophobia in South Africa today" (Valji, 2003: 1).

Furthermore, the film brings to attention the brutal selectivity of the xenophobic violence, as it was only black foreigners who were targeted. Father Scully, Charles and Lovemore's

adoptive father, is white and Zimbabwean yet he suffers none of the xenophobic hatred that Charles and Lovemore have along with many other black foreigners in *Descent*. Nyamnjoh points out that “Xenophobia is racist in its application; victims are predominantly black and are targeted for their very blackness by a society where skin colour has always served as an excuse for whole catalogues of discriminatory policies and practices” (2006: 51). This reflects our unresolved racial tensions; hence the conversation between Liebowitz and Lindelo when they drive into *Descent* serves to foreground the racial aspect. In this scene, Liebowitz, the white Scorpion agent, says to Lindelo, “You’d like that wouldn’t you boss? You’d like it if all the whites were just driven into the sea”, and again: “You know if I didn’t know better, I’d say you didn’t like whites much, but then again I know better” (*Descent*, 2010). Lindelo’s response to Liebowitz is not one that attempts to ensure unity but rather one that reinstates that white South Africans are a minority and thus outsiders in the country. Lindelo responds: “If conditions are so deplorable here then maybe you should move. I’m sure government officials in Israel aren’t so prone to corruption like us Africans. You are a minority here, you’d live better remembering you’re one” (*Descent*, 2010). Lindelo’s words betray a refusal to accept white South Africans as South African and therefore having no other home but this country. It is an interesting thing, then, that the white Zimbabwean in the film, like other white foreigners who have immigrated to South Africa, does not get treated with the same hostility as black non-South Africans, and in terms of the conversation mentioned above with the same kind of antagonism as experienced, probably, by white South Africans. It is evident in this film that racism still exists in this country; it only manifests itself in a different way than Apartheid’s formalized version. The xenophobic attacks were a symptom of our own issues, most of which had nothing to do with the influx of foreigners coming to seek refuge in this country.

Lastly, the film's constant, often unmotivated and unnecessary intercutting, between scenes and in the middle of dialogue from one scene to the next, was disturbing and disorienting. The film was, despite its unaesthetic disorder, a strongly provocative reflection of the xenophobic violence, the state of new South Africa and the issues of corruption and police brutalities. Qubheka recaptures some of the gruesome images that populated our television screens and newspapers during the xenophobic attacks and preserves the memory of that period. This is also the first feature film to deal directly with the issue of xenophobia; even though *Jerusalema* brings it up through the tension between Lucky and the Nigerian Tony Ngu, it is in the periphery of the films' narrative. This is also due to the fact that *Jerusalema* came out in 2008, the year that the attacks took place, whereas *Descent* was released two years later and is directly referencing true events. The xenophobia brought up in *Jerusalema* suggests rather that what is shown in *Descent* was already stirring long before the violent manifestation of it in 2008. This film brings to question the socio-political condition of post-Apartheid South Africa as well as the idea that South Africans view themselves as separate from the rest of Africa.

The film's final sequence, which starts after the shootout at the school festival with Daphne, Jack Mbizo's wife, driving out of *Descent* and offering Funeka a lift, is entirely in black and white. Since the flashbacks have been in black and white throughout the film, except for that one instance in the opening sequence in which we see a beaten up Lovemore crying out, it is possible that the filmmaker may want the final sequence to be a form of flashback. This will then confirm that the film works as a reminder, a flashback, and a fictional memory of South Africa's recent history. This ending also signifies a clear leaving of the past, a deliberate moving away from the recent history to start anew with the hope of a better life. When Mayiti presents

Lovemore with a South African identity book as confirmation of citizenship, Lovemore rejects this gesture and commits suicide. One would have assumed that Lovemore would accept the South African citizenship because for many non-South African Africans it represents the promise of a better life. Lovemore's suicide can be read as a response to his trauma for having lost his brother and killed someone, but also as a symbolic statement that he has nowhere to call home – not South Africa and not Zimbabwe. This emphasizes the fact that the violence displaced a group of people already displaced and dislocated. Lovemore's rejection of a South African identity can also mean a rejection of the whole notion of South Africa as any kind of Promised Land or even refuge. "Unless we address the ethical and practical tensions, violence will always be just around the corner" (Hassim, 2008: 107). The xenophobic violence was a rude awakening, showing that the total recognition of human dignity, peace, and a strongly pan-African identity are not yet realities in South Africa. This film can be seen as an indication that "South Africans are no longer "the Rainbow Children of God," as Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu once delighted in calling us (Gevisser, 2009: 3).

Jahmil Qubheka's *A Small Town Called Descent* is very successful in bringing to question the notion of what it means to be South African and how we realize our own ideals as a post-Apartheid nation. Father Scully's words in the beginning of the film are directed at his congregation, but also to all South Africans, and they encapsulate what this film is attempting to do. Father Scully implores:

Our humanity comes into question when we allow murder and mayhem to be committed at our doorstep and in our names. There is all that love available for those

people who come here and speak the other language or come from the other countries because they are being put through terrible, terrible suffering. They are our brothers and sisters. Dear God let us welcome them somehow, in our homes, in our hearts; there must be a space (*Descent*, 2010).

Is Qubheka saying that the country failed to provide that space? Perhaps not, but this film is certainly alluding to the fact that this country rejected not only its neighbours but also its identity as African, which is what Thabo Mbeki's ideology of the African Renaissance was trying to achieve. This film depicts the country in socio-political disarray and as a place of no hope; Lovemore's rejection of the identity document and the two women leaving *Descent* infers that very strongly. The chant, "*hambani makwerekwere hambani*", which echoed throughout the South African landscape in 2008, is extremely different from the unifying "Ole, Ole, Ole" chant in *Invictus*. The film was screened during the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup, a time of euphoria and celebration for the country while many foreigners came into South Africa, and only two years after the most extreme xenophobic attacks shocked the world.

Conclusion

This paper discussed three films and how they represent the socio-political landscape of the new South Africa. From showing the glories of overcoming Apartheid and being termed the rainbow nation in 1994 through Clint Eastwood's *Invictus*, to the depiction of how the post-Apartheid dream of socio-economic equality and success, as well as racial and cultural unity is only an illusion, as seen in Ralph Ziman's *Jerusalema* and Jahmil Qubheka's *A Small Town Called Descent*. Although each film can stand alone in its representation of South Africa, together they form a connected narrative that begins with the fictional Nelson Mandela in *Invictus* setting up the dream, proceeds with Lucky Kunene in *Jerusalema* pursuing the dream and realizing that his poverty limits his prospects of success and thus turning to crime, to end with *A Small Town Called Descent* in which the gruesome reality of xenophobia, along with the corruption brought by greed in pursuit of economic privilege and luxury, brings about a realization that perhaps the South Africa imagined in *Invictus* is indeed the illusion that Zapiro illustrates in the cartoon cited in the introduction. The advent of democracy ushered in high expectations of South Africa by South Africans and the world at large (Beall, et al. 2005: 682), expectations the country was not economically or politically ready to fulfill. These films show how such high expectations affect the nation's identities and the national narrative of how the world sees South Africa. In 1994, the world audience celebrated as blacks and whites came together despite their segregated past. In 2008, the world watched in disgust as South Africans burned a man alive and ransacked with pangas and burning torches the homes of fellow Africans (Hassim, et al. 2008). The Mandela 'miracle' had not proven a reality for all South Africans; in

fact, as Ziman and Qubheka's films so poignantly reflects, it seems that for many the dominant social reality merely morphed from being one of institutionalized racism to being one of high crime statistics, pervasive murder, and xenophobic violence. The "'rainbow nation' romance of the transition," depicted in *Invictus* with the glamorous Rugby World Cup at the center, according to Beall et al., "had faded and the miracle metaphor is evoked infrequently" (2005: 682). These films draw from real stories, and although they remain fictional and not faithful representations of the national narrative, they provide a narrative of the "fragile state" of contemporary South Africa (Beall. et al). It is important to recognize that an officially non-racist South Africa is pertinent and worthy of celebration. The fears reflected by Francois' father in *Invictus* should be a reminder that other African nations have chosen alternate means of asserting their independence, and therefore white South Africans do not need to fear that one day they might be driven into the sea. The attempts to alleviate poverty and the progress made toward economic equality through Black Economic Empowerment are all aspects to be held in good regard. However, one cannot ignore the prominence of crime, poverty, disease, and ethnic violence that persists in the country and escalates rather than decreases. These narratives do not seem to provide any solutions to the problems they are posing, but only suggest the continuation of crime, as in Lucky Kunene's case, or the rejection of the dream and promise of a better life, as symbolized by Lovemore throwing the South African identity document to the ground. As depictions of national realities, these films contribute to the growing South African cinema.

There is a move amongst South African filmmakers, like Qubheka, to engage with the socio-political issues prevalent in the nation. Akin Omotoso's *Man on Ground* (2011) also deals with xenophobic tensions, and Jann Turner's *Paradise Stop* (2011) looks at the issue of hijacking and crime that we find in *Jerusalema*. Also in 2011, Makunda Michael Dewil's *Retribution* is a

reminder, like *Descent*, that the past haunts the present. These films grapple with, expose, reconsider, and challenge the pervasive socio-political problems in this country.

I specifically chose to not focus on the topic of African /Third World cinema because two of the films are international productions by Hollywood directors. I was also more interested in the narratives rather than the style of cinema because film in South Africa has not yet been addressed in terms of stylistic development and contribution. Although the post-Apartheid cinema industry is a fast growing industry, mostly of independent films, documentaries and shorts, there is a great lack in funding and distribution which limits the audience to film festival goers. Local films like *Descent* only ever show at film festivals, whereas more international films like *Invictus* and *Jerusalema* reach wider audiences through distribution in cinemas. Despite limited funding and distribution constraints, filmmakers keep bringing to the fore stories of national relevance, issues that hinder the principles of the new South Africa, proposing ways toward making the hope for equality, freedom, and unity a reality through an undivided effort. It is without a doubt that “film production and the arts in general are an important part of the reemergence of civic and public life in the young democracy installed after the 1994 elections.” (McCluskey, 2009: 1) More importantly, I would like to suggest that South African films need more scholarly attention to help bring attention to what these filmmakers are attempting to achieve and address through their films. The few books and articles that discuss South African films are an important starting point and a guide on how to consider South African films in scholarly terms. McCluskey’s book *The Devil You Dance With* is a discussion with contemporary filmmakers in the country, seeking to understand their role, concerns, and their position in the history and present moment of South Africa. McCluskey’s statement that “filmmakers must be diligent about telling silenced stories” could not be reiterated more, “even

though sizeable segments of their fellow citizens are turning a deaf ear” primarily because of their lack of faith in South African films (2009: 13).

This thesis by no means covers everything about South African cinema, rather the aim was to highlight how these three films *Invictus*, *Jerusalema*, and *A Small Town Called Descent*, released during a time when the nation needed to rethink its national identity, represent and reflect the new South Africa and the possible issues that problematize its national image. According to Saks, “any national cinema story of South Africa in the 1990s and beyond must be about a nation developing a national spirit at a postmodern moment when diversity is understood to be what the nation requires” (2010: 6). These films were released during such a moment when, with dreams that the FIFA World Cup would re-awaken national unity and bring economic success as well as an end to the problems with xenophobic outrage, they were pertinent and timely cultural interventions. I believe in a cinema that considers the narratives of the people as part of the fabric of the nation and as the conscious manifestation of the national psyche. Eastwood (*Invictus*), Ziman (*Jerusalema*), and Qubheka (*A Small Town Called Descent*) individually deal with various aspects of post-Apartheid South Africa but together become a powerful narrative lens into understanding this country, its people, and its hopes. It is my hope that most South African films will engage the people of South Africa in their own national narrative.

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