

Nostalgia and the (re)construction of South African identity in *District 9*

Dr Ian-Malcolm Rijsdijk
Centre for Film and Media Studies
University of Cape Town
ian.rijsdijk@uct.ac.za

South African cinema has experienced a difficult transformation since the democratic elections of 1994. The context for South Africa's democracy is unusually complex. It comes in the wake of the end of the Cold War, in the middle of the explosion of capitalist globalization, and on the cusp of technological transformations in communications (particularly the internet and cellular phones). The last African country to discard white minority rule, this independence also comes after an especially long history of colonization and the social experiment of apartheid. South African filmmakers and audiences have grappled with how to represent South African identities on screen while trying to gain a foothold in the global film market through prestige productions like *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1994) culminating in *Yesterday* (2004) and the Academy Award-winning *Tsotsi* (2005). Filmmakers have been confronted with questions of how to deal with the historical past, what influences the past has had, and continues to have on the present, and how to look forward through representations of the country's political and social reality.

This search for “new terms of representation” is, in the words of Lucia Saks, “a race to disgorge the old styles of thinking and showing, illustrating and believing, and to supplant them with new images and ideas... It is also a race to stabilise and forestall chaos and a race to plan the future in the wake of the unpredictable contingencies of immense social transition.” (2010: 2) Implicit in this process of (re)construction and reconciliation is a tension between the need to challenge entrenched beliefs and perceptions, and the need to maintain certain continuities with past social formations and identities. Importantly, this applies to black as well as white South Africans; for the first twenty years of democracy have demonstrated how uneven and, in some cases, barely noticeable economic and social change has been in the country.

The process of seeking continuity with the past is often represented through nostalgia – the recalling of past, usually pleasant, experiences either as a positive reflection of that period or as a negative reflection of present perceptions of people's lived realities. Popular culture, particularly in the form of film, music, and literature, provides interesting insights into the struggle to (re)construct identities, by which I mean the attempt to produce new South African identities as well as recuperated or reconfigured models of older identities.

In this paper I want to examine two ideas relating to *District 9* (2009); firstly, that the film is contextualised by a complex interplay between notions of white nostalgia and the “dissonance” of being white in post-apartheid South Africa (Steyn 2005: 122), and secondly, that the idea of nostalgia in the first decade of the 21st century in South Africa is, itself, a complex notion underscored by volatile political, cultural and social contradictions. In so doing, I would like to pursue some of the interesting effects of deploying the science fiction genre within a contemporary South African context, particularly in terms of race, and ethnicity. *District 9* deals with the casting out of the hero because of his abject hybridity, and supposedly provides an allegory for the outbreak of xenophobia in 2008 in the prejudice shown towards the alien race, but is it possible to see in Wikus's transformation an examination of the crisis of whiteness in South Africa? The film is punctuated with refrains from the past and about the past, from the film's title

(invoking the forced relocation of residents and the destruction of the suburb of District 6 in Cape Town in the 1970s) to Tania's desperate plea to Wikus: “How do we go back?”

While *District 9* lit up fan sites and forum discussions on the internet with comments about its South African peculiarities, *Invictus* (2009) trafficked in a different kind of nostalgia.¹ Through its parallel narratives – the behind-the-scenes conversations between Nelson Mandela and Francois Pienaar in the lead-up to the Rugby World Cup of 1995, and the relationship that develops between the black and white bodyguards – the film attempted to relate the well-worn media images of Mandela's iconic appearance and the sporting miracle of the tournament (particularly its final) to the struggles of ordinary South Africans in embracing the potential of a democratic South Africa. Coming in the wake of South Africa's victory at the 2007 Rugby World Cup, the film not only aligned South Africa's postdemocracy optimism with the sturdy conventions of the underdog sporting hero movie genre, but also suggested to viewers the national euphoria that had been eroded in the period between the 1995 final and the present.²

Nostalgia lies at the heart of *District 9*, as well, despite its dystopian vision. Both films open up a space of remembrance but while one proposes a fading utopian memory, the other confronts us with the volatility and uncertainty of the present even as it provides one of the strongest assertions of South African identity seen in post-apartheid representations of South Africa. In *District 9*'s many intertextual references and parochial social observations, some South Africans (especially those abroad) revelled in being in on the joke, for once. Instead of references to North American cities, commodities and environments, here was an international phenomenon centred on Johannesburg.

However, while *District 9* is shot through with comedy there is no utopian optimism in the film: Wikus is condemned to his alien-hybridisation and there is only faint hope that Christopher Johnson will return to save him. The film's mischievous, and for many, offensive portrayal of Nigerians seems to run counter to its critique of xenophobia which is, in turn, collapsed into a faltering allegory of the State of Emergency in the 1980s. Does the film, as Armond White claims, “make trash of that country's Apartheid history by constructing a ludicrous allegory for segregation” (White, 2009) or is it an ironic and witty challenge to both the inter-planetary science fiction ‘first contact’ fantasy and the geopolitical bias of earthly catastrophe?

In the first reading, *District 9* effaces apartheid in South Africa by replacing it with an allegory of the present, proposing that our xenophobic post-apartheid identity is, perhaps, not that distinct from the segregationist ideology of apartheid (thus suturing the break that supposedly separates the post-liberation black government from the white government of apartheid). It achieves this sleight of hand through the innovative deployment of the science fiction genre which has as one of its central devices, the construction of believable alternative temporal realities. Plenty of science fiction films have given us dystopian visions of the future, but *District 9* offers us a dystopian present grounded in disturbing realism. Here the present is not the past of the future but the future of the past.

In the second reading – what Michael Valdez Moses calls the “progressive” reading – “Wikus is transformed from a staunch (and unreflective) defender of the segregationist regime that employs him into a courageous dissenter and freedom fighter who struggles on behalf of the liberation of the aliens.” (2010: 157) Moreover, Wikus's traumatic journey challenges the white man ‘gone native’ narrative favoured by revisionist Hollywood westerns (and seen contemporaneously in James Cameron's *Avatar*, 2009) by emphasising how terrible his experience is. As Annalee Newitz notes, “When whites fantasize about becoming other races, it's only fun if they can blithely ignore the fundamental experience of being an

oppressed racial group.” (2009) Ultimately, however, Moses opines that, “For all of its progressive anti-apartheid energies, *District 9* stands as a troubling lament on behalf of South African whites for the world lost with the end of apartheid.” (2010: 160) For the film’s fans outside South Africa, this is unknowable. But, from a South African perspective, this statement requires an understanding of how nostalgia operates in post-apartheid cultural landscape.³

The nostalgia in *District 9* undoubtedly relates to white peoples’ perceptions of South Africa. With increasing distance from the watershed ‘moment’ in South Africa there are, nevertheless, different and often conflicting nostalgic discourses at work in South Africa and these provide context for the way in which narratives of national identity are constructed. I would argue that, at the moment in South Africa, nostalgia is operating in several powerful ways. There is a continuing vein of white nostalgia that seeks refuge in idealised notions of the past that acknowledges apartheid racism, but literally encloses its nostalgia like a gated community, protecting that place from what is beyond the wall. This narrative of contemporary South Africa accepts change reluctantly and, in Steyn’s terms, believes that “the colonial binaries that structured the master narrative still provide the scaffolding for reality.” (2001: 69)

At the same time, there is nostalgia for the period of transition, for its optimism, lest we forget the ‘miracle’ that happened twenty years ago. The memorialisation of the first democratic elections and the recalling of sporting triumphs like the Africa Cup of Nations victory in 1996, the two Rugby World Cup triumphs in 1995 and 2007, and the Olympic medals won in Atlanta in 1996 are signifiers of this nostalgia. More recently, a form of black nostalgia seems to have appeared which looks back to the intellectual and spiritual integrity of the struggle against apartheid in the light of the current government’s perceived corruption and incompetence. Nelson Mandela’s failing health, the passing away of the older generation of struggle icons (some of whom were cabinet ministers in the first democratic government), and the rise of new political formations in opposition to the ruling African National Congress who claim ties to the Black Consciousness movement of the 1970s. In these latter instances nostalgia “works to retrieve the past for support in building the future.” (Tannock, 459) Significantly, contemporary forms of nostalgia support an increasingly complex and multivocal engagement with the apartheid past as South Africans move beyond institutional attempts at unifying the country in both the recognition of past oppression and the creation of a new post-democratic identity.

In Steyn’s discussion of ‘white talk’ – which surveys the different responses by whites to social and political change in South Africa – she examines “how multiple, and even conflicting, aspects of identity compete for our single bodies.” (2005: 120) In *District 9*, Wikus’s becomes a symbolic site of invasion, his gradual mutation representing, in the most visceral terms, the fear of infestation that drives the anti-alien xenophobia. In the context of Steyn’s ‘white talk’, does the film use the science fiction genre to represent this notion of a conflicted white male South African body? In order to properly understand *District 9*, it is necessary to examine both its science fiction innovations and its peculiar South African social and historical context.

The dystopian present

There is no doubt that the main impetus behind the film’s international popularity lies in its innovative reworking of conventional science fiction tropes. The massive alien craft in *Independence Day* (1996) that hover over the world’s major urban centres before unleashing a co-ordinated attempt to exterminate humankind are clearly the object of *District 9*’s ironic establishing panorama of the stranded spaceship

parked over the Johannesburg skyline. *District 9* also challenges the tendency in recent big-budget science fiction films to merge with the genres of the disaster and combat movie that posit a hopeless case for all humankind but for the actions of a small group who overcome prejudice and/or difference to combat a common enemy. Alien invasions make class and racial difference obsolete; all the better if Will Smith is doing the shooting. These alien invasion and celestial apocalypse films (for example, *Deep Impact*, *Armageddon*, both 1998) offer both the “successful negotiation of difference” and “allow for the emergence of a seemingly benign state mechanism, which comes to the rescue through engaging solutions offered by science/technology along with humanistic values of courage and self-sacrifice,” (Kakoudaki, 123, 122) sentimental resolutions that are left barely intact in *District 9* after Wikus’s final showdown with MNU that allows Christopher Johnson to escape.

For Kakoudaki, what is significant about this post-Cold War turn towards international co-operation and cultural tolerance – at least until the alien invaders have been repelled – is the weakening of the allegorical element of many science fiction films from the 1960s and 70s. The recent films “have evacuated the didactic narrative of human responsibility. They effect this evacuation through a double simplification: first, a simplification of the agent of destruction, which is now most often presented as outside human agency or responsibility; and second, through a simplification of the alien characters, which are now almost always represented as insects.” (Kakoudaki, 120) *District 9* manages to appeal to both of these tendencies: we get the insect-like extra-terrestrials and a narrative about the failure of human responsibility that harks back to films like *Soylent Green* (1973), *Logan’s Run* (1976) and even *Blade Runner* (1982).⁴

Another way in which *District 9* both acknowledges and then subverts science fiction tropes is through its engagement with historical time. While it reshapes time in one sense, it does not engage with time travel and the time-loop paradox of films like *The Terminator*. However, I do think it relates strongly to the strain of ‘critical dystopias’ (Penley 1990:117) in science fiction film through its immersion of the fantasy of alien visitation within the reality of everyday life in South Africa. Instead of time distortion, *District 9* presents us with the displacement of time as the ongoing drama of the stranded aliens and their mistreatment pushes other elements of South Africa’s recent history to the margins. In 1982, Fredric Jameson wrote that technologically utopian visions in science fiction were “historical and dated – streamlined cities of the future on peeling murals – while our lived experience of our greatest metropolises is one of urban decay and blight. That particular Utopian future has in other words turned out to have been merely the future of one moment of what is now our own past.” (1982: 151) For Jameson, the result is not imaginative anticipation so much as a form of ‘historical melancholy’: “what is indeed authentic about [science fiction], as a mode of narrative and a form of knowledge, is not at all its capacity to keep the future alive, even in imagination. On the contrary, its deepest vocation is over and over again to demonstrate and to dramatise our incapacity to imagine the future...” (1982: 153)

Utopias and dystopias are thus tied inexorably to the moment of their imagining, designed as ideal reversals, or more usually as inevitable degradations of the contemporary conditions of their writers/creators. *District 9* offers no utopian hope; the utopian ambiguity of being both “no place” and “good place” has become a dystopian “this, bad place.” Its central conceit is a parallel South African reality that at once acknowledges the fact of change in South Africa, but also sees no difference in government attitude towards the aliens. Blomkamp makes this matter-of-fact admission about the political-historical

context for his stranded aliens narrative: “In my mind, a black government is in control, and I assume that the white government – with apartheid ending in 1994 – did the same thing to the aliens.” (O’Hehir, 2009)

This reliance on an assumed political continuum is what leads to the film’s problematic relationship between ideology and time because, for many people, it is inconceivable to ignore the effect of a new government being elected in 1994 and the momentous shift in the country’s social environment that took place as a result. Kimberly Nichele Brown argues that the film “never really fixes the conundrum of using ‘Prawns’ as a metaphor for disenfranchised blacks in the face of the existence of real blacks in South Africa who are still mainly disenfranchised in the contemporary apartheid state.” (Brown 2012: 197) The reverse field of the shots of riot police, which should comprise people protesting against apartheid laws, are instead populated by aliens, and in this sense *District 9* delivers a 1980s free of the state of emergency, violent revolution and actual discrimination against black people. Even the Casspirs – a ubiquitous icon of apartheid law enforcement – are white in an echo of the United Nations vehicle livery, and a visual reference to the UNTAG mission in Namibia in 1989. Two early statements by interviewees in the mockumentary frame narrative show how this ideological slippage takes place. In the first, a woman says, “We were on the verge of first contact, the whole world was watching,” and a few minutes later a man says: “There was a lot of international pressure on us at the time, the whole world was looking at Johannesburg so we had to do the right thing.” Given that the date is 1982, one has to assume that the whole world was actually monitoring South Africa because of apartheid, but the first statement prioritises the thrill of ‘first contact’. For the second speaker, as a result, “doing the right thing” is thus treating the aliens with dignity, even while the majority of South Africans enjoyed no such rights.

Whatever Blomkamp’s reasons are for arranging his action along this metahistorical timeline, it is important to investigate the consequences of his creative decision. I largely agree with Brown that *District 9* is a “post-national imaginary, but one that functions to reinscribe old ways of national belonging in South Africa”; however, I am not as convinced by her claim that the film is “covertly pro-apartheid”. (194,195) Brown mentions but overlooks the jokes and asides at the expense of the old order that punctuate the mockumentary sequences in particular – “all the delights of our ethnoscapes” as Andries du Toit notes. “The movie has a lot of fun... parading its provincial roots with a kind of delighted embarrassment,” he adds, from the thick accents to the drab office interiors and uninspired talking-head television interviews. Without being parochial, this is detail that might be lost on viewers unfamiliar with white South African slang, and certain particularities of South African history. For Du Toit, far from marginalising apartheid, *District 9* reminds South Africans very directly about the crushing apparatus of the apartheid state.

Apartheid repression was never just about violence. Instead, it was a strange and carefully composed mix of brutal force, racist anthropology, Foucauldian surveillance, and a curious, bureaucratic obsession with the appearance of due process and the rule of law. Every single thing you see in this scene – the harassed, edgy bureaucrats with their clipboards and their explanations; the ludicrous attempts to get the aliens to sign the consent forms prior to their removal to the tent town; the prowling military thugs; the constant threat of violence, spiralling out of control; the chaos and confusion – all of it is precisely how it all worked. Watching it, I suddenly remembered, with vertiginous clarity: Crossroads. KTC. The Witdoek. Jeff Benzien. Dolf Odendaal.

Watching *District 9* the first time, I was interested by the film’s deployment of the contemporary mockumentary mode of television comedy (as seen in *The Office* and *Arrested Development*, for example) and the parodic interview style of *Saturday Night Live* and *The Daily Show*. However, in the scene where Wikus and Christopher Johnson are trapped in the MNU weapons testing facility, the brutality of the apartheid machine suddenly erupts into the film and the terrifying lobotomy scenes in the concrete vault in Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* (1984) came to mind. The potential intertextual references suggest that Blomkamp’s vision of a science fiction Johannesburg has less to do with the extrapolating into the future as it has to do with mining the past; South Africa’s cultural past (particularly from a white middle-class perspective) and the eclectic visions of science fiction film that takes in the sub-genres of alien invasion, mutant insects, and hybridisation.

While one cannot explain away the rather lazy xenophobic treatment of the Nigerian criminal syndicates with a handful of asides, I think one needs to carefully pick apart the film’s “mangled anthropology” (White, 2009), rather than dismissing it in one fell swoop.

Nostalgia and narrative fetishism

We often tend to think of nostalgia in predominantly negative terms, as a retreat, an attempt to recuperate an ideal moment from the past in the face of what we find unpleasant and unsustainable in the present. For some white South Africans, for example, that might entail a wistful longing for the days when things were cheaper and there was ‘no crime’. Stuart Tannock writes that “nostalgia approaches the past as a stable source of value and meaning” (455) and moreover (citing Fred Davis) that nostalgia may be seen as “the search for continuity amid threats of discontinuity.” (456) In this context, nostalgia is not a snapshot but rather a home movie of the past; continuity is crucial. However, as Svetlana Boym writes:

Modern nostalgia is paradoxical in the sense that the universality of its longing can make us more empathetic towards fellow humans, and yet the moment we try to repair that longing with a particular belonging – or the apprehension of loss with a rediscovery of identity and especially of a national community and unique and pure homeland – we often part ways with others and put an end to mutual understanding. *Algia* (or longing) is what we share, yet *nostos* (or the return home) is what divides us. (2007:9)

Especially in a post-revolutionary period, which South Africa has experienced over the past twenty years, the possibility of different groups sharing links with the past as a “stable source of value and meaning” is slight. Even in a period with great emphasis on nation-building, unity and the breaking down of legal, cultural, linguistic and social barriers imposed by the apartheid state, nostalgia can also be seen as “a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an ‘enchanted world’ with clear borders and values.” (Boym)

Importantly, this irretrievable past is composed of both lived experience and cultural signifiers; by what actually happened and what one remembers seeing, reading and hearing. In her book, *Cinema in a Democratic South Africa*, Lucia Saks notes wryly: “Depending on one’s age... the objects of consumption play a large role in reimagining the nation.” (2010: 47). While this might appear to apply most directly to the

Born Free generation of South Africans and their engagement with globalised consumer capitalism in the post-apartheid period, it also applies to generations of older South Africans who situate themselves along a historical continuum according to the complementarity of pop culture pastiche, media events and signifiers of the everyday: the assassination of Verwoerd, Sharpeville, the country's first television broadcast, the Soweto uprising, conscription, the death of Steve Biko, the bank heists of the Stander gang, 'rebel' sports tours, Prime Minister Botha's Rubicon speech, simulcast American television series, *The Cosby Show*, and so on. What is problematic for South Africans is what sort of "belonging" is invoked by a nostalgic text. Du Toit, in his statement about apartheid repression, above, finds a belonging in the alternative world of *District 9* for all the 'wrong' reasons – it reminds him of apartheid's vicious machinery – where Brown, looking at that same world, sees no irony in the representation, or at least a false irony that masks a deep-seated and unapologetic longing for the security of Wikus's simple life.

In this context, *District 9* produces a potential dual reading. First, is the possibility that the film shows in unflinching terms how South Africa has not actually changed, how its leadership has exhaustively produced one new national identity after another from The Miracle through the Rainbow Nation to the African Renaissance while social realities for many South Africans have not improved at all. This also leads to a dystopian present of forced removals and the militarization of law enforcement. Second, is the fantasy that South Africa under a State of Emergency was not at war with itself, but rather unified against an alien Other. Apartheid is thus a structured absence in the narrative through temporal displacement.⁵ After apartheid, this antagonism towards the other extends to the rapacious Nigerians, creating a seamless continuity of defence against alien invasion. One can see in this historical displacement a form of narrative fetishism, described by Eric L. Santner as,

The construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called the narrative into being in the first place... it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness, typically by situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere... Narrative fetishism releases one from the burden of having to reconstitute one's self-identity under 'posttraumatic' conditions; in narrative fetishism, the 'post' is indefinitely postponed." (1992: 144)

In a period of representations of South Africa on film focused intensively on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (*In My Country, Red Dust, Forgiveness, Between Joy and Remembrance*) and nation-building narratives such as *Invictus*, films such as *Yesterday, Tsotsi* and, more recently *Lucky* – in spite of the 'positive' attention they have drawn to South African filmmaking – represent South Africa as a "diseased dystopia" (Hodes, 2008). *District 9*'s alternative interregnum, enabled by the science fiction genre, can be seen as an allegory for what Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze terms "transition as a memorial deferral of justice" (2004: 757). The government's indefinite postponement of a permanent solution to the problem of aliens' rights which results in them being constantly relocated represents the legal limitations set against the need for moral justice. One could argue that the constant attempts in films about South Africa to seek closure through forgiveness and institutionally organized reconciliation "simulate a condition of intactness" in Santner's words which, on the surface at least, are undone in the dystopian vision of *District 9*. However, Blomkamp's displacement of 'real' apartheid history, combined with his vilification of Nigerians in contemporary South

Africa appears to "situate the site and origin of loss elsewhere": again, the film's metahistorical timeframe appears to face in two directions at the same time.

This representational paradox applies to the film's apparent xenophobia too. The aliens and their mistreatment are possibly an allegory for the eruption of xenophobic violence in 2008 while, at the same time, Nigerians are clumsily represented as not only gangsters, but cannibals, sadists and technophobic primitives. For his part, Blomkamp is unapologetic. "The bottom line is that there are huge Nigerian crime syndicates in Johannesburg, I wanted the film to feel real, to feel grounded, and I was going to incorporate as much of contemporary South Africa as I wanted to, and that's just how it is." (O'Hehir, 2009) Corrine Sandwith argues that "the events of May 2008 led to an interpretative crisis unleashing multiple, often contradictory, stories, the most powerful of which involved crime." (2010: 61) In the film, one of the 'experts' interviewed during the mockumentary sequence makes the bald statement that "where you have a slum you have crime" which is seen to apply to both the aliens and the Nigerians who parasitically live off them. Sandwith notes the paradox of violent xenophobia being justified as the clearing out of criminal elements: "arising out of the same series of events, the figure of the immigrant was simultaneously constructed as threatening criminal and victim of violent crime." (62)⁶ In *District 9*, this paradox is contained in the figure of the alien. However, the Nigerian gangsters yield no such ambiguity; they are universally evil and, for this, Blomkamp must accept the blame. The consequences are not only offence caused to Nigerians but also, for the film, the failure of the xenophobic allegory.

Conclusion: historical awareness

Grant Farred, writing in 2004, describes a 'double temporality' in South Africa: "the failure of the present emerges not from what is absent, but from how the present is overburdened by the incursion of the past, the ways in which the past inscribes itself onto the present." (2004: 594) This double temporality arises from the co-existence in the South African cultural psyche of both "history (apartheid) and not-yet history (post-apartheid)... within the same temporality in post-1994 South African society." (ibid.) 1994 becomes the centre around which the past and present circulate, exercising centripetal force over South African stories. Now, ten years later, is it possible that with the emergence of truly new generation of South Africans (born after the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC) the present might loosen some of the claims to identity of the past? In a second article on double temporality, this time on the film *Lagaan* (2002), Farred describes the "locus of historical enunciation" as "the cinematic moment of and from which [the film] ideologically speaks" (2004: 95) producing in *Lagaan* a "posterior nostalgia... a postcolonial desire for the (culturally produced) political unity of the colonized past." (ibid.) *District 9*, it seems might be seen to do the same, except that the unity in the past that it proposes is between the apartheid state and the majority of South Africans it sought to oppress.

Against this social and historical backdrop, I don't think *District 9* is deliberately nostalgic. In fact, I think at the core of Blomkamp's South African sci-fi is a decision to reconceive the country's screen representation of itself. However, South Africa's history is inescapable, and Blomkamp knows this too. As a result, he attempts to solve the middle-class whinge that afflicts film discourse in South Africa – "but why does it always have to be about apartheid?" – by making a film that is both about apartheid without mentioning it, and about xenophobia even as it taps into a deeply xenophobic vein in contemporary South African society.

The ‘problem’ with *District 9*, then, is its confusing ‘historical enunciation’. Though its historical locus predominantly references the xenophobic attacks of 2008, it is also a flea market of cultural artefacts laid out on the pavement to be scrutinized, chuckled over and perhaps purchased for the mantelpiece back home. The temporal fluidity that allows it to challenge the fantasies of contemporary science fiction (that transport the troubles of our world to distant worlds) is also at the heart of its failure to properly appreciate the historical process of South Africa’s transformation.

References

- Boym, Svetlana : <<Nostalgia and its Discontents.>> In *The Hedgehog Review* 9:2, 2007, 7-18.
- Brown, Kimberley Nichele : <<Every Brother Ain’t a Brother’: Cultural Dissonance and Nigerian Malaise in *District 9*’s New South Africa.>> In : Maryellen Higgins (ed.) *Hollywood’s Africa After 1994*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2012, 193-206.
- Du Toit, Andries : <<Becoming the Alien: apartheid, racism and *District 9*>> September 4, 2009. <http://asubleknfc.wordpress.com/2009/09/04/science-fiction-in-the-ghetto-loving-the-alien/>
- Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi : <<Transition and the Reasons of Memory.>> In *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:4, 2004, 755-768.
- Farred, Grant : <<The Not-Yet Counterpartisan: A New Politics of Oppositionality.>> *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:4, 2004, 589-605.
- Farred, Grant : <<The Double Temporality of *Lagaan*.>> *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 28:2, 2004, 93-114.
- Hodes, Rebecca : <<‘Diseased Dystopias’: HIV/AIDS and the South African City in *Yesterday* and *Tsotsi*.>> *Postamble* 4:2, 2008, 1-16.
- Jameson, Fredric : <<Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?>> *Science Fiction Studies* 9:2, 1982, 147-158.
- Kakoudaki, Despina : <<Spectacles of History: Race Relations, Melodrama, and the Science Fiction/Disaster Film.>> *Camera Obscura* 17:2, 2002, 109-152.
- Moses, Michael Valdez : <<*District 9*: A Roundtable.>> *Sajoudi*, 11: 1, 2010, 155-175.
- O’Hehir, Andrew : <<Is Apartheid Acceptable – for Giant Bugs?>> August 12, 2009. <http://www.salon.com/2009/08/12/blomkamp/>
- Newitz, Annalee : <<When Will White People Stop Making Movies like Avatar?>> 18 December, 2009. <http://io9.com/5422666/when-will-white-people-stop-making-movies-like-avator>
- Penley, Constance : <<‘Time Travel, Primal Scene and the Critical Dystopia.’>> In Annette Kuhn (ed.) *Alien Zone: cultural theory and contemporary science fiction cinema*. London: Verso, 1990, 116-127.
- Rijsdijk, Ian-Malcolm : <<White Man’s Curse: *Stander* and *The Last Samurai*.>> In Martin Botha(ed.) *Marginal Lives and Painful Pasts: South African cinema after apartheid*. Cape Town: Genugtig, 2007, 305-316.
- Saks, Lucia : *Cinema in a Democratic South Africa: the race for representation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Sandwith, Corrine : <<Postcolonial Violence: narrating South Africa, May 2008.>> *Current Writing* 22:2, 2010, 60-82.
- Santner, Eric L. : <<History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma.>> In Saul Friedlander (ed.) *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution”* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, 143-154.
- Steyn, Melissa : *‘Whiteness Just Isn’t What It Used To Be’: white identity in a changing South Africa*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Steyn, Melissa : <<‘White Talk’: white South Africans and the management of diasporic whiteness.>> In Alfred J. López (ed.) *Postcolonial Whiteness: a critical reader on race and empire*. Albany: State University Press of New York, 2005, 119-135.
- Tannock, Stuart : <<Nostalgia Critique.>> *Cultural Studies* 9:3, 1995, 453-464.
- White, Armond : <<From Mothership to Bullship: *District 9* trucks in trash and South Africa’s apartheid history.>> New York Press, August 13, 2009. <http://nypress.com/from-mothership-to-bullship/>

Films

- Armageddon*, USA, d/ Michael Bay, Buena Vista Pictures, 152’, 1998.
- Arrested Development*, USA, 20th Century Fox Television, 2003-2006.
- Avatar*, USA, d/ James Cameron, 20th Century Fox, 162’, 2009.
- Between Joyce and Remembrance*, South Africa, documentary d/ Mark Kaplan, Grey Matter Media, 68’, 2004
- Blade Runner*, USA, d/ Ridley Scott, Warner Bros. Pictures, 116’, 1982.
- Brazil*, UK, d/ Terry Gilliam, 20th Century Fox (Europe), 143’, 1985.
- Cry, the Beloved Country*, South Africa/USA, d/ Darrell Roodt, Miramax Films, 106’, 1995.
- Daily Show, The*, USA, Comedy Central, 1996-present.
- Deep Impact*, USA, d/ Mimi Leder, Paramount Pictures, 121’, 1998.
- District 9*, USA/South Africa/Canada/New Zealand, d/ Neill Blomkamp, TriStar Pictures, 112’, 2009.
- Forgiveness*, South Africa, d/ Ian Gabriel, Ster-Kinekor/California Newsreel, 92’, 2004.
- Gods Must Be Crazy, The*, South Africa, d/ Jamie Uys, Ster-Kinekor/20th Century Fox, 109’, 1980.
- Independence Day*, USA, d/ Roland Emmerich, 20th Century Fox, 145’, 1996.
- In My Country*, UK/Ireland/South Africa, d/ John Boorman, Columbia TriStar, 103’, 2004.
- Invictus*, USA/SA, d/ Clint Eastwood, Warner Bros. Pictures, 135’, 2009.
- Lagaan*, India, d/ Ashutosh Gowariker, Aamir Khan Productions, 224’, 2002.
- Logan’s Run*, USA, d/ Michael Anderson, United Artists, 119’, 1976.
- Lucky*, South Africa, d/ Avie Luthra, Indigenous Film Distribution, 2011.
- Man on Ground*, South Africa, d/ Akin Omotoso, TOM Pictures, 80’, 2011
- Office, The*, UK, BBC, 2001-2203.
- Red Dust*, UK/South Africa, d/ Tom Hooper, BBC Films, 110’, 2004.
- Saturday Night Live*, USA, NBC, 1975-present.
- Soylent Green*, USA, d/ Richard Fleischer, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 97’, 1973.
- Stander*, Canada/South Africa/Germany, d/ Bronwen Hughes, 7 Arts/Newmarket Films, 116’, 2003
- Terminator, The*, USA, d/ James Cameron, Orion Pictures, 108’, 1982.
- Tsotsi*, South Africa, d/ Gavin Hood, Ster-Kinekor/Miramax, 94’, 2005.
- Yesterday*, South Africa, d/Darrell Roodt, HBO Pictures, 96’, 2004.

¹ It is worth noting that the violence that made headlines in 2008 is more of an eruption of ongoing tensions that has claimed, and continues to claim, the lives of non-South Africans living and working in South Africa.

² I should make the point that I do not consider either *Invictus* or *District 9* to be South African films. Though their subject matter is South African and, in the case of *District 9*, the director was born and raised in South Africa, both films are financed and supported by major producers and studios outside of South Africa, and, therefore, represent a more transnational attempt at (re) constructing South African identities.

³ I have argued elsewhere that the transnational production of the film *Stander* (2003) ultimately failed because it tried to make a classic frontier hero in the American mould out of a South African criminal. The political context of the real André Stander’s life, let alone his individual personality, crushed the film’s proposition that he might be a recuperated hero whose bank robberies arose out of his growing awareness of the evils of the apartheid regime. (see Rijsdijk, 2007)

⁴ Neill Blomkamp references this era of science fiction films in his interview with Andrew O’Hehir.

⁵ In *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980) – one of South Africa’s most internationally popular films – Jamie Uys creates a bushveld utopia through spatial displacement by setting the story in the distant Kalahari, far from the apparent influence of apartheid law and authority.

⁶ See, for example, the examination of xenophobia towards Nigerians in Akin Omotoso’s film *Man on Ground* (2012).

Raychaudhuri's work on South Asian diasporic nostalgia is an invaluable contribution to memory studies that deals with topics as diverse as Brexit, BBC Asian broadcasting, and diasporic literature. Moving from experiences of the everyday "like food" to historical figures, Raychaudhuri offers a sophisticated portrait of nostalgia's radical potential to transform and challenge the idea of home. Anindya Raychaudhuri's theoretic scaffolding of the argument is unique, and promises to open new avenues for reading South Asian diasporic subjects and spaces. The stunning clarity of the argument is highlighted by a contextualized reading of diaspora in a contemporary, heightened, political climate of rising populist nationalism.

â€œNostalgia and the (Re) Construction of South African Identity in District 9.â€ May (2015): n. pag. Web. Rubenstein, Roberta. Swamy, Mrs. G. Serwani Venkata. Immigrant Identity, Nostalgia for Home and Home Land: A Perception in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's the Vine of Desire.â€ I Issue III August I Issue III (2013): n. pag. Tronvoll, Goitom Gebreluel & Kjetil. South Africa's youthful population is gradually aging, as the country's total fertility rate (TFR) has declined dramatically from about 6 children per woman in the 1960s to roughly 2.2 in 2014. This pattern is similar to fertility trends in South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, and sets South Africa apart from the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, where the average TFR remains higher than other regions of the world. As the proportion of working-age South Africans has grown relative to children and the elderly, South Africa has been unable to achieve a demographic dividend because persistent high unemployment and the prevalence of HIV/AIDs have created a larger-than-normal dependent population. The history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, as well as the struggles against them, have had a major influence on the literature and film of South Africa. District 9 reflects many of the conflicts of the Apartheid era. Works of art that have emerged from the historical mindset of colonialism and apartheid, and therefore are critical of those practices, are called postcolonial and/or post-Apartheid. They are considered "post" because their thinking has moved beyond the old historical views of racial difference that supposedly justified segregation, persecution, and exploi...â€

How does the presentation of alien invasion in District 9 differ from the mainstream British and American tradition of alien invasion fiction and film? Dec 16 2019 02:12 PM. Solution.pdf. District 9. Since then, Copley's carved out a career in playing eccentric, flawed but unceasingly mesmerising characters, including a new interpretation of Howling Mad Murdock for the 2010 A-Team reboot, and most recently, the sometimes comic, frequently terrifying sociopathic assassin Kruger in Blomkamp's latest feature, Elysium.â€ Yeah, I basically ended up sending him four different versions of South African. I also tried a British and Eastern European version of the character. And one of the four South Africans, I felt, was the one we should do, and Neill felt the same way. And we fine-tuned elements of him a little bit, of the dark, sadistic side he would have " the humour versus the lethality of him, I suppose. Did you improvise much in this film, because I know you did in District 9.