

***UNMASKING THE HEROES:
SOURCES OF POWER IN AFRIKANER
MYTHOLOGISING***

by

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***UNMASKING THE HEROES:
SOURCES OF POWER IN AFRIKANER MYTHOLOGISING***

by

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SUMMARY:

Unmasking the heroes: sources of power in Afrikaner mythologising is a personal, visual and theoretical exploration of the underlying sources of power which governed the development of Afrikaner nationalism, particularly the years spanning the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The practical work, a series of drawings and relief cut-outs, sets out to unmask the beliefs, customs, traditions and attitudes particular to Afrikaner culture. It does so through the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction of selected mass mediated images whereby different symbolic paradigms are juxtaposed through the devices of collage and allegory to uncover layers of meaning. This art-making approach was informed by theoretical and visual research into the tradition of Western mythology, including related topics such as linguistics, psychology and sociology, Afrikaner history and historiography, and the mechanisms of contemporary cultural reproduction, particularly the South African mass media and fine arts.

LIST OF KEY TERMS:

Afrikaner myths and heroes; allegory; collage; hero; hero and myth as forms of cultural reproduction in Western myth; mass media images; myth; postmodernist cultural reproduction; relief cut-outs; reproduction of Afrikaner mythologising; South African artists.

DECLARATION

Student number: 403-291-8

I declare that *Unmasking the heroes: sources of power in Afrikaner mythologising* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

MS L E Sherman

SIGNATURE

(MS L E SHERMAN)

14 December 1998

DATE

CONTENTS

	Page
Volume I	
PREFACE	i
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
ENDNOTES	12
CHAPTER ONE	
The hero and myth as forms of social reproduction	14
THE NATURE OF MYTH	15
THE FUNCTION OF MYTH	25
MECHANISMS OF SYMBOLIC REPRODUCTION	29
ENDNOTES	39
CHAPTER TWO	
The Afrikaner's primordial myths: their origin and cultural reproduction	43
TRUE STORIES: THE INFLUENCES OF EARLY EUROPEAN COLONIALISM UPON LATTER-DAY	
MYTHOLOGISING	48
SAD STORIES: THE SACRED HISTORY OF THE AFRIKANER'S HEROIC AGE	59
ENDNOTES	69

CHAPTER THREE

**Mythical stories: deconstructing contemporary Western and Afrikaner visual cultural reproduction
as a source for personal visual art-making** 75

WESTERN VISUAL REPRODUCTION AS A SOURCE FOR PERSONAL ART-MAKING 80

AFRIKANER CULTURAL REPRODUCTION AS A SOURCE FOR PERSONAL ART-MAKING 86

POSTMODERNIST CULTURAL REPRODUCTION AS A SOURCE FOR PERSONAL ART-MAKING 94

ENDNOTES 102

CHAPTER FOUR

Unmasking Afrikaner mythologising as a source for personal art-making 109

ALLEGORY AND COLLAGE AS DEVICES FOR CREATING PERSONAL SYMBOLIC PARADIGMS 112

ALLEGORY AND COLLAGE AS DEVICES FOR CREATING PERSONAL VISUAL MYTHS 125

ENDNOTES 137

CONCLUDING NOTE

The hero's return 141

Appendix

LIST OF EXHIBITIONS 155

BIBLIOGRAPHY 156

Volume II

ILLUSTRATIONS 173

VOLUME I

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PREFACE

This project brought together a number of interests which I have had for some time, the most relevant to this research probably being my preoccupation with everyday politics. This curiosity about how we negotiate our lives amidst the numerous power axes at work upon us took on a more sombre tone when I scrutinised the power and effects of Afrikaner mythologising and the ideologies that they were authenticating. I embarked upon this research to gain a clearer understanding of the workings of myths and heroes in contemporary society, and in particular within Afrikaner culture. I explored the meaning and form of the Afrikaner's heroes and myths through the visual deconstruction and reconstruction of mass mediated symbols through a series of relief cut-outs and drawings. The research is presented in two parts, Volume I being the theoretical explication of my research, and Volume II containing the photographic documentation of the series of drawings and relief cut-outs that together constitute the practical body of work.

The dissertation explains important concepts and terms either where they are first mentioned or where it is most appropriate. The use of the terms “ingroup” and “outgroup” are, however, not explained in the main text, and were taken from the research of different scholars, such as psychologists Wolfgang Stroebe and Chester Insko on stereotype, prejudice and discrimination (1989:3-36), and Walter Stephan and David Rosenfield on racial and ethnic stereotypes (1982:92-136). “Ingroup” refers to people of the same group who hold similar attitudes and prejudices; and “outgroup” denotes members from a different group that are perceived to be different from the “ingroup” or “us”.

I wish to take the opportunity to extend my gratitude to all the individuals and institutions who assisted me in this research. I wish to

especially extend my sincerest thanks to my supervisors, Dr Keith Dietrich and Mr Koos van der Watt, for all their support and guidance in this research project. Also a word of thanks to Prof. Karin Skawran and the Unisa Department of History of Art and Fine Arts. Marika Tucker, the Fine Arts subject librarian was an ever helpful presence and lifeline to special resources. Mrs Marna de Klerk, the Fine Arts secretary, was always a cheerful contact at the Department. My fellow artists in the studio provided camaraderie and support in many ways. To Kevin Brandt, Angela Ferreira, Paul Grendon, and Brett Murray, many thanks. Finally, a grateful acknowledgement to Jennifer Hicks for her editing and proofreading.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure		Page
1.	<i>Heavenly heroes: the seraph</i> , 1987. Egg tempera and oil pastel on wood panel. 95 x 78 x 2.5 cm.	170
2.	<i>Earthly heroes: the politician</i> , 1987. Egg tempera and oil pastel on wood panel. 99 x 31 x 2.5 cm, 24.5 x 16.5 x 2.5 cm & 24 x 16 x 2.5 cm.	171
3.	<i>Heavenly heroes: the martyr</i> , 1987-1988. Egg tempera and oil on wood panel. 193 x 50 x 2.5 cm.	172
4.	<i>Earthly heroes: girl in party dress</i> , 1988-1992. Egg tempera, oil pastel, and oil on wood panel. 138.5 x 59.5 x 2.5 cm.	173
5.	<i>Earthly heroes: the dancers</i> , 1988-1992. Egg tempera and oil on wood panel. 100 x 90 x 2.5 cm.	174
6.	<i>Earthly heroes: blue bull and girl in pink bikini</i> , 1988-1992. Egg tempera and oil on wood panel. 99.5 x 150 x 2.5 cm & 87 x 72 x 2.5 cm.	175
7.	<i>Heavenly heroes: weeping bishop</i> , 1989-1990. Egg tempera and oil on wood panel. 83 x 160 x 2.5 cm.	176
8.	<i>Earthly heroes: the water bearer</i> , 1990-1991. Oil, enamel and aluminium sheeting on wood panel. 173 x 80 x 2.5 cm.	177
9.	<i>The angel's lost trolley</i> , 1988-1991. Oil on wood panel. 153 x 116 x 2.5 cm.	178
10.	<i>Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 1</i> , 1991. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm.	179
11.	<i>Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 2</i> , 1992. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm.	180
12.	<i>Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 3</i> , 1992. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm.	180
13.	<i>Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 4</i> , 1992. Ink and charcoal on paper. 76 x 56 cm.	181

14. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 5*, 1992. Mixed media on paper. 76 x 56 cm. 181
15. *Earthly heroes: the mayor in a tangle with Madonna and swordfish*, 1991. Ink, charcoal and pastel on paper.
76 x 56 cm. 182
16. *Earthly heroes: the mayor and seal performing in township*, 1991. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm. 182
17. *Earthly heroes: the mayor and seal performing on beach*, 1991. Charcoal, chalk and oil pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm. 183
18. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, domestic princess No 2*, 1991. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm. 183
19. *Earthly heroes: the mayor and seal No 2*, 1991. Mixed media on paper. 76 x 56 cm. 184
20. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the nurturer No 1*, 1992. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 70 x 100 cm. 185
21. *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the archangel No 1*, 1992. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 70 x 100 cm. 186
22. *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the mayor No 5*, 1991. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm. 187
23. *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the archangel No 3*, 1991. Ink, charcoal and pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm. 187
24. *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the archangel No 4*, 1992. Charcoal, gouache and pastel on paper. 76 x 56 cm. 188
25. *Earthly heroes: the Madonna and the archangel*, 1992. Oil and metal on wood panel. 102 x 157 x 2.5 cm. 189
26. *Commuting between heaven and earth: Madonna and the modern chariot, the helicopter*, 1992. Charcoal and pastel
on paper. 70 x 100 cm. 190
27. *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter No 2*, 1991. Charcoal on paper.
100 x 70 cm. 191
28. *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter No 3*, 1991. Charcoal and pastel on paper.
100 x 70 cm. 191
29. *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter No 4*, 1991. Mixed media on paper.

	76 x 56 cm.	192
30.	<i>Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter and angels</i> , 1991-1992. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 70 x 100 cm.	193
31.	<i>Above and below, before and after No 1</i> , 1991. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 100 x 70 cm.	194
32.	<i>Above and below, before and after No 2</i> , 1991. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 100 x 70 cm.	194
33.	<i>Above and below, before and after No 3</i> , 1991. Ink, charcoal and pastel on paper. 100 x 70 cm.	195
34.	<i>Above and below, before and after No 4</i> , 1991. Ink and charcoal on paper. 76 x 56 cm.	195
35.	<i>Launching pad No 1</i> , 1992. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 70 x 100 cm.	196
36.	<i>Launching pad No 2</i> , 1992. Pastel on paper. 70 x 100 cm.	197
37.	<i>Launching pad No 3</i> , 1992. Charcoal and pastel on paper. 70 x 100 cm.	198
38.	<i>Launching pad I: the church</i> , 1987. Egg tempera and oil pastel on wood panel. 60 x 58 x 2.5 cm.	199
39.	<i>Launching pad II: the pool</i> , 1991. Oil, enamel and lead on wood panel. 60 x 46 x 2.5 cm.	200
40.	<i>Launching pad III: the modern chariot</i> , 1992. Oil, enamel and lead on wood panel. 60 x 61.2 x 2.5 cm.	201

All the drawings were photographed by the artist and all the relief panels were photographed by Jac de Villiers.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s, the Afrikaner began to feel that the success of their political hegemony, established over the last 40 years, was double-edged. They enjoyed the cultural and social structures that they had created for themselves, but they also had to live with the implications of the social engineering that they had undertaken at the expense of all the other non-white population groups in South Africa. The Afrikaner Nationalist Party's racist policies made for an increasingly troubled and unstable society. The country was filled with negativity and despair which can be related directly to the Afrikaner's apartheid policies. According to Alistair Sparks, apartheid "cast a darkness upon white as well as black" (1994:218).¹ In this research I also consider and explore the underlying reasons that propelled the Afrikaner people into adopting these extreme social solutions.

The advantages experienced by the white minority set them apart from the rest of the population and created unnatural distances between them and non-white groups, both culturally and physically. The differences were reproduced in the stereotypes perpetuated by each separate community of the "other" or "them".² Apartheid legislation defined and enforced the distances between "us" and "them" in all South African communities through various Acts of Parliament that officially limited interaction between different race groups and both dispossessed and disenfranchised the non-white majority. Apartheid policies cultivated a culture of exploitation, alienation, distrust, and fear among fellow South Africans. Through these policies, Afrikaner politicians managed to separate the various peoples of the land and controlled society through "divide and rule".

The separatist social structure created in South Africa by the Afrikaner, which was largely put in place by colonial governments before

them, was my first encounter of social order. I came to understand the complexity of this social order, and the uncomfortable, dichotomous position the Afrikaner held in South Africa. This awareness led me to question the distinctions made between “us” and “them” in South African society. I wanted to explore the origins of this “othering”, as I could not identify with the “us” which was constructed around me, neither was I part of “them”.³

My exploration of the origins of apartheid took a symbolic form, and I focused in particular on the heroes and myths of the Afrikaner as a means through which to deconstruct Afrikaner beliefs, attitudes, codes of conduct and traditions. I accepted that certain aspects of Afrikaner ingroup mythologising were “true”: for example, their sufferance under expedient foreign rulers and their bravery as pioneers in a wilderness during the early years of colonial settlement and subsequent rule by colonial overlords. Yet in more recent times, since the 1960s, in other respects such as their commitment to Christian love and adherence to the principles of democracy, I ascribed “veracity” to outgroup myths which portrayed the Afrikaner as being racist and repressive from within and beyond South Africa. Perceiving the “truth” emanating from different mythical paradigms resulted in “mixed myths or metaphors” (refer to Chapter One regarding myths as extended metaphors) which created psychological conflicts and tensions within myself, and resulted in feelings of alienation, which eventually led to a form of personal detribalisation. Once I questioned the “veracity” of Afrikaner myths and the ideologies that they were employed to support, I experienced a growing distance between myself and my kinsfolk. This distance was not only a function of the change within myself, but also a response to it from my fellow Afrikaner. Any deviation from the group “norm” resulted in a closing of ranks by the Afrikaner. As a group they demanded a blind, unstinting loyalty and obedience to the Afrikaner cause, with no tolerance of any thoughts contrary to the mainstream. Joha Louw-Potgieter, in her book *Afrikaner dissidents: A social psychological study of identity and dissent* (1988) describes this phenomenon:

Afrikaans speakers who adopt an anti-apartheid stance are regarded as left-wing dissidents by the Nationalists. Ultra-right wing dissent to the government takes a traditional conservative form and is concerned with the re-implementation of a stringent type of apartheid which was popular in the 1960s. From a Nationalist's perspective, Afrikaans-speaking political dissent could thus hold left-wing or ultra-right wing attitudes (1988:2).

The Nationalist ethos was exclusive, conservative and paternalistic: it did not encourage alternative ideas. Afrikaner politicians and other leaders constructed a finite reality where the views of ingroup members concerning race, religion and politics had to conform to the "official line". This totalitarian approach was characteristic of the Afrikaner, and if members deviated on any point the basis of their kinship to Afrikanerdom would be threatened. The Afrikaner establishment's insistence upon loyalty to the group was a powerful deterrent to any individual with dissenting views. It transformed many expressions of individual thought (which should have been a cerebral, intellectual exercise) into emotion-laden events, as constraints set up by the ingroup had to be broken in order to express them. Having constructed such rigid parameters for Afrikaner kinship meant that any deviation resulted in factionalism, which was dreaded and feared by Nationalist leaders for so many years.

My search for the meaning of the hero in contemporary society was coloured by my own experiences and subsequent memories of Afrikaner heroes. Although an Afrikaner myself, I felt increasingly alienated from this cultural group as I realised how damaging the impact of apartheid was on all South Africans, not least the Afrikaner themselves. This distance between myself and my origins led to a range of moral, intellectual and emotional tensions that found expression in this body of work. In probing these tensions in myself, and in South African society, I uncovered numerous discourses each denoting their own respective power structures. To come to an understanding of heroes and their myths I had to look at the wider picture of the interrelationships between these symbolic entities as well as the power relations that governed them.

Having decided to deconstruct Afrikaner culture through symbolic indicators (in this instance the hero and myth), in order to identify the fields of force of the power relations that determined Afrikaner ideology, I faced the problem of defining the meaning of the hero, or heroine, and myth in contemporary society. Although I could list numerous examples of classical and contemporary popular heroes and myths, I could not find any contemporary Afrikaner hero that was significant to me personally. Whilst I questioned the “veracity” of Afrikaner mythologising, I realised that I recognised and lived by certain other Western heroic and mythical configurations and conventions without demanding any form of “truthfulness” from them. These realisations exposed the contradictions inherent in life, as well as in my field of research, and revealed that even though I hoped to clarify some issues through my research I was also bound to encounter many more contradictions in the process. I, therefore, resolved to adopt approaches that would enable me to arrive at conclusions without incurring inaccuracies as a result of over-simplifications and finite distinctions which are contrary to the spirit of myth. To achieve the fluidity, as well as the control, necessary for the success of my research, I incorporated various conceptual and visual strategies into my approach.

My research was prompted by memories of either my own experiences or what I gleaned from the mass media of discordant Afrikaner mythologising which made me question the tenets upon which Afrikanerdom was based. Through this project I aimed to arrive at a greater understanding of the attitudes, beliefs, customs and traditions established in Afrikaner mythologising. Based on the premise that by looking at the heroes and myths of any society one can learn a great deal about the people who created them, I set out to uncover more about the Afrikaner and unmask what were to me, the most significant power relations behind their mythologising strategies during the last couple of decades leading up to the late eighties and early nineties.

The Afrikaner’s discordant mythologising resulted in tensions experienced by individuals and groups of people from all population

groups in South Africa. I wanted to explore in my practical work the reasons behind the mythological *impasse* which the Afrikaner had brought upon themselves as a result of their apartheid policies. This I set out to achieve through the creation of a series of hierarchical heroes based upon my perceptions of contemporary Afrikaner myths and heroes reproduced in the mass media. The reason for choosing the mass media as a source of contemporary symbolic reproduction is that it has become the most pervasive purveyor of symbolic reproduction in contemporary society.

In order to “unmask” the power relations governing Afrikaner myths and heroes which were reproduced in the mass media I had to unravel the underlying paradigms upon which they rested. This “unmasking” was achieved through the dual organic processes of visual exploration and theoretical research which cross-fed one another. Myth is a protean and omnipresent force and has a bearing upon many other fields of study apart from the mythical itself. The wide ranging characteristics of myth steered my research to incorporate a broad overview of Western symbolic reproduction with particular reference to Afrikaner mythologising. This overview included research on myth, symbol and metaphor in relation to literature, literary theory, religion, history, psychology, philosophy, sociology, the fine arts and contemporary cultural reproduction. As I focused on contemporary manifestation of visual myths in the mass media, my field of study had to incorporate the paradigms underlying the development of twentieth-century mass media and visual symbolic reproduction *per se* as they presented important shifts in the power relations of cultural reproduction. The ordering of these different fields of study into a coherent theoretical structure and vision for my own personal art making posed certain challenges which had to be overcome. To contain the difficulties posed by the scope of the research, I decided upon two ordering principles: first, that it should be an organic, two-way process between visual exploration and theoretical research which left sufficient manoeuvre for the free development of intuitive creative processes, unhindered by theoretical structures; and second, I prioritised the study of those theoretical areas whose insights facilitated progress in my practical work.

To identify the mythological in my visual references, I had to understand the nature and function of myth. In Chapter One I outline some aspects of myth that were important for the identification and deconstruction of the mythical paradigms of Afrikaner myths contained in my reference material and the subsequent reconstruction processes used in the development of personal works of art from these mass media images. This chapter presents a general overview of myth and does not include a discussion on the reproduction of the mythological in the mass media. This aspect is covered in another chapter which deals specifically with contemporary visual symbolic reproduction.

Myth and history are interdependent and inseparable. Therefore any study of Afrikaner myths also had to include a historical survey of the origins and development of the Afrikaner people. In Chapter Two I discuss how the Afrikaner's pre-history and period of nation-building gave rise to the formation of certain mythological paradigms. These paradigms were to form the basis of the Afrikaner's latter-day mythologising after the formation of a republic in 1960 and which lasted until the early 1990s when the Nationalist Party Government ceded political power and South Africa entered into a process of electing a new democratic government. My research on Afrikaner history focused mainly on historical texts, but I also took into account points made in the fields of psychology, cultural history, art theory, religious studies, Afrikaner historiography as well as articles in contemporary political journals and newspapers. I researched the history of the Afrikaner people from both ingroup and outgroup perspectives written by various historians, and consulted different articles and papers on the re-writing of South African history concerned with addressing past injustices and biased perceptions reproduced by Afrikaner and colonial historians. This information was supplemented by current reports from the mass media.

The reproduction of symbolic information in contemporary society has expanded to include modern technological reproduction

techniques. These technological advances resulted in the mass media playing an increasingly important role in the reproduction of symbolic information. The growing multiplicity of symbolic reproduction in terms of output and sources meant that I had to address not only the symbolic itself, but also the mechanics and politics of contemporary symbolic reproduction. In order to do this I looked into the various symbolic reproduction modes used in the twentieth century through visual and theoretical research methods designed to complement one another. In practice, this meant that I was tracing the manifestation and origins of the reproduction of heroes and myths in contemporary Western, and in particular Afrikaner society. Although the emphasis of my research was visual, the written narratives accompanying the mythical depictions were equally important references for the deployment of my practical works.

The deconstruction of culture, in this instance Afrikaner culture, reveals many layers of information, and I had to find mechanisms capable of expressing the complexities at hand. My explorations and solutions were visual, but many of my conceptual frameworks were derived from structures first defined in other theoretical disciplines. The literature that I consulted was wide-ranging, but the common topic of myth, and the underlying power relations which governed Afrikaner mythologising provided a common thread throughout my research. For my research on the contemporary visual reproduction of myth I consulted texts dealing with myth, religious studies, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, literary theory, linguistics, the fine arts, and the theory of art.

The contemporary visual reproduction of the symbolic takes place in both the mass media and the fine arts. Therefore, the references that I consulted included texts dealing with symbolic reproduction from antiquity through to the present in art history as well as the mass media since the beginning of the twentieth century. My research on symbolic reproduction in the mass media included issues such as the impact of the camera on visual reproduction, the politics of contemporary visual reproduction, and the thematic and formal interrelationships between the fine arts and the mass media. By combining these visual and theoretical sources, I assembled personal

and collective reference material with which to explore the origins and nature of Afrikaner culture. As far as visual references for the development of my own body of practical work is concerned, I made use of a variety of sources including mass media pictures, images from art history, personal photographs, the works of artists working in South Africa, and international artists from America and Western Europe. To do this, I consulted various art historical and theory of art texts as well as mass media studies on the topics of symbolism, stereotypes, archetypes, iconography, hermeneutics, metaphor, myths and heroes.

Joseph Campbell made a distinction between private and public myths and he wrote that private myths are dreams, and that public dreams are myths (source unknown).⁴ In Jungian terms this means that individual unconscious symbols are expressed through dreams, and collective unconscious symbols manifest themselves as myths. To distinguish between my own private points of view of Afrikaner myths I looked for the points of correspondence and divergence in different mythical paradigms. This deconstruction of different mythical realities took the form of a visual Postmodernist analysis where different metaphorical texts were juxtaposed. This analysis, translated into my working process, meant that what Derrida refers to as the *erga*⁵ of the symbols or metaphoric texts that I explored was only complete if the context or *parergon* was also specified. In this instance it meant that the context of my perceptions, or the “self”, took place within a personal mythological text that resided within an Afrikaner mythological paradigm, which in turn resided within a greater global continuum of Western thought.

When I collected references to serve as a basis for my visual explorations, I followed the same surveillance processes through which we assimilate new information on a daily basis. I collected pictures and texts, including those from advertisements, from newspapers, magazines, journals, television and my own personal documentation of related material to represent a year’s news cycle. Apart from mirroring local concerns, the media also reproduce global concerns of the Postmodernist era within which we live. The multiplicity

of the Postmodernist era is reflected in contemporary visual symbolic reproductions and the underlying power relations which govern them. Although my focus was Afrikaner mythologising, the power relations governing their visual reproduction included wider influences than only those generated by the Afrikaner themselves. For this reason, as well as the characteristics of myth itself, mentioned on page five, my research not only dealt with the study of Afrikaner myths and heroes, but also included a general study of Western mythology and other related fields for a more comprehensive understanding of the general discourse of contemporary visual symbolic reproduction pertaining to Afrikaner mythologising.

For my research purposes, and in order to contextualise my works of art, I had to come to terms with the origins, nature and content of each of these mythological paradigms. I approached this research from the most general topic and gradually narrowed it down to focus on my own visual mythologising. I used this approach for both my theoretical and practical research. In the theoretical component I started researching Western symbolic reproduction which formed the backdrop to Afrikaner mythologising. I went on to study Afrikaner mythologising in more depth and then started to interpret my readings of Western and Afrikaner symbolic reproduction by assessing how contemporary visual reproduction takes place in the mass media and the fine arts which both served as sources and references for my own art-making. The practical work also proceeded from the general to the more specific as I honed down my research and explorations of the visual reproduction of symbolic meaning and form. My visual references of symbols, collected from the mass media, covered an encyclopaedic range of topics which I grouped into stereotypical and archetypal categories to ascertain which power axes they represented. My choice and use of symbolic topics in my body of practical work gradually became more directed and specific in uncovering the underlying zones of power contained within Afrikaner mythologising.

I explored the art of drawing and the relief cut-out, a form of *polyptychs*⁶, as means to ponder the attitudes, beliefs and codes of

conduct represented by the hero and myth to unmask Afrikaner mythologising. My own use of the cut-out is derived from a more secular form, that of cardboard point of sale figures printed on one side displaying commercial products, whilst the back displays the cardboard die-cut. I elected to use wooden supports for these cut-outs as a reference to religious icons as a pictorial representation of the teaching of the Christian Church (Ouspensky & Lossky 1982:27) as well as my own past experiences of relief woodcut printing. The wooden blocks used in woodcut printing acquire a rich patina from the repeated cutting and printing process that happen during their making. I wanted to explore the possibility of extending these pieces of wood into works of art themselves. What interested me in terms of meaning was how cut-outs, in religious or commercial use, could create illusions of different aspirational realities. Yet when one circled them, their frontal approach seemed to counter or contradict the power they possessed to convince the viewer of the truth that they proclaimed. The ironic potential of the cut-out, and its characteristic frontal approach, was of particular interest to me in my visual exploration of the hero and myth, as it created the illusion of a three-dimensional reality whilst simultaneously subverting the illusion of form when the viewer moves off-centre.

The extensive theoretical research carried out for the purposes of this dissertation was completed after most of the practical work was completed. This dissertation serves as an explication of the conceptual and intuitive processes and the formal exploration that went into the creation of this body of works of art. The sometime subjective, rather than objective nature of both the material itself, and my responses in the interpretation thereof in the art making process is mentioned in my discussions where necessary. It should therefore be read alongside the practical work as a simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of contemporary Afrikaner mythologising in a Postmodernist society where heroes and myth are omnipresent, but whose reproduction is becoming ever more condensed, fleeting and fragmentary.

This study is a subjective, personal search of how myths and mythologising were appropriated by contemporary Afrikaner heroes, particularly political heroes for their own ideological purposes. My research was a fact-finding exercise, based on contemporary and historical sources, but was also revisionist in nature as it looked at myths, heroes and mythologising in the same way as historiographers are currently revising South African historiography and in doing so, looking at history from different perspectives. My methodology included the use of historical texts and contemporary mass mediated reproductions of Afrikaner myths as references. This approach was ideological by definition and incomplete in the sense that as I was using contemporary reference sources, I could not collate and use all the extensive material now available in retrospect. I therefore accepted the subjectivity of my research as an integral component thereof and assumed artistic licence to create art works in response to this material.

This research is presented in two parts. Volume One contains the dissertation on my research, and Volume Two contains the illustration of my practical work. Volume One is divided into four chapters and a concluding note. In Chapter One I looked at myth as a form of symbolic communication which serves as a general background to the rest of the study. A brief review of the history of the Afrikaner people and its significance to Afrikaner mythologising is outlined in Chapter Two. This historical review serves to inform the references I make to Afrikaner mythologising in the rest of the dissertation as well as the practical work. The use of Western and Afrikaner visual cultural reproduction as a source for my personal art-making is discussed in Chapter Three. In the final chapter I discuss how I unmasked Afrikaner mythologising through a series of drawings and relief cut-outs in order to reveal the underlying sources of power which governed Afrikaner cultural reproduction. A brief Concluding Note brings this dissertation to an end.

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Sparks believes that the Afrikaner and the rest of the world do not fully realise the detrimental impact apartheid had upon the Afrikaner as a group and that the whites were brutalised while destroying the self-esteem of the blacks (Sparks 1994:218).
2. Distances between different cultural groups are reinforced by stereotypes. The psychologists Wolfgang Stroebe and Chester Insko, wrote the following:

Prejudice and stereotypes can be seen as part of an ideology of a group which, on one hand, buttresses group members' belief in their own superiority, and on the other hand, justifies aggression and violence towards members of the outgroup (1989:15).

Walter Stephan and David Rosenfield describe how stereotypes increase the distances between different ethnic groups:

Stereotypes generally lead ingroup members to perceive that outgroup members possess a number of negatively evaluated personality traits, and to believe that they are very different from ingroup members. These assumed dissimilarities are likely to lead to negative attitudes towards outgroups and to a reluctance to interact with outgroup members unless they are counterbalanced by information on similarity or situational norms favouring interracial interaction (1982:115).

3. This dilemma is also partly due to the Eurocentric leaning of European descendants in South Africa who have always maintained the attitudes, customs and beliefs they brought with them from Europe, and never looked for ways in which to integrate them into a new, local reality which drew elements from all the various local groups. This is perhaps an unrealistic expectation, as most indigenous peoples of South Africa have themselves not managed a similar integration. In fact, apart from this, they also suffer from continued European imperialism, both economically and culturally, and often lose certain aspects of their own cultural roots.
4. I came across this phrase on the leading pages of a book on psychology. There was no reference supplied in this text as to where it was taken from, bar the author. In spite of this, I think it expresses the idea well, which is why I include it.

5. Pretorius explains Derrida's concept of the *parergon* by separating it into the *ergon* and the *parergon*. She writes that *ergon* as (art) work "refers to the act of unravelling or figuring out in the broadest sense" whereas *parergon* "refers to the discourse of interpretation around the artwork that attempts to uncover the 'presence' of the *ergon*/artwork in its concealed form" (1995:3).
6. A *polyptich* is a type of icon that consists of multiple free form panels.

CHAPTER ONE

The hero and myth as forms of social reproduction

According to the art theorist Jack Hobbs, “by studying the heroes of a given society, we can discover a great deal about the people who made them myths, for heroes invariably embody the ideals of that society” (1975:179). What Hobbs unveiled above is how products of cultural reproduction can be decoded to reveal the concerns of a society. In this research I took the hero and myth as cultural indicators, and through a process of visual analyses, and theoretical research, gained more insights into contemporary Afrikaner mythologising as well as Western mythologising overall.

The hero and myth, often called individual cultural phenomena, are inseparable. The hero is always a central dramatic figure in mythical narratives. Myths, on the other hand, always explain the hero’s attributes and actions.¹ Hobbs sets out the relation between myth, the hero and society as follows:

Next to the gods themselves, heroes are the most important figures in the myths of any society, and they are often nearly as powerful as gods. The hero is inevitably a person of greater abilities than the rest of society, one who is able to meet a crises and overcome great dangers (1975:178-179).

The hero and myth as cultural indicators were of interest to me for many reasons: myths and heroes refer to all aspects of life; they represent a symbolic means of understanding life, and they are intrinsic and perpetually fascinating to man. (This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)

Myth, a dense field of study, is too diverse to cover in this chapter. I will, therefore, outline only pertinent characteristics of myth under the headings of the nature and function of myth. This will be followed by a selective discussion of the mechanisms of mythologising, whereafter this research will be placed within a contemporary framework, and finally, the main perpetrators of contemporary myth will be addressed in as far as they apply to this research. This discussion takes place within the context of the Western tradition of myth with its roots in ancient Hellenic and Judaeo-Christian sources.

Afrikaner culture, although heavily influenced by the West because of its colonial past, was also deeply affected by the immediate environment, that is, the African continent and its indigenous inhabitants. The mainstream Afrikaner culture, however, retained its Eurocentric character and continued to function within a Western paradigm, largely discounting the African cultures around it. The Afrikaner's cultural reproduction will be discussed in the next chapter.

NATURE OF MYTH

In the paragraphs above, I cited Hobbs' findings that myths and heroes are part of society's cultural reproduction. The interdependence between myth and the hero, and the fact that they cannot be easily separated, was also mentioned. This correspondence between the hero and myth must be kept in mind by the reader or viewer when addressing the research. Whenever myths are mentioned, heroes are also implicated, and vice versa; when heroes are mentioned, the attendant myths are drawn into the discourse.

Although myths are protean, certain characteristics distinguish them from other forms of cultural reproduction. However, no easy formula exists to encapsulate all the possible meanings of myth. Myth pervades all spheres of life and society, and this is reflected

in the wide variety of sources available for the study of myth. These sources include, among others, literary texts, anthropological, sociological and religious studies, many forms of visual art, including fine arts, advertising and the mass media. I will discuss the following aspects of the nature of myth: myth's relation to language, mythical time, myth's narrative structure, myth as symbolic understanding and lastly, the interrelationship between ideology and myth.

Myth and language

Most people are often not conscious of their continual, daily encounters with the mythical in all kinds of guises, be it as language (as speech or written texts), visual imagery, or a combination of both. When asked for a definition, the likely commonplace answer is that myth is a kind of tale or story, most likely of ancient origin. Myth is also generally understood as a fallacy, untruth or “unscientific truth”, an ancient form of religion or as part of our literary heritage.

The ancient Greek for the term mythology has been broken down by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, into the words *mythos* and *logos*, writes Alan Olson in his book titled *Myth, symbol and reality* (1980). *Mythos*, in his view, has “fundamentally to do with the activity of telling” and *logos*, from which -logy stems, “has as its root the verb *legein* which he [Heidegger] describes as meaning ‘to lay down before in the presence of’”. Olson further points out that such definitions “are highly restorative in their intention...” (1980:3). That may in fact be so, but it is a useful pointer to the origin and function of ideas as they were first used in ancient cultures.

The structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, also defines myth as a way of telling. For him, “...to be known, myth has to be told; it is part of human speech.” Lévi-Strauss, however, believes that a distinction must be drawn between myth and language in order to identify myth's singularity (1968:209). Although myth is part of language, it has specific properties that exhibit more complex

features than other kinds of linguistic expression. According to Lévi-Strauss, *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech) uses “different time referents”, and that differs from myth which uses a combination of the two:

We have distinguished *langue* and *parole* by the different time referents which they use. Keeping this in mind, we may notice that myth uses a third referent which combines the properties of the first two. On the one hand, a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place long ago. But what gives the myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past as well as the future (1968:209).

Having drawn the parallels between the employment of language, speech and myth, Lévi-Strauss goes on to look at myth as a form of social reproduction. He looks for the “innate factors which determine our perception of social relationships”. In his research into these inborn factors, he sets out to uncover the “archetypal themes” or what the linguist Avram Chomsky referred to as “deep structures” of the psyche (Stevens 1982:44).

By comparing the research on myth across different disciplines such as anthropology, linguistics and psychology, I found that some findings overlapped. My own findings were in agreement with the research of linguistic and psychology scholars. According to the psychologist Anthony Stevens, Chomsky’s research, in “seeking to define innate propensities underlying the development of articulate speech” was similar to what the psychologist Carl Jung “attempted to do much earlier for psychology, through the study of mythology, comparative religion, legends and fairy tales, dreams and nightmares” (Stevens 1982:44). The common threads that ran through the work of these scholars are to be found in the archetype. Jung thought that these parallels between disciplines was no coincidence as they represented “the revival of possibilities of ideas that have always existed, that can be found in the most diverse minds and in all epochs, and are therefore not to be mistaken for inherited ideas” (Jung 1979:cw 8, para 320).

Myth and time

By analysing the nature of myth and breaking it down into separate topics for discussion, such as myth's relation to language, symbolism and ideology, artificial distinctions can often be made. Understanding how different aspects of myth operate simultaneously is important, as therein lies the power of myth, rather than in the individual components of a particular mythical narrative. If reducing myth to its constituent parts were possible, thereby rendering myth transparent, myths would no longer possess the powers we associate with it. For the sake of clarity, however, I will discuss different aspects of myth, but it has to be kept in mind that these component parts are interrelated and their unique combination is the very being of myth. In the above section on myth and language, the relation between language, speech, and myth (with some references to time) was introduced. In this section, the relationship between time and myth will be outlined in more detail.

Myth's ability to suspend real time is introduced first, as this is often one of the most apparent indicators to the viewer or reader that they are about to enter a mythical realm. Phrases such as: "once upon a time...", "long, long ago...", "in the year 2 000...", and "at the beginning...", with the introduction of the main characters, the heroes, immediately arouse a curiosity within the reader. This awakened expectation can only be satisfied by the development of the narrative in question. Audio-visual material creates a similar tension within the viewer by introducing the impending mythical narrative by sound, moving credits and logos in filmic time. For example, the beating of a huge gong to mark the beginning of a film, as used by the Rank Film Distributors Ltd company, sets the tone for mythical action through the ritualistic use of movement, sound and artefact in slow motion, or mythical time. In this instance, filmic time prolongs the action beyond the real, but film and video also use real and condensed time to mythical effect.²

Mythical time has a different referent than real or historical time. Myth refers to events alleged to have happened a long time ago, but

it gains in operational value by a specific pattern that is timeless, explaining the present, the past and the future (Lévi-Strauss 1968:209-210). Time is ordered into categories denoting the past, the present and the future. Within Western literary traditions, categories of myth that order the past are, for example, cosmogonic myth, which deals with the origin of the world; those that order the present, such as cosmological; and etiological myths explain the nature of the world and peculiarities in creation; and those that order the future, such as eschatological myths, deal with the end of things. Mythical time does not only provide external order to myths by grouping them into categories explaining the past, the present and the future, but also offers coherence in a beginning, a middle and an end to the internal narrative structure of individual myths. It provides this order to any narrative, event or enactment, no matter how long or brief it may be. One of the most concise examples of mythologising today must be the television advertisement that condenses a mythical narrative complete with a beginning, middle and end into a time span of a couple of seconds.

Myth's ability to suspend real time offers the reader or viewer a release from reality and provides a welcome relief from the harshness of life. While the mythic narrative is imparted, all other thoughts related to the realities of life are put "on hold". Religious rituals and the cinema are examples of this "release", where reality and "real time" are replaced by a mythical narrative and time.

The structure of myth

When Kees Bolle writes that myth is "first and foremost something that happens; it is recited, chanted, enacted" (1968:84) in his book, *The freedom of man in myth* (1968), he describes myth as a particular kind of event created through a form of ritualised language. Myth "happens" in different, yet structured ways. Many set formulas or stereotypes for the creation of myths exist that are either used in a direct or parodic way by mythologisers. These formulae depend on at least two levels of reading the narrative structure of myth. The first is the formal structure of individual myths as described below by Campbell. The second is a deeper reading which Chomsky called

the “deep structures” of myth, as mentioned earlier (Stevens 1982:44) and which Lévi-Strauss calls “a language of myth” (Leach 1967:xviii).³

Joseph Campbell, an authority on myth, believes that myth reveals a consistent pattern as is illustrated by the hero’s monomyth: the hero leaves the ordinary world and descends into an underworld, where he confronts both hostile and helpful forces. After various preparatory adventures, he faces the ultimate ordeal and gains his reward. After “a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life enhancing return”, he has the power to bestow favours on his fellow man (Campbell 1956:35).

The structure which myth provides to any narrative by introducing a scenario, creating a tension and then resolving that tension is obvious, but the deeper structures are more obscure, camouflaged by the particularities of individual myths. It is only when we compare mythical structures and analyse what Lévi-Strauss call “bundles” of mythic relations that we can gain insights into their meaning (1968:211).

Lévi-Strauss found a repetitive structures in myths. Jung’s theory of the archetype as a “prime imprinter” comes to a similar conclusion: that the unconscious determines the structure of myth as well as the mind.

The Italian jurist Giambattista Vico pre-empted structuralism when in 1725 he put forward the principle of *verum factum*. He argued that “that which man recognizes as true (*verum*) and that which he has himself made (*factum*) are one and the same” (Hawkes 1977:13). It follows that when man perceives the world, he unknowingly perceives the superimposed shape of his own mind. This ability to construct myths, social institutions, and the whole world, means that in so doing, man also constructs himself. Myth’s

structure is lodged in the human mind that both possess and controls mythic thought. All life's experiences are channelled through the structures of the mind and are categorised by the mythic function. Myth provides structure to symbolic relations; therefore mythologising is the process of activating different symbolic relations. "Structure" in this instance not only refers to the structure of the mind, providing certain schemata to order the symbolic function, but also to the existing structures of the symbolic which is common to all people.

Myth as means of symbolic understanding

The hero's "separation" from and "return" to the world suggest that the mythical is a way of dealing with the extraordinary. In psychological terms this may be seen as a shift from consciousness to the subconscious, where we encounter the domain of the symbolic, and where external individual human experiences meet the internal archetypal structure of the human psyche.⁴ The philosopher Richard Kearney, in writing about "the logic of 'dream'" which is opened by "the metaphysical opposition between the imaginary and the real", mentions that Freud describes this logic "as a play between the strange (*unheimlich*) and the familiar (*heimlich*)" (1988:289).

The definition below illuminates the symbolic and extraordinary qualities of myth:

Myth is a collective term used for one kind of symbolic communication and specifically indicates one basic form of religious symbolism, as distinguished from symbolic behaviour (cult, ritual) and symbolic places or objects (temples, icons). Myths are specific accounts concerning gods or superhuman beings and extraordinary events or circumstances in a time that is altogether different from that of ordinary human experience. As with all religious symbolization, there is no attempt to prove that these unusual transcendent or divine events are "possible" or otherwise to justify them. For this reason, every myth presents itself as authoritative and always as an account of facts, no matter how completely different they may be from the ordinary world (*New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1979. Sv "myth").

According to this definition, the mythical narratives of the gods and heroes, called here “superhuman”, take place within the symbolic realm. The relation between myth, the hero and society are, therefore, symbolic interfaces within the broader context of social reproduction.

The structure of myth presents a framework for symbolic expression through the archetype, which provides “systems of readiness for action, and at the same time images and emotions” (Jung 1970:31). The subconscious reaches conscious thought by the symbolic aspect of myth. The psychologist, Walter Shelburne writes that

symbols function as interconnecting links between the conscious and the collective unconscious, as they bring into consciousness, in representable form, the otherwise unknowable archetypes. The symbols mediate the experience of the archetypes, and because of their unavoidable personal characteristics, due to the embodiment in an individual consciousness, are products of both the collective unconscious and unconsciousness (1988:43).

The symbolic is not logically equivalent to its referents, and points beyond itself to the unknown. This inability of the symbolic to be precise and scientific is its very strength and maintains its enduring power.⁵ An example of myth’s omnipresence is the paradise myth that has retained meaning despite the evolution of thought and scientific explanation.

Myth and ideology

In the previous discussion the relationship between myth, thought and language was explored in structuralist terms, which were defined as functions of the mind. The philosopher Johan Degenaar applies a Poststructuralist theory of deconstruction to thought, myth and language. Degenaar proposes to replace the paradigm of perception where “the mind has an immediate access to the world” with the

paradigm of writing where “our relationship to the world is mediated”. He then continues and draws the conclusion that “language mediates our experience, that a grammar mediates the work of art” (1987:3). By using language as a means of understanding, we look at the work of art, or myth (or anything else for that matter), as a text which has to be interpreted within a historical context, and the reader, whose own experience and understanding of life brought to the text, is also a text. It becomes clear that no text or language is ever neutral as they will always be contextualised and intertextualised.

Degenaar, in *Writing and re-writing*, discussed another aspect of Poststructuralism called Social Criticism, which sees writing as “part of a social process which is a larger context that has to be taken into account”. Degenaar is of the opinion “that Social Criticism emphasises the role of political mediation in the process of understanding” (1987:9-10). Political mediation, including political myths, like any other form of language, is not neutral, and is always subject to a range of influences, including what David Chichester, the sociologist, termed “zones of power” or power relations (1988:8). These “zones of power” are intricate networks of influence, where the powers of individual elements are interlinked and subject to the power relations between other elements. To deconstruct or form a social critique of political mediation (or any other), the power relations that govern the text, the context and the critique have to be taken into account.

The mediation of myth and ideology have ambiguous meanings for Postmodern society. Myth, known on the one hand as a form of symbolic truth and exploited as such by mythologisers, is also described as a mere “figment” or an “untruth” (see section on myth as symbolic understanding). In spite of this ambiguity and man’s cynicism about the power of myth, it continually provides meaning and gives direction to our lives. The term “ideology” has been used in different ways and, as a result, has found different meanings. Ideology, today, is perceived either in a neutral way as “systems of thought” or as a “critical idea”. The sociologist John Thompson,

however, argues that ideology can be seen as the relation between meaning and power. He writes: "Ideology, broadly speaking, is *meaning in the service of power*" and that:

...the concept of ideology can be used to refer to the ways in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical - what I shall call "relations of domination" (1990:7).

Another significant point made by Thompson is the relation between ideology and symbolic meaning:

Hence the study of ideology requires us to investigate the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds, from everyday linguistic utterances to complex images and texts ... (1990:7).

For the purposes of this research on the hero and Afrikaner mythologising, the mediation of ideology (dominant systems of belief) and myths (symbolic meaning) were the most important conduits of information from which I drew. I traced how asymmetrical power relations were used by the Afrikaner to serve symbolic mediation and inversely, how symbolic mediation served to maintain "relations of domination". The following chapter will deal more specifically with Afrikaner mythologising and ideology. Mentioning that the power of myth makes it an ideal vehicle for ideological exploitation is important. Myth has always been, and continues to be appropriated in the pursuit of control, whether it is religious, political or secular.

In this discussion on the nature of myth, I have established that myth and the hero are forms of social reproduction mediated through a particular use of writing which combines the time-frames of both speech (*parole*) and language (*langue*). The mythical narrative, or the hero's adventure, is a symbolic means of communication that follows the same pattern. Lastly, myth and the hero are open to appropriation for ideological gains. The next topic will deal with how the hero and myth function as forms of social reproduction.

FUNCTION OF MYTH

The secularisation of myth and the demythologisation of religious traditions in contemporary society have resulted in a decrease of power previously exerted by symbolic places and patterns of behaviour. The movement away from the traditional reproduction modes of myth such as cult, ritual, liturgy and the sanctity of places and the earth has not diminished other forms of contemporary symbolic communication. There has, however, been a shift in emphasis as contemporary myth has taken on the guise of social and political ideologies (*New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1979. Sv “myth”). The major forms of myth are described by Martin Day in his book *The many meanings of myth* (1984) and are listed here in the order of their development in history: archaic myth (derived from non-literate tribal societies); intermediate myth (skilled literary accounts by writers who believe in the sanctity of myth); and derivative myth (aesthetic and secular in nature, but reliant upon timeless patterns of myth), which have been replaced in contemporary society by ideological myths. In Postmodern society, according to Day, man deliberately exploits the ideological potential of myth, yet, he remains as governed by myth as in any other period (1984:1-33).

This study reiterates Day’s beliefs that myth still governs contemporary society and offers meaning and order. Myth combines mechanisms from the past with those of the present. With the development of anthropology in the nineteenth century and modern literary theory in the twentieth century, the mechanics of myth and mythologising have been widely investigated. Yet, these findings, which usually demythologise the workings of the mythological, have not affected mankind’s susceptibility to myth. Jacques Waardenburg writes that symbols and myths lie in reserve, ready to be tapped when necessary (1980:63). He contends that “symbols use mythical elements, or mythologems, to come to life” (Waardenburg 1980:63). In this section, I will introduce some functions of myth.

Myth as a charter for social action

The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski believes that myth in primitive societies is an authority for social action:

Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom (1926:19).

For Malinowski, myth is a conservative force, which regulates the behaviour and actions of society. The same principles of order and survival propagated by myth in primitive societies are also activated in contemporary societies by taboo, codes of law, religious beliefs, and the mass media. Malinowski's definition of myth as a charter for social action, therefore, also applies to contemporary society. This is the focus of my research.

Myth provides meaning and order

Malinowski also believes that myth, by responding to changes in society, offers meaning and order to humanity. This notion parallels theories in other disciplines, such as psychology, anthropology and linguistics, as has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter. In psychological terms, the ordering ability of myth does not only reside in external forms of behaviour that regulates society, but also in terms of ordering the mind. Jung proposed that mythological statements are not about the external physical world, but are actual psychological statements (Shelburne 1988:50). For him, myth formed an intrinsic part of the archetype.⁶ Jung, as cited by Marshall

McLuhan, defined the relationship between myth and the archetype as follows:

The primordial or archetype is a figure, whether it be daemon, man or process, that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasy is fully manifested. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure. If we subject these images to a closer investigation, we discover them to be the formulated resultants of countless typical experiences of our ancestors. They are, as it were, the psychic residua of numberless experiences of the same type (1970:19).

Society, present, past and future, has depended upon myth to provide symbolic meaning and order. Myth combines mechanisms from the past with those of the present. With the arrival of contemporary literary theory in the nineteenth century and anthropology in the twentieth century, the mechanisms of myth and mythologising have become themes for investigation, yet this demythologisation has not affected the extent to which humankind is governed by myth.

Myth encapsulates symbolic meaning

The intrinsic and fundamental functions of myth mentioned above are at the basis of its power, but are also supported by other compelling aspects that render it attractive and useful to humankind. Ian Barbour defines myth as a dramatic narrative that relates a primordial event, and helps man to understand the present in relation to this past event (1974:20).

The Paradise myth, which the psychologist Edward Edinger positions at “the beginning of our cultural tradition and [which] is rich in psychological meaning”, is a complex construction, stringing together many symbolic elements (1972:17). The paradise myth explains the creation of the world and man. In this respect the Eden myth is similar to the myth of the Golden Age and Plato’s idea of the original “round man” which represents an ideal state of being (Edinger 1972:17). The story of Adam and Eve in paradise is also

the forerunner to the myth of two cities, which is continued in the story of broken kinship between Cain and Abel.⁷ The principle of bipolarity and the freedom to distinguish between good and evil was introduced here. The gaining of wisdom and an ability to discriminate unfortunately also resulted in a loss of innocence (paradise) and the burden of personal responsibility. Jung saw this raising of consciousness as similar to a child's development breaking the psychological barriers of the inflated self and acknowledging a wider world beyond its own.

Myth guarantees the meaning of life

Man is not isolated in the world but is a member of a community that is “constituted by the key events which it remembers and in which its members participate” (Barbour 1974:20). The traditions of man, passed on from generation to generation, supply a framework based on kinship in present society and in the past. This is the feature of myth that distinguishes and separates similar needs and expressions shared by all people in distinct traditions. The festival of Easter in the Christian religion is celebrated in different ways across Europe as the ritual was adopted and became integrated in local culture and customs. An example of Afrikaner individualisation is the Covenant. For the Afrikaner, the Covenant, although derived from the Israelite notion of peace based on kinship, friendship, and marriage (Pederson 1964:263-310), had its own historical roots and use in creating a unified group.⁸

Another aspect of myth's guarantee to meaning in life is that it provides a narrative of salvation. The ideal state of human existence differs from the imperfections of reality. Myth provides the means to overcome the corrupt state of man and nature and aspires to the ideal prototype of perfect man created in the likeness of God. This could be in the guise of a personal redeemer, laws, rituals or codes of conduct to be followed (Barbour 1974:21). In this context Christ, the Saviour, can be seen as an example of a mythical redeemer

who provides salvation in spite of man's sins and imperfections.

MECHANISMS OF SYMBOLIC REPRODUCTION

The decoding of cultural indicators, in this instance myths and heroes, required insight into the nature and function of myth, and an understanding of the mechanisms and perpetrators of myth in contemporary society. According to the definition mentioned earlier, myth is “a *symbolic* form of communication” (italics mine). The understanding of myth, therefore, not only requires an insight into symbolic meaning, but also the mechanisms, or workings of the symbolic.

Myths themselves, are complicated mechanisms that communicate symbolic ideas. The mechanisms of myth resemble in many ways other symbolic “mechanisms” used in language and art. In fact, these mechanisms are often employed for the purposes of mythologising. The parallels between (and appropriations of) myths and other forms of symbolic communication such as religion or dance are to be found in their symbolic function and ability to communicate thoughts beyond the literal and convey different, deeper levels of meaning. For the purposes of this research, I also looked at other symbolic devices such as metaphor, allegory, symbols⁹, stereotypes and archetypes, as they have a bearing upon the study of the mythical. These symbolic devices are mostly regarded as linguistic, psychological or philosophical in origin though their applications extend to other areas, such as myth, religion or art. To extend the discussion beyond the parameters of the disciplines in which they are usually found and to apply this to my research, I have grouped them under the heading of symbolic mechanisms. As the mechanisms included are complex areas of study in themselves, they cannot be dealt with in great depth in a study of this nature. So I have isolated the most relevant correspondences and distinctions between these mechanisms to illuminate their uses in symbolic reproduction and to serve as a basis for further reference in the following chapters.

Metaphor and myth.

Metaphor, like myth, has been defined in many ways. Since the late 1920s there has been a proliferation of material written on the subject (Booth 1978:49-50). It is commonly understood that metaphor is a figure of speech that is either a “condensed simile or comparison” (Black 1955:283). Linguistic analysis reveals that metaphor has two distinct subjects where the principal subject is transformed by the characteristics of the subsidiary subject.¹⁰

The linguist Max Black, in two important articles written respectively in 1954-55 and 1977 on metaphor, argues that simple and complex metaphors need different definitions for the accurate descriptions of the kind of transformations that take place between the principal and subsidiary subjects. He distinguishes three possible metaphoric transformations: substitution, comparison and interaction. These transformations taking place in metaphors describe the kind of shift that takes place between the words, which starts the meaning of the metaphor.

Metaphor is, however, not only a linguistic or philosophical device, but also has psychological implications in the sense that it is considered “an essential process and product of thought” (Feinstein 1982:45). The art educationist Hermine Feinstein describes the relation between metaphor and thought:

The power of metaphor lies in its potential to further our understanding of the meaning of experience, which in turn defines reality. In art and in language, metaphor urges us to look beyond the literal, to generate associations and to tap new, different, or deeper levels of meaning. The metaphoric process reorganizes and vivifies; it paradoxically condenses and expands; it synthesizes often disparate meanings (1982:45).

Metaphor mediates experience that is often inexpressible in ordinary language in a condensed and vivid way. The meanings derived from metaphors are ideas generated from the experiences and thoughts of the writer and responded to those of the reader. Art, itself a product of thought, acts as metaphor. It, therefore, also represents experience, but in a nonverbal way. This relation between experience and metaphor (art), which Feinstein outlines with references to the writings of Langer and Ortony, provides the working rationale which propels this research in which I appropriated existing images and symbols and from them created new visual metaphors to translate my experiences, memories and ideas of the hero into works of art (1982:45-49).

The critical stance required in the reading or decoding of the metaphor was an element that was consciously explored in my art-making. The linguist Wayne Booth writes that every time we try to understand a metaphor, we also decide whether to side or reject the metaphor and the metaphorist (1978:65). Booth describes this phenomenon thus:

A very large part of what we value as our cultural monuments can be thought of as metaphoric criticism of metaphor and the characters who make them (1978:66).

The point Booth raises here in comparison with Hobbs' thoughts on the hero and myth as cultural reproductions as mentioned in the first paragraph of Chapter One; "by studying the heroes of a given society, we can discover a great deal about the people who made them myths, for heroes invariably embody the ideals of that society" (1975:179). Heroes and myths, both "cultural monuments", are cultural indicators capable of metaphoric critique of metaphor itself and the society from which they stem.

Myths and metaphors both convey cultural information. The distinction between them is that metaphor uses condensed conceptual

shifts between individual words and images to generate meaning, whereas myths are extended metaphors that use narrative structures to convey ideas with the same end result. The relation between experience, metaphor and the critical possibilities contained in metaphor, and how it was applied in this research will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Stereotype and myth

The stereotype, similar to metaphor, is a condensed communication of cultural information. Ideas are bundled together to create a shorthand for lengthy, complicated ideas. The difference between myths, metaphors and stereotypes is that myths and metaphors are open and alive to continual interpretation, whereas stereotypes have fixed meanings and can be considered as old, inactive myths or metaphors. A stereotypic hero or myth is a cultural indicator that has been in use for a long time and is known to all people in a particular community.

The term “stereotype” was first coined by the well-known writer and journalist Walter Lippmann in 1922 to describe what he called “pictures inside people’s heads” (Miller 1982:3). Lippmann, cited by Steinberg, writes that we do not see and then define, but that we define first and then see. In the great confusion of the outer world, we pick out what our culture has already defined for us and we perceive life through these preconceived stereotypes (Lippmann & Steinberg 1972:113). Lippmann argues that the stereotype is more than a shortcut.

The psychologist Arthur Miller, in a chapter on the historical and contemporary perspectives on stereotyping, cites Gordon Allport’s concept of categorisation by means of stereotyping as a “type of psychological solution” to human interaction (1982:17). Allport sees this categorisation of information by resorting to stereotypes as a perceptual shortcut to label people and events. Stereotypes often

project group or individual prejudice and impose our own ethnocentric values in the world. The stereotype serves to protect the existing status quo and privileges of the group or individual, and it is highly resistant to change.

In clarifying the generalisations and misrepresentations possible with stereotyping, Lippmann referred to the truthfulness of myth to identify a similar dilemma:

The myth is, then, not necessarily false. It might happen to be true. It may happen to be partly true. If it has affected human conduct a long time, it is almost certain to contain much that is profoundly and importantly true. What a myth never contains is the critical power to separate its truths from its errors. For that power comes only by realizing that no human opinion, whatever its supposed origin, is too exalted for the test of evidence, that every opinion is only somebody's opinion (1922:123).

Stereotypes are commonly used to encode information and place it into useful categories. The stereotype denotes certain attitudes and as such has the power to influence the perception of truth. As a phenomenon, the stereotype is, therefore, an important control mechanism. Myths are also ordering devices and can also be employed to monitor people's thoughts.

The widespread availability of myths, in written or visual form and the common occurrence of them in all aspects of life, alleviates the need to recall the original, primordial events of a myth every time it is referred to. This common currency of myths has led to the development of a symbolic shorthand by directors and writers in the mass media; by referring only to parts of myths, the complete form is evoked. This device of recalling the whole through a part is referred to as synecdoche. The mere mentioning of a Greek hero's or heroine's name, such as that of Achilles or Demeter, for example, evokes a wealth of associations and meanings. Similarly, fictional references to characters in fairy tales, such as Little Red Riding Hood or Cinderella, recall certain scenarios and narrative structures

with which we are all familiar.

The appropriation of a part to denote a complete entity such as myth also occurs with the stereotype. For example, by appropriating the biblical myth of the Chosen People, Afrikaner politicians also gained access to the history, attributes and stereotypes of the Hebrews. This, in turn, presented an infinite source of symbolic material with which to validate past, present and future action. This appropriation of myth is discussed at more length in the following chapter.

Archetype and myth

As mentioned earlier, the archetype is a form without content, representing the possibility of a certain type of perception and action (Leymore 1975:152). Because it has no specific content, the archetype cannot be made conscious or visualised. It is transcendent, but has certain recurring symbolic reactions that can be translated into images. Symbols, linking conscious experience with the personal and collective unconsciousness, give representable form to the archetype (Shelburne 1988:43). Shelburne wrote that Jung, in his later writings, simply defined the archetype as “part of the inherited brain structure” which are “systems of readiness for action, and at the same time images and emotions” (1988:53).

The archetype’s significance to this study lies in its symbolic function that provides a representable form to the otherwise unrepresentable structure of the mind. The archetype represents basic principles that in Jungian terms are seen, for example, as the *anima* and *animus* that form the connection between the conscious ego and the unconscious, and which establish a differential between the male and female condition (Robertson 1987:122). Other well known Jungian terms describing elements of the archetype are the Self, “an archetype of transcendence and wholeness” (Robertson 1987:137), and the Shadow, a “personified archetypal

expression of our hidden ‘personal’ character traits” (Robertson 1987:112). In my research, the archetype was first encountered when I was collecting reference material from mass media images of heroes and myths. I found many images whose significance extended beyond Afrikaner heroes, myths and stereotypes, and pointed to more fundamental principles, shared by all groups of people. I found a category or generic term to describe the ideas reflected in these recurring images in the archetype.¹¹

Allegory is the last symbolic mechanism to be discussed in any detail in this chapter. This discussion of symbolic mechanisms is hardly exhaustive, but, with the actual visual symbols that I used as references, they formed a framework for my understanding and exploration of contemporary symbolic reproduction in the South African, and specifically the Afrikaner, context.

Allegory and myth

In the introduction to her book *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*, the novelist Marina Warner defines allegory in relation to speech, irony and metaphor:

Allegory means “other speech” (*alia oratio*), from *allos*, other, and *agoreuein*, to speak openly, to harangue in the *agora*; it signifies an open declamatory speech which contains another layer of meaning. It thus possesses a double intention: to tell something which conveys one meaning but which also says something else. Irony and enigma are among its constituents, but its category is greater than both, and it commands a richer range of possible moods. It is a species of metaphor, and, as part of speech, has provided one of the most fertile grounds in human communication (1985:xix).

Allegory is a narrative form that has its origins in philosophy and religion rather than literature, according to the linguist John MacQueen (1970:1). He writes that all Western religions found their best expression in mythical narratives that served to explain the

fundamental issues of life. These original material myths were gradually extended to incorporate psychic interpretations. For example, the myth of Demeter and Persephone was originally an allegorical explanation for seasonal changes, and the sowing and subsequent harvesting of crops. With time this allegory was extended to also signify the notions of immortality and rebirth after death (MacQueen 1970:1-3). The myths of ancient Greece and Rome were gradually adjusted to accommodate Judaeo-Christian principles and appeared in the Bible as allegories in which one thing was stated, but a further meaning was carried. Biblical myths such as the Good Samaritan (Luke X:30-35) or the Prodigal Son (Luke XV:11-32) are, according to MacQueen, examples of narrative allegories (MacQueen 1970:18).

Allegory, according to the art theorist Craig Owens, “occurs whenever one text is doubled by another” (1987:204). This “doubling” of texts was important in my art-making processes for two reasons. First, in my research I decoded contemporary mass media material of Afrikaner and Western symbolism that was at least a “double” text, if not a more complex construction. All information put out by media institutions are in effect complex interpretations of reality or the truth as seen through the “eyes” of cinematographers, editors, advertisers, and directors. Secondly, by using this reference material to construct my own myths and create new visual metaphors to convey these, I grafted my own mythical vision onto existing layers of visual metaphors. Owens’ statement that “the paradigm for the allegorical work is thus the palimpsest” (1987:204-205), provides me with an apt description of own my working processes as the palimpsest is “a manuscript in which old writing has been rubbed out to make room for new” (*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* 1992. Sv “allegory”). This notion of “rubbing out”, and replacing “old writing” for “new” is achieved in my work by allegory that subverts normal expectations of language by inverting literal meaning to supply another level of meaning. Yet, this characteristic double text of allegory, states the linguist Angus Fletcher, does not necessarily have to be read “exegetically”, as the literal meaning stands on its own (1964:7). This was also true of my relief sculptures, which were loaded with different levels of

cultural information and meanings, but also had to work on a “literal” visual level as well.

Visual allegory, in painting and sculpture, is commonly associated with the portrayal of mythical and religious narratives. According to Owens this art form, prolific up till the middle ages, has been critically rejected as an outmoded or exhausted device for almost two centuries. Yet, he argues that allegory, upon closer inspection, has never been absent and is an inherent structural element in Postmodern art (1987:203-204). When allegory is used as a structural¹² device in the artwork itself, it appropriates “culturally significant” imagery (Owens 1987:205). In doing this, the allegorist does not restore lost meaning as would happen in hermeneutics, but replaces the previous meaning by providing another, new, meaning. In contemporary art appropriated images are altered to “empty them of their resonance, their significance, their authoritative claim to meaning” (Owens 1987:205). The role which allegory, in the sense of “rubbing out parts of one text and substituting it with another”, played in my practical work and my memories of Afrikaner mythologising (that in turn served as a source for my art making) will be elaborated upon in further chapters.

This research approached traditional and contemporary symbolic reproduction such as myths and heroes through consulting mass media sources. My aim was to use commonplace sources through which individuals encounter symbolic information as reference material. Mass media sources are, however, complex reproduction systems that impose their own structures upon the information they transmit. Because of the complexity of twentieth-century social reproduction in the mass media and the differences between traditional and contemporary modes of reproduction brought about by technological advances, a different set of criteria is introduced which warrants a separate discussion. It is, however, a continuation of the previous topic, symbolic reproduction mechanisms, and will be continued in Chapter Three.

The omission of irony as a symbolic mechanism under the present heading is intentional, as the ironic viewpoint is so inextricably part of contemporary social reproduction that I have included it under the discussion of twentieth-century myth, also in Chapter Three, to avoid unnecessary duplication.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. The visual depiction or mention of a particular hero does not impart the complete symbolic significance of that hero or heroine, as the narrative describing the hero's adventure or attributes is either too complex or there exists more than one narrative describing the hero's actions. Visual portrayals, unless in serial format, usually depict a single space frame illustrating one episode from all the possible narratives which are possible concerning the particular hero.

In allegorical paintings from the fifteenth century, for example Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (About 1485). Canvas 174.9 x 279.1 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence. (Janson 1974:333, colour plate 37), the viewer is presented with a number of visual clues, including a title, to identify the mythical figures. Early Greek vase painting however, do not always display titles and viewers have to draw upon their knowledge of the hero or heroine for identification, decoding the dress, objects and situation of the hero in relation to other figures and creatures. For example, an amphora painted by Psiax, titled *Herakles Strangling the Nemean Lion* (c. 525 BC). Pottery, 31 cm. Museo Civico, Brescia. (Janson 1974: 77 & 83, colour plate 5 & fig 119), shows Hercules, "the personification of physical strength", in a struggle with "a ferocious lion which had come to devour Amphitryon's herds" (Guirand 1975:169-170).

2. Real time in film or video can be tedious and this fact is often used in video and performance art to give significance to otherwise very ordinary actions. By filming or recording the mundane actions of the human body in real time, the viewer is transposed beyond reality and experiences the ordinary in an extraordinary way.
3. Anthony Stevens, in a discussion of the universal grammar of language, reiterates Chomsky's view that whilst "specific grammars (like mythological motifs) show rich diversity throughout the world...their basic forms - what he [Chomsky] calls their *deep structures* - to be universal" (1982:44).

Lévi-Strauss writes:

- a) If there is a meaning to be found in mythology, it cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of a myth, but only in the way those elements are combined.
- b) Although myth belongs to the same category as language, being, as a matter of fact, only part of it, language in myth exhibits specific

properties.

c) Those properties are only to be found above the ordinary linguistic level. That is, they exhibit more complex features than those which are to be found in any other kind of linguistic expression (1968:210).

Edmund Leach in defence of Lévi-Strauss's theories, writes that he [Lévi-Strauss] has employed the concept "structure", also used by "linguists, folklorists, certain psycho-analysts, mathematicians and communication engineers" to analyse "the categories of orthodox ethnography" (1967:xvi). Leach continues to write that Lévi-Strauss says that "at a certain level of abstraction, the dialectical redundant structure of all myths is the same, or perhaps one should say 'constitute a set of variations on a common theme'" (1967:xvii).

4. Jung, cited in Shelburne, expressed a desire to understand his own psyche:

I simply had to know what unconscious or pre-conscious myth was forming me, from what rhizome I sprang (1988:50).

Shelburne continues to discuss Jung's concepts relating to myth and the archetype:

In speaking about his personal myth as in the above, it is evident that myths are often used as vehicles of the most symbolic and numinous manifestations of the unconscious. Thus, Jung's use of the term "myth" deviates somewhat from the ordinary usage. Sometimes he means myth to refer to the symbolic archetypal images themselves, the mythologems, and at other times he uses myth in the conventional way to indicate the cultural product as an aspect of the collective unconsciousness. When this dual sense of myth is taken into account, it would seem clear that Jung means that the original symbolic expression of archetypes may be either mythic or religious (spiritual) in form (1988:50).

5. The point which I want to elaborate is this: if all the components which constitute myth are known, it no longer functions as a living myth, but is dead. This is borne out by Jung's discussion as to what constitutes a symbol and what a sign (I am drawing an analogy between myths and symbols, as according to my working definition of myth in the main text, myth is a form of symbolic communication):

The concept of a symbol should in my view be strictly distinguished from that of a sign. Symbolic and semiotic meanings are entirely different things...so long as a symbol is a living thing, it is an expression for something that cannot be characterised in any other or better way. The symbol is alive only so long as it is pregnant with meaning. But once its meaning has been born out of it, once that expression is found which formulates the thing sought, expected, or divined even better than the hitherto accepted symbol, then the symbol is dead, i.e., it possesses only a historical significance (1971: 814ff).

and

An expression that stands for a known thing remains a mere sign and is never a symbol. It is, therefore, quite impossible to create a living symbol, i.e., one that is pregnant with meaning from known associations. For what is thus produced never contains more than was put into it. Every psychic product, if it is the best possible expression at the moment for a fact as yet unknown or only relatively known, may be regarded as a symbol (1971: 817ff).

6. The concept of the archetype, which has become a universal term amongst scholars of anthropology, linguistics and psychology, was first used by Carl Jung in 1919. The word, of Greek origin, dates back to Classical times and means “prime imprinter”. The archetype usually referred to original manuscripts from which later copies were made (Stevens 1982:47).
7. The concept of the two cities is not to be confused with that of two paradises, one a heavenly paradise, and the other an earthly paradise, as described by John Prest in his book *The Garden of Eden* (1981). In it, he traces the evolution of thought concerning the Garden of Eden and paradise. What is interesting about this evolution is that the wilderness, which was initially considered to be beyond the parameters of paradise, was seen as the place of mankind’s salvation where he would again find his God. This view stems from the biblical account of the Jews who accepted God’s discipline in the desert.
8. The idea of a covenant was initiated in November 1838 by Andries Pretorius and Sarel Cilliers. Its purpose was to strengthen the morale of their disheartened men in a forthcoming expedition against Dingane (Cameron 1988:135).

A “Day of the Covenant” was later instituted to celebrate the Boer’s victory over the Zulu impi on 16 December 1838. Bloomberg described this day as part of the Christian-Nationalist belief that the Afrikaner’s history is a divine predetermination from God:

The most dramatic of God’s interventions was the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838, when a few hundred Boers, after praying for victory, defeated the Zulu empire, killing some 12 000 soldiers in the process. The day of the battle is celebrated as the “Day of the Covenant”: the day when God made known his covenant with his “chosen people” (1990:26-27).

The Day of the Covenant celebrations which I attended as a child combined aspects of religious ceremony, political speeches and serious Afrikaner cultural events such as choirs singing religious and patriotic songs or performances of dramatised poetry deliveries. Although I experienced these celebrations as extremely dull events, they provided me with strong stereotypes of the Afrikaner’s beliefs and ways of doing things. What I found interesting later in life, was the similarity between the oratory style of the Day of the Covenant celebratory speeches,

Dutch Reformed Church services and the delivery of Afrikaner politician's speeches in parliament and at other political meetings. This particular style of authoritative speech was used by the Afrikaner in conjunction with other mythologising devices such as continual references to the Afrikaner's sacred history, as a justification for political decisions and actions.

9. Hermine Feinstein defines a sign as a "paired relationship that exists in nature and indicates existence - past, present, or future - of an event, a thing, a condition". She gives the example of a "nimbus cloud" which signifies rain and writes that "signs denote rather than connote and are the same for all people, in all languages". Symbols, on the other hand, according to Feinstein, "are invented by humans when a group of people agree that one thing (object, event, idea) shall stand for another". She distinguishes two categories of symbols which may be interchangeable depending on their context, namely, symbols which "denote the meaning of something and by definition are explicit" and symbols which "connote the meaning of something and by definition are implicit" (1982:46).
10. According to Black in the following metaphor, often used in linguistic analyses, "Richard is a lion", the principal subject, Richard, is transformed by the characteristics of the lion. The literal meaning of the sentence is that "Richard is brave" (1955:281). The tension which is created between "Richard" and "lion", is what activates the reader to solve the riddle of the metaphor and thereby to understand the idea put forward.
11. Typical examples of the archetype are the mother or female principle, the father or male principle, and the family unit, comprising males and females with an inborn "capacity for mutual understanding" (Stevens 1982:83). The archetype also includes images from our dreams, which can take the form of a personal configuration or more general images recurring amongst mankind through the ages. Régamey wrote of such an archetype, the angel: "Men's dreams in every age and in every society often include a spreading of wings, a mysterious bird, an angel" (1960:123). The angel as archetype and metaphor will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters dealing with the practical work.
12. In response to Frye's contention, cited by Owens, that "genuine allegory is a structural element in literature", Owens writes:

In allegorical structure, then, one text is *read through* another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be; ... (1987:204).

CHAPTER TWO

The Afrikaner's primordial myths: their origin and cultural reproduction

To come to an understanding of myths and other forms of symbolic reproduction, in themselves means of expressing that which is not expressible in any other way, requires an integrated approach as it touches upon so many diverse aspects of life simultaneously. Yet, understanding the nature and functions of myth and symbolic reproduction is probably not as emotionally demanding as confronting one's own mythical framework and critically analysing the very structures that are so inextricably part of one's conscious and subconscious experiences. To understand my own personal mythical framework and to distinguish it from the concerns of my research and practical work, I needed to distinguish between my own private myths, or the "self", Afrikaner myths and Western myths. The previous chapter dealt with collective Western myths and related symbolic topics; this chapter expounds the origins and themes of collective Afrikaner myths and symbolic reproduction. My theoretical and visual research on the Afrikaner and other related topics on symbolic reproduction broadened my understanding of the Afrikaner hero's adventures. It also alerted me to correspondences between (or deviations from) my private myths, public Afrikaner myths (from both in- and outgroups' perceptions), and Western myths, which provide a wider cultural backdrop to Afrikaner myths. The topics of these two chapters on collective symbolic reproduction served as sources of reference for my search for a personal visual mythology.

Before discussing my approach to Afrikaner myths, and the distinction between private and public, it is important to point out that I was chiefly interested in the attitudes, beliefs and the mind-sets embodied in and perpetuated by these myths and heroes, rather than in the actual histories or anthropological structures related to them. My interest in the visual images related to Afrikaner myths and

heroes was twofold. Firstly, I was interested in these images as a mode of perpetuating existing attitudes and beliefs held in society, particularly Afrikaner society; and secondly, these images were important sources of metaphoric reproduction. I was concerned with the hermeneutics and stereotypical reproduction of Afrikaner symbols, circulated by in- and outgroups, as they are revealing cultural indicators. I also hoped to delve deeper to uncover the underlying philosophical structures upon which these attitudes rest as they formed the basis for the sources of power that governed South African society at that time.

This chapter deals with selective residua¹ of the sources of power that influenced Afrikanerdom and events in South Africa as they were reproduced in mass media images and my theoretical research. I did not set out to construct a history of the Afrikaner hero and mythologising *per se*, but to take up visual leads intuitively, as they interested me, to explore some fundamental principles underlying Afrikanerdom and the ideologies they perpetrated as a group in pursuit of hegemony.

In the following discussion, I will outline the origins of the power structures that were formative in Afrikaner mythologising, and the symbolic themes that were central to these power structures. Decoding the origins and reproduction of these power structures underpinned my art-making and the creation of my own personal visual metaphors from mass media pictures.

This personal account of the past adventures and solutions of the Afrikaner will be discussed under the headings of True Stories² and Sad Stories. The Afrikaner's more recent past adventures will be dealt with in the next chapter under the heading of Mythical Stories. True Stories will deal with the "primordial" situation, history and events facing the group of people later known as the Afrikaner; Sad Stories will recount the next historical period of Afrikanerdom, sometimes referred to as their sacred history or heroic age. Lastly, Mythical Stories, in Chapter Three, will relate the latter-day symbolic strategies that the Afrikaner employed in their struggle for power

and survival before their commitment to a non-racial, democratically run South Africa. In reality, these stories are all part of the same myth, whether one sees them serially as parts of one extended narrative, or as bilateral repetitions or restatements of the same mythical dilemma. The first two stories, however, deal with the Afrikaner's physical phase of mythologising that started with the landing of the first immigrants at the Cape in the seventeenth century (and was to last until the end of the nineteenth century), as opposed to the Afrikaner's political era of mythologising which was a twentieth-century phenomenon.

The period during which the visual research for this study on the Afrikaner hero and myths was started (the 1980s) was, according to the psychologist Graham Saayman, a decade filled with negativity in South Africa:

No book originating in South Africa in this decade, with psychology as its theme, could fail to address the all-pervading mood of its social nexus: fear, depression, rage, doubt. Positive expectations are few and far between, despite what the politicians and town criers tell us (1990:1).

This troublesome period in South African history can be seen as a continuation of the Afrikaner hero's adventure (or misadventure as it may be in this instance). This dismal time, according to Campbell's mythical narrative structure, can be seen to represent a phase in the Afrikaner's history where the hero descends into the underworld and struggles to overcome great adversity. Yet it seems that pre-Afrikaner and Afrikaner history already contain episodes reminiscent of this adverse mythical phase: the Dutch immigrants from Europe finding a wilderness instead of paradise; the French Huguenots leaving a known terrain and culture behind in search of freedom of worship in a new, open territory; the Boers' treacherous inland trek to escape English hegemony and harassment from indigenous inhabitants; the two Anglo-Boer Wars; the urbanisation of the rural Afrikaner; and the Afrikaner's rise from poverty to a middle class existence. In heroic terms all these events represent phases of struggle, whereafter redemption and ultimately salvation should follow.

However, in my view, the Afrikaner's redemption and salvation were not personified in a contemporary hierarchy of credible heroes. On the contrary, the Afrikaner hero, whether stemming from political or other cultural backgrounds, by and large lacked credibility and were surrounded by contradictions and doubts which in fact created distances between what these heroes embodied and the Christianly principles upon which Afrikaner myths are based.

Before continuing this discussion, the relevance of these "stories" to the mass media imagery that I collected and used as visual references for my art-making has to be explained. As already mentioned, the period in which I gathered my material was a troubled time. It was an era of intense repression, censorship, upheaval and clashing between Afrikaner and black nationalisms. Photographs in newspapers and popular magazines reflected this turmoil. Yet, in as far as the photographs in the mass media mirrored the state of the nation, no one group seemed to dominate. There were pictures of both parliamentary and ex-parliamentary political speakers. Photographs of protesters and victims from the townships were alternated with images of the armed forces, *et cetera*. Depictions of members of the Nationalist Party Government were placed alongside pictures of opposing political persuasion, whether of spokesmen for the United Democratic Front, Inkatha, Congress of South African Trade Unions, End Conscription Campaign, or the carnage taking place in the townships.

Government sources exerted considerable pressure on the press and the broadcasting services during this time. This ultimately led to the banning of "unrest related" images and reporting under the state of emergency regulations. What was peculiar was that newspapers seemed to exchange the now banned images of politically inspired violence with equally morbid pictures of road accidents and deaths. Violence, the aura of destruction and civil warmongering had become the norm in public consciousness. Television audiences, at this point mainly white, were continually exposed to violence through the media, whereas blacks experienced it on their doorsteps in the

townships, and on public transport systems. The media reflected the turmoil in the country and, in doing so, conveyed mixed messages. The unrest in the country was so extreme that the Nationalist press and Government-controlled television coverage did not reflect the ideology of the dominant group, the Nationalist Party, as it did in the past, but inadvertently also displayed the disastrous effects that their policies had upon all the peoples of South Africa.

We know from art history that heroic portrayals alone do not convey the full narrative of heroes' adventures. In fact, viewers and creators of artworks bring together their knowledge of myths that narrate heroes' adventures to explore the meaning of symbolic communication. In other words, both the viewer and creator supply the *parergon* (discourse of interpretation) with which the *ergon* (artwork) is approached (Pretorius 1995:3).³ When decoding mass media images, the viewer not only scrutinises what is shown, but also how, where and by whom it is shown. Apart from decoding the points of view through which symbolic information is filtered through mass media mechanisms, the viewer also has an ideological position that has a bearing upon the discourse of interpretation. According to the art theorist Elfriede Pretorius, "the idea of a 'window', a 'frame' or a *parergon* concerns the viewer and the artist. The viewpoints of both contribute to construct meaning" (1995:4). This was also true of the mass media images that I collected. In themselves, these pictures could not be interpreted as a complete rendering of the attitudes or ideologies which they portrayed. What was needed was a different narrative, not as concise as visual mythologising, which could enlarge the mythical narrative evoked by a given image and fill in the viewer with relevant details. Visual mythologising is similar to poetry in that it is a condensed form of mythologising. This is not to say that these concise forms are lacking in any way, but they are different to the narrative character of, say, drama and prose, and they each have their specific place in symbolic reproduction.

The following three stories represent a personal perspective on Afrikaner mythologising that, with the theoretical considerations

discussed in Chapter One, and contemporary visual mythologising discussed in the next chapter, form the *parergon* or textualisation of my *ergon* or artworks. Together these stories represent my perspective on the Afrikaner's reality and serve as the mythical contextualisation of my artworks. In True Stories I set out the attitudes and beliefs that the early immigrants and settlers brought with them from their countries of origin and which would, combined with local circumstances and conditions, have had a severe impact on the future of the people in southern Africa. Sad Stories deal with the hardships encountered in the Afrikaner's second physical individuation process, and Mythical Stories deal with their political mobilisation, that is, the "truths" or "untruths" that the Afrikaner created through their cultural reproduction, based upon biblical allegories, and their own primordial and sacred histories.

Characters and events from the first two stories are seldom directly used in my practical work, but serve as the primordial, underlying "truths" upon which latter-day Afrikaner mythologising is built. The relief cut-out, *Earthly heroes: the politician* (1987, fig 2), is one of a few instances where I portrayed a figure from the Afrikaner's heroic era, the Great Trek, to comment upon latter-day Afrikaner politics; that is the Afrikaner being caught in a time warp, and not adjusting to contemporary realities.⁴ By juxtaposing women from this bygone era (whether in the role of sage, guide or protector) with the immobilised patriarchal politician, I deliberately intended to subvert the status of the male figure, the politician. By juxtaposing opposite genders, and alluding to past codes in the form of period dress, I wanted to extend the discourse and call into question the nature of past male Afrikaner political heroes as well.

TRUE STORIES: THE INFLUENCES OF EARLY EUROPEAN COLONIALISM UPON LATTER-DAY AFRIKANER MYTHOLOGISING

The people who would later become known as the Afrikaner were descendants of the first Dutch immigrants to the Cape and later arrivals of mainly French, but also Dutch and German Huguenots. These immigrants, augmented by the arrival of subsequent British

settlers, landed at the southern tip of Africa for various economic, strategic and religious reasons. The settlers brought their different cultures, beliefs and mind-sets with them. These were to influence many events that took place in South Africa during the following 300 years. In this sub-section I will discuss a number of factors which formed the nucleus of the Afrikaner's latter-day attitudes and ideologies, and which go some way towards explaining the contradictory nature of their mythologising processes. Many contemporary beliefs are current adaptations of past thoughts and incidents that can be traced back in history, often even to primordial events.

In the latter half of the fifteenth century a crisis developed in Europe which was precipitated by the Turkish conquest of Constantinople and which resulted in the effective cutting-off of the overland trade route to the spice fields of the East. The closure of this crucial trading route was the motivation behind the seafaring explorations of the Portuguese, the Spanish and others to find new routes for continuing trade. A Portuguese, Vasco da Gama, found the route to the East around the southern tip of Africa in 1497, but it was only some 150 years later, in 1652, that the Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (V.O.C.), under the leadership of Jan van Riebeeck, set off to establish a victualling station at the Cape to serve passing ships.

After the repeal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, Protestants from France, present-day Holland and Belgium were persecuted and their freedom to worship was severely curtailed. Of the nearly half a million French Huguenots who fled their country, only a small group made their way to the Cape three years later. More than a hundred years passed before another large group of European settlers arrived at the Cape. Holland was invaded by the French in 1802, and initially, at the request of the Prince of Orange, Britain was asked to protect the Dutch outpost at the Cape. However, after the collapse of the brief peace of Amiens between France and Holland, the British claimed the Cape permanently to protect their most important trading route to India. This annexation was to last till 1960 when South Africa declared their independence from Great Britain and formed a republic.

Having briefly introduced the origins of the European peopling of the Cape, to which there is another, parallel history that tells of the indigenous population of Southern Africa⁵, I will continue to discuss some of the power structures and mind-sets that settlers to the Cape brought with them and which contributed towards determining their future attitudes, beliefs and actions in this new terrain.

The Dutch East India Company, and later the British as colonial overlords, had their own agendas that were often to the detriment of the prosperity of the local communities. The V.O.C. had no political or strategic ambitions beyond profit-making and set out to provide a service only to passing fleets. In order to reduce their costs, Jan van Riebeeck released some workers who became known as the “free burghers”. In effect these “free burghers” became the first permanent European residents at the Cape, and mark the start of European settlement in southern Africa. Ironically, the settlement of “free burghers” along the fertile banks of the Liesbeeck river had exactly the opposite result to the V.O.C.’s intentions, as it turned out to be the first move towards a permanent settlement and precipitated the first land dispute. The resulting battle, writes Sparks, introduced “the right of conquest and a tradition that the land was the white South Africans’ for the taking” (1994:39). The subsequent planting of a wild almond tree hedge by van Riebeeck, to keep out Khoikhoi cattle herders was to become the first symbol of distinction between the terrain of Europeans, the “us”, and the indigenous inhabitants, the “them”, at the Cape.

The Company (V.O.C.) never stated outright that the burghers held a superior legal status. However, the burghers did in fact benefit from a position of privilege as the V.O.C., in reality, upheld a social hierarchy with officials and burghers at the top, and the Khoikhoi and slaves at the bottom. These burghers, later known as the Afrikaner, increasingly considered privilege and their elevated position in society as a fundamental right. This belief became entrenched and accepted as the norm as very few free black burghers emerged,

and this came to be perceived as a white privilege (Giliomee 1979:87). From the outset, the profit-seeking Dutch (Sparks 1990:30) and imperialist British (Sparks 1990:66) colonisers' extension of privileges to white settlers established them in an advantageous economic and social position, and instilled in these Europeans certain patronising attitudes towards the slaves and indigenous peoples of the land. This assumption of the right to privilege by Europeans at the Cape was further encouraged by their belief that they came from a superior civilisation, founded upon Christianity and learning (Sparks 1990:33). The European belief in their racial superiority to the indigenous peoples of Africa was supported by stereotypes of themselves, as the ingroup or "us", and the natives as the outgroup or the "other". These attitudes were reproduced in many ways: as the normal passing down of traditions from one generation to the next, and through religious cultural reproduction.⁶

The Dutch could not contemplate the notion that these indigenous peoples were their "neighbours" in a Christian sense. Their moral ambivalence grew from their belief that they were the "Elect of God" after they gained material prosperity during the Dutch Golden Age (Sparks 1990:33). The economic success of the Dutch, spurred on by their Protestant work ethic, however, sat uncomfortably with their sense of morality. This dichotomy drove the Dutch in contradictory moral directions, a phenomenon that would also manifest itself later in the human relations of their descendants, the Afrikaner in southern Africa (Sparks 1990:33-35).

This trait was also present in the conduct of the next colonial ruler, Britain. But it appeared in another guise, and infused both future power relations and codes of conduct in the region with contradictions. When the British finally took control of the Cape colony from the Batavian Republic in 1806, they initially acted with caution to avoid upsetting the local inhabitants. Yet, they ultimately had a similar dual impact upon the land and its indigenous inhabitants, as did their predecessors. Although theirs was a sophisticated and cynical approach, cloaked by philosophical and humanist reforms, in reality it was as eagerly guided by expedience and opportunism

as those of their predecessors. The British introduced a series of fundamental changes to society in a colony that had become increasingly isolated and cut off from current world trends. The first British occupation of the Cape in 1795 initially brought few changes, but the emancipation of the slaves in 1833 and the apparent disintegration of social order that followed precipitated the Great Trek. The release of the slaves, a large percentage of the total population, must have had a severe impact on the social order of the day and put a strain on an already feeble local economy. The Cape in 1833 was suffering from social instability and imbalance. There was no enthusiasm for ideas that could further unsettle the already precarious equilibrium.

In spite of the principle of equality introduced into society through the emancipation of the slaves, the Europeans' perception of their racial and cultural superiority, as well as their political and economic hegemony, prevailed in southern Africa until very recently. The Europeans' failure to integrate the philosophies of the Enlightenment, born from the humanitarianism of the evangelicals and the writings of Locke and Rousseau into their local context, created a gradual rift between the rest of the Western world and white South Africans, especially the Afrikaner (De Klerk 1976:159-160, 172 & 177).

The freedom of the slaves, however, was not the main source of frustration that prompted the Great Trek inland to Natal in 1836. Frustration about civil matters such as law and order, language, education and the economy under British rule mounted between the Dutch and Huguenots settlers. The way in which the slave emancipation was handled by the authorities, and the fact that they were now considered as equals was for many the final straw.⁷

Existing European cultural attitudes and prejudices against indigenous black people at the Cape were not the only reasons for white supremacy, and were equally founded upon economic reasons. The Cape was an expensive colony that initially yielded little financial

reward except its strategic position between Europe and India. In the early nineteenth century the British occupation drew the region into the world economy and created the need for cheap labour to step up wine and grain exports. This economic factor, accelerated by the discovery of diamonds and gold, seen by many historians today as the foundations upon which apartheid was later built, introduced exploitative employment conditions along racial lines. The administrative ground was laid by Sir Theophilus Shepstone, a British commissioner in Natal, who imposed a comprehensive system of segregation in the colony between 1845 and 1876 (Sparks 1994:32).

This segregation was to introduce a system of control that later served as a model for the Afrikaner's sophisticated power structure, namely separate development, or apartheid. Similar to most other beliefs and attitudes held by groups, apartheid was the result of a complex confluence of events and beliefs that crystallised over years. The psychologist Phillip Faber points out how colonialism fostered the notion of separate development:

...it must of course be emphasized that although apartheid is a specifically Afrikaner nationalist creation, it can only be analyzed against the background of centuries of prejudice against and exploitation of the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa by European colonists. "Separate Development" constituted a new departure only in the sense that, from 1948 onwards, an institutionalized and legalized system of racial segregation became official government policy. Apartheid is therefore a "special case" in the history of European colonialism, although it clearly has, in some cases, close affinities with other systems of colonial rule (1990:49).

It is ironic that segregation was installed as an economic policy by the same hand which introduced liberalist and humanist philosophies to the colony in the emancipation of the slaves only twelve years earlier. This is another example of colonialism's economic needs overruling philosophical beliefs and social structures, which by now had become a *leitmotiv* in South African history.

Apart from the economic and political fields of force operating in the early power relations at the Cape, and later those throughout South Africa, religion played a fundamental part in events. Willem De Klerk, political commentator and historian, writes that the Afrikaner's heroic age, the period which includes the Great Trek and the Wars of Independence, was closely linked to the "Protestant spirit of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Dutch", the Huguenots, and the Anglo-Saxon Revolution introduced by the Scottish Reformed tradition (1976:138). The changes in religious beliefs brought about by the Reformation had a profound impact upon Western society. Apart from the liturgical differences in worshipping and religious practice, the Reformed Church, as a source of power, set up new structures and relations within society. The Reformed church was the most international of the Protestant churches and its influence spread from Geneva throughout Europe and further afield to the British Isles, and other continents such as Asia, the Americas and Africa. Most settlers to the Cape were Reformed Protestants, with Calvinism as its central source.⁸ This doctrine, lodged in the Pauline and Augustinian theological traditions, had two central tenets of belief. The first was in the "absolute sovereignty of God", and the "authority of the Scripture", and the second was the doctrine of "justification by grace through faith alone"⁹ (*Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia '95 for Windows 1995*. Sv "Calvinism" & "Presbyterianism").

The reduction of the liturgy by the Reformists, to get closer to the word of God, relinquished certain symbolic aspects of worship. For example, the Marian cult in Roman Catholicism, then and now, provided a feminine angle to what was otherwise a principally male religious structure. This feminine principle was lost in the Reformed tradition and meant that Protestantism was chiefly about male divinities, defined by the confessions of male Reformists¹⁰, and that the church was run by male elders and clergy.¹¹ The increased reliance upon male principles in the Reformed tradition also filtered through to Afrikaner society which displayed strong patriarchal and paternalistic roots.

The masculine principle in Christianity, had the same impact upon society then, as what Saayman recently describes as a contemporary problem resulting from the “reverence invested in the word of the masculine principle of logic and intellectual judgement”. He continues that “in our time, and in this country [South Africa] in particular, the functions of the intellect have been placed upon the pedestal of authority - at the expense of the archetypal feminine, the principle of relationship, of caring, of *feeling* for others” (1990:6). Saayman believes that apartheid, or separate development, was a typical solution founded upon the masculine principle of logic, rather than the female principles of caring and feeling for others.

This solution that the Afrikaner formulated to solve their problematical situation was a radical, rational reconstruction of society. According to De Klerk, “‘apartheid’ is an attempt to remake a society in the total vision of a socio-political ideal”. He continues to say that it was radical because “it is the politics of redemption trying to reach down to man’s existential roots” and it was rational because “it is an extensive human exercise of the mind, endeavouring to formulate a moral justification for what is basically the will to power” (De Klerk 1976:xiii). This will to power, in Christian terms, and especially in terms of the Calvinist-Puritan tradition that the Afrikaner adopted from the Anglo-Saxons, was only acceptable to them if it were morally indefensible. The Afrikaner found their justification for power and domination mainly in religion, as they saw themselves as a chosen people, exercising the will of God. They also used public mythologising, often with religious undertones or biblical examples, to give credibility to their quest.¹²

The myth of the chosen people appeared regularly in Afrikanerdom’s mythologising. Frequent analogies were drawn between the Boers and the Hebrews. The story of the Hebrews provided credibility¹³, biblical authority, and bore many resemblances to the Boers’ own historical experiences and physical realities. For example, the free burghers’ experiences of repression under British rule and their subsequent inland trek echoed the much earlier plight of the Israelites in Egypt and their flight to Israel, the Promised Land. The Great

Trek and the hardships encountered in opening new frontiers provided a similar and familiar history to that described in the Bible. For example, expressing the Boer Republic's discontent with the British in 1906, Paul Kruger, cited by Giliomee, spoke of the Afrikaner as God's chosen people: "He had led them from the colony as His chosen people and had given them liberty" (Giliomee 1979:100).

The Afrikaner's belief in the divine right of their existence, and the creation of the *volk*¹⁴ as an act of God, manifested itself through the words of many other political leaders as well, such as Dr D. F. Malan, political leader and Dutch Reformed minister, cited by Degenaar, who said: "we have a divine right to be Afrikaners. Our history is the highest work of art of the Architect of the centuries" (1983:62). According to Degenaar, "political myth is a dramatic narration which legitimizes political action" (1983:61). He distinguishes three kinds of political myths in Afrikanerdom: past-orientated myths such as the myth of the Great Trek; a second kind of myth that provides a basic paradigm and explains the first kind; and lastly a future-orientated or eschatological myth offering Utopian elements and a cataclysmic transformation of the world. The first kind of myth is self-evident and uses past events to give significance to the present. The second kind of myth uses a more fundamental model to legitimise its own mythological basis (Degenaar 1983:61-63). Degenaar supplies the example that "within Afrikaner nationalism the Myth of the Great Trek and the Myth of Blood River function within the context of another myth which helps to mythologise historical events but which itself is not based on an historical event" (1983: 61). What Degenaar refers to here is, among other things, the Old Testament myth of the Chosen People. The last kind of myths, eschatological myths, refer to the *eschatos*, or the end of the world as we know it, which tells a story of a group of people destined to cause a new, revolutionary order (Degenaar 1983:62).

Apart from the justification of the Chosen People, other biblical references were used by the Afrikaner to give credibility to their separatist policies. For example, the idea that God created separate nations, and therefore they should remain so; or that the sons of

Ham were forever to serve under Shem and Japheth. Scriptural evidence was found in Deuteronomy 32:8¹⁵, Acts 17:26¹⁶, and Genesis 9:20-27¹⁷, 10:6-20¹⁸, and 11.¹⁹

Religion played a significant role in South African history. For the purposes of this study, however, what has been mentioned thus far is a sufficient indication of the importance of religion, particularly Christianity, in Afrikaner mythologising. The role of Christianity, however, was not only limited to the Afrikaner's community, but also played an important part among the indigenous and expatriate communities.²⁰ The philanthropic role assumed by the missionaries, educating and converting the local inhabitants is problematical as they have much to answer for concerning the erosion of the natives' culture and self-esteem. However, to return to the Afrikaner, religion and in particular Calvinism (some writers such as De Klerk cite the Puritan strain of Calvinism as the most decisive influence) provided the most significant philosophical ideas in Afrikaner mythologising. This was due to the traditions and cultures the first settlers brought with them, and to the Afrikaner's increasing geographical isolation during their inland trek, and much later, their forced isolation from the rest of the world when international boycotts were instigated because of their apartheid policies.

The impact of the land and its indigenous inhabitants upon the settlers, initially at the Cape and subsequently inland, played an equally important part in determining events for the Afrikaner. De Klerk describes the Afrikaner's predicament in Southern Africa as "unusually relentless, intricate and dismaying" and questions whether history has seen anything similar to this situation (1976: xiii). The harsh geography of the land and the limited natural resources available in what became known as South Africa, made the battle for arable land a crucial part of local history. Thomas Pakenham, the historian, describes the unproductive nature of the Cape Colony in 1869:

Apart from the lush valleys around Cape Town, with their rolling wheat fields and neat, chequered vineyards, the land was half desert. At the heart of the colony was the great Karoo, too dry and stony for anything but sheep or cattle raising (1991:45).

Since the earliest days of colonial rule, forays were made inland for seasonal grazing for livestock. As the population grew, and demands for farmland increased, there was a gradual move inland. The course of survival at the Cape and in the frontiers beyond resulted in Europeans and various indigenous tribes sharing the available resources as they moved further inland²¹ (Davenport 1977:22-23). With fewer opportunities shared among more people, poverty and British imperialism prompted the “free burghers” to move inland.

The Afrikaner’s latter-day ideologies and desire for political control were the result of past and present influences, arising from different power relations. These ranged from inherited attitudes and beliefs that the original settlers and colonial rulers brought with them, the struggle for their livelihood in a harsh terrain, and what they perceived as two hostile outgroups, the ruling British and the indigenous blacks, who were in competition with them for economic survival and prosperity. Many of these fields of force were historical, but equally, many of them were pragmatic problems which arose from the nature of the land itself, the diversity of the inhabitants, and the expediency of the colonial overlords.

This brings me to the end of my account, True Stories, of the people, factors and events at the early Cape up to the time of the frontier farmers’ inland trek compiled from sources written by European historians. The beliefs, attitudes and conditions that constituted the European immigrants’ reality upon their arrival and subsequent settlement has been briefly considered in this sub-topic. I pointed out that the immigrants arrived with a certain mind-set that was reflected in the attitudes, beliefs and traditions they brought with them. However, conditions at the Cape under colonial rule, their encounters with the indigenous inhabitants of the continent, and the natural

habitat of the land imposed its own demands upon these peoples. In the following section, Sad Stories, I describe the events which followed after various groups of frontier farmers decided that to move further inland, away from British jurisdiction, was their only solution. It is a narration of what mobilised these people into physical action, and the events that followed this white diaspora into the interior.

SAD STORIES: THE SACRED HISTORY OF THE AFRIKANER'S HEROIC AGE

“On 6 April 1652, Jan van Riebeeck landed at Table Bay, the Cape of Good Hope, with his five ships, the *Drommedaris*, the *Goede Hoop*, the *Reijger*, the *Walvis* and the *Oliphant...*”. Although True Stories contains the material for a dramatic narrative that could well serve as a primordial history, this never became an important episode in Afrikaner mythology. This early period did not produce any heroes either, as individuals such as Hendrik Bidault, Carel Buitendag, Frederik Bezuidenhout, H.L.D. Maynier and Andries Stockenström, all acted according to their own different allegiances, and did not represent any group interests as such. According to the historian Basil Le Cordeur, the actions of men like Frederik and Johannes Bezuidenhout in the Slagtersnek rebellion did not constitute anything close to heroism:

The rebels were not heroes, and they were not supported at all by the great mass of frontiersmen: they were simply individuals who had taken the law into their own hands as they were accustomed to doing under the VOC (1988:83).

For the symbolic content of Afrikaner myths and heroes we therefore have to turn to the events that took place after 1837. For future generations of the Afrikaner, the central symbolic events of Afrikanerdom were, apart from religious references, the Great Trek and the two Anglo-Boer wars.

Very little documentation exists on the exact causes that led to the Great Trek. This was largely due to the need for secrecy as the trekkers did not want to alert the British to their plans.²² Most sources though, agree that many different factors led to the decision to move inland, as has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter. The trekker movement was in fact joined by individuals for different reasons. To some individuals, for example, there was the motivation of escaping bankruptcy, and access to new land as the eastern Cape had become overpopulated. To others, such as Gerrit Maritz, it meant leaving behind successful farms (Davenport 1978:39). Many trekkers were already used to a nomadic way of life as *trekboers*, and migrated with their livestock in search of winter pastures, so that a more permanent move inland was simply an extension of their existing lifestyle. Broadly speaking, one could view the situation as the Enlightenment reaching the Cape community, whilst being in the throes of exchanging one colonial ruling structure for another. The change in administration between the two colonial powers affected the burghers who had by now become used to looking after their own affairs, as the colonial overlords only intervened sporadically to keep administrative and military costs to a minimum. Latter-day historians view the inland move by the trekkers more as an economic issue than as a “revolt” against Anglicisation, or as a reaction to the more effective authoritarian control of British rule that hampered their freedom.

De Klerk observes that Piet Retief’s statement in the *Grahamstown Journal* on 2 February 1837, which effectively became the Voortrekkers’ manifesto, was a “statement of revolt, not of revolution” (1976:27). The extensive effects of the Declaration of Independence in America, and to the world beyond, were not evident in the Manifesto which only assured that the mass migration, or diaspora, would be undertaken “in the fear of, in humility before, and in obedience to, the Lord” (De Klerk 1976:26).

After various *kommissie*-treks, including Uys’ exploration in 1834 of Natal during which he examined the inland conditions and reported back favourably, different trekker groups, approximately 6 000 Europeans and 4 000 coloured servants, set off under the

leadership of Hans Van Rensburg, Louis Tregardt, Hendrik Potgieter, Gerrit Maritz and Piet Retief.

The trekkers' first hostile encounter was with the Ndebele under Mzilikazi whom they managed to beat off at Vegkop. This was, incidentally, the first occasion on which the *laager* formation, that is covered wagons pulled into a circle to create a "fort", was used as a tactical device in conflict (De Klerk 1976:36). The second hostility was with the Zulus in Natal which started with the trekker massacre at Mgungundlovu, and ended in the Battle of Blood River: victorious for the trekkers, but disastrous for the Zulus. This event would, with time, be shaped into the single most dramatic symbolic event of Afrikanerdom that was to be enshrined in the Voortrekker monument outside Pretoria in 1949.²³ The sunbeam that falls upon the words of the national anthem, *Ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika*²⁴, on the cenotaph inside the monument²⁵ every year on 16 December at noon, symbolises the grace that God bestowed upon the Voortrekkers to overwhelm Dingane and his Zulus (Oberholster 1972:170).

On 3 February 1838, Retief and his party, in all seventy-one Boers and thirty coloureds, set out for Mgungundlovu. After successful negotiations with Dingane were concluded, the trekkers were invited back on the 6 February for celebrations and a dance display. Once there, Dingane's cry, "*Bulalani abatagati!*" - 'Kill the wizards!'" turned a pageant into a massacre (De Klerk 1976:40). Upon hearing the dreadful news, Potgieter and Uys hurried down to Natal, but were severely beaten at Italeni by the Zulus.

The arrival of Andries Pretorius and his followers from Graaff-Reinet and elsewhere in the Cape, brightened up the trekkers' prospects. To bolster low trekker morale before the battle, Pretorius and Sarel Cilliers put forward the idea of a covenant that pledged that if God granted them victory they would build a church in His honour and forever after commemorate the day of victory (Du Bruin 1988:135).²⁶ After the Battle of Blood River, the covenant was largely forgotten and only resurrected some thirty years later.²⁷

The significance of the Battle of Blood River to the Great Trek and to the future of Afrikanerdom has been largely overstressed by Afrikaner historians and mythologisers alike. Leach argues that the Boers' victory at the Battle of Blood River was not essential to the Great Trek's ultimate success; that the battle was not the start of Afrikanerdom; and that it was not a victory of Christianity over paganism. To substantiate his point of view, Leach cites the research of two Afrikaner historians, F.A. Van Jaarsveld and Ben Liebenberg, to reveal how rising Afrikaner nationalism, especially after the two Boer Wars, elevated the battle and the commandos to the status of legend (1990:14-18).

According to Leach, the Battle of Blood River "has been a mighty symbol nakedly exploited to further the political, philosophical and religious cause of the Afrikaner" (1990:13). Sparks also shares this viewpoint, and writes that after the trekkers won their victory, they promptly forgot their vow and only resurrected it in the 1870s to serve as an event to celebrate the "*volksgees* - the national spirit" (1994:113). Another Afrikaner commentator, De Klerk, writes that the belief "that Blood River and what followed put an end to Zulu power once and for all, however, is a myth". Although the Zulus were repressed by the Voortrekkers, their power was only finally broken during the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. It was, therefore, the British, according to De Klerk, and not the Boers, who ultimately conquered the Zulus (1976:46-47).

The Voortrekker diaspora and the establishment of the two Boer republics delivered a series of heroes and two significant symbolic events, the Great Trek, and the Battle of Blood River. At the time though, the events in themselves were not deemed as unduly important. The Great Trek generated enthusiasm, excitement and action, and seemed to the trekkers themselves, being a religious people, similar to the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt to Canaan. But it was only during years to come that the Great Trek was shaped into a myth of the Chosen People. Similarly, the Battle of Blood River, as has already been mentioned, became the most revered event

in Afrikaner mythology through subsequent mythologising.

The Great Trek produced leaders who became heroes almost overnight. The different groups of trekkers were loyal to their own groups and leaders, and one cannot therefore speak of national heroes in the main at the time. In Andries Pretorius perhaps the trekkers had a hero who transcended specific group loyalties. It was only later, with the first Afrikaner historiographies and other mythologising practices, that these leaders took on the role of national heroes.

The trekker leaders were men of action, engaged in the physical struggles that daily events brought upon them, and they led their followers into the unknown wilderness with the spiritual support of the Christian belief and the Scriptures. They had to decide upon a course, *inspan*²⁸ and *uitspan*²⁹; negotiate on behalf of the group with the indigenous tribes and, if that failed, provide military strategies for hostile encounters with the same. This lifestyle induced the reverence of patriarchal heroes, which in any event was a characteristic of the trekker *maatschappij*. It is interesting to note that of all the sources which I consulted, most of them scarcely mentioned the role of women during the Great Trek. Anna Steenkamp is mentioned a few times, and the cultural historian J. Oberholster, in his survey of the historical monuments of South Africa, lists monuments commemorating Afrikaner women during the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer wars. Oberholster also includes the monument of the widow Antjie Scheepers at Ladybrand, the National Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein, and the Marie Koopmans-De Wet Huis in Cape Town³⁰ (1972:27, 84 & 102).

Voortrekker women are mentioned in some accounts of the Great Trek, and for their role during the Anglo-Boer Wars, when they kept the farms going and provided the Boer Commandos with essential supplies, and towards the end of the war, when women and children were interned in concentration camps by the British. The women, though, played no role in the civil administration of the Boer

republics, and in fact white women in South Africa only gained the right to vote with the introduction of the Women's Enfranchisement Act in 1930 (Murray 1988:254).

Civic leaders of note governing the Boer republics were few, but Presidents J.N. Boshof in the Free State, and T.F. Burghers in the Transvaal were both successful in their own respective ways. After the Boer Republics lost their independence, a Triumvirate, including Paul Kruger, Piet Joubert and Marthinus Wessel Pretorius headed the Afrikaner commandos in their war against the British. Of these men, Paul Kruger, a farmer and former game hunter, was to distinguish himself as a great Afrikaner hero with natural leadership qualities and military prowess. The heroes and events described in this section, and the following sub-section, form the basis of my personal account of the elements upon which future Afrikaner symbolic reproduction came to be based.

The period during which the Boer republics were established, and leading up to the two Boer Wars, constituted as fragile a peace as ever between the European settlers, the indigenous inhabitants and the colonial overlords. The lack of trust between the different peoples inhabiting the land, whether unfounded or legitimate, reduced every past treaty, accord or covenant to failure. However, this period supplied the Afrikaner with a set of heroes (and anti-heroes) which they revered in future mythologising and stereotypical perceptions of their own identity and status in this land.

The Afrikaner's conservative harking back to the past, although not unique to their culture, was often used by contemporary mythologisers, especially politicians. Few contemporary politicians would introduce new ideas without referring to the themes of previous "primordial" leaders, particularly from the eras of True and Sad Stories, or establish credibility without making calls to what they perceived as the "ultimate" truth of the Bible. This nostalgia was especially apparent after the first Boer War when impoverished

Afrikaners sought employment on the Witwatersrand mining fields, and after the second Boer War, when farmers were driven off the land by the destruction of their farms through British war actions, persistent drought, cattle plague and uneconomical inherited land units. The Afrikaner, however, mobilised themselves from poverty to power, from a rural, pastoral society to that of the industrial and post-industrial eras. Sparks writes that the rapid industrialisation brought upon South Africa after the discovery of diamonds and gold had a severe impact upon the Afrikaner and blacks as they moved to the cities. He continues that both groups were equally ill-equipped for urban life under English rule and "...changed the whole focus of Afrikaner nationalism, switching its reference point from conflict with the English to conflict with the blacks" (Sparks 1994:121). Before embarking upon the second stage of the Afrikaner's individuation process that is part of the topic of Mythical Stories in Chapter Three, the symbolic significance from the last phase of the Afrikaner's sacred primordial history, is summarised below.

The Voortrekker dream of independence was realised with the establishment of the two Boer republics; respectively the Orange River Sovereignty in 1854, and the South African Republic in 1853 (Heydenrich 1988:143 & 150). The Great Trek, or the Afrikaner's diaspora, was unique in that it dispersed a small group of people over vast tracts of land without conquering the local, indigenous inhabitants. Their largely unchallenged inland move was probably due to the *Difaqane* or *Mfecane*³¹ which left great tracts of land unpopulated at the time of the Trek. Fortunately for the trekkers, this kept potential possible conflict with the indigenous population groups under control for the time being. The trekkers, with their move inland, took with them their inherited attitudes, beliefs and traditions, which during this process of isolation from the rest of the world, resulted in what can be phrased as forming a *laager*, a closed attitude to new and foreign ideas or influences. This largely physical isolation, led to intellectual and cultural impoverishment, and a stultification and dearth of ideas about how a community or society can or should function.

The discovery of diamonds³² in 1867 and gold³³ in 1871, was, according to Sparks, the “watershed event” that changed the course of South African history (1994:119). South Africa’s mineral wealth not only thrust the nation into the forefront of international events, but also led to the annexation of the Boer Republics by the British. A change in British foreign policy, introduced when Lord Carnarvon became Foreign Secretary in 1874, led to the annexation of the South African Republic by Sir Shepstone in 1877. After peaceful negotiations with the British came to nothing, the Boers declared war on the 16 December 1880. The British army, under General Colley, was soundly defeated at Laing’s Nek and on 23 March 1881 a peace agreement was signed at the Pretoria Convention between the two parties. However, the peace was not to last for long, as the profitability of the South African Republic, after the discovery of gold, threatened British interests in South Africa.³⁴ By October 1899, the two Boer Republics were at war again with Britain.

The Anglo-Boer War, which lasted from 1899 till the Peace of Vereeniging in 1902, is isolated by De Klerk as the “climactic act in the heroic age of Afrikanerdom” (1976:75). This war introduced the era of the Boer Generals, and they were formidable enemies, any time the equal, if not superior, to those in the British army. The Boers changed the tactics of warfare from large scale set-piece battles, to that of trench warfare using accurate, long-range rifles, and eventually to that of informal, but highly effective guerilla warfare.

The Boer military leadership, as before, instigated personality cults, and produced heroes of calibre, in contrast to the administrative leaders of the previous civilian phase. Yet again, this veneration of the individual led to difficulties that resulted in the Boer armies never quite being able to integrate their tactical co-operation. In spite of these problems, the names of De La Rey, Botha, Smuts, Steyn, De Wet, Prinsloo, Joubert, Cronjé and Kruger became immortalised in Afrikaner mythology. Gideon Scheepers became a Boer martyr when he was handed over to the British for medical treatment during the war, but soon after was tried and executed.³⁵

The bleakest chapter in the Anglo-Boer War for the Boers must have been the collective punishment, in the form of the looting and burning of their farms, and the concentration camps, sanctioned by Lord Roberts, where Boer families were kept under appalling conditions (Pakenham 1988:211 & 214). The concentration camps, instituted for the first time ever by the British³⁶, were devised as a military strategy to demoralise the men in the Boer commandos. A total of 27 927 Boers, including 26 251 women and children, and 14 000 Black people died in the camps (Pakenham 1988:214).

One consideration that prompted Boer leaders to negotiate a peace settlement was a growing rift within Afrikaner ranks that manifested in two opposing groups, the *handsuppers* and the *joiners* on one side, and the *bittereinders* on the other.³⁷ Division was even present in the peace-making process. The Transvaal was in favour, while the Orange Free State initially opposed it. In May 1902, however, the war ended with the Peace Conference of Vereeniging. In spite of the war, the Boers retained a sense of self, and in opposing the British, had achieved a fair amount of nation-building.

Returning after the war to their farms, now in ruins, a crisis on the land developed which, with continual drought and the depression, were to affect the Afrikaner's self-esteem even more adversely than the war itself. The Afrikaner was driven off the land, and what followed was their next trek, a migration to the cities. The Afrikaner was ill-equipped for urban life and were "reduced to a state of *kneenskap*, or servitude, and of squalor" (Sparks 1994:133). From this desperation and feeling of inferiority, the Afrikaner launched themselves on a political course, and attempted to achieve through politics that which they could not do by physical means. The Afrikaner also launched various cultural initiatives such as the two language movements and the formation of Afrikaans medium schools known as Christian National Education in which the principles of Afrikanerdom were espoused (Spies 1988:223). In 1914, under the leadership of JBM Herzog who promoted the interests of the Afrikaner, the National Party was established in the Free State

and the Transvaal (Spies 1988:233). Between 1914 and 1951 Afrikaner politics experienced various breaks and shifts in power which finally culminated in the amalgamation of what was once again called the National Party. This era saw the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and symbols of their success were the building of the Voortrekker Monument which was started in 1938 and inaugurated in 1949 and securing Afrikaans as an equal language to English.

This primordial history of the Afrikaner which seldom appears directly in my practical work, except in a few drawings (figs 18 & 20) and in the relief cut-outs, *Earthly heroes: the politician* (1987, fig 2) and *Launching pad I: the church* (1987, fig 38) is, however, an implicit collective source which informed my art-making. This brings me to my next tale in Afrikaner mythologising, *Mythical Stories*. This is a narrative partly constructed from the two earlier versions of Afrikaner mythologising discussed here as True and Sad Stories, and partly based upon my own perceptions of Western and Afrikaner myths read from the mixed cultural reproduction put out by the mass media, as well as my own experiences of being an Afrikaner. *Mythical Stories*, a visual tale of past histories that legitimises the present, is based on the so-called “truths” reproduced in the media as well as my own nostalgia for real truths that do not hark back to the Afrikaner’s pastoral notions of paradise.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1. Refer back to endnote four, Chapter One.
2. The name of my first mythical tale, *True Stories*, is derived from David Byrne's book, *True Stories* (1986), which inspired me to look at the mass media, especially photographs and news reports, as a source of contemporary symbolic reproduction.
3. Refer back to Endnote 5 of the Introduction.
4. Photographs of P.W. Botha, the then Prime Minister and later President, clad in dark suit and hat, represented a certain stereotypical image of Afrikaner politicians reminiscent of the previous Malan and Sauer eras. Although this image was revealing, as being suggestive of someone caught in a time warp, oblivious to change, this alone could not convey the full extent of the ideological dead-end in which the Nationalist Party Government found itself. Nevertheless, this picture of a man, in my view "straight-jacketed" into a previous era's codes, gave me a visual image that conveyed certain philosophical and ideological ideas of the Afrikaner's political heroes. See *Earthly heroes: the politician*, (1987, fig 2).
5. There is another equally important history which describes the indigenous peopling of southern Africa, the move of Bantu-speakers from the north-west of the central African tropical forest down south, the Khoikhoi and San people, and what the Sotho and Tswanas called the *Difaqane* or forced migration, which was the flight and dispersal of the black population from the southern African regions in fear of the brutality of Shaka, the Zulu king and his impis (Edgecombe 1988:115-126).
6. Mostert provides an example of a European outgroup's perception of an indigenous tribe at the Cape. He writes that the first Europeans saw the "Khoikhoi existence as something especially base, foul and profane" (1992:34) and that their

nakedness and lack of permanent dwelling structures were always to strike Europeans as proof positive of an inherent lack of morals and of unmitigated backwardness respectively. But the Khoikhoi affected them in all sorts of other ways as well. Khoikhoi languages retained from their Bushmen ancestry a clicking sound whose total unfamiliarity was regarded by early Europeans as the strangest and most incomprehensible form of all human communication. But what affronted them most of all was what Khoikhoi were willing to eat and what they did to their bodies

(1992:35).

7. According to Mostert a woman trekker, Anna Steenkamp, expressed the general indignation as follows:

...their [blacks] being placed on an equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion, so that it was intolerable for any decent Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke; wherefore we rather withdrew in order to preserve our doctrines in purity (Mostert 1992:781).

It is obvious from this quotation that the white burghers were affronted by the thought that blacks were considered their equals before God, and were similar to the French Huguenots before them who moved to other regions for their religious beliefs, prepared to give up everything for what they believed in and trek into the unknown wilderness to retain control over their own destiny, their viewpoints, and attachment to their beliefs, customs and attitudes.

8. John Calvin, the French church reformer, wrote the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1553 which was the most seminal work in the development of the Reformed Protestant Church (*Microsoft Encarta '95 for Windows* 1995. Sv "Calvinism").
9. After the split with Rome the Protestants reduced their liturgy to two essential sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This reduction was seen as a return to the essentials of worshipping, without the excesses in which the Roman Church indulged. Obviously, this move towards cerebral, abstract notions of worship, resulted in changes to the symbolic communication used by the Reformists (*Microsoft Encarta '95 for Windows* 1995. Sv "Calvinism").
10. Various confessions have been written to define and guide the theology and practice of the church, for example, the First Helvetic Confession (1536), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Canons of the Synod of Dort (1619) (*Microsoft Encarta '95 for Windows* 1995. Sv "Presbyterianism").
11. This is not to say that Christianity lacks the feminine principle as defined in Jungian terms, but it is often manifested as male action in the Bible (for example, The Good Samaritan,) which in itself is balanced, but could leave women without sufficient role models and stereotypes with which to identify in the face of a mainly male church hierarchy. It is the accumulation of the male principle between theology and church which results in a tradition of male exclusivity, where women have to find a place for themselves by substitution. For example, I as a woman can also, as this man, extend compassion to my fellow human being.

12. The Afrikaner was not alone in resorting to these devices. It has been used by many leaders, the political heroes of society, and by as many societies. De Klerk cites the examples of James I of England, Napoleon Bonaparte, the Führer of the Third Reich, Hendrik Verwoerd, Idi Amin and the Anglo-Saxon world, especially in New England (1976:xiv). Degenaar points out that the seminal example is the Hebrew people, but that examples also come from other sources, including the European societies of our ancestors, namely, Germany, France, Holland, and England (1983:62).
13. The history of the Hebrews gives credibility to Afrikaner historiography as it predates Christianity and sets a precedent for a Chosen People. Refer to Chapter One for more detail regarding the truth of myth.
14. *Volk* means people or nation.
15. “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel” (Deuteronomy 32:8).
16. “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17.26).
17. In Genesis the story of Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth is told.
18. In Genesis the descendants of Ham are laid out. Verse 20 ends as follows:
“... these are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations” (Genesis 10:6-20).
19. Genesis 11 tells the story of Babel and how the whole world shared one language. The Lord came down to see the city and tower that was being built, and decided to stop the people by confusing their languages and scattering them “over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:1-9).
20. During British rule various missions were set up in southern Africa by, among others, the London Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the Moravian Missionary Society and the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society who spread the word of the Bible among the indigenous peoples. The impact of these missionaries upon both the Afrikaner and the indigenous inhabitants had both positive and negative effects. For the “free burghers” the missionaries brought trouble as they supported the local inhabitants and accused the burghers of maltreating their slaves and labourers. Yet, in spite of their support to the local inhabitants, Davenport writes on the softening effect which

traders and missionaries had upon black resistance in the late nineteenth century before conquest:

The interests of hunting, trading, prospecting, spreading the Gospel, and protection of the strategic needs of individual states and colonies, all contributed to the elimination of black independence during these hectic years (1977:116).

21. According to Foucault the relationship between land and people is only disturbed when there are more people than can be naturally borne. It is then that the principle of economics enters the picture. In a discussion on the value of labour, he writes:

In fact, labour - that is, economic activity - did not make its appearance in world history until men became too numerous to be able to subsist on the spontaneous fruits of the land. Some, lacking the means of subsistence, died, and many others would have died had they not begun to work the land (Foucault 1994:256).

In the case of the trekkers, they did not turn to working the land, but moved on to areas which were not so densely populated and could support a pastoral existence.

22. Davenport writes:

Because of the need for discretion in the planning of the Trek and the consequent paucity of records, it is not possible to give a reliable explanation of why, in detail, most of the Voortrekkers went (1978:39).

23. The official opening of the Voortrekker Monument was conducted by Dr D.F. Malan on the 16 December 1949, and it was completed in 1954 (Oberholster 1972:172 & 182).

24. *Ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika* means "We are for you, South Africa". "The Call of South Africa" was written by the poet C.J. Langenhoven (Sparks 1994:110). Kannemeyer writes that through the use of contradictions, parallelisms, repetitions and a regular rhythm, this poem evokes an image of the African landscape and repeatedly pledges loyalty to the country (translation mine) (1988:77).

25. The Voortrekker Monument, designed by Gerhard Moerdijk, was erected through the combined efforts of Paul Kruger, S.P.J. Kruger and Samuel Marks (Oberholster 1972:182).

26. The exact content of the covenant is open to debate, as there are discrepancies between Sarel Cilliers' deathbed account and the more authentic reports from Bantjies and Pretorius. According to Bantjies, only the building of a church was mentioned, and Pretorius recalled that the "religious celebration took precedence over the building of a church" (Leach 1990:20).

The official version of the covenant, which appears on page four of a brochure published by the Voortrekker Monument is cited by Sparks:

My brethren and fellow countrymen, at this moment we stand before the holy God of heaven and earth, to make a promise, if He will be with us and protect us and deliver the enemy into our hands so that we may triumph over him, that we shall observe the day and the date as an anniversary in each year and a day of Thanksgiving like the Sabbath, in His honour; and that we shall enjoin our children that they must take part with us in this, for a remembrance even of our posterity; and if anyone sees a difficulty in this, let him return from this place. For the honour of His name shall be joyfully exalted, and to Him the fame and the honour of the victory must be given (1994:112).

27. Two Dutch parsons in Natal, the Reverends P.D.M. Huet and F. Lion Cachet respectively in 1864 and 1866 resurrected the covenant (Leach 1990:18). The publication of H.J. Hofstede's *History of the Orange Free State of 1876* contained the "*Joernaal*" by Sarel Cilliers that was, according to the historian Leonard Thompson, to become the "principal source for the myth of the covenant" (1985:166).
28. *Inspan* in this sense means the harnessing of horses or yoking of cattle to resume the trek (translation mine).
29. *Uitspan* means outspan, or unharnessing for a break or the setting up of a camp (translation mine).
30. I did not include the monument of Maria Quevellerius van Riebeeck as she was Dutch and left the Cape after a while, neither the French Huguenot Monument, as the image of the woman was used to express symbolically the spirit of religion and the freedom of conscience of the French Huguenots, rather than a portrayal of the Voortrekkers' female ancestors.
31. The Nguni referred to the crises of war that affected most of the indigenous peoples in southern Africa during the second decade of the nineteenth century as the *Mfecane*, meaning "'crushing' in the sense of 'total war'", whereas the Sothos called it the *Difaqane* or the *Lifaqane* (Edgecombe 1988:115).
32. John Benyon writes that two young boys, "Klonkie" and Erasmus Jacobs, dug out what proved to be a diamond from the banks of the Orange River, near Hopetown. Further discoveries of alluvial diamonds at Pniel and Barkley West in 1869 set off a big rush and by 1871, the Big Hole at Kimberley was being excavated (1988:167-168).

33. Grundlingh writes that rumours of gold deposits circulated as early as the 1850s in the Transvaal, and in 1853, P.J. Marais was appointed by the volksraad as the official prospector. In 1871, on the farm Eersteling, gold was found with other discoveries at Lydenburg, Pilgrim's Rest, and De Kaap to follow. After the War of Independence was over in 1881, viable deposits were found on the farm, Kromdraai, near Krugersdorp (1988:184).
34. According to Grundlingh, many latter-day historians interpreted the events leading up to the Anglo-Boer War as not caused so much by the franchise issue, or the handling of negotiations by the Kruger Government, but rather that the British feared that the economic power of the Boer republic would make them, instead of the British, the leading force in the region. This growing independence could possibly lead to the colonies drifting away from British control. This interpretation is enforced by the viewpoint that the economic power structures in place at the time in the region were, according to British mining magnates, not handled in a sufficiently sophisticated manner under Boer control. The mining magnates were in favour of a "regime which could offer the optimum conditions for the development of unbridled capitalism". This of course, suited the British, as they could then retain their control over the region, as well as the international money markets by bolstering their gold reserves at the same time (1988:197-199).
35. Spies writes that "in terms of the Hague and Geneva Conventions and the canons of international law, there remain doubts as to the competence of a British military court to pass a death sentence, while the war was still in progress, on an enemy subject who was a prisoner of war" (1988:213).
36. Leach writes that combined with the blockhouses erected all over the country, the British soldiers under command of Kitchener conceived another strategy, the concentration camps, "thereby earning themselves a place in history as the inventors of this particular form of population control" (1990:43).
- Leach differs here from Pakenham in the main text, and according to him Lord Roberts was in charge of the farm-looting and the concentration camps.
37. *Handsuppers*, according to Grundlingh, were Boers who surrendered during the war, whilst *joiners* were Boers who fought for the British, especially towards the end of the war. *Bittereinders* were Boers who wanted to continue with the war at all costs (1988:217).

CHAPTER THREE

Mythical Stories: deconstructing contemporary Western and Afrikaner visual cultural reproduction as a source for personal art-making

This chapter deal with the visual reproduction of myths and heroes and the potential power of the symbolic image to influence the power relations in society. In this section I will outline how I brought selective aspects of different contemporary visual paradigms pertaining to Afrikaner mythologising together, and the diversity of these cultural “artefacts” as sources for my art- making. This deconstruction of mass mediated symbolic information, in particular Western and Afrikaner myths and histories that were discussed in Chapters One and Two, completes my trio of stories which unravels Afrikaner mythologising and which informed my art-making.

Before launching into a discussion of the contemporary visual reproduction of the hero and myth in Western culture, and Afrikaner culture in particular, that informed my work, I want briefly to introduce my working definitions of culture, and one of its subsidiary components, myth, that I employed in this research. Sociologist John Thompson writes that the term “culture”, originally derived from the Latin *cultura* in the early modern era, underwent different transformations in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The original concept of *cultura* as animal husbandry and the tending of crops was extended to include the “cultivation of the mind”. The term “culture”, however, became synonymous with “civilisation”, reflecting the notion of civilisation as a “progressive process of human development”, a move away from “barbarism and savagery”. German intellectuals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries distinguished between *Zivilization*, which they saw as an upper class concern with “politeness and refinement”, and *Kultur*,

which dealt with “intellectual, artistic and spiritual” matters (1990:124).

The sociologist Ronald Fletcher, in *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, defines culture as “the ‘social heritage’ of a community”:

...the total body of material artifacts (tools, weapons, houses; places of work, worship, government, recreation; works of art, etc.), of collective mental and spiritual ‘artifacts’ (systems of symbols, ideas, beliefs, aesthetic perceptions, values, etc.), and of distinctive forms of behaviour (INSTITUTIONS, groupings, RITUALS, modes of organisation, etc.) created by a people (sometimes deliberately, sometimes through unforeseen interconnections and consequences) in their ongoing activities within their particular life-conditions, and (though undergoing kinds and degrees of change) transmitted from generation to generation (1977. Sv “culture”).¹

These definitions show the breadth of culture, and the many layers of meaning contained therein. In spite of this obvious complexity, we all continuously engage in culture in our every-day existence. Whilst analysing culture, writes Thompson, “we are engaged in unravelling layers of meaning, describing and re-describing actions and expressions which are *already meaningful* for the very individuals who are producing, perceiving and interpreting these actions and expressions in the course of their everyday [sic] lives” (1990:131). Although culture is in constant use, and it is “already meaningful” to individuals within the group, the exact form and meaning thereof differs from group to group, and between individuals. In unravelling the meaning of Afrikaner culture, as reproduced by the mainstream Afrikaner ingroup (as opposed to my own understanding of Western culture, and Afrikaner culture in particular) I was trying to come to terms with the distances between the perceived “self”, the “us”, and “them”, which in the racist South African context during the late eighties was extremely polarised. Culture is so broad a topic that to make analysis feasible, one must restrict the area of focus. I was concerned with the symbolic aspect of culture, specifically mythological texts and images.

The complexity of the deconstruction of the symbolic is further increased by Western society's dualistic usage of "myth" that sustains two contradictory primary meanings. Myth is either understood as "a figment: a commonly-held belief that is untrue, or without foundation" (*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* 1972. Sv "myth") or as a story whose inherent truthfulness is not to be questioned. Frankfort describes the influences exerted by myth's poetic truthfulness:

Myth is a form of poetry which transcends poetry in that it proclaims a truth; a form of reasoning which transcends reasoning in that it wants to bring about the truth it proclaims; a form of action, of ritual behaviour, which does not find its fulfilment in the act but must proclaim and elaborate a poetic form of truth (1949:16).

The multiple meanings of myth are overridden by the prevailing power of myth to proclaim a poetic truth. Few ancient myths exert religious influence in contemporary Western society today, yet many themes and symbols that give meaning to life can be traced back to antiquity in one form or other. The tension between the two meanings of myth described above is re-enforced by the pervasiveness of the symbolic which continuously re-establishes the power of the mythical. The power of the symbolic and the poetic truth that it proclaims sustains the mythologising process in the face of contemporary technology, thought and philosophies where notions of "truth" or "certainty" are questioned.

In order to acquire insights into the tensions in South African society, and to uncover the various power structures at work, I attempted to unravel the multiple layers of symbolic meaning that were reproduced in the mass media. Peter Munz writes that the deconstruction and reconstruction of the symbolic, the first to uncover hidden meaning, and the second to restore meaning, are both hermeneutic activities. According to Munz, when symbols are deciphered, hidden meanings are uncovered; whilst in the reconstruction of the symbolic, every-day events are scrutinised for meaning (1973:88). This simultaneous two-way process of decoding and encoding of

mythological stereotypes was employed in my practical work to explore Afrikaner attitudes, beliefs and customs. But I also studied symbols in past and contemporary fine arts, particularly where I perceived the barriers between art and communication, and art and technology to have collapsed.

During the process of producing my first relief cut-outs, I worked intuitively from a collection of media images as well as my own photographs, and these works formed the starting point of my research. In the initial stages of my research, working in this manner was possible, as firstly I knew where I wanted to start off my enquiry, and secondly, I was committed to Hobbs' premise that the hero and myth reveal a lot about the people in society from which they stem. However, it soon became clear, as I got more involved in my research and extended my collection of images that the range of material, representing the full spectrum of life, could expand beyond the parameters of this research project. In order to contain this study, I resorted to drawing as a more economical and efficient way of visually probing the underlying power relations of Afrikaner heroism before embarking on relief sculpting, which is a more time-consuming medium. I proceeded with various series of drawings that juxtaposed different symbolic images and paradigms to uncover possible power relations that existed amongst them. At the same time, I also tried to find generic categories or stereotypes within which to group my images and concepts. Even though the collected images were eclectic and disparate, some overriding themes soon emerged.

Concurrent with my empirical visual research, my reading programme included the works of psychologists such as Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. At this point, I realised that the stereotypes and groupings that I identified related to underlying archetypal structures. This realisation prompted me to delve even deeper and extend my search further through the visual and conceptual devices of collage. I cut up many media images and photographs, and re-assembled them in a series of different compositions to uncover further power

relations, keeping in mind the broader categories of gender, sex, race, religion and class. From these collages I developed a series of drawings illustrated in figures 20-26. My research uncovered multiple asymmetrical power relations simultaneously at work in the reproduction of symbols at any given time. Fiske describes the complex multiplicity of power relations continuously at work in society:

The metaphor of culture as multiple currents is an attempt to depict the multiple axes of power that crisscross our daily lives and the identities and relations that we form and re-form as we move through them. As hyperreality dissolves stable categories of modes of representation, so multiaxiality transforms any stability of categories into the fluidities of power. The core axes in this messy business may be the classic trio of class, race, and gender, but they are far from the only ones (1994:65).

The task that I set myself was to unmask the symbolic in which ever guise it appeared, and to uncover the axes of power reproduced in the image. However, for every dominant power axis reproduced, there are many secondary forces that remain invisible, and become lost narratives. Mark Cheetham writes that our “construction, recollection, and - crucially - amnesia of history *through* the use of historical images provides a potent vehicle for critique” (1991:xii). What is included in the symbolic narrative or text, is, therefore, as important as that which is omitted.

Not only do we have to look at the dominant/subordinate power relations such as religion, politics, race and gender etcetera in place to read the meaning of symbolic reproduction, but we also have to look at how, that is through what medium (for example film or video), mode (for example fiction or documentary) and by whom (for example clergyman or politician), it is reproduced. This means that meaningful analysis requires the consideration of the notions of the *erga* and the *parergon*, as well as acknowledging the equal participation between authors and readers or viewers in the interpretation of a work. In the process of gathering mass media images, I assembled the collective memory and amnesia of previous symbolic reproductions. It therefore became important to research,

particularly in the case of earlier reproductions, the *erga* and *parergon* of these past symbols to understand their significance in the representation of contemporary women in the mass media. It follows that once I selected and analysed these narratives in my practical work, my own personal memory and amnesia were also reflected in the symbolism portrayed.

In pondering the contemporary deconstruction of culture, the art theorist Linda Hutcheon writes that “postmodernism tries to understand present culture as the product of previous codings and representation. The representation of history becomes the history of representation too” (1991:129). Therefore, when I took up themes in the mass media, which constituted both public or collective memories, as well as private memories of my own, I also considered the “by whom” and “how” of their reproduction.

Now that I have established my working definitions concerning the deconstruction of culture as a source for my art-making, I want to introduce the three main points of this chapter. The first topic is the deconstruction of the broader Western tradition of symbolic reproduction upon which Afrikaner culture is largely based as a source in my art-making. The second topic is Afrikaner symbolic reproduction; itself a source in my art-making, and lastly the visual reproduction of symbolic information in a Postmodernist society as a source in my art-making.

WESTERN VISUAL REPRODUCTION AS A SOURCE FOR PERSONAL ART-MAKING

I was aware of certain forms of control and power structures that, to a large extent, determined my life. These culturally induced influences ranged from traditional sources of power that are transferred from one generation to the other through various institutions, such as the church, education, the state, the arts and other societal frameworks. These traditional reproduction modes were supplemented by a more pervasive and intrusive cultural reproduction that took place via the mass media. It was interesting to note

that all these reproduction modes had a common thread running through them in that they all mythologised information to a greater or lesser extent. The symbolic communication of attitudes, beliefs, and customs is seldom neutral, and is nearly always politically, or ideologically motivated. The reproduction of culture, therefore, is ideological in the sense that ideology is concerned with “the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination” (Thompson 1990:56).²

Greater insights into contemporary mythologising can be gained by looking at the prime producer of symbolic information in Western society today, namely the mass media. John Fiske an American communications expert, writes that the mass media’s circulation of cultural texts, including the mythological, involves technology that “produces knowledge and applies power” (1994:217). The technology employed in reproducing contemporary culture reproduces existing power structures, and introduces new power axes into existing power relations. Although the new technologies add further dimensions to existing power relations, Fiske points out that technology may “determine what is shown”, but “society determines what is seen” (1994:221). It therefore follows that the impact of new technology upon society, that is, the new and wider distribution modes, does not eclipse the previous power structures, passed on from generation to generation through traditional means, but becomes one more factor in what is “seen”. The numerous factors that determine what we “see” include social structures of long standing such as class, race, gender and context. For example, my perspective as observer was that of being part of a dominant class, white, and female in a racist society. My quest was to try and understand, through a visual exploration of the hero, the meaning and implications of these past and present power axes in relation to the orders and hierarchies that existed within Afrikaner society.

Developments in communication technology transformed contemporary cultural reproduction. The inventions of cinema, television, computer and telecommunication technologies changed society in numerous ways. The platforms previously held by the church,

educators, state and theatre as mythologisers, were now marginalised and superseded by photographers, cinematographers, video and television editors, filmmakers, news agencies and journalists, *etcetera*. Mass media techniques required adaptation from traditional mythologisers and introduced new ones into the field.

The changes in twentieth-century social reproduction brought about by new technological advances and various philosophical shifts also had an impact upon the hero and myth. Thomas Carlyle, in his book *On heroes and hero-worshipping* (1895), describes how the hero evolved through the ages, starting from a notion of the hero as divinity in the guise of gods, prophets and priests, and systematically becoming more secularised to incorporate the hero as king. Some time later, the hero became the man of letters who expresses divine ideas through writing. Carlyle reflected on the role of the writer in the latter part of the nineteenth century:

I many a time say, the writers of Newspapers, Pamphlets, Poems, Books, these are the real working effective Church of a modern country. Nay, not only our preaching, but even our worship, is not it too accomplished by means of Printed Books (1895:162)?

Carlyle detects a dualism in the symbolic reproduction of writers that straddles the activity of symbolic reproduction, or “preaching”, and the symbolic act itself, the ritual of “worship”. This dualism in the role of the hero as both narrator of, and participant in, the symbolic act is, however, not a contemporary phenomenon, and historical examples are plentiful. For example, the Egyptian god-king³, and the Christian Messiah⁴ were both self-perpetuating in that they became enshrined as symbols. The difference between these heroes lies in the reproduction mechanisms available to them at the time. In pre-history, heroes relied upon verbal and organisational power structures. Centuries later, these structures were replaced by hand-written manuscripts, and thereafter by printed texts. In the twentieth century printed material was supplemented by visual, verbal and audio-visual media such as photography, film and video, broadcasting and the electronic media.

The symbolic reproduction stemming from commerce, in the form of advertising, and fiction and reportage from the entertainment and news industries, introduced a new spectrum of heroes alongside the traditional heroes perpetuated by the polity and clergy. An interesting addition to twentieth-century mythologising is the news media. The analytical news coverage normally associated with newspapers has, in television news broadcasting, seen a shift to action where the newsreader or reporter become part of the narrative action.

In the past and present, news services and agencies have always positioned themselves (in a mythical sense) as purveyors of truth, devoid of ideological motives. Their traditionally claimed impartiality is even more questionable within contemporary reproduction modes where the immediacy and nature of the medium can misrepresent information that belies the apparent objectivity of the camera lens. Jean Picker Firstenburg, in an article titled *On heroes and the media*, describes how the reading of the hero can be distorted in television news coverage:

Recently, however, the immediacy and intimacy of the media has somehow confused the issue of heroism, blurring the traditional criteria by which we measure our heroes and allowing mere exposure - that is "fame" - to precede, and occasionally preempt [sic], "worthiness" as a qualification for heroism (1987:67).

and:

We could watch a hostage crises unfold right on the runway... . News began to resemble drama, except that with drama, the hero is readily identified, and in reality, he often is not (1987:67).

The interpretation of news and the identification of the hero often comes after the fact in television. The hero's identity is eclipsed

by the dramatic action of the narrative. Many other instances of change or re-enforcement in the reproduction of mythical stereotypes in the mass media exist. For instance, the film critic J. Hoberman and the author Jonathan Rosenbaum, postulate that in popular entertainment, cinema has become the secular faith of this century and movie theatres resemble cathedrals:

If the origins of art are to be found in religion, then the movies are surely the universal secular faith of the twentieth century. Purely as phenomenon, the cinema has provided the simulation of religious epiphany on an unprecedented, assembly-line scale (1982:48).⁵

Many contemporary heroes or other role-models reproduced in the mass media whom we aspire to, are a combination of past and present heroic types. In assessing mass mediated symbolic reproduction of the hero and myth one is also, often unwittingly, analysing how and by whom the information is being reproduced. Walter Lippmann made several observations about the reproduction of information and established a link between perception, interpretation and the stereotype. He pointed out that one only sees what one knows and called this the “gatekeeper theory”. According to David White, journalists, including newspaper editors, are also gatekeepers and see “only those events which the newsman, as the representative of his culture, believes to be true” (1964:171). The editor then, according to Lippmann’s theory, is a “gatekeeper” who only allows certain information to be published. Editors, however, are part of a bureaucratic structure, and this “gatekeeping” function is duplicated by all their fellow workers. This cultural filtering process up and down the hierarchical employment chain is further tailored by the policies of the particular institution, and those of the independent news agencies to which they subscribe.⁶

Newspapers, encyclopaedic in nature and scope, draw upon the collective memory of societies, and the individual memories of writers and photographers, the viewers and readers. The information that, for instance, newspapers put forward coincides with the reader’s own *parergon* or context that is used in the process of decoding information. Whatever is read or viewed, is interpreted by filtering

through layers and layers of information and meanings in the mind till it coincides with a recognised fact or “truth”. As much as I was sifting through external layers of information to reveal some symbolic “truth” about Afrikanerdom, I was also drawing upon a parallel internal source: that is my own experiences, attitudes and beliefs of the same.

Perusing mass media, I focused on individual picture captions that amplified their meaning, and the texts that adjoined them. My attention was directed towards small, apparently insignificant bits of information, leading stories covering whole pages, and the inter-relationships between some and all of these visual and written texts. I consulted both editorial material and advertisements, each reproducing their respective “truths”. I was probing the “truth” of what I knew by measuring it against what I could read or see in the mass media.⁷ However, as Fiske writes, this distinction of what is “true” is becoming more nebulous in the modern technological age:

Our age may be that of the visual simulacrum, where what is seen is what matters, and any distinction between an unseen (“true”) event and its (false) representations no longer seems achievable. Much of the thrust of our cultural technology is to extend what can be made visible and to technologize a panoptic power that lies in the means of seeing as much as in what it sees (1994:133).

But, Fiske also writes that history is not “dislodged as simply as that”, and that the “visual and verbal enter complex relations with each other as they move up and down the social and discursive hierarchies, as they oppose or endorse each other’s way of knowing” (1994:133).

In contemporary Western society, most mythologisers direct their symbolic output towards mass audiences for economic reasons. Mass audiences, according to the sociologist Denis McQuail, are a collectivity unique to modern society. He describes this group as a number of individuals with common interests, who are loosely organised and experience little contact between themselves and the

communicator (McQuail 1969:9). The success of the mass media to involve all strata of society to partake of mass culture, has profound political implications as it yields considerable power to the communicator. McQuail writes that the “mass society thesis has indeed been especially concerned with the political consequences of these [loose organisational] tendencies” (1969:21).⁸ Later, in the same text, McQuail points out that it is not the external manipulation of the communicator that is the greatest problem concerning the mass society, as control is exerted through many different power structures (1969:80)⁹, but the innate “...needs common to most members of industrial society and catered for in ways made possible by the technology of mass communications” (1969:76). McQuail’s concern is not so much with the power yielded by the new producers of culture, but contemporary society’s perceived need of mass culture.

Media institutions are not autonomous agencies. They function within a specific context governed by laws, regulations and political shifts that operate as sets of continuously changing power relations. Yet, the media conglomerates who control mass mediated cultural reproduction have become the most important symbolic reproducers in contemporary society. This supremacy has given the mass media the edge over the state and church as symbolic reproducers, and this often leads to asymmetrical power relations amongst traditional and contemporary mythologisers.

AFRIKANER CULTURAL REPRODUCTION AS A SOURCE FOR PERSONAL ART-MAKING

Before discussing the Afrikaner’s mythologising strategies since the turn of the century, I want to mention the uncertainty that lingered in Afrikanerdom about who and what is an Afrikaner, and the political disparity that dogged Afrikaner leaders as this was a recurring inhibiting factor. Despite the Afrikaner’s persistent and successful mythologising, which largely contributed to their political hegemony, they remained insecure about their identity and unity.

Who is an Afrikaner? Who and what is a **true**¹⁰ Afrikaner? These are fundamental questions that occupied many pages of debate over the years in Afrikaans political journals and newspapers. The Afrikaner is perhaps now, for the first time, grappling with the true meaning of what it is to be an Afrikaner without the safety of being the dominant political force. Suffice it to mention that many articles debating this issue appeared in the Afrikaans press, especially newspapers and publications such as *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, *Die Vrye Weekblad*, and *Insig*. Although Afrikaner unity was seldom achieved, the mythologising that took place after the turn of the century was a power structure with sufficient strength to keep the Nationalist Party Government in power for approximately forty years, and to create a self-contained Afrikaner culture that catered for most needs from within.

Cultural reproduction, including symbolic reproduction, has undergone substantial changes in the twentieth century, and South Africa also witnessed these innovations. Along with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism since the turn of the century, and their increasingly sophisticated reproduction of past myths and symbols to validate current ideologies, the Afrikaner also expanded their use of the new mass media technologies available to them, especially television. Although the Afrikaner Nationalist Party Government exerted tight control over the flow of information, it could not counter the tide of foreign material entering through commerce, the press, the broadcasting services and leisure industries which exposed South Africans to global issues. This control was part of a deliberate strategy to diminish the voice, body and politics of black South Africans. Similar to his attachment to Western myth and culture, the Afrikaner looked towards Western trends, symbols and reproduction methods for his cultural reproduction.

The rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the emergence of an Afrikaner ingroup since the turn of the century happened in an unexpected way. One could have expected the Afrikaner to make more use of the mass media technologies available to them at this time, as they did in the film *De Voortrekker* (1916), which dealt with the Great Trek and the Battle of Blood River in realistic detail, which they

showed at venues around the country on Dingane's Day commemorations (Le Roux & Fourie 1982:10). However, the Afrikaner used other strategies to reproduce their ideologies. This is not to say that the Afrikaner did not use the new, sophisticated mass media technologies available to them; in fact, they controlled most media at their disposal effectively. The Afrikaner used a different tactic of mythologising, which penetrated all levels of social order. The Afrikaner resorted to what they knew best, the formation of groups, or *laagers*, to mobilise themselves from a position of disadvantage, insecurity and poverty to that of dominance, affluence and power.¹¹

According to the journalist Charles Bloomberg, the most significant Afrikaner grouping was the formation of the Afrikaner Broederbond in 1918, which he called the "invisible cement" which held together Afrikanerdom (1990:xxii).¹² The Broederbond exerted influence across all spheres of society in its attempt to uplift Afrikanerdom.¹³ They set out to counter the English influence in South Africa and their monopoly of business and finance through the economic empowerment of the Afrikaner. However, they also succeeded in creating an Afrikaner universe that had an Afrikaner counterpart for every aspect of life.¹⁴

The Afrikaner's cultural reproduction remained largely a patriarchal activity, from conception through to control and execution. The planning, devising and reproduction of ideology across the power-houses of state, judiciary, church, education and the mass media were chiefly executed by men. The network of organisations, mostly male, with some members overlapping, and the establishment of an elite within, who served as conceptual think-tanks, filtered their message and influence through to all levels of society.¹⁵ By the sixties, the Afrikaner establishment and cultural structures were in place and represented a complete world of their own.¹⁶ Later, in 1976, with the introduction of television, the SABC allocated different time slots for broadcasts in Afrikaans, English and the major black languages. The Afrikaans media needed a constant supply of material, and this created many opportunities for Afrikaans writers,

actors, producers, directors, musicians and cinematographers.

Themes such as the Eden myth, the urban trek and the dynamic social position of the outsider or *uitlander* (Tomaselli & Van Zyl 1992: 396), explored in Afrikaans literature and radio dramas were also developed in the film and television media either as cinematic adaptations of books or as separate productions perpetuating similar stereotypes. The heroes in Afrikaans films seldom escaped the traditions of Western melodrama and often indulged in romantic genres that avoided all social, political and other relevant issues (Botha & Van Aswegen 1992:3).¹⁷

The uncritical stance of Afrikaans film-makers and their aim to produce “good family entertainment”, reflected little of South Africa’s socio-political realities, and produced films that lacked a creative and structured use of the medium (Botha & Van Aswegen 1992:9-10). According to Pieter Fourie, Afrikaans-oriented films “painted a one-sided and stereotypical portrait of the Afrikaner” which led to a “misconception about whom and what the Afrikaner is” (1982:60-73). The stereotype hero portrayed in Afrikaans films, such as the farmer, or the struggle involved in the transition from a rural to an urban existence, for the most part, remained a “historical curio” which did not keep up with events. The Afrikaner film-maker’s voice, as opposed to the writer’s, remained largely mainstream and seldom produced distinct individual visions of Afrikanerdom.¹⁸

As far as historical reproduction for creating a total universe was concerned, the matter was addressed by various writers and academics at universities across the country, most notably those of the Universities of Stellenbosch and the Orange Free State. The “objective-scientific” approaches to Afrikaner nationalism in history writing propagated by Prof. H.B. Thom from Stellenbosch would become the largely prevailing approach followed by all the major Afrikaans-speaking university history departments.¹⁹ At school level

F.A. van Jaarsveld's prescribed history handbooks played an important role in forming the Afrikaner's sense of their own history from a youthful age.

A well-documented history had many political and cultural advantages, as events could be portrayed so that they built nationalism and furthered the Afrikaner cause. The sacred history of the Afrikaner, being of slight proportions in relation to those of other nations, was supplemented by events that only became meaningful to the Afrikaner in their commemoration. For example, the writings of Gustav Preller about the 1938 ritual re-enactment of the Great Trek positioned the original event as central to Afrikaner historiographies (Thompson 1985:36).²⁰

My practical work drew upon the myths, stereotypes and archetypes of Afrikanerdom, and other Western myths that I gleaned from mass media images and texts. These sources were augmented by scholarly works, but I was chiefly interested in how Afrikaner myths were reproduced in the mass media which is the most pervasive contemporary forum of the symbolic. What made this analysis interesting, and all the more curious, was that the Afrikaans press, whilst conveying the mainstream Afrikaner ideologies, also reflected the absurdities and many contradictions of Afrikaans culture.

Many aspects of Afrikaner mythologising that were reproduced in the press were implicit, in that they assumed the reader had a prior knowledge of events and did not require a detailed account to follow the specific myth in question. A protracted study of mass media imagery and texts revealed that, similar to most news reportage, and other forms of mythical reproduction, only parts of narratives are reported. To gain a more thorough insight into Afrikaner myths and the power axes exerting influence upon them, I consulted other sources *inter alia* historical texts. The opposition press, largely English, furnished me with as many illuminating outgroup stereotypes

of Afrikanerdom as the Afrikaans press itself. The information from the opposition press, both locally and internationally, and my increasing interest in the anti-hero as a means of exploring the power relations underlying Afrikaner mythology, combined with the political shifts and fluidity that was characteristic of the time in South Africa, steered my work away from the portrayal of the stereotypical Afrikaner hero. Instead, I moved towards a parodic deconstruction of Afrikaner attitudes, beliefs and customs through a process of subverting the Afrikaner's heroes and anti-heroes. I saw this alternative route of facing the fear of the "other" as the most effective way to explore the power relations that structured Afrikaner mythologising.

The most accepted example of what constituted an Afrikaner hero to all Afrikaners, no matter from which political camp they stem, must be the Boer, both as man of nature and pioneer *par excellence*. Therefore, uppermost in my mind at the start of making this series of relief sculptures was the Boer portrayed as an angel in *Heavenly heroes: the seraph* (1987, fig 1). The Boer not only stands at the beginning of the Afrikaner myth, but is also central to Afrikaner mythology. The Boer hero stems from the Afrikaner's primordial era during which the Voortrekker leaders and the Boer generals served as heroic stereotypes. They represent the rural and pioneer era of Afrikanerdom and the power axes which regulated their society in those times. The Afrikaner was guided by a fierce belief in God and the Bible, a desire to be relieved from the constraints imposed by foreign colonial overlords, and the freedom to carve a living for themselves from the African soil.

The politician, a more recent heroic protagonist, is explored in *Earthly heroes: the politician* (1987, fig 2). Since the end of the second Anglo-Boer War and the unification in 1903, politicians assumed the roles of being the most commonplace Afrikaner heroes. This change reflected the shifts in politics, but also the changes of economic power relations from a rural, pastoral life to that of an urban society. The power relations governing a blossoming industrial society during this period took on a different form from the more

informal and organic structures of the eras of the Voortrekkers and Boer generals which preceded it. Afrikaner society became more ordered and power structures developed accordingly which denoted the power of government, the church, education and the economy. These different power lobbies each exerted influence upon Afrikaner society and also formed certain power alliances amongst themselves. By and large these influences were orchestrated by the government, educators, the clergy and the Broederbond.

These two works mentioned above marked the starting point from where I went on to explore Afrikaner mythologising. The Boer was as much a traditional symbol of Afrikanerdom, as a personal marker of my own ancestors who all came from farming stock and, as such, served as a means to understand a collective and a personal history. The politicians in power during the period of my research during the late eighties and the early nineties, and therefore the heroes of their time, were those that served under the leadership of P.W. Botha and F.W. De Klerk. The politician upon whom my relief cut-out was based, P.W. Botha, was chosen because I perceived him as a cardboard shell, appropriating the appearance of past Afrikaner politicians, rather than assuming the role of visionary leader that was required. Apart from the self-portrait in *Earthly heroes: the martyr* (1987-88, fig 3), and the references to the self in *Earthly heroes: girl in party dress* (1988-92, fig 4), the rest of the imagery in my body of practical work was derived from the mass media or photographs of people, objects and the landscape that I photographed myself.

The power axes explored in these two works, apart from the subversive use of two Boer women heads in *Earthly heroes: the politician* (1987, fig 2), reveal the patriarchal structure of Afrikanerdom and the masculinity of its symbolic order. In my search for heroines of a similar status, the power axis seemed to shift from gender to sexuality. Apart from names such as Antjie Scheepers and Rachel De Beer, few female personalities were reproduced in the same way as the Boer generals and militia, even though they provided a crucial back up in the Anglo-Boer War that was only curtailed by putting the children and women in British concentration camps. In the

absence of a documented female Afrikaner history, I reverted to the notion of the anti-hero as a means of exploring the feminine principle in Afrikaner power relations. The first work dealing with the feminine principle, *Earthly heroes: the martyr* (1987-88, fig 3), was introspective and parodied the “self” as a heroine, but the following works juxtaposed the “self” or “us”, with the “other”. In *Earthly heroes: the dancers* (1988-92, fig 5), I juxtaposed the “self” with “them”, the “self” being a white girl, and the “them” a couple of so-called coloured ballroom dancers. In *Earthly heroes: the water bearer* (1990-91, fig 8), I explored another South African stereotype of the “other female”, the black woman.

By looking at different stereotyped symbolic memories of female sexuality outside Afrikanerdom, I was hoping to unmask the symbols reproduced within them. Among the spectra of different power axes in female sexuality, ranging from the extreme stereotyped polarities of the “hypersexuality” of the black female to the “purity” of the white female, one can find some primary myths supporting white racism. The attitudes towards the feminine principle and female sexuality in Afrikanerdom led me to a search of the reproduction of these principles in myth and religion, as they are of the most important traditional reproducers of the symbolic. Evidence of the attitudes towards female sexuality are reproduced in art history. Tracing through art history and the myths of Classical Greece and Christianity, my search uncovered the primeval prototypes of Automoe, Demeter and Pallas Athene (Rinaldi 1966:5) and later the Virgin Mary as reincarnations of the feminine psyche. Bonaventuri Rinaldi writes that these “prototypes of the feminine psyche recur constantly, always the same, yet always different, according to their culture, their race and their degree of historical development in their society” (1966:5).

Marina Warner insists upon the centrality of the Marian myth in Western attitudes towards women and she writes that “she is one of the few female figures to have attained the status of myth...” (1985:xxv). By unravelling this myth and the attributes surrounding it,

I uncovered many attitudes towards women in the present that have come down to us through religious and mythical reproduction. Christianity's contribution to the mythic formulation of the feminine principle, continues Warner, is the "...interpretation of the virgin birth as the moral sanction of the goodness of sexual chastity" (1985:48). Herein lies the forerunner of contemporary attitudes towards women, who are often portrayed as the primeval seductress or first Eve, and the virgin or the second Eve.

My chief interest in the Virgin Mary, however, lies in what Warner pronounces as the "...most constant theme of her cult", namely, mediation (1985:xxiii) or what a Greek writer of the sixth century called "...the ladder in the firmament" by which God came down, the bridge leading men from earth to heaven..." (Warner 1985:63).²¹ The idea of a mediator as embodied by the virgin, was explored in my drawings in search of a metaphor for the changes that South Africans, and the Afrikaner in particular, needed to make to overcome their prejudices.

My exploration of past cultural reproductions, particularly symbolic images, to uncover the origins and continuing existence of Afrikaner beliefs and attitudes was complemented by a parallel survey of the mechanisms of contemporary visual cultural reproduction. The following discussion explains the multiplicity, cross-referential, and cross-cultural nature of visual reproduction in a Postmodernist world where cultural exchanges have become a global activity.

POSTMODERNIST CULTURAL REPRODUCTION AS A SOURCE FOR PERSONAL ART-MAKING

In the previous chapter I pointed out that myth and history are inseparable in any reading of culture. The same is true of visual myth and history, as is evident in the many works of art that portray past events, people and places. Any visual depiction, as well as displaying its object, also reveals something about its creator or producer. In South Africa at the time of my research, cultural

reproduction was dominated by Western ideologies for two reasons. The first being Western cultural imperialism; and the second being that the whites who governed the country operated within a European cultural framework. When European powers colonised Africa and the Americas they introduced and imposed their own cultures upon the local inhabitants. The counterflow of African culture to Europe has been well illustrated in the fine arts where European artists, especially the Modernists, have appropriated elements of African art into their own working processes. Europe holds many collections of African art, often obtained by dubious means, but in South Africa, until recently, the indigenous visual arts were largely negated and not represented in public art collections.²²

Although I have already mentioned cross-cultural reproduction in the South African mass media, I have not addressed the relevance of the tensions between the white and black visual art traditions to my work. These tensions operated along numerous power axes which were not only limited to the cultural and ideological differences of the different population groups in South Africa, but also included the tensions between the traditional fine arts and contemporary visual reproduction put out by modern technological innovations such as photography, film, video and electronic communications. The high and low technology tension in visual reproduction had an added racist value in South Africa as black people had little access to expensive media.

Since the early eighties, the art world in South Africa experienced increased exposure to the visual art works of the “other”. The Cape Town Triennial played a significant role in this escalating exposure of black art to white audiences, as did the endeavours of various English universities through exhibitions or collections such as those held at the Gertrude Posell Gallery at the University of the Witwatersrand, the African art collection at the De Beers Centenary Gallery at the University of Fort Hare, and the Institute of African Studies at the University of Cape Town. The term “transitional art” emerged to describe the wide range of contemporary art produced by black artists during this period. Artists such as Tito Zingu, Helen Sibidi, Jackson Hlungwane, Noria Mabasa, Bonie Ntshalintshali,

Willie Bester, Tommy Motswai, and Masaego Segogela became celebrated participants in an active era of political resistance and art. White artists embraced imagery from the black culture to enrich and subvert their own past art-making practices. The works of Andries Botha appropriated the African's recycling of urban and natural materials and weaving techniques in works such as *Familiar memories* (1984)²³, *Drommedaris Donder!...en ander dom dinge* (1987-8)²⁴ and *Baptism for the fallen...and those taken darkly* (1990).²⁵ White artists such as William Kentridge in *Head*²⁶, and Keith Dietrich in *Themba Thinsila and the Tigermat*²⁷, explored the black body and culture in their works whereas black artists explored traditional Western art media such as the coloured felt tip drawings by Tito Zungu (Younge 1988:45)²⁸ and Derrick Nxumalo (Younge 1988:52)²⁹ and painting in pastels and oils in works by David Koloane (Younge 1988:23)³⁰, Mandla Emmanuel Sibanda (Williamson 1989:120-1)³¹ and Sfiso Ka Mkame (Williamson 1989:108-109).³²

These contemporary works and other more traditional African sculptures informed my art-making. A sculpture of the African water spirit, Mami Wata³³, that I had seen many years before in the Fort Hare collection, inspired my version of the black Madonna, *Earthy heroes: the water bearer* (1990-91, fig 8). The snake wrapped around the female figure, is according to Wittmer and Arnett associated with the ancient and universal symbol of water and fertility (1978:62) which seemed to conjure up associations with the Madonna in Western art whose depictions with a snake beneath her foot represent Christianity's victory over sin and Satan. The snake in Christian mythology lost the ancient attribute of wisdom and power as embodied by the Minoan goddess of Crete, and instead took on the meaning of wickedness and sexuality (Warner 1985:268). The symbolic complexity of the snake in Western myth, juxtaposed with the African symbol of water and fertility, was explored for its possible meanings to express race, religion, gender and sexuality.

Living in an information-based society, as an artist I was exposed to images from local and international artists, as well as to mass media sources. The juxtapositioning of Western and African cultures in South Africa, and the eclectic mixture of traditional and

twentieth- century visual reproduction modes all influenced and informed my own art production. Symbolic reproduction in South Africa reflected the multi-ethnic composition of society, the meeting of two worlds, Western and African, or in terms of ideology, the coincidence of Afrikaner and black nationalisms.

My interest in visual symbolic reproduction in the fine arts encompassed fine arts and mass media sources. I was primarily decoding symbolic information from mass media sources, which also included a wide range of fine art reproductions. I identified with the works of fine artists that deal with the interface between fine art and the mass media. On the surface, these artists' work bears little resemblance to my own, although I used similar Postmodern conceptual devices in my works as theirs. Upon closer inspection, my relief cut-outs present the viewer with a parodic text, made up of multiple texts, that draws the unsuspecting viewer into a labyrinth constructed of different layers of symbolic meaning. The works of Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman, Mimmo Rotella and Richard Prince interest me as they used mass media imagery and technology, the very tools of contemporary symbolic reproduction, to both de-and reconstruct the symbolic function in society today. Although their works are executed in different high technology media, they all share the use of the camera lens, either in the form of still photography, video or film. These artists are attuned to the mass media as a symbolic reproducer, and I found interesting parallels between their works and my own that informed my working processes.

Another aspect of symbolic reproduction that I observed within the fine art sphere was the fluidity of the symbolic, and how symbols are reproduced and adapted across different cultures and epochs. It was especially pertinent in the divided society of South Africa during the late eighties, to understand how stereotypes and other forms of symbolic reproduction maintained the distances or proximities, the tensions or trust, among peoples. Equally important was the need to understand the Afrikaner's insistence upon apartheid as their only mode of survival, and how they used symbolic reproduction as a means to instill fear and distrust to maintain

their ideologies.

Technology and Postmodernism in twentieth-century symbolic reproduction have eroded past barriers between photography and art, art and mass media reproduction, as well as fiction and fact. By scrutinising images in the mass media and fine arts, I recognised the omnipresence of the symbolic narrative. The symbolic residue is always present in the reader or viewer, ready to be tapped into, and has to be merely alluded to in however a fragmented way, as is characteristic of the disjointed Postmodernist narrative, for the reader or viewer to continue or complete. Different technologies of the mass media, however, affect the reading of the information reproduced.

Traditionally, the distinction between fact and fiction in writing, television and film, fine art and photography put the reality or truthfulness of non-fiction categories above those of fiction. Richard Kearney, in discussing the parodic imagination cites the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who holds forth that writing in the wider sense of cultural reproduction is both true and false, and neither true nor false, as it is a textual play of meaning without any reference to some original truth. He continues that it is the countless reproduction and repetition that create the illusion of an original presence. This imagined *mimesis*, without a primordial example, results in a “...mirror of a mirror...a reference without a referent...” (Kearney 1988: 281-288).

However, the idea of truthfulness in symbolic reproduction, nebulous as it is, is dependent upon what society sees. Fiske writes that in a Postmodern world the distinction between reality and the mediated representation of it collapses. The notion that reality is more truthful or real than the mediation no longer applies. Fiske continues:

A media event, then, is not a mere representation of what happened, but it has its own reality, which gathers up into itself the reality of the event that may or may not have preceded it (1994:2).

Society will believe what it is shown, and the realism, or analogous characteristic of the camera, will contribute to that belief, especially if the information is couched in a factual format such as news reportage or documentary. The philosopher Roland Barthes discusses the photograph first as a denoted message, an *analogon*, or literal reality that only differs from the real in scale, but which does not transform the information it imparts. However, photographs are connoted information in that they are formally manipulated (1979:17). The photographic image, despite what we know, is persistently mythical in that it entices the viewer to both accept and question its truthfulness.

Artists have acknowledged this paradox in photography, and the artworks of Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger appropriate this knowledge, and even take it a step further by including written texts into their images. These artists, in their deconstruction of the ideology of the stereotype, introduce the stereotype itself as the paradox that goes against the doxa. Barthes writes that:

Setting the stereotype at a distance is not a political task, for political language is itself made up of stereotypes, but a critical task, one, that is, which aims to call language into crisis. Such an activity allows one first and foremost to isolate the speck of ideology contained in every political discourse and to attack it like an acid capable of dissolving the greasiness of “natural” language (that is to say of language which feigns ignorance of the fact of its nature as language) (1979:199).

Before the introduction of film and video, the image used to illustrate the text, but now, especially in photo-journalism, film and video, the text amplifies the image. Forster, in describing the media-based work of Holzer and Kruger points out that it “displaces language”, and in doing so may “question stereotypes in work that, though it does not conform to political art conventions, is acutely critical, i.e.,

political” (1985a:187-88).

Holzer and Kruger have distilled their visual reproduction to the point where art becomes a social sign interacting with other signs (Forster 1985a:180). Cindy Sherman, however, has eroded the politics of photographic reproduction by breaking down the barriers between painting and photography. Her mimetic use of the camera to usurp painterly conventions such as the selection of imagery, painstaking compositions and use of colour has inverted the old argument of whether photography is an art form, to the ironic title of Woodward’s article, cited by Lovejoy, on Sherman in the New York Times (October 1988) “It’s Art, But Is It Photography?” (1989:101 & 104).

In this analysis of existing visual cultural reproductions in order to unravel Afrikaner mythologising, I mentioned that culture is the social heritage of a community. Like the German intellectuals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries³⁴, the Afrikaner saw culture as a cerebral pursuit and used it in order to gain and retain political power as well as to create the unity lacking amongst his kinspeople. The Afrikaner used past myths and historical events such as the Biblical myth of the Chosen People and its recurring theme in early Afrikaner history to give credibility to present ideologies, not as vehicles for analysis or critique of his circumstances. He applied the dual hermeneutic potential of myth where firstly, the meaning of past symbols are uncovered, and secondly, searched for the mythical resonances of current events to aid him in his quest for continued hegemony.³⁵

In conclusion, the multiple reproduction of visual symbols in South Africa reproduced fragments from different mythologems that included both Western and African paradigms, or combinations of both. From these paradigms I selected and juxtaposed certain symbols with which to unravel the power axes of Afrikaner mythologising. In the final chapter I will discuss the visual and conceptual

mechanisms that I put to use in creating a personal visual myth that unmasked the power relation behind Afrikaner heroes and myths.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1. Michel Foucault, the French philosopher, distinguishes three types of cultural order, namely the empirical, the philosophical/scientific, and a nebulous area in between the first two that deals with order directly without the interface of the others:

The fundamental codes of a culture - those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practises - establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home. At the other extremity of thought, there are the scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations which explain why order exists in general, what universal law it obeys, what principle can account for it, and why this particular order has been established and not some other. But between these two regions, so distant from one another, lies a domain which, even though its role is mainly an intermediary one, is nonetheless fundamental: it is more confused, more obscure, and probably less easy to analyse. It is here that a culture, imperceptibly deviating from the empirical orders prescribed for it by its primary codes, instituting an initial separation from them, causes them to lose their original transparency, relinquishes its immediate and invisible powers, frees itself sufficiently to discover that these orders are perhaps not the only ones or the best ones; this culture then finds itself faced with the stark fact that there exists, below the level of its spontaneous orders, things that are in themselves capable of being ordered, that belong to a certain unspoken order; the fact, in short, that order *exists* (1994:xx).

2. The relations of domination, also known as power relations, are not single power axes, but form part of a complicated interconnected web of power relations. Fiske writes that the “multiaxiality” of power relations in culture “transforms any stability of categories into the fluidities of power”, and that in every-day life, one power axis cannot be isolated or held solely responsible, but must be read in relation to others (1994:65). The decoding of Afrikaner culture, therefore, like any other culture, requires the deconstruction of the multiple power axes contained within it, and activated by it, as well as the particular relations amongst these axes in their respective circumstances. This process of decoding though, according to Foucault, is not always so easy to accomplish when one enters the opacity of what he refers to as the third domain of cultural order (1994:xx).

3. John Wilson, in a chapter on the function of the Egyptian state in *Before Philosophy*, explains the god-king’s dual role as deity and perpetuator of divinity. He wrote:

The king of Egypt was himself one of the gods and was the land’s representative among the gods. Furthermore, he was the one official intermediary between the people and the gods, the one recognized priest of all the gods. Endowed with divinity; the pharaoh had the protean character of divinity; he could merge with his fellow-gods and could become any one of them. In part this was symbolic, the acting of a part in religious drama or the simile of praise. But the Egyptian did not distinguish between symbolism and participation; if he said that the king was Horus, he did not mean that the king was playing the part of Horus, he meant

that the king *was* Horus, that the god was effectively present in the king's body during the particular activity in question (1971:73-74).

4. Christ was both one with God as contained in the concept of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and spread the word of God during His lifetime with the help of His disciples. Christianity further perpetuated itself in written form through the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testament.
5. Another secular phenomenon to have reached equal ritualistic proportions in contemporary society is the consumer and the shopping mall. Advertising is the driving force behind this ritual. The boundless potential of the mass media to reach large audiences and motivate people to consume goods is constantly at work. John Berger, the art critic, maintains that "publicity is not merely an assembly of competing messages: it is a language in itself which is always being used to make the same general proposal" (1972:131). This proposal entails that consumers, by buying something, transform themselves into richer, somehow more enviable individuals, and envy, in turn, creates power for the envied. Publicity exploits the viewers' identification with the "exceptional powers" of the hero in advertisements to motivate sales. The advertising and entertainment industries use mythologising as a form of cultural reproduction to recycle and re-invent existing stereotypes that provide role models for action in every-day life.
6. News agencies such as Reuters, Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI) and Agence France-Presse (AFP) have, since World War II, provided news items to newspapers, radio and television broadcasters (Thompson 1990:181). These international news cartels, process information and engage in "gatekeeping" activities which effectively transfer layers of stereotypes alongside the information relayed to local news bureaux. These stereotypes denote certain power relations, and in assessing the information or "truth" of the cultural reproduction taking place, in as much as there is such a "truth", one is also assessing the power relations encapsulated by the stereotypes.
7. The texts and images of different articles, reports and advertisements in the mass media that I consulted, all contributed, either on their own, together, or in juxtaposition to one another, some truth about Afrikaner and South African society. For many years, especially the Afrikaans press and advertisers (important opinion-shapers and reproducers of attitudes and beliefs) largely ignored the black body and sex, or separated and targeted them along existing political divisions within society. Certain products, specifically earmarked for black consumers, were depicted in advertisements with black users, but most other brands, used by all population groups, were portrayed with white consumers. When advertisers changed their perceptions and views in the eighties with an eye towards a future black middle class market, they started to produce advertisements which put forward various imaginary scenarios that portrayed a non-racist society. Black people were depicted as sophisticated, meaning "westernised and white" living in a society where apartheid and inequalities did not exist. This denial of reality was deliberate as it was designed to challenge the *status quo* and introduce a new social order. In fact, white stereotypes were grafted onto black bodies to limit

their perceived difference and to reduce the white fear of the black majority. Parallel to this development, advertisers were also quick to exploit and romanticise the African-ness and urban quality of black life in the townships and recreated it in their advertising campaigns.

8. McQuail explains as follows:

New possibilities of exploitation have been held to result from the decay of traditional forms of authority and the availability of large numbers of people lacking strong ties and loyalties (1969:21).

9. McQuail elaborates upon the different power relations which exert influence upon individuals:

To consider the mechanisms of control separately from the dynamics of mass communication activity is somewhat arbitrary, since controls exert pressures as well as constrain, but it serves the purpose of exposition to do so. As we have seen, both mass society theory and research on media effects have ignored or underestimated the degree to which control is exercised on mass communications, guiding what they do and what people do with them. We can abstract from the process of communication several points at which controls are operative: there are formal rules which govern the licensing and operation of communication agencies; the editing and selection of content is guided also by the rules of the organization, the personal values of the communicators, the ethics and codes of practise of the communicators; there are economic controls where market conditions apply; finally the audience exercises control by its selections, and these in turn are affected by values, norms and group influences. The controlling power of the audience derives from the need of the communicator to enter into a relationship with the audience, and the freedom of the audience member to select or reject communications. Between them, these controls structure the communications process and place limits on the effect which communications can achieve (1969:80).

10. A True Afrikaner was called a *ware Afrikaner* in Afrikaans and this idea was a frequent debating issue amongst Afrikaner intellectuals.

11. E.B. Sachs, cited by Giliomee, writes that after the Anglo-Boer War, and the subsequent unification of South Africa under British rule, the Afrikaner found themselves in the position of a “conquered nation, ... an oppressed people” (1979:109). Afrikaner leaders and intellectuals rallied around and consciously promoted group awareness. The historian Hermann Giliomee describes this trauma:

The middle class Afrikaners, particularly educators and clergy, who were most attracted to a strategy of ethnic mobilization [sic] to overcome the deep feelings of insecurity and social inferiority that plagued Afrikaners. It was they who disseminated the ethnic gospel that self-realisation and human worth could only come through group identification and assertion (1979:111).

12. The Broederbond, a secret society of white Afrikaner males over the age of twenty-five, was founded by fourteen members that grew to 6 768 by 1963. Bloomberg writes:

Historically, the AB has had three objects: to unite all Afrikaners who have the welfare of their people at heart; to foster national awareness; to implant a love of language, religion, tradition and fatherland; and to promote all of Afrikanerdom's interests (1990:32).

13. Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, the ex-politician and political philosopher, on the other hand, argues that Afrikaner unity, or grouping, occurred in two phases as a result first of the development of Afrikaner bureaucracies between 1910 and 1948, and secondly, because of the political control the Afrikaner gained since 1948 when the Nationalist Party came into power (1975:4). According to Slabbert the "interlocking" of organisations and government after 1948 was so successful in mobilising Afrikanerdom towards progress, that it also overcame the leadership struggles between Botha, Smuts, Herzog and Malan, that so characterised the first half of the century (Van Zyl Slabbert 1975:9). Slabbert, unlike Bloomberg, does not attribute the centre of Afrikaner power-broking exclusively to the Broederbond, but also mentions the fact that an Afrikaner elite, or establishment, by being members of different organisations and institutions, could spread their influence effectively throughout all walks of society.
14. To Bloomberg, this grand scheme was underpinned by the amalgamation of different philosophical structures or power relations:

This doctrine [the Afrikaner Broederbond's] blends the theology of orthodox, classical seventeenth-century Calvinism with the Afrikaner's racial and Nationalist consciousness, and has attempted to reconcile the Bible with apartheid. Largely as a result of the Broederbond's tireless propaganda, Christian Nationalist ideas permeate Nationalist thinking and constitute the ideological basis of the Republican state and the theology of the Dutch Reformed Churches (1990:xxii).
15. By the time that I went to school in 1961, I could, as Van Zyl Slabbert writes about the Afrikaner community, "...move from the cradle to the grave within the framework of Afrikaner organizations: Afrikaans nursery, primary and high schools; in the place of Boy Scouts, the Voortrekkers; the equivalent of the Chamber of Commerce, the Afrikaanse Sakekamer; ..." (1975:9). I was of a generation of the Afrikaner who benefitted from earlier generations' striving to give their children an education and cultural life in Afrikaans.
16. Cultural activities included the publication of books, magazines, and newspapers, and regional performing arts councils produced plays in Afrikaans from both original texts and translations from English German, Italian and other world languages (see Uys Krige's translations of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night* mentioned in Kannemeyer (1988:158)). In radio broadcasting there were services for each sector of society, including the Afrikaans program.

17. Except a few films such as *Die Kandidaat* (1968) and *Jannie Totsiens* (1970) by Jans Rautenbach and *Wild Season* (1968) by Emil Noval, Afrikaans films seldom rose above the level of 'soapies' (Botha & Van Aswegen 1992:46). Barry Ronge, in an article titled *Jans Rautenbach in Retrospect*, wrote that "*Jannie Totsiens* has much in common with some of the most impressive work of the 'sestigers'" (1970:16).
18. The reasons for this lapse in vision and individuality can be subscribed to many factors, the most obvious being ideological censorship, ill-conceived funding systems and the small Afrikaans market in relation to the cost of film-making.
19. According to the historiographer Albert Grundlingh Prof H.B. Thom was a skillful historian who synthesised "volksgeskiedenis" and "scientific history" into a seamless whole and thereby contributed to the establishment of a nationalist tradition of Afrikaner history writing (1990:1-3).
20. Afrikaner history, written for and taught at schools, was Christian-nationalist inspired and presented past events from an exclusively Afrikaner perspective. This one-sided presentation is ironic on two accounts: first, as the early Afrikaans histories written by, for example, Gustav Preller (Kannemeyer 1988:70) were seen as "corrective" in relation to British versions that glorified the Empire's role; and secondly, because a recent trend re-evaluates Afrikaner historiographies itself and discounts the very approaches taken by earlier Afrikaner historians such as G.Preller, H.B. Thom and F.A. van Jaarsveld.
21. Warner cites Romanos Melodod, writer of the Akithistos hymn.
22. The past negation of the black body and culture in South Africa, has in recent years been addressed by academia in a re-writing of history towards a more representational account of the country's history. Art curators and historians have dealt with this issue through the adjustment of acquisitions policies reflected in exhibition catalogues such as the Johannesburg Art Gallery's *The neglected tradition* (1988) and conferences such as the South African Association of Art Historians' 1987 meeting entitled *Re-writing the art and architectural history of Southern Africa*.
23. Andries Botha, *Familiar memories*, 1984. Wood, rope, ht 272cm. Photograph by the artist. (Williamson 1989:144).
24. Andries Botha, *Drommedaris donder!...en ander dom dinge*, 1987-8. Wood, rubber tyre, aluminium, wire, ht 314 cm. Photograph by Michael Hill. (Williamson 1989:144).

25. Andries Botha, *Baptism for the fallen...and those taken darkly*, 1990. Metal, thatching grass, soda can tops, 94 x 183 cm. Photograph by S.A.A.A.. (*Affinities. Contemporary South African Art. Venice Biennale 1993*. 1993:25).
26. William Kentridge, *Head*, 1991. Gouache, charcoal on paper, 148 x 119 cm. Photograph by S.A.A.A.. (*Affinities. Contemporary South African Art. Venice Biennale 1993*. 1993:37).
27. Keith Dietrich, *Themba Thinsila and the Tigermat*, 1987. Chalk pastel on paper, 200 x 110 cm. Photograph by S.A.A.A.. (*Affinities. Contemporary South African Art. Venice Biennale 1993*. 1993:29).
28. Tito Zungu, *1972*, 1972. Ballpoint pen on paper. Photograph by Gavin Younge. (Younge 1988:45).
29. Derrick Nxumalo, *Vaal Reefs Exp & Mining Company Limited*, 1987. Felt-tipped pen ink on paper. Photograph by Gavin Younge. (Younge 1988:52).
30. David Koloane, *Workers*, 1987. Oil on canvas. Photograph by Gavin Younge. (Younge 1988:23).
31. Mandla Emmanuel Sibanda, *Life in flames*, 1986. Pastel on paper, 58 x 76 cm. Photograph by Athol Franz. (Williamson 1989:120).
32. Sfiso Ka Mkame, *Homage to the mothers*, 1988. Oil pastel on paper, 64 x 91 cm. Photograph by David Hewitt. (Williamson 1989:108).
33. The Mami Wata, according to art historians Marcilene Wittner and William Arnett, is a twentieth-century innovation in African myth that was introduced by a British officer's request to the Anang Ibibio carver Akpan Chukwu, for a sculptural interpretation of a German print of a snake-charmer (1978:62). Art historian Margaret Drewall includes a photograph, taken in 1887 in Hamburg, in her article on the Yoruba of Maladamatjaute, a snake charmer, who posed as Mami Wata for a chromolithograph printed in Bombay, India (1990:45). What is of interest is that through the transcultural reproduction of this snake charmer Maladamatjuate, the same symbol is reproduced through both Western and African cultures, and in the process, acquires more layers of meaning. Drewall writes that as a spirit, the Mami Wata not only reproduces the forces of history and tradition in the shape of ancestors, heroes and heroines, but also includes the forces of Ajogun, the Iroju and "forces of capitalism and neocolonialism" (1990:44). My own appropriation and development of this image, again, infused it with more layers of symbolism.

34. John Thompson writes that Kant distinguished between two notions of culture, namely “Kultur” and “Zivilization”: “We become cultivated through art and science, we become civilized [by acquiring] a variety of social graces and refinements” (1990:125).
35. Hegemony is the leadership acquired through forceful dominance (*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*. 1972. Sv “hegemony”) of one power or state within a league, a confederation, or as in the Southern African context a zone of power (*Collins Paperback English Dictionary*. 1986. Sv “hegemony”).

CHAPTER FOUR

Unmasking Afrikaner mythologising as a source for personal art-making

In the previous chapter I looked at the contemporary cultural reproduction of Western, and in particular Afrikaner, heroes and myths. This chapter relates how I interpreted these pictorial and conceptual notions concerned with Afrikaner mythologising into a series of artworks. My approach to Afrikaner mythologising was to gain an understanding of Afrikaner heroes and myths through a dual visual and theoretical process whereby I simultaneously deconstructed and reconstructed existing mass mediated cultural signs in order to create new personal works of art. The art theorist Linda Hutcheon, in an afterward to Cheetham's *Remembering Postmodernism*, writes about the interpretation of culture as an attempt to "understand present culture [including myth] as the product of previous codings and representations". She continues that in assessing history, one is also assessing historiography, and the representation of history (1991:129). The visual and textual references of contemporary Afrikaner mythologising that I collated from the media soon directed me to what Hutcheon refers to above as "previous codings and representations" (Cheetham 1991:129), as I found that only by understanding the reproduction of past events in their context, could I decode the tensions in present day Afrikaner mythologising. In effect this means that I employed a two-way research methodology that approached the hero and myth from both contemporary and historical points of view. These images and texts served as a memory bank from which I developed my works of art.

Hutcheon, in discussing the nature of postmodern memory, writes that the study of representation

...becomes not the study of mimetic mirroring or subjective projecting, but an exploration of the way in which images structure how we

see ourselves and how we construct our notions of the self in the present and in the past (Cheetham 1991:114).

This does not mean that what is reproduced is always truthful, or the only truth. In the South African context during the Afrikaner Nationalist Party's rule, what was reproduced as "true" was mainly Afrikaner ideology, as the Afrikaner was the dominant group, and therefore reproduced their own particular interpretation of the truth.

Cultural reproduction, whether collective or personal, is a selective form of memory, and memory is equally about remembering and forgetting. Therefore, the reproduction of myth and history not only represents personal and collective memories, but also individual or group amnesia; what is consciously or unconsciously omitted. My references to symbolic themes were selected from mass media sources and personal documentation. The images that I documented were compared to equivalent mass media reproductions with the same symbolic theme.¹ By ensuring that all the themes I selected existed within the collective consciousness I, in turn, consciously reproduced the contemporary memory and amnesia of Afrikaner mythologising. The use and deployment of these chosen images in my practical work were personal, but their common reproduction in the local media was confirmed as they were collated from existing mass media material.

Culture is not read by its reproduction modes only, but equally by what is reproduced. Hutcheon emphasised the "how" as opposed to the "what" in symbolic reproduction, whereas I was equally concerned with both aspects, as I was interested in identifying recurring symbols in the form of archetypes, and establishing whether their reproduction conformed to any stereotype that could throw more light upon Afrikaner mythologising itself .

Bearing in mind the notion that the past throws light upon the present, I researched the origins and nature of Afrikaner myths with their close links to Western mythological structures, and Afrikaner history, which was also part of the greater history of European colonialism. The art historian Andreas Huyssen, in an essay on Kiefer and this artist's preoccupation with recent German history and nationalism, puts forward the argument that "myth can never escape history", and that "history in turn has to rely on mythic images" (1989:27). Similarly, Afrikaner mythology, like any other form of mythologising including the visual, was and remains linked to its own history. The relationship between myth and history, however, is also affected by their modes of reproduction, whether linguistic or visual. This meant that in my research, I had to take into account the reproduction of myth and history, and the politics of the reproduction of both.

In the first two chapters, I dealt with the issues of history and myth. Myth, a symbolic rendering, and history, an ironic interpretation of events, both throw light upon past power structures in Western society. In contemporary Western society the most commonplace reproduction of information takes place in the mass media. This information is produced and distributed by various media agencies, some under the control of local governments, and others by large international corporations that devise products for mass audiences. In Chapter Three, I discussed the contemporary visual reproduction of symbolic information in Western society, as well as in Afrikanerdom, and highlighted some aspects of the discourse between the fine arts and mass media in the reproduction of symbolic power relations. In this chapter I will explain how I integrated diverse mythical and historical perspectives with contemporary visual mythologising and through the devices of allegory and collage transformed them into a personal visual myth that aimed at unmasking Afrikaner myths and heroes.

My practical work presented different layers of symbolic reproduction which functioned to unmask the underlying power structures

that influenced past Afrikaner mythologising. To represent the simultaneous operation of the different power relations at play in Afrikanerdom, and how they were reproduced, I had to find a visual narrative structure that could relate a number of different symbolic meanings concurrently, and simultaneously put forward my perceptions of the contradictions and tensions within Afrikaner mythologising. I found a solution by gradually developing and integrating two devices as the work progressed, namely allegory and collage.

This discussion of allegory and collage as structures capable of simultaneously reconstructing and deconstructing symbolic meaning whilst creating a new visual symbolic reality, cannot be treated separately, as their functions are so closely aligned and my use thereof so integrated. Art theorist Craig Owens, in a discussion relating to allegory and Modernism, asks rhetorically about this similarity: “and does not collage, or the manipulation and consequent transformation of highly significant fragments, also exploit the atomizing, disjunctive principle which lies at the heart of allegory?” (1987:212). I will, therefore, discuss my exploration of the historical, the mythical and mass mediated visual fragments that reflect Afrikaner mythologising by firstly concentrating on allegory and collage as a means to explore symbolic content, and secondly by looking at the formal possibilities they present in search of meaning.

ALLEGORY AND COLLAGE AS DEVICES FOR CREATING PERSONAL SYMBOLIC PARADIGMS

During this era of conflict and tension in South Africa, embarking upon the creation of a series of Afrikaner heroes was fraught with all kinds of ironies. The Afrikaner nation was held by many outgroups, both nationally and internationally, as a pariah because of its apartheid policies. As a result, international sanctions and boycotts were in place against South Africa at this time. The internal turmoil and political activity induced by opposition groups, the largest being the African National Congress, as well as the pressures from outside and within South Africa put Afrikaner unity and leadership under stress. The visual reproduction of Afrikaner heroes in the

media was diluted or cast in a negative light, as images, quotes and footage of opposition leaders and international spokesmen against apartheid were increasingly given more coverage. Local artists and cartoonists, opposed to the Nationalist party's regime, produced satirical imagery that portrayed their misuse of political and military power. For example, the mural paintings of Paul Grendon, *Ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika* (1985)², embraced Afrikaner iconography only to expose the exploitation of power in the name of *volk en vaderland*.³ Closer in spirit to my own work, Phutuma Seoka's *Angry Boer* (1986)⁴, and Johannes Maswanganyi's *D.F. Malan* (1988)⁵ are satirical portraits of Afrikaners based upon outgroup stereotypes (Williamson 1989:46 & 49). These anti-heroic figurative representations employ formal and metaphoric conventions in a playful, direct, and forceful manner that reflects the brutality of Afrikanerdom's recent past rule. Although I find these works compelling, I did not want to pursue a similar approach for a number of reasons. Firstly, I realised that a too overt politically engaged fine arts discourse was alienating to many viewers. As a result such works carried the risk of being dismissed too readily by these same viewers. Secondly, I was concerned that this resistance art would suffer the same fate as black protest theatre in South Africa, where largely supportive audiences became tired of the way that metaphors were monotonously repeated, even though they conveyed important social messages. I also did not want my works to be derivative, or fall into a visual cliché by repeating existing styles, as the viewer can then, if not committed to this discourse, all too easily disengage from the artwork. For these reasons, I consciously pursued other visual avenues of unmasking Afrikaner mythologising.

My approach to unravelling Afrikaner mythologising in order to expose underlying ideologies was intentionally mythical in construction. I adopted myth as a metaphoric device to deconstruct the mythical. Hal Forster, an art theorist, in discussing the distance created between the sign and meaning in Postmodern art, writes that Postmodern art "must do more than merely demystify, for demystification is now mythological too" (1984:196). In order to navigate the mysticism of myth, I employed various metaphorical paradigms in search of symbolic "truths" in my own artworks.

I considered different metaphoric devices such as irony, paradox and allegory. Of these, allegory is probably the widest typology, and one usually associated with narrative. Allegory was particularly suited to my research into Afrikaner mythologising, as its origins, apart from philosophy and theology, are religious, and so much of the Afrikaner psyche and mythology are based upon Old Testament allegories.⁶

My initial stages of collecting visual references from the mass media were undocumented processes and were based upon the principles of collage, that is, randomness, chance and the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated elements. I collected diverse images from different sources for approximately eighteen months, until I found sufficient archetypal and stereotypical themes that were regularly repeated. Once these patterns emerged, I could start unravelling the underlying power structures that affected them. After a year's collection of images, seasonal themes such as the yearly grape harvest, the celebration of the bounty of the sea, Christmas, and the opening of Parliament were repeated in the media. These pictures reproduce cyclical themes, some celebrated from primeval times that come down to us through the festivals of paganism and Christianity to their present form as they appear in the media. The numerous drawings that I made, and the diversity of images that are included in them, reflect the reproduction of memories that I judged the most interesting in retelling Afrikaner myths, even though it does not record the whole spectrum of themes that I collected. This process of textual and visual information retrieval was by design analogous to contemporary symbolic reproduction, and the way we use and discard certain images and facts from the information that we are exposed to every day.

The images and bits of written excerpts that I gathered could not, however, be turned into allegorical structures without an insight into the myths and history from which they originated. This meant that every image was not only scrutinised for its own intrinsic symbolic meaning, but also for its possible relation to other previous symbols, codings and meanings. I researched the images' relation to

previous myths and historical accounts, and the politics of the reproduction thereof in the media. In other words, I analysed these images' power to sustain or erode present power relations in South Africa.

My objective to unmask Afrikaner mythologising was approached through numerous means; the primary mechanism being the construction of a critical discourse by superimposing different allegorical structures where each text was read and deconstructed through another. I introduced various layers of symbolic meaning by either alluding to parts of a symbolic paradigm, or by juxtaposing two completely different contexts with sufficient visual clues to lead the viewer to make a connection between them. According to Owens, classical allegorical devices are used to establish a “fragmentary, intermittent or chaotic” relation between different texts. Owens explains that allegorists add meaning by replacing it with more meaning (1987:204-5). True to the allegorical form, I presented the viewer with fragments of symbolic meaning from different Afrikaner discourses including history, historiography, myths, the mass media and Christianity. These fragments, alluding to various symbolic paradigms, introduced different texts into the visual discourse which were juxtaposed with one another.

Through a process of juxta-positioning the relationships between different visual fragments were explored in a series of collages made from cut-out media images, which were then extended further in a series of mixed media drawings. Through this collagic process I could imitate the mass media's visual manipulation of information that either amplifies or diminishes the symbolic significance of a specific image. My research covered a wide spectrum of power relations, but the most powerful axes supporting the Afrikaner's ideologies proved to be gender, class, race, and a power pact between state and religion. As the body of work progressed and these aspects became clearer through further research, certain visual patterns emerged that supported the dominant power relations and categories of power.

My series of Afrikaner heroes was coloured by personal experiences and perceptions of Afrikanerdom which, for obvious reasons, contained both the amnesia and memories of certain historical events. As Cheetham states, “memory and its work are never neutral” (1991:xii). In my practical work I explored the notion of the reproduction of memory and amnesia by using the painting support, whether it was wood or paper, as a palimpsest, and added to, or subtracted from the visual memories that I reproduced. Along with the reproduction of collective and personal memories was also their accompanying amnesia, that is, what was not reproduced. In the relief cut-out *Earthly heroes: The politician* (1987, fig 2), the reproduction of amnesia in history, in this instance the silences regarding Afrikaner women in Afrikaner historiography, as well as their absence in recent politics, is alluded to by positioning two plaques of Voortrekker women on either side of an Afrikaner political figure. These women are recognisable by the *voortrekkerkappies*⁷ on their heads and they warn the viewer to silence with fingers sealing their lips. However, in effect, they themselves are muted by this gesture which raises the dilemma of whether the “victim” is in collusion with the oppressor. The collusion theory was often employed in the South African context by individuals who held racist views to reduce their own feelings of responsibility as oppressors of an “inferior” people who could not empower themselves and rise above their situation in life.

In assessing the mediated reproduction of these systematically related power relations, I explored different visual symbolic paradigms which reflect these relations in my drawings and relief cut-outs. In this part of the discussion, I will deal with some of the symbolic themes and how I, through the devices of allegory and collage, constructed and deconstructed these themes to unravel the underlying power relations at work. Power relations are never static, and do not work in isolation, but operate within zones of power with certain power axes dominating, dependant upon circumstances. The drawings and cut-outs that I made reveal my own personal perceptions of the mass mediated axial mixes in place at the time of this research.⁸ The symbolic themes that I selected for the visual exploration of the power relations behind Afrikaner mythologising, reflected more than the single category it was known to denote, and also carried

information about other categories. For example, the Marian cult, one of the few female cults handed down through history, has been formed by, whilst itself exerting influence over, different categories of power such as gender, sex, and religion. Therefore, in probing the multiplicity of axial mixes influencing Afrikaner myth, I selected a configuration of symbols, that through its main and lesser attributes, could reflect the complexity of the zones of power in question.

Afrikaner mythologising, steeped in biblical traditions explaining cosmogonic, soteriological and messianic questions, used biblical allegories to lend legitimacy to its political ideologies.⁹ The biblist nature of Afrikaner mythologising, the Afrikaner seeing themselves as a Chosen People, and the central placement of religion as a rationale for ordering society, directed my research towards religious imagery and symbolism. However, the Afrikaner is Protestant, and representational symbolic reproduction is not part of their religious tradition. It therefore follows that there were limited visual references of the Afrikaner's religious themes to explore. In search of reference material, I turned to pre-sixteenth century Christian traditions of symbolic reproduction for visual examples of power relations that continued to play a role in Protestantism after the Reformation and investigated the pictorial representation of Christian symbolism related to Afrikaner mythologising in art history.

By appropriating existing religious themes, the Afrikaner reinforced their own current symbolic reproduction. In my practical work, I, in turn, devised a visual narrative by appropriating the Afrikaner's usurpation of biblical allegory and the accompanying power relations it denotes. Owens is of the opinion that allegorists do not invent imagery, but confiscate it. In a discussion of the works of Troy Brauntuch, Sherrie Levine and Robert Longo whose art generates images by reproducing other pre-existing images, Owens points out that they manipulate their images and "empty them of their resonance, their significance, their authoritative claim to meaning" (1987:205). The works of these artists, and others such as Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, Mimmo Paladino and Barbara Kruger, all

use appropriated images to engage in a discourse with culture rather than nature. Although my works are very different in style and medium to these artists, I was interested in their allegorical engagement with culture, and referred to their work in the course of my own exploration of allegorical structures and culture.

The limited nature of what one can call Afrikaner visual symbolic reproduction¹⁰, and my search for imagery that could convey their attitudes, customs and traditions, without relying upon restricted visual stereotypes such as the Great Trek, invariably led me to research other sources such as the mass media, fine arts and religious conventions in the Western traditions. In order to collect these references, I carried out a loose overview of religious imagery from early Christian art to the Baroque period, and was struck by the regular presence of angels and the Madonna in religious painting and sculpture.¹¹ Catholicism represented a female presence and principle in the form of the Marian cult which, in my view, was absent in Protestantism. My perception of the differences between these two Christian dogmas, Catholicism and Protestantism, the first reproducing a memory of a symbolic reality, and the latter an amnesia thereof, prompted me towards the feminine principle of religious symbolic representation, and how the memory, or loss of symbolic representation was to influence future symbolic reproduction.

My main interest in these symbolic structures is how they are essentially human constructions conceived as mediations between heaven and earth; that is, between the known and the unknown, life or death, which is one of the most profound power relations which motivates mankind.¹² Eliade sees angelic mediation in a wider sense than Christianity and writes that it “belong[s] to the enormous variety of spiritual beings who mediate between the transcendental realm of the sacred and the profane world of man” (1987:282). In my practical work I explore the angelic hierarchy as a metaphor for the Christian symmetry of earthly versus heavenly realms, and as it connects to the principles of good versus evil in order to achieve salvation, and thereby to attain eternal life. On a more concrete

level, the literal meaning of angel, namely messenger¹³, is explored as a being that travels between heaven and earth with the hindsight of experience and knowledge of life on earth.

In contrast to Eliade's hierarchical vision of angels, the film maker Wim Wenders created an angelic persona for his film *Wings of desire* (1987) which does not link angels to people and God anymore. Instead of a church, he found a public library for his angel to reside in (Paneth 1988:6). Ira Paneth, in an interview with Wenders, writes that the director chose a library as an angelic home because of its similarity to heaven, and because it represents, amongst other things, the "whole memory and knowledge of mankind". According to Wenders, angels "can witness so much", they read human thoughts, overcome physical barriers and see things from a different perspective to man (1988:6).

Initially, in my relief portraits, I did not employ the "angelic perspective" to indicate the hero's elevated position and wisdom, but directed the hero's gaze level with the world and the viewer. Whereas in the drawings from *Earthly Heroes: The mayor in a tangle with Madonna and a swordfish* (1991, fig 15 onwards), and the last two relief panels, *Launching pad II: the pool* (1991, fig 39) and *Launching pad III: the modern chariot* (1992, fig 40), I introduced a bird's eye view perspective, and other visual devices such as skylscapes, to explore the angels' heavenly vision.

The sky, formerly the realm of Icarus and the angels, now also included the flight paths of earthlings and their accompanying earthly power structures. The power structures generated and exerted by air and space travel, as well as mass media broadcasting transmitted through space, play a significant role in contemporary symbolic reproduction and, therefore, were relevant to my practical research. Otto Piene, a multi-media sky artist, writes in a joint article with Robert Russett about his work that "in the past, celestial space was

the mysterious home of the gods; now it has become the arena for various kinds of human and technological activity” (1986:200). Apart from air and space travel, and the launching of satellites that navigate space for transmission or reconnaissance purposes, the air is also traversed by military aircraft and projectiles.

Life in South Africa during the period of my research also presented a military presence in the sky. Aeroplanes and helicopters, previously seen in a civilian or surveillance role, took on a more sinister character when helicopters were introduced to monitor unrest between political activists and the police or military in the townships. When a state of emergency was not in effect, unrest-related images could be published in the mass media. I recall images of low flying helicopters, hovering above civilians desperate to escape from these intimidating mechanical wasps, that were reminiscent of the disturbing footage of modern helicopter warfare in Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1979). The artist Nancy Spero, cited by art historian Julie Wosk in her article *The Aeroplane in Art*, commented that Spero considered “the aeroplane to be an embodiment of the war: ‘this hovering helicopter was the real symbol of the Vietnam War, the helicopter¹⁴ with its victims being thrown’”(1984:27).¹⁵

In South Africa, during the late eighties and early nineties, the erratic eruption of violence in the country that was reported or that I witnessed from a distance, was often marked by the smoke of gunfire or smoke bombs trailing across the landscape, and helicopters hovering in the sky. The clashes between the government agencies and their political opponents left many people in fear, homeless or dead. This political upheaval that disrupted ordinary civilian life, and caused many deaths, was explored in *Earthly heroes: Madonna the nurturer No 1* (1992, fig 20), *Commuting between heaven and earth: Madonna and the modern chariot, the helicopter* (1992, fig 26), *Commuting between heaven and earth: The modern chariot, the helicopter No 4* (1991, fig 29), and *Above and below: before and after No 4* (1991, fig 34).

The power relations of gender, sex and race in Afrikaner society were functions of inherited traditions and customs from the Afrikaner's European past, particularly from English colonial conventions, and the economic and cultural realities that evolved within the country itself over numerous decades. I explored the role of women in relation to gender and sexual power relations within Afrikaner culture which was dominated by a patriarchy controlling many facets of society, including politics, religion and commerce. The biblical symmetries described by Warner of the two Eves, the first Eve representing the fallen temptress, and the second Eve, personified by Mary, the redeeming virgin, formed the basis of the gender axis in South Africa (1985:225). These principles are common to all Christian societies and influence attitudes towards women. So, too, in South Africa, did St Augustine's ideas of the "sinfulness of sex, the virgin birth and the good of virginity" have influence, not only upon male views of women and what women should be, but also of women's opinions of themselves.

I explored the themes of gender and sex in relation to Afrikaner racism, and the resultant power structures that came into play as a result of these beliefs. According to Fiske, gender affects race and class issues, but do not change them fundamentally in any way. Fiske writes:

Class and racial powers are exerted along the axis of gender, just as gender power flows along theirs. Gender difference is experienced and operationalized differently within different racial and class formations, and the differences are magnified when applied in interracial and interclass relations (1994:66).

In *Earthly heroes: Madonna, domestic princess No 2* (1991, fig 18), the feminine principle of nurturing and caring in relation to race and religion is explored through the juxta-positioning of various symbolic images, each denoting a particular discourse, including that of the mother and child; a Herero woman; a child's string of beads; a washing line; chickens scavenging for food; a rainbow; and a

couple of fishes. In this drawing, textual and visual imagery in the form of a title, the images of motherhood, femininity, and husbandry, as well as the issues of gender and race that accompany them, are explored in a domestic environment. The composition is arrived at through the ordering principles of collage, whereby symbols representing particular discourses are randomly juxtaposed. In later drawings, such as *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the nurturer No 1* (1992, fig 20), and the relief panels, *Earthly heroes: The Madonna and the archangel* (1992, fig 25), and *Launching pad III: The modern chariot* (1992, fig 40), the collagic principle is extended by the use of synecdoche where parts of symbols are used to allude to symbolic paradigms.

Returning to the symbolism in the drawing discussed in the paragraph above, *Earthly heroes: Madonna, domestic princess No 2* (1991, fig 18), I explored the power relations introduced by the elements of science, and the unknown celestial sphere depicted by a string of beads drawn to resemble the planets of our universe. The power axes exerted by religion, alluded to by the depiction of fishes and the rainbow, are also explored. Read from a religious perspective, the domestic or scientific reading of the string of beads is diminished and the resemblance to a rosary gathers greater significance, and that in turn shifts the reading of the washing line supports as crosses. These images were selected on the grounds of their form and content, as well as their potential ambiguity and ability to render more than one meaning. Juxtaposing these images set up multiple interpretative possibilities that drew upon different symbolic paradigms. This multiplicity was intentional, as it resembled the reality of everyday life where events are guided by different sets of power relations and the random acquisition of symbolic information which depends upon what is transmitted through the mass media at a particular time. This approach was also explored in other works, for example, *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 1* (1991, fig 10), *Earthly heroes: The mayor and seal performing in township* (1991, fig 16), and *Commuting between heaven and earth: The modern chariot, the helicopter No 3* (1991, fig 28), where different sets of power relations representing themes such as religion, sex, nature and the military were juxtaposed.

Continuing the theme of the reproduction of the feminine principle in history, and how stereotypes serve to maintain women's status in society, I explored the symmetry of the first and second Eves in a series of drawings before embarking on a relief panel of the same theme. In *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve Nos 1 - 5* (1991-2, figs 10-14), the male role in female symbolic reproduction that presents women in either maternal or sexual terms is not explored through an overt male presence, but rather by their physical absence and the inclusion of objects and creatures that refer to the male reality. In *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve* (1991, fig 10), the male as historically dominant symbolic reproducer is alluded to through the inclusion of certain visual stereotypes such as a woman assuming an alluring stance in anticipation of the male gaze, sun umbrellas ambiguously resembling phallic symbols or breasts, an oscillating Kreepy Krauly¹⁶ valve serving as a platform, and the hindquarters of a stud horse. This imagery, although presented in an obscure way, is not subtle, and reflects the overt sexual representation of women that is commonplace in contemporary mass media advertising. The reference for the blonde woman was taken from a fashion magazine editorial that parodied the joint theme of a Madonna/Marilyn Monroe fusion. What interested me about this particular series of magazine images was the appropriation of existing imagery, derived from the commercial persona of the singer Madonna, whose own parodic re-invention of herself drew upon Marilyn Monroe and the Marian cult of Roman Catholicism. My own appropriation of these images as reference material introduced different historical texts concerning the feminine principle and the reproduction thereof into my practical work that could be developed in an allegorical way.

My parodic application of allegory subverted the existing meaning of the visual symbols that I used. In the relief cut-outs and the drawings, Afrikaner heroes are parodied by portraying them either possessing exaggerated heavenly or civic hierarchical status, see for example the self-portrait in *Heavenly heroes: the martyr* (1987-88, fig 3), or depicting them partaking in absurd, empty rituals such as the mayor in *Earthly heroes: the mayor and seal performing in township* (1991, fig 16). Hutcheon describes the duality of parody

and its potential to illustrate the contradictions in Postmodernism by relating culture to itself and history as follows:

As form of ironic representation, parody is doubly coded in political terms: it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies. This kind of authorized transgression is what makes it a ready vehicle for the political contradictions of postmodernism at large. Parody can be used as a self-reflexive technique that points to art as art, but also to art as inescapably bound to its aesthetic and even social past (1989:101).

The visual portrayal of Afrikaner heroes as omnipotent and authoritative can be employed to either confirm or subvert their hegemony. Through the ironic representation of the Afrikaner hero the contradictions upon which their ideologies and mythologising rested could be exposed.

The pressures exerted by internal and external opposition groups upon the Nationalist Party Government to abolish apartheid in South Africa resulted in intermittent political and military unrest. *The angel's lost trolley* (1988-1991, fig 9) is an exploration of the power relations behind this unrest, whether these power structures are man-made, or caused by the laws of nature, including the habitat and sociological pressures between different groups of people. In searching for symbols that could represent the sporadic eruption of violence across the country, I selected the image of a shopping trolley to deploy the notion of a moveable storm. The shopping trolley, a Western symbol of consumerism to the privileged, yet a vehicle for survival for disadvantaged people, has been taken up as a symbol in advertising and the fine arts by some artists, including Duane Hanson whose *Supermarket Lady/Woman with a Shopping Cart* (1970)¹⁷ shows a shopper pushing a trolley filled to the brim with groceries. In Cape Town, local *bergies*¹⁸ “appropriate” chain-store trolleys for use as mini mobile homes, or as a means of transport to collect the material that they recycle to eke out a living. In the South African context the divide between privilege and poverty is well served by this image, a product of capitalism built upon the inequality that was the source of the political upheaval that continuously marked the landscape.

Through my use of allegory and collage as devices for the creation of personal visual symbols, I tried to show how technological innovation in this century has irrevocably changed the reproduction of power structures in society at large, and in South Africa: the mass media, transmitting images and narratives globally through satellites in space; supersonic travel, transporting heroes across cultural and physical boundaries; and military powers, using long range projectiles rather than rifle to rifle combat, and thereby making the process of killing more remote. These technological advances have changed how people interact with one another. In particular, the advances in the mass media have affected the way in which symbolic communication occurs. In the drawings titled *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the nurturer No 1* (1992, fig 20), *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the archangel No 1* (1992, fig 21), and *Commuting between heaven and earth: Madonna and the modern chariot, the helicopter* (1992, fig 26), *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter and angels* (1991-2, fig 30), and *Above and below, before and after No's 1-4* (1991, figs 31-34), I examined different sets of power relations related to the sky, such as our dependence upon the weather, and vulnerability in the face of nature, the effects of military and civil violence, and the resulting transience these power relations inflict upon family units. These drawings selectively explored the multiple sources of power that affect us in our daily lives, and that reach us through various ways, but increasingly through the mass media.

ALLEGORY AND COLLAGE AS DEVICES FOR CREATING PERSONAL VISUAL MYTHS

In this part of the discussion I shall focus on how I deployed allegory, collage and metaphor, not only as conceptual symbolic devices as mentioned above, but also as visual devices in unmasking Afrikaner myths and heroes. The conceptual and visual devices I applied in developing my series of relief cut-outs and drawings were closely aligned to one another, not only because of the structural similarities between allegory and collage, but also as contemporary cultural reproduction, both linguistic and visual, happens in a collagic fashion: that is, random, fragmented, disjointed and disparate. The narrative linguistic and visual structures of understanding

that we acquire through acculturation in, for example, the arts, religion and the mass media, often relies upon collagic principles as ordering devices. Many contemporary narratives, such as television advertisements, news broadcasts and fiction films rely upon the mind's ability to piece together fragments of stories to form minute, condensed epics, or recognise stories that are presented in a disjointed manner. For my purposes, allegory and collage were useful ordering devices for a number of reasons: firstly, they were able to represent the multiplicity of the material that I was researching, and secondly, they could bring together seemingly unrelated elements, in this instance the contradictions in Afrikaner mythologising. This approach suited my visual exploration of the different, diverse power relations that influenced Afrikaner mythologising.

The mechanisms of creating metaphoric tensions in my art-making

My visual research, drawn from previous codings of fact and fiction, or phrased in terms of my first two chapters, myth and history, included linguistic and visual reference material. Newspapers, magazines and books mediate information with the text being dominant, whereas in television and films, images dominate. Feinstein, in an article on meaning and visual metaphor, distinguishes between linguistic and visual metaphor by pointing out that people are more skilled in words than in images, and that linguistic metaphor, therefore, operates within "an already familiar symbol system", and that visual metaphor differs from linguistic metaphor "not only in kind, but also in their metaphoric expressions" (1982:50). Feinstein continues that linguistic metaphor provides the reader with more information than the visual counterpart, as it conveys four terms, namely the *topic*, *vehicle*, *ground* and *tension*, whereas in visual metaphors, the *topic* is often omitted (1982:50). The *topic* is the subject, and the *vehicle* the means through which the transfer between different categories are made. Feinstein describes metaphor as a "deliberate category mistake" (1982:48), and goes to say that the greater the distance between the categories, the greater the tension in the metaphor. Inversely, the closer the *topic* and *vehicle* are to one another, the more common ground they share.

In my body of work, the *topics* were in fact omitted as often happens in visual metaphoric expression, and the viewer has to unravel the titles, and the juxtaposed symbolic paradigms in order to arrive at their own unmasking of Afrikaner myths and heroes. I applied the notion of “category mistakes”, or mixed metaphors, to create *tensions* between the symbolic entities that I represented in a single work. In *Heavenly heroes: the martyr* (1987-1988, fig 3), I broke the iconographical convention of the virgin, one of the three orders of Christian martyrs as described by Hall and Uhr, by replacing the conventionally associated symbol of white lilies with a red rose, and the *aureola*, the tiered golden crown, with vertically stacked jewels (1985:567).

In order to create new meaning through the deconstruction of existing symbolic paradigms, I overturned established iconographical and hierarchical conventions. The extent of tampering with existing symbolic conventions could either amplify or decrease the *tensions* and *grounds* in the representation of Afrikaner mythologising. Hierarchies such as the nine ranks of heavenly beings, as listed by Bittleston (1980: contents page), and the three orders of sainthood mentioned by art historians Hall and Uhr (1985: 567-603), provided me with useful mechanisms with which to create distances between the *topics* and the *vehicles* in my practical work. For example, in *Heavenly heroes: weeping bishop* (1989-90, fig 7), a black bishop, loosely based on Bishop Tutu, is presented as an Afrikaner “hero”, or rather in this instance, as an Afrikaner anti-hero. The *tensions* in this work are generated by the contrast between the *vehicle*, a black body representing an Afrikaner hero, and the *topic*, the Afrikaner’s past racist beliefs and ideologies. The historical framework of the Afrikaner, and their recent past racist beliefs that people of colour are different, and inferior to whites, is belied by the status of a senior bishop, albeit a black one. The layering of information, and the contradictions that are set up as a result, occur because of the discrepancy between the *topic*, and the context of Afrikaner beliefs that it evokes, and the appearance of the *vehicle*, a black bishop, that belies these beliefs and attitudes.

In this work, a second level of *tension* is evoked through the visual contradiction of the bishop trying to dry his tears through the barrier of his glasses.¹⁹ The glasses, as a metaphoric device, encourage numerous interpretations and political readings. I used this ambiguity to engage the viewer in a process of unravelling the contradictions this man presented as an Afrikaner “hero”. In this cut-out, as in the rest of the body of work, I deployed formal *tensions* generated by contrasting visual realities, namely, real form and texture of the wooden relief, as opposed to the illusion of form and texture created through perspective, painting and glazing. The use of different materials such as wood, paint, glass, beads, and gold leaf in the three-dimensional composition opened up formal possibilities that could be used to extend the conceptual framework of the body of work. The integration of inlaid stained glass, with its obvious connotation of religious architecture, and glass beads used to decorate domestic items such as lace doilies to suggest precious gemstones, underlined the visual paradoxes already at work between illusion and reality in this work.

The interplay between actual and illusionist form, and the solutions required to resolve them, introduced formal ironies into the work that also increased the *tension* between *topic* and *vehicle*. The paradoxes that emerged in my working process simulated paradoxes in Afrikaner mythologising based on Christian and democratic principles, yet, contravening them continuously. To explore my perceptions of the contradictions in Afrikaner mythologising, I developed a visual allegory through the *vehicles* of heavenly and earthly heroes. In *Heavenly heroes: the seraph* (1987, fig 1), the Afrikaner hero was portrayed as a heavenly hero in the guise of an angel. In contrast to this hero, in *Heavenly heroes: weeping bishop* (1989-90, fig 7) a black man is portrayed as an angelic Afrikaner hero. This portrayal of a black bishop possessing equal attributes to that of a white Afrikaner has no model in Afrikaner mythologising, and contained a double irony in that the Afrikaner could not refute a bishop’s belief in the same principle of Christian love that he himself believed in because he was black, and a black bishop criticising Afrikaner conduct and social ordering fell completely outside the Afrikaner’s frame of reference and racist construction of society.

Symbolic conventions, such as the hierarchy of angels and the three classes of martyrs, were employed as *vehicles* for the referent meanings that could be deconstructed in search of their underlying connection to power relations that promoted Afrikaner ideologies. The introduction of hierarchies, in the form of earthly and heavenly heroes, and the portrayal of some heroes as angels, triggered off a process of “unmasking” the tensions and contradictions created by the piling up of multiple, diverse symbolic images and titles in a single work. Through a process of deconstruction, and an unravelling of the different discourses that are alluded to, layer by layer, the possible meanings of the body of work were revealed. Different to the enigmatic, riddled captions used by the artist Barbara Kruger²⁰, and the simplicity, yet boldness of her work’s contrasting imagery, the deconstruction of my works relied upon the apparent transparency and factual categorisation of the heroes, in contrast to the juxtaposition of iconographically disparate symbols within single compositions. My works resemble religious icons whose apparent unworldliness belie the fact that they pile up symbols in order to deconstruct power relations from different eras and structures in Western society that shaped past Afrikaner myths.

The hierarchy of angels, a human construction as set out by Dionysus the Areopagite, is not part of the Afrikaner’s reformist religious traditions (Bittleston 1980:100). However, the angel as a biblical figure in the form of heavenly messenger, and as a reborn soul after death on earth, is cited in the Bible on numerous occasions, including the Old and New Testaments, and forms part of the Afrikaners’ religious frame of reference. My portrayal of angels was parodic, which is, according to Linda Hutcheon in a discussion of parody in relation to Postmodernism, “often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality” (1989:93). The parodic deployment of angelic figures as a series of Afrikaner heroes took the shape of either winged, or wingless creatures. In the final drawings and relief panels, I devised angelic heroes that had, in the place of traditional feathered wings, pairs of semi-circular metallic discs, reminiscent of turning windmill wheels. This allusion to water as a precious commodity through the incorporation of the windmill that pumps water, placed these angelic heroes within a context that resembled many parts of the South African landscape, and introduced the

region's limited natural resources as a power axis into the visual discourse.

The use of the hierarchy of angels as a metaphor for Afrikaner heroes opened many biblical and secular interpretations that could be explored to deconstruct Afrikaner mythologising. Considering that most world religions and mythologies deal with the fundamental principles of being, in the form of life and death, it is not strange to view Afrikaner myths, born from a people who, from the beginning, endured extreme physical and political conditions in order to survive, as a symbolic formulation to secure an earthly and heavenly future or themselves. By contemplating this shared function of religion and myth, and in particular Afrikanerdom's mythological past, I was pondering the future of the Afrikaner, and the adjustments they would have to make to their self-image and their future in a truly democratic South Africa. In exploring the process of transcendence that the Afrikaner would have to commit themselves to in order to overcome their prejudicial attitudes towards other South African groups, and their possession of the land, both physically, and culturally, I juxtaposed different heroic figurations, and elements of the urban and rural landscape. The drawings that precipitated the final three works, *Launching pads I: the church* (1987, fig 38), *Launching pads II: the pool* (1991, fig 39), and *Launching pads III: the modern chariot* (1991, fig 40), explored these notions through the concepts of places of arrival and departure, both literally and metaphorically.

Angels, the heavenly messengers, have biblical companions, such as Jacob and Elijah who also traverse the space between the earth and heaven. I explored Jacob's dream of angels ascending and descending a stairway linking earth and heaven, and Elijah's ascension to heaven in a chariot of fire as images of Afrikaner salvation that I envisaged as a transcendental progression from their present mind-sets through the myriad power axes that determine survival in contemporary society towards a new, future mythological paradigm. Jacob's dream and Elijah's ascension were juxtaposed with numerous symbols signifying different power axes in a number of drawings

such as the marked doors of the Israelite's homes before their flight from Egypt, the present incumbent Pope, elements of simple rural South African architecture, windmills, a rickety wooden ladder, and barbed wire associated with either the demarcation of property boundaries, or the prohibition of entry into military areas (refer to figs 27-37).

These drawings, executed mainly in black and white mixed media, simulated the sky as domain for the struggle between different power axes. The conceptual sobriety of the drawings, in my view, rendered the use of colour superfluous, and it was sparingly applied when it was incorporated. I used unrealistic colours in acerbic, fluorescent tones such as lime green, citron yellow or bright pinks in *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter and angels* (1991-1992, fig 30), or understated naturalistic colours to lead the eye through the composition in *Launching pad No 1* (1992, fig 35). In the relief cut-outs, the use of colour also became more restrained as the body of work progressed, and the initial polychrome rendering of the panels became more subdued as the colour and materials were chosen for their intrinsic properties and symbolic significance. For example, in *Earthly heroes: the water bearer* (1990-1991, fig 8), *Earthly heroes: the Madonna and the archangel* (1992, fig 25), *Launching pad II: the pool* (1991, fig 39) and *Launching pad III: the modern chariot* (1992, fig 40), materials such as aluminium plate, copper wire, wood and lead were used for their specific resemblance to the actual material of the objects portrayed, rather than creating the illusion of material as in *The angel's lost trolley* (1988-1991, fig 9), and *Launching pad I: the church* (1987, fig 38), where wood, for example, is rendered to resemble metal. The use of colour became more controlled and monochromatic as can be seen in the use of different blues in *Launching pad II: the pool* (1991, fig 39), which was used to cohere and restrain the composition as well as to allude to the river Styx, the stillness of the semi-desert landscape, the seduction of the Hockney-esque pool and the re-configured crucifixion structure. The colours blue and silver are also associated with the spiritual in colour symbolism and suited this work that explored the metaphoric threshold between life and death. The optimism of arrival and departure, or in Christian terms the twin rebirth signified firstly by

baptism, and secondly by death on earth, are explored in the remaining two panels that make up the triptych *Launching pads I, II and III*. The use of colour in the first panel is naturalistic, but restrained in portraying a sense of place where souls arrive and depart. In the last panel, the application of colour is limited to earthy tones with only a small rectangle of bright blue signifying water, a necessity for life.

The mechanisms of collage and allegory in creating a personal visual myth

From an artistic point of view, my task was to unmask the ideologies behind Afrikaner mythologising through a series of relief cut-outs and drawings. In search of solutions, I consulted the works of other artists, amongst them the paintings of Anselm Kiefer. Huysen writes that Kiefer deals with issues related to national identity, namely the “terror of recent German history” (1989:25), how to remember this terror, and how to cope with the past (1989:30). Unlike Kiefer, who deliberately broke the latter-day taboo on iconography that was appropriated from German mythology by the fascists, I turned away from explicit Afrikaner iconography. There were formal and personal reasons for this decision. Firstly, the Afrikaner created relatively few symbols beyond those generated by the Great Trek and the Boer war; and secondly, the Afrikaner leadership’s appropriation of Christian principles to validate its racist ideologies, created a mythological *tabula rasa*²¹ that left Afrikaner symbols, to my mind, devoid of integrity or honesty. Although I do not intend to dwell on parallels between Nazi Germany and the Afrikaners’ political regime, I am interested in the similarities between them and the effects that politics exercised on both their cultures, and public psyches.

The Afrikaner, in reproducing their own symbols, also stifled the reproduction of myths by other population groups in the country. My practical work was designed to unmask the malevolence of Afrikaner mythologising and in my drawings and relief panels, I explored some of the contradictory aspects of Afrikaner morality as embedded in their myths and heroes through the ironical and

paradoxical juxtaposition of symbols that reflected the stereotypes and archetypes held to be “true” by them.

I created a personal visual mythology by recycling and re-interpreting existing symbols. The relief panels were constructed from wooden planks that were joined together to form shapes slightly larger than the parameters of the final piece, and that were subsequently cut out, layer by layer, whereupon they were either assembled, carved and painted, or carved, painted and assembled, dependant upon the delicacy or complexity of the construction of the elements in each work. The construction, carving, painting and assembling processes, explored formally the same allegorical and collagic devices used conceptually to reconstruct and deconstruct existing symbols in order to create new meanings. Shapes and volumes were constructed, only to be whittled away to reveal the form and shape of the heroes. Disparate symbolic elements were carved, constructed, joined or juxtaposed.

The series of heroes, at first conceived as *trompe l’oeil* cardboard cut-outs to emphasise the transience of Afrikaner mythologising, changed after *Earthly heroes: bluebull and girl in pink bikini* (1988-1992, fig 6) was completed. Slowly, the series of relief panels became more articulated and sculptural, and the hard edges of the cut-out gave way to shaped modulated forms at the perimeters of the work. The formal ironies that surfaced during the construction and carving of the wooden panels were further emphasised by the use of assemblage, where prefabricated materials such as aluminium sheeting and brass wire, were incorporated into the works, whereupon the pieces would be finished off with paint and varnish. The optic vibration of certain colours that were applied to areas of carved wood, easily flattened out or obscured actual textures and volumes, and inverted or negated the depth of the layers of relief constructed. The problems involved in resolving the application of colour to three-dimensional form resulted in lengthy explorations to find a balance where real and illusionistic form and colour could be integrated. The solutions ranged from the painterly, as is evident in *Heavenly heroes: weeping bishop* (1989-1990, fig 7), to the graphic in *Earthly heroes: the water bearer* (1990-1991, fig 8), where

the grey, flat areas of the sarong were given a surface texture by scratching into the paint with the back of a paintbrush to balance the materiality of the metal motifs, and the carved texture of the lower part of the woman's sarong. The eye is led across the latter work by following real and simulated form, incorporating the use of various materials, textures and shadows, and presents, in three-dimensional form, what Muecke referred to as the basic feature of irony: "...a contrast between a reality and an appearance" (1970:30).

The projected installation of the drawings and relief cut-outs once completed in an exhibition space brought me back to the issue of the narrative structure of myth. The written and oral traditions of myth rely upon traditional linear narrative structures that introduce heroes and their attributes, the trials and ordeals that they suffer during their adventures, and their eventual triumph over adversity. Visual narratives communicate the mythic in a non-linear fashion, and I had to find equivalent structures that could communicate the complexity of the symbolic meanings in myth, yet also allude to the mythic narratives describing the hero's origin, attributes and adventures. The most logical solution was to adopt the notion of the series and to some extent imitate the sequential, linear narrative structure of the linguistic traditions of myths. The drawings were developed in series, but did not require a specific linear hanging sequence to constitute a narrative as they achieved that through collage that is not wholly dependent upon linear structures.

The relief panels were also conceived as a flexible series. To facilitate the random installation of the relief panels, they were planned as cut-outs, or *polyptychs*. Apart from the triptych, *Launching pad I: the church* (1987, fig 38), *Launching pad II: the pool* (1991, fig 39), and *Launching pad III: the modern chariot* (1992, fig 40), the relief panels contained no background that could contextualise the figures or indicate a sense of place. This meant that I had to reconstruct and deconstruct the symbolic themes that I explored using the conventions of portraiture. The absence of a background in most of the pieces also meant that the figures existed in real space in a

different way to the conventional linear arrangement of geometric panels and pictures, and the free-form shapes of the figures facilitated a greater interchangeability in the installation of the works, that in turn affected the reading of meaning of the works. This opened up the scope of possible readings of the body of work, depending upon the particular installation of the individual works. The absence of a predetermined hanging sequence provided further possibilities to explore the asymmetrical symbolic power relations in Afrikaner mythologising that were in constant flux, depending upon the particular power structures that dominated at the time.

The relief cut-outs were displayed in a specific way to link them with the figures in the drawings that were depicted in skylscapes. To enhance the illusion of figures floating in space, the cut-outs were suspended away from the wall support on extension brackets. The pieces were anchored in space by the shadows cast from directed light sources, and this play of light and shadow was used to enhance the possible interpretations of the works, ranging from the literal to the more abstract meanings already alluded to in the work. The negative spaces in between the cut-outs, resolved as skylscapes in the drawings, introduced the element of space and, by inference, the sky into the visual discourse. The portrayal of imaginary, mythical figures in the sky represents the extra-terrestrial space which is occupied in the religious imagination by angels. In real space this terrain is crossed by aircraft, spacecraft and the numerous microwave signals relayed around the earth through radio and television broadcasters. It follows then that this aerial space serves both as the real and fantastic conduit of many important power relations, whether traditional symbolic reproduction modes or by high and low mass mediated technological means.

During the process of creating a personal visual mythology, from the initial gathering of references from mass media sources through to the design of the installation of the works, I consistently explored the avenues of allegory and collage, and their ability to simultaneously construct meaning through a process of deconstruction whereby one text is read through another, in order to unmask

Afrikaner mythologising.

In Postmodern society, there is no truth or primordial event upon which our understanding of life can be based, and Kearney, in a discussion of Derrida's view of the end of man, writes that only the "labyrinth of multiple mirrors" exists or a "paradigm of parody - as an endless play of a copy copying a copy and so on *ad infinitum*" (1988:288). In my mythical construction, I explored the nature of the Afrikaner hero and myth through the recycling of existing symbolic paradigms that reflected how each symbolic truth can be seen from different perspectives, and are copies or reincarnations of previous symbolic truths.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1. I not only used personal documentation to capture cultural signs, but also took photographs of events and objects of reference that I had collected from the mass media to have greater detailed documentation thereof.
2. Paul Grendon. *Ons vir jou, Suid Afrika*, 1985. Oil on masonite, 240 x 1200 cm. Photograph by Andrew Meintjes. (Williamson 1989:12&13).
3. *Volk en vaderland* means nation and country.
4. Phutuma Seoka. *Angry Boer*, 1986. Wood and paint, ht 90 cm. Photograph by Athol Franz. (Williamson 1989:46).
5. Johannes Maswanganyi. *D.F. Malan*, 1988. Wood and paint, ht 76 cm. Photograph by Athol Franz. (Williamson 1989:49).
6. Philip Rollinson, in his book *Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture* (1981), translates the four levels of meaning in the Bible:

*Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia*"

as

The letter teaches deeds, allegory what you are to believe,
The moral what you are to do, anagogy where you should be going (1981:xi?).

Afrikaner mythologising was closely bound to Christianity and used classical forms of allegory to reproduce its symbols, that is, the implied application where a literal reference in one context is used with another in an altogether different context, as well as allegory as partial or concealed reference where allusions are made to facts already known to the addressee (Rollinson 1981:xix). I used both these forms of allegory, not only for the purpose described before, but also to alert the spectator to the existence of another allegorical principle in my work, that of "allegoria with hyponoia" that evolved in late antiquity, where a hidden, underlying meaning exists in a myth or story (Rollinson

1981:3).

7. A *voortrekkerkappie* is a cloth hat in the shape of a bonnet with a deep, stiffened brim that used to be worn by Voortrekker women.
8. Fiske, in a discussion on the multiaxiality of power, writes that different social formations, such as class, race, gender, and the many others that exist, are not stable categories, but are in a constant process or interplay of power. Fiske explains that race, class and gender are not separate power axes that either function individually, or together, but rather that they generate influence along the power axes of the others.

Class and racial powers are exerted along the axis of gender, just as gender power flows along theirs. Gender difference is experienced and operationalized differently within different racial and class formations, and the differences are magnified when applied in interracial and interclass relations (Fiske 1994:66).

Fiske provides the following example of the class axis affecting the reading of a racial power axis by referring to the possible readings of the television series, called *The Cosby Show*:

Class directs social relations differently among European Americans than among African Americans, and differently again in interracial relations. For many white critics of *The Cosby Show*, for example..., the Huxtables' class privilege signified yuppie conservatism, and for others it meant that they had been whitewashed or made into honorary whites and thus disarticulated from the category used by these whites to make sense of "normal" Blacks. For some African Americans, however, their signs of class privilege were reasons for hope and pride: they contradicted the prevalent white strategy of representing African Americans as criminals, failures, or threats. Interracially, the Huxtables' class privilege may have whitened them for whites; for Blacks, however, it did not overpower their Blackness but rather inflected it into a representation of African American life that Blacks were pleased to show whites. The dominant system of representation makes Blacks into the mysterious or threatening other, and the Huxtables' class privilege countered this strategy by normalizing them (Fiske 1994:66).

9. The Afrikaner wrote an explicit religious foundation into the preamble of the Constitution under the Nationalist Party Government that subordinated the government to "the sovereignty and providence of God in guiding the affairs of nations" (Bloomberg 1990:xxiii).
10. The most prevalent heroic figure in Afrikaner mythology is the *Boer*, in the guises of man of nature, the farmer, and the pioneer or soldier. The central myths of Afrikanerdom are based upon the Great Trek and events surrounding the two Anglo-Boer Wars. The visual reproduction of these Afrikaner heroes and myths are mostly in the form of public monuments and landscape painting. The most grandiose of these are the *Voortrekkermonument* outside Pretoria, the *Nasionale Vrouemonument* in Bloemfontein and the *Slag van Bloodriver* with its sixty-four bronzed ox wagons near Dundee in Natal (Oberholster 1972:102, 170 & 238). In 1938, with the symbolic commemoration of the Great Trek, many memorials in the form of stone ox wagons were erected in towns such as Worcester, Cottesloe, Bethulie, and Johannesburg, and others

that were on the original trek routes (Oberholster 1972:266).

11. Angels, or winged creatures, predate Christian iconography and appear in earlier Egyptian and Assyrian cultures (Drioton 1981:143 & 149), whereas depictions of the Virgin arose from Christianity according to Josèphe Jacquot (1974:39). Early Christian art adopted many existing pagan and Oriental pictorial themes, such as Roman and Palestinian motifs.
12. Régamey is of the opinion that pseudo-Dionysus' conception of an angelic hierarchy is too rigid and introduces an element of hardness "to the order of love" that is contrary to the spirit of the Gospels (1960:49). He continues that this stands in opposition to the words of St Peter in 1 Timothy 2.5: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ". To Régamey this principle is essential to the Christian faith, and any mediators other than Christ, must conform with it.
13. Régamey writes that "the Greek ἄγγελος, equivalent to the Hebrew Mal'ak, signifies the 'messenger' or 'envoy'" (1960:15).
14. It is interesting to note that the ideogram deciphered in Linear B pre-alphabetic writing, which denotes the ceremonial wagons used in death rites in prehistoric Europe, curiously resembles the modern day helicopter (Van Der Merwe 1987:58). The ancient chariot and ceremonial wagon have parallels in the Bible and possess many similarities to the helicopter today. I explored these parallels in my drawings where I depicted the helicopter as a contemporary chariot.
15. For me, one of the most disturbing images of political unrest that I have witnessed in South Africa was the black smoke spirals from burnt car tyres going up in the air above townships whilst helicopters hovered nearby. These signs, read from a distance, were all the more ominous as in themselves they weren't horrific, but signified the human struggle that occurred below.
16. Kreepy Krauly is a brand name of an automatic swimming pool cleaner that has an oscillating valve that keeps it moving around whilst it cleans the pool.
17. Duane Hanson, *Supermarket Lady/Woman with a Shopping Cart* (1970). Polyester, fibreglass and mixed media, life size. Aachen, Neue Galerie, Ludwig Collection. (Albrecht 1987:164).
18. A *Bergie* means a vagrant. In the past, many vagrants in Cape Town took shelter on Table Mountain, and from there they got the nick-name that translates literally as "little mountain".

19. Images of Bishop Tutu in tears have been published in the mass media from time to time. Most of the time these tears were indicative of emotions of despair, grief and sadness, although at other times they were induced by joy. Even though the Nationalist Party is no longer in power, the effects of their past policies upon the people of South Africa are still in evidence as the Truth Commission hearings have proved. Bishop Tutu, at one of these hearings, was once again overcome with the horror of people's past experiences and expressed his sorrow through tears.
20. For example, see Kruger's *We are our circumstantial evidence* (1984) in *Rethinking Modernism* by Brian Wallis (1988:415).
21. Huyssen, in discussing the Nazis' appropriation of German myths, writes that post-war Germany provides an example of a cultural vacuum that was created in place of previous codings:

Fascism had furthermore perverted, abused, and sucked up whole territories of a German image-world, turning national iconic and literary traditions into mere ornaments of power and thereby leaving post-1945 culture with a tabula rasa that was bound to cause a smoldering crises of identity (1989:34).

CONCLUDING NOTE

The hero's return

As the title of my research suggests, I set out to unmask Afrikaner mythologising in order to identify the underlying power structures which regulated Afrikaner society. The mass media references which I consulted presented many different sources of power ranging from the overtly political to the natural habitat and climatic conditions. I set out to unravel the relationships between the different sources of power which controlled Afrikaner society by deconstructing the symbols reproduced in mass mediated images. This unravelling of existing symbolic structures served as the references for the creation of my personal visual hierarchy of heroes. By deconstructing the roles of various power axes such as race, religion, politics, the economy, education and gender in the South African context as was signified by Afrikaner heroes and myths, I uncovered what to me were the most important factors which led to the Afrikaner's adoption of apartheid. I was also interested in exposing the ideologies conveyed as myths put forward to justify and give credibility to apartheid.

In the process of unravelling the underlying sources of power which determined Afrikaner attitudes, beliefs, traditions and customs, it became clear to me that, despite my own nostalgic allegiance towards some historical heroes from their heroic age, I could seldom identify with the utterances and actions of contemporary Afrikaner political heroes. In my view, the Afrikaner had come to reproduce contradictory symbols which had by the late 1980s and early 1990s led them to the point of a political and symbolic *impasse*. In fact, the principles or "truths" upon which Afrikanerdom based its political ideologies and which were reflected in its mythologising, seemed better served by its outgroups' symbolic reproduction than their own. The principles of Christianity, democracy and free-

market capitalism which the Afrikaner supposedly espoused and upheld was seldom borne out by his heroes' actions. The contradictions between heroic actions and mythical narratives produced tensions within the Afrikaner community as well as the South African society in general. For me, these tensions resulted in a disbelief in Afrikaner heroes and steered me towards an exploration of the anti-hero as a means of searching for the "truth" in Afrikaner mythologising. By unravelling the symbolism of the Afrikaner anti-hero I hoped to find heroes and myths whose principles and ideologies corresponded, and to gain further insights into the basis of the Afrikaner's racist ideologies and the inherited prejudices which they reproduced in a separatist society. Ironically, I often found the very qualities and principles which Afrikaner myths propagated reflected in the actions of who they perceived to be the antitheses of their notion of heroes: that is the black peoples of South Africa. In individuals such as Bishop Desmond Tutu and the scores of female domestic workers working in South Africa, I witnessed heroic qualities that were difficult to reconcile with the Afrikaner's ingroup attitudes and beliefs and outgroup prejudices. These contradictions seemed to pervade so many of the principles espoused by the Nationalist Party Government and other Afrikaner leaders that I found myself in the position of a dissident Afrikaner, at odds with the actions of my own ingroup.

The tensions generated by the Afrikaner's contradictory mythologising found expression in my art works. I turned to the symbolic, as artists experiencing trauma and crises have done in eras before me. S. Polcari, an art historian, describes how the destructiveness and crisis brought about by World War II were reflected in abstract expressionism:

The Abstract Expressionists engaged the historical, psychological, and emotional crises of the dark days of the early 1940s not by recording them with illustrations and images of war as most other artists were doing, but by disguising them through symbol, metaphor, and allegory (1988:202).

In my own practical work, which is closer to the figurative tradition of art-making, I also reverted to symbol, metaphor and allegory in various ways: firstly, as a reference for my art-making; and secondly, to create a personal visual myth which unmask Afrikaner mythologising. Through the symbolic vehicles of the hero and myth, I set about creating a visual allegory which would simultaneously deconstruct and reconstruct the power relations active in Afrikaner mythologising. Formally, I achieved this by treating my whole body of work as a palimpsest: I appropriated existing symbols and, through a process of collage, deconstructed their meanings and components and replaced certain elements with fragments from other symbolic entities. My approach of questioning the tenets of past Afrikaner mythologising was parodic. I appropriated existing images and concepts from art history, the mass media and written texts as a reflection of my own individual memory and of society's collective memories of symbolic reproduction. In the mimetic process of copying existing imagery and translating it into drawings and relief cut-outs, I identified symbols representing certain power relations which played a role in Afrikaner mythologising as well as the methods of cultural reproduction used in the process of reproducing these myths.

The Fine arts and my field of research, myth and the hero, are forms of symbolic communication which do not readily lend themselves to research findings of a scientific kind. I restricted my research to the realm of the symbolic, although some of my findings resembled "concrete" facts, in the sense that they were generally accepted "truths" or visual stereotypes. Visual and other symbols representing the configuration of the underlying sources of power governing society are pervasive, and diffuse: they refer to multiple power axes simultaneously. To further complicate my research, in our Postmodernist world, the "truth" of myth is considered to be ambivalent, ironic, and paradoxical. Different mythical paradigms representing different views of the "truth" are continuously juxtaposed through traditional reproduction modes and the mass media. When one is dealing with different versions of the "truth", it is axiomatic that any conclusions derived will inevitably display the same ambiguous characteristics. The symbolic is not neutral in structure or application,

as the viewers' or readers' acceptance of its metaphoric truth is sought to secure its viability. However, it is in the application of the symbolic, whether it be for religious, commercial or political use, that its underlying ideological purposes and the power which it possesses become more evident.

The Afrikaner's first mythological phase, discussed previously under the headings of True Stories and Sad Stories, represents a physical individuation and nation building process. This era covers the periods from their first settlement in the Cape under expedient colonial rule, the hostile encounters with indigenous peoples over land and property issues, the events leading up to the Great Trek, the white inland diaspora itself, the establishment of the two Boer Republics, the subsequent annexation of the Republics by the British after the discovery of diamonds and gold, and the two Anglo-Boer Wars which followed after the British annexations. One could distinguish a pre-mythological Afrikaner era before the settlers perceived themselves as a separate people, but as this awareness was a gradual process, not easily associated with a distinct creation myth or time, I included this early period as part of the Afrikaner's first phase of mythologising.

After enduring the disillusionment, suffering and losses brought upon the Afrikaner by the Anglo-Boer Wars, South Africa was unified into one region at the turn of the century under British control. The Afrikaner, in assessing their losses, realised that physical opposition was not going to secure their autonomy, and instead embarked upon a political course of action to achieve what they saw as their right to self-destination. The Afrikaner's second phase of mythologising, previously discussed under the heading of Mythical Stories, was based upon Christian-Nationalism which was used to build the natural "othering" which occurs between different groups of people as a matter of course, into a radical social ordering called apartheid.

The Afrikaner's political mobilisation, with the help of the Broederbond, resulted in the National Party's election victory in 1948. In order to maintain power, the Nationalist Government, also with the support of the Broederbond, set out to reconstruct South African society along separatist, racial lines. The Afrikaner movement assumed control of all the resources available to them. These included government agencies such as the militia and the police force, education, religion, the economy, sport, the Afrikaans press and other national broadcasting media. During their years of rule, the Afrikaner Nationalist Party Government systematically set about imposing their own political will upon the rest of the nation who was by far the majority of people in South Africa.

The Afrikaner's second phase of mythologising followed certain world trends in which politicians played an ever greater role in society and assumed for themselves the role of heroes, who possess the ability to bestow gifts upon their people. However, the Afrikaner politicians' appropriation of the Afrikaner's mythological domain for their own ideological purposes, took on proportions reminiscent of Nazi Germany's confiscation of traditional German symbols for their own political ends. Afrikaner politicians, acknowledging the power of myth, exploited the mythological by appropriating past Afrikaner myths to support their own contemporary ideologies, by unifying the "heroes" of Afrikaner society around one common cause, and monopolised all public reproduction modes for their own myths to the detriment of the reproduction of outgroup beliefs and mythologising. The "fear of communism" as supposedly represented by black people in South Africa and in bordering countries, was used extensively to instill fear into the Afrikaner and to unify them around a common theme and enemy.

The Afrikaner's mythologising processes centred around the Nationalist Party's political structures and the Broederbond's extensive cultural activities which set up links between government, church and education that was supplemented by organisations and committees which included culture, sport and the economy. This networking set up the mechanisms through which the Afrikaner was

economically and culturally uplifted, and yet by the same token tolerated no dissent from the ingroup. By linking ideology with education and religion under the umbrella of Christian-Nationalism, and with the benefit of an extensive Afrikaner network in place, the task of controlling the Afrikaner through pervasive and repeated mythologising was streamlined.

By linking politics with religion and reproducing it through educational institutions, Afrikaner leaders touched upon the very roots of the Afrikaner's symbolic existence. The Afrikaner's deeply rooted religious beliefs, based upon Judaic-Christian principles, proved a valuable source for future mythologising. The Afrikaner's identification with the Bible, apart from providing a moral code and endorsing their inherited European sense of superiority over the indigenous black peoples of Africa when they first arrived at the Cape as immigrants, also later supplied the Afrikaner with inspiration, hope and comfort during their inland trek. They saw parallels between themselves and the biblical Chosen People, the Jews, whose suffering under and flight from Egypt bore resemblances to their own history and the Great Trek. What during the Afrikaner's first period of mythologising can be described as finding support for the Afrikaner's mobilisation as a people or nation building, after 1948 became an orchestrated ideological strategy by the Afrikaner movement to maintain power by appropriating past Afrikaner myths and Christianity for political gain.

The Afrikaner movement, largely made up of the National Party Government and Broederbond members, adopted a totalitarian approach to maintain power. The sinister actions which this generated, in my view, created a situation where the Afrikaner's heroes, in particular the politicians' actions, no longer reflected the principles upon which they supposedly based their beliefs. This dichotomy resulted in tensions between the Afrikaner's political rhetoric, actions and mythologising, and the Christian beliefs on which they rested. This usurpation of past Afrikaner heroes and myths for ideological purposes to retain their hegemony, ultimately undermined the "truthfulness" of Afrikaner heroes and their myths not only as perceived by their outgroups, but by many Afrikaners as well.

In my research, started during the 1980s, I was following the reproduction of these “untruthful” myths and heroes in the mass media which had been in circulation in various guises and transformations since the Nationalist Party came to power as a source for my personal art-making. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, South Africa was undergoing extreme political changes. The Nationalist Party Government was under pressure from anti-government movements such as the African National Congress, Inkatha, and the United Democratic Front to cede political power. This political turmoil was reflected in the mass media which reproduced images of “heroes” from different interest groups. The volatile situation, combined with the frequency and high profile of the reproduction of these pictures of the various political leaders in the mass media, made it difficult to decode the hierarchical positions of these different heroes. Deconstructing the struggle for political supremacy amongst the different political factions from mass media sources was further complicated by the roles assumed by journalists and reporters. They often participated in the dramatic narrative of news reportage, and usurped the heroes’ role in the action, rather than assuming the position of commentator or narrator. It was, therefore, axiomatic that the search for the “truth”, as personified by the heroes reproduced in the mass media, was coloured by the effects of different sets of power relations which had to be uncovered and identified in my practical work.

In my drawings and relief cut-outs, I identified and addressed certain dichotomies which were embodied in past Afrikaner myths. By locating selected historical symbolic manifestations of these attitudes, and incorporating them into my art works, I hoped to unmask, through reproduction, juxtaposing and subversion, the underlying power structures which governed Afrikaner society. However, I was not only at pains to understand the origins and contemporary reproduction of these beliefs through the collagic deconstruction of past Afrikaner symbolic reproduction, but I was also looking towards a possible reconstruction of future Afrikaner symbolic communication. My desire to contemplate the nature of future Afrikaner mythologising, freed from constraints of past contradictory ideological paradigms, was abetted by the radical political changes taking place in South Africa at the time, and which was earmarked

by F.W. De Klerk's speech in 1992. De Klerk's speech signalled a turning-point in Nationalist Party politics, and the subsequent negotiation of a peaceful settlement for South Africa's future signalled the closure of a period of Afrikaner mythologising. These actions also paved the road towards partial redemption for future Afrikaners. This turning-point in Nationalist Party politics placed the Afrikaner's symbolic reproduction *in limbo* whilst they entered a period of adjustment to their new status in South African society. This period is most probably going to last for some years to come.

The political implications of De Klerk's speech had repercussions upon my research as I was following the Afrikaner hero's dramatic narratives as they were reproduced in the contemporary mass media. The main focus of my work, that is understanding how the Afrikaner came to adopt apartheid as a political and social solution for South Africa, however, remained unchanged. De Klerk broke the stereotypical mould of contemporary Afrikaner heroes which signified a change in their fortunes. This departure had radical implications for Afrikaners and their future symbolic output. These events did not hamper my research on the Afrikaner's past symbolic reproduction, neither my speculations upon the possibilities which faced them in the future as the processes of symbolic redefinition have yet to crystallise into a new mythologising phase. De Klerk's speech and the events which followed created a watershed between two different eras for the Afrikaner, and they now have to re-establish themselves as a cultural minority with a voice acceptable to themselves, their immediate society and the world at large. The Afrikaner's loss of political power and the re-organisation of South African society has left a void or a *tabula rasa* in their mythologising which have created an opportunity for the reappraisal of Afrikanerdom itself. This process however, has to filter through all layers of Afrikaner society if it is to happen collectively, and will still emerge in the future. In the meantime, my research concerns remained intact, even though the political landscape has been radically changed.

In my assessment of the Afrikaner's symbolic output during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, I was concerned with the reproduction of visual symbols in a Postmodernist media-based era. This meant that every symbol which was reproduced, was a product of different symbolic contexts and layers of meaning, denoting as many different power relations and sources of output. Despite the multiplicity of contemporary symbolic reproduction, certain power relations emerged as being dominant. As far as the power structures of Afrikaner society was concerned, I tried to isolate those which in my view coloured the nature of their deployment of the power relations in South Africa and distinguished them from those generated by other societies. Although these power relations were not necessarily the most powerful axes *per se*, they determined or influenced the Afrikaner's particular usage of the most powerful power axes at their disposal. In my view, the power axes of kinship, religion and gender seemed to predetermine all other axes such as race, class and economics.

The Afrikaner's sense of kinship which emerged from the various groups of mainly Dutch, French and German settlers was based upon common threats to their livelihood in a harsh terrain. These *emigres* shared a common European ancestry and held corresponding beliefs, attitudes, traditions and customs. However, despite the cultural similarities in their origins, the Afrikaner's kinship was characterised by factions from the start. For example, groups of trekkers leaving the Cape displayed loyalty foremost to their individual leaders rather than showing a general allegiance to the trekker cause. The same patterns emerged with the creation of the Boer Republics and subsequently during the Anglo-Boer Wars in which the Afrikaner was organised around individual hero cults of Boers into commandos led by different Boer generals. The factionalism within Afrikaner society continued to hinder the emergence of Afrikaner unity and their subsequent efforts to present a unified front. Later still, the Afrikaner struggled to define the basis of their kinship and excluded all "non-white" Afrikaans speakers from their group even though they shared a common language. Defining the parameters of "us" and "them" continued to present difficulties with the Afrikaner's sense of identity during their later years of nation

building. However, the issue of kinship was not solely responsible for the Afrikaner's resolution to introduce apartheid. Other factors or power structures also played a role in the Afrikaner's adoption of this extreme social ordering. The Afrikaner's belief in their right to privilege was also fuelled by other power relations such as their inherited belief of their European superiority based upon religion and learning.

Although the power axes imposed by the landscape played an important role in the formulation of the Afrikaner people, the power structures related to gender and religion inherited from their European ancestors seemed to dominate Afrikaner culture. In Western society, gender and religion have always been closely aligned sources of power. These structures, reproduced from earlier generations of Europeans, became entrenched in the colonial society in a particular way as a result of their isolated pioneer existence. The colonists' isolation and the physical nature of their frontier existence, increased their reliance upon the resources which they had on hand, namely themselves and their cultural heritage. This cultural heritage included the reproduction of religion and gender roles and I was particularly interested in the separate and combined roles of these power axes in the development of the Afrikaner's apartheid policies.

Religion played an important part in sustaining the power relations which ensured the Afrikaner's political dominance. The Dutch Reformed Church sanctioned racism and provided the moral credibility for the Afrikaner Nationalist Party's apartheid policies. Without that sanctioning, the Afrikaner leadership under the Broederbond's auspices could not have implemented and sustained these policies for as long as they did and in the way that they did. The myth of the Chosen People was often put forward by the clergy and and polity as a symbol with which the Afrikaners could identify. The power structures of Afrikaner culture, supported by religious symbols and texts, and historiographies, were controlled by the state, the church, the various education departments and indirectly the

Broederbond. Although the government was in direct control of apartheid policies, it would not have succeeded without approval from the Afrikaner churches, as religion to a large extent provided the spiritual force behind these ideologies. Education was an important means of influencing the thinking of young Afrikaners. Education departments and educators, however, reproduced rather than conceptualised symbols supporting apartheid. Many contemporary historians emphasise the role of economics and financial opportunism by colonial powers in their re-assessment of South African history. The deployment of economic power structures in South Africa under the Nationalist Party Government were channelled through the power axes of gender and sanctioned by those of religion. This resulted in a complex power structure where the axes of economics, race, kinship, gender and religion amongst others combined in a particular way which was to become known as apartheid.

Divides, or “othering” between various groups of people are omnipresent and my research showed that distances between different groups exist globally. Each group functions with its own sets of power structures and accompanying attitudes and prejudices. In the past, the Afrikaner manipulated these prejudices reproduced through commonplace stereotypes and developed them into power structures that divided society for their own ideological and economic purposes.

Afrikaner society was led, and their culture engineered by men. This patriarchal system imposed solutions upon society based upon male principles of individuation. My reference to male principles of individuation is not made to apportion blame upon Afrikaner men, but to a more complex reference to male principles of social engineering and domination, a condition to which Afrikaner women were equally partisan. As a result, the Afrikaner’s social and cultural solutions were imposing, aggressive and physical by nature. These characteristics were further enhanced by their Calvinist religious traditions, in particular the Puritan strain thereof. Calvinism invoked a certain rigidity into Afrikaner society, which at the same time also galvanised their pioneer spirit. The moral ambivalence of

European Calvinism also manifested itself within the Afrikaner's assumption of the right to white privilege, which stands in contrast to the supposed principles of Christianity upon which they based their ideologies. The parallel the Afrikaner saw between themselves and the Chosen People described in the Bible, the Jews, were also shared by their Dutch, French and German ancestors. The myth of the Chosen People combined with their sense of superiority based upon their being educated and cultivated, supported their notion of their right to privilege during colonial occupation and, thereafter, since independence.

In studying the reproduction of contemporary mass mediated visual symbols, I uncovered different layers of power relations which governed Afrikaner mythologising since the primordial periods of the Great Trek and the two Anglo-Boer Wars up to recent times. The Afrikaner's early periods of symbolic reproduction produced the Boer as hero, either as the pioneer man of nature leading his people from domination to greener pastures which echoed the Biblical myth of the Chosen People, or as Boer General heading up the Boer Commandos. The Afrikaner's hierarchy of heroes, similar to their society, was patriarchal and despite women's contributions to society, the role of few females such as Rachel De Beer were reproduced in historiographies, literature or other arts. Men took the leading roles in politics, religion, education, the economy and culture.

The Afrikaner's will to transcend apartheid and the subsequent deconstruction of the power structures which held it in place, was the result of numerous factors, including moral and economic pressures from indigenous and external sources. The Afrikaner's symbolic ambiguity, signified by heroes who yielded too much power and who lost sight of the principles upon which their myths rested, were in my view, largely eroded by the introduction of television in South Africa in 1976. This mass medium, the most common purveyor of symbolic information in contemporary society, increasingly introduced internal outgroup and global power relations into the South African consciousness. This event broadened the symbolic discourse in South Africa, and in doing so subverted the existing power

structures constructed by the Afrikaners at the time. These sources of power included the state, the Afrikaner churches, education departments, and the printed and audio-visual media previously under the Afrikaner's influence and control. The collapse of existing global power relations due to the end of the Cold War also affected the power structures in South Africa as the "danger of communism" represented by African National Congress policies, was lessened.

By looking forwards to future Afrikaner symbolic reproduction, I explored two concepts as a basis for mythological transcendence. Firstly, the unification of the masculine and feminine principles as a basis for future Afrikaner mythologising and secondly, I explored death as a means of change through which the Afrikaner can surpass their past paradoxical mythologising. My interest in this latter notion of transcendence was two-fold: either as a physical or spiritual release from life on earth which serves as a natural ending to a particular era and all its attitudes and beliefs, or as a metaphor for the conscious rejection of a particular set of attitudes and beliefs. The Afrikaner's future, devoid of their extreme racist beliefs, can only be realised by transcending their past, and this includes both their mythical and historical pasts. One approach to achieve this is to relinquish past problem-solving strategies based on masculine principles. Phillip Faber formulates apartheid in Jungian terms as a negation of the archetypal feminine mode and writes that:

The previously one-sided masculine mode must be superseded by a more fundamentally "androgynous" one, which can only be accomplished by means of the integration of the feminine unconscious of the male subject (1990:60).

The Afrikaner's transcendence, couched in psychological terms, can be achieved if they allow the feminine principle equal status to the male principle. They can then assume more normalised ingroup/outgroup views of the different groups that make up the peoples of South Africa which will reduce the divide between "us" and "them". This will result in an easing of the tensions between different groups of people in South Africa and amongst the Afrikaner themselves. The Afrikaner's will then be free to reproduce symbols in

which heroes and myths represent the same principles or “truths”. The Afrikaner hero’s return to the values upon which their myths rested, will establish a correspondence between the hero’s actions and their mythical narratives which can provide a basis for future symbolic reproduction, perhaps a third phase of mythologising based upon the spiritual.

Appendix

LIST OF EXHIBITIONS

- 1985 - *Cape Technikon Lecturers*. S.A. Association of Art, Cape Town. Group show.
- *Angela Ferreira, Gabi Cheminai and Louisa Sherman*. Market Gallery, Johannesburg. Group Show.
- *30 Women Artists*. Michaelis Gallery, Cape Town. Group show.
- *Angela Ferreira, Gabi Cheminai and Louisa Sherman*. S.A. Association of Arts, Cape Town. Group show.
- 1986 - *Peepshow 4*. S.A. Association of Arts, Cape Town. Group miniature show.
- *About time. Images of South Africa*. Michaelis Campus, University of Cape Town.
- 1987 - *Portraits*. S.A. Association of Arts, Cape Town. Group show.
- 1988 - *Pictures on Paper*. Roodehek Street Gallery, Cape Town. Four person show.
- *Wood Exhibition*. S.A. National Gallery, Cape Town. Group show.
- 1989 - *Women's Mail Art Show*, New York.
- *Artists for Human Rights*, Durban.
- *Centre for African Studies Art Fair '89*, University of Cape Town, Cape Town.
- 1991 - Opening exhibition of Newmarket Galleries, Johannesburg.
- 1993 - *Made in Wood*. South African National Gallery, Cape Town.
- *Unmasking the Heroes*. M.A.(F.A.) exhibition. Unisa Art Gallery, Unisa, Pretoria.

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VOLUME II

Fig 1. *Heavenly heroes: the seraph*, 1987.



Fig 2. *Earthy heroes: the politician*, 1987.



Fig. 3 *Heavenly heroes: the martyr*, 1987-1988.



Fig 4. *Earthly heroes: girl in party dress, 1988-1992.*



Fig 5. *Earthly heroes: the dancers*, 1988-1992.



Fig 6. *Earthy heroes: bluebull and girl in pink bikini, 1988-1992.*



Fig 7. *Heavenly heroes: weeping bishop*, 1989-1990.



Fig 8. *Earthy heroes: the water bearer*, 1990-1991.



Fig 9. *The angel's lost trolley*, 1988-1991.



Fig 10. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 1*, 1991.





Fig 11. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 2, 1992.*



Fig 12. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 3, 1992.*



Fig 13. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 4*, 1992.



Fig 14. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the second Eve No 5*, 1992.



Fig 15 *Earthly heroes: the mayor in a tangle with Madonna and swordfish, 1991.*



Fig 16. *Earthly heroes: the mayor and seal performing in township, 1991.*



Fig 17. *Earthly heroes: the mayor and seal performing on beach*, 1991.

Fig18. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, domestic princess No 2*, 1991.



Fig 19. *Earthly heroes: the mayor and seal No 2, 1991.*



Fig 20. *Earthly heroes: Madonna, the nurturer No 1*, 1992.



Fig 21 *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the archangel No 1, 1992.*



Fig 22. *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the mayor No 5*, 1991



Fig 23. *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the archangel No 3*, 1991.



Fig 24. *Earthly heroes: Madonna and the archangel No 4*, 1992.

Fig 25. *Earthy heroes: the Madonna and the archangel*, 1992.





Fig 26. *Commuting between heaven and earth: Madonna and the modern chariot, the helicopter, 1992.*

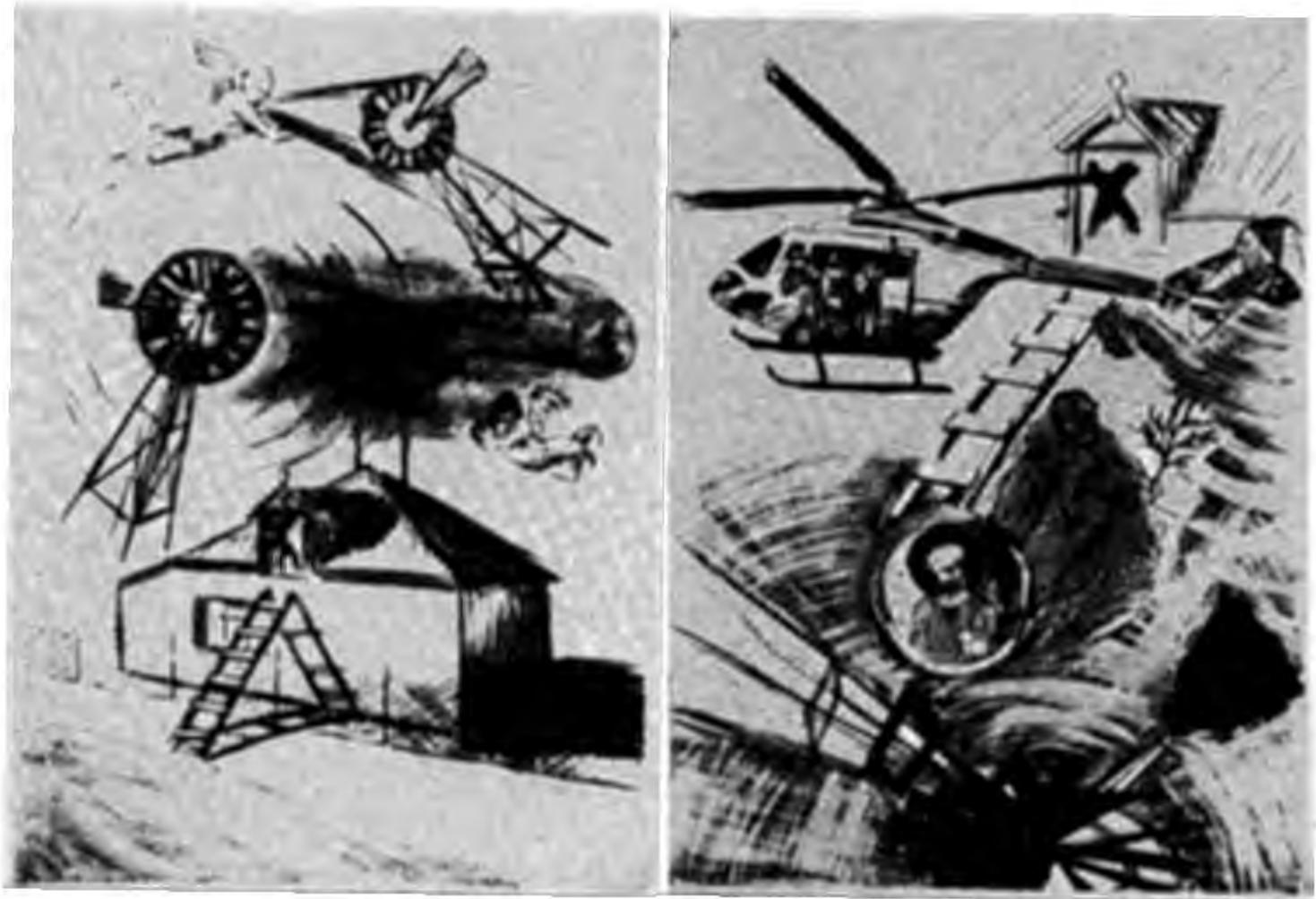


Fig 27. *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter No 2, 1991.*

Fig 28. *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter No 3, 1991.*



Fig 29. *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter No 4, 1991.*



Fig 30. *Commuting between heaven and earth: the modern chariot, the helicopter and angels, 1991-1992.*



Fig 31. *Above and below, before and after No 1*, 1991.

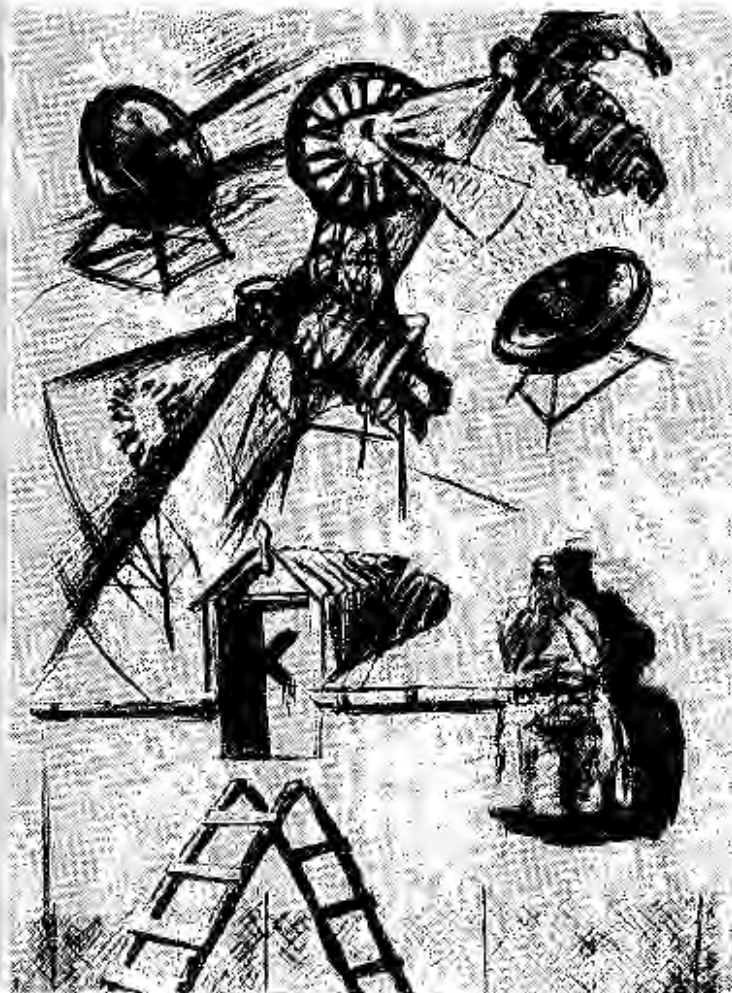


Fig 32. *Above and below, before and after No 2*, 1991.



Fig 33. Above and below, before and after No 3, 1991.

Fig 34. Above and below, before and after No 4, 1991.



Fig 35. *Launching pad No 1*, 1992.



Fig 36. *Launching pad No 2*, 1992.



Fig 37 *Launching pad No 3*, 1992.

Fig 38. *Launching pad I: the church*, 1987.



Fig 39. *Launching pad II: the pool*, 1991.



Fig 40. *Launching pad III: the modern chariot*, 1992.

