

**Representing the post-apartheid township and the rural: The case of ETV's  
*Ekasi: Our Stories*, Mzansi Magic's *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies***

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university, nor has it been prepared under the aegis or with the assistance of any other body or organisation or person outside the University of the Witwatersrand.

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Nkosinathi Leonard Selekane

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2019

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my ancestry: Bhengu: *Ncolosi!*; Sele Kane:  
*Mokone!*

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, through the reading of selected popular films commissioned by ETV through *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Mzansi Magic* via *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies*, I investigate the narratives and aesthetics that are embedded in the films that are aligned to post-apartheid nation-building and neoliberal archetypes. In an attempt to address the above hypothesis, I examine how narratives and aesthetics of neoliberalism and nation-building buttress the concealing of realities about black spaces. The central argument emanating from this study is that the popular films by South African private television networks seem to significantly represent a sugarcoated view of blackness, the township and rural spaces, in the ploy to lionize the post-1994 democratic dispensation.

Popular arts in Africa by Karin Barber (1987, 1997, 2000), alongside Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPEM) and Third Cinema are applied in the task to extrapolate the representations portrayed by the selected films that have been commissioned by private television networks. The films in this study draw from popular discourses that exist in contemporary creolised culture to construct nation-building, aspirational and neoliberal narratives (Hannerz, 1987; Mhlambi, 2012). The findings divulge a return of apartheid representations that were created by filmmakers who were co-opted by the state into creating content that worked to neutralise black ambitions for liberation and political consciousness. Also, narratives that promote black middle-classness together with conspicuous consumption are advanced to create a perception about the township as progressive. In support of nation-building and neoliberal ideals, some narratives of poor spaces present tropes that shift the blame for the plight of the underclass away from the state towards individual failures to deploy mechanisms of self-help. Foreign nationals are presented as a scapegoat for the failures of the government to improve the lives of township dwellers. Multicultural and multilingual narratives are presented by the films in the exertion to advance nation-building that is veered towards solidifying Black Nationalism that this current dispensation is based on. This is done at the expense of the gender project. In the representation of the rural spaces, the films confront issues of patriarchy in the ploy to advance the status of rural spaces as progressive black living spaces and in so doing, the themes of the 'Back to the Homelands' films are brought into this present epoch. Alarminglly,

the television networks that commissioned the films in this study are private broadcasters that are hypothetically perceived as not vulnerable to manipulation by government, as is the case with public broadcasters. Tropes that were deployed by apartheid popular film and television seem to reemerge in productions by private television entities to cement the present political economy.



## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ANC –	African National Congress
ASGISA -	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
COSATU -	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPEM –	Critical Political Economy of the Media
DSTV –	Digital Satellite Television
GEAR –	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
IFP –	Inkatha Freedom Party
M-NET -	Electronic Media Network
NP –	National Party
NDP –	National Development Plan
NGP -	New Growth Path
RDP –	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SABC –	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACTWU -	South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union
SMMEs -	Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises



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## Lights, Camera, Action!

This study aims to explore the narratives and aesthetics that are used in representing a sugar-coated image of blackness, the township and rural spaces in *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies*. Firstly, *Ekasi: Our Stories* inherently implies that the films are created for the people and reflect the lives of the people in the township. Secondly, *Lokshin Bioskop*, on the other hand, is synonymous with informal film exhibition spaces that were popular during apartheid such as garages, sportfields and community halls that were used in the townships. Lastly, *Mzansi Movies* from its naming implies that the films represent all spaces in South Africa, as Mzansi is another term for the Republic of South Africa. Sugar-coating for this study entails the making of issues more positive or pleasant than they are<sup>1</sup>. Also, the films do political work by presenting a false consciousness through their hijacking of popular formats that are associated with African popular art forms. Narratives of neoliberalism and nation-building are extremely predominant in the formation of a sugar-coated image of blackness, the township and the rural, as they are agents in the creation of false consciousness.

Narratives of neoliberalism and nation-building are explored in this study as accounts that conceal the true state of black lives, the township and rural spaces. This study is informed by a definition of neoliberalism as an economic concept that advocates for limited state intervention in the economy, in favour of free enterprise. Furthermore, that which argues for economic liberation policies in the form of privatization, austerity, deregulation, free and reduced government spending to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society (Springer, Birch & MacLeavy, 2016). For South Africa to service its apartheid debt to the international community and attain economic growth, the neoliberal economic turn was adopted by the African National Congress (Bond, 2010). However, neoliberalism through its offspring which was the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy failed to improve the South African economy. On the other hand, nation-building was crucial in cementing the new Republic that had experienced the injustices of colonialism and apartheid.

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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Dictionary online. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sugarcoat>.

Nation-building involves the construction and structuring of national identity by the state (Deutsch, 2010). It aims to fortify the state by unifying its citizens which guarantees political stability and henceforth ensuring the state's longevity. Nation-building is sustained through popular rule, which is how modern nation-states are constructed. It further incorporates propaganda, whereby the state employs various means to promote certain ideologies that support its continuance. A black leadership through the African National Congress (ANC) usurped power in 1994 and had to immediately engage in the labour of nation-building. This nation-building led to the creation of new national paraphernalia with the new South African flag and national anthem. In the same period, President Nelson Mandela spoke of rainbow nationalism, national reconciliation and non-racialism. It is outright that the current South African state is built on the foundations of neoliberalism and a nation-building agenda of the ANC. This study focuses on extracting the neoliberal and nation-building narratives that sustain the current South African state and propagate for its endurance.

Furthermore, the study evaluates how nation-building policies that are predicated upon neoliberal policies are carried through in narratives and aesthetics that are intended for public consumption. Besides, these narratives and aesthetics play a role in establishing a euphoria of false consciousness. The following films are considered for analysis of *Ekasi: Our Stories*, namely, *Maid for Me* (2014), *Love at First Sip* (2015), *Piece Job* (2014), and *Iqiniso (The Truth)* (2015). With *Lokshin Bioskop* the following are examined: *Taxi Cheeseboy* (Taxi Tycoon) (2014), *Tin City* (2014), *Mgosi* (Gossip) (2014), *Uncle Malume* (Uncle Uncle) (2015) and *Battle of House* (2013). *Isitulo* (The Chair) (2016) and *Balungile* (They are good) (2018) were commissioned under *Mzansi Movies* which is owned by DSTV which was launched in 2016. These respective films can be described as made-for-television films since they are not intended for the cinema circuit but are commissioned by television networks to be exhibited exclusively on their channels (Browne, 1984). In the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies*, the films that are produced are 'popular' but yet they are subjected to mainstream processes of production and circulation. Also, these films as they are made from a vantage point of the 'popular', on the contrary, they seem to serve a different purpose.

The popularity of *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies* comes at the heels of popular film in Africa such as Nollywood which has resulted in the formation of various film initiatives across the African continent that concentrate on the experiences of Africans within their geographical locations (Haynes, 2000). Nollywood, *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* employ a formula of melodrama where the ending can be predicted as in the case of the telenovela. It is common for Nollywood films to be made into a two-part structure, which is the influence of soap operas and the telenovelas (Ibid.). However, *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies* have utilised a feature film structure to present stories.

The success of Nollywood and the broadcasting of its films by Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) from 2003 (Jedlowski, 2013) ushered forth an era that revealed people were extremely interested in stories that depicted their quotidian experiences<sup>2</sup>. Nollywood audiences were not disgruntled by novice filmmakers and inexperienced actors as this was overshadowed by the interest audiences had in the black stories that were being told by the people they shared a living space with (Krings & Okome, 2013).

The utilization of amateur filmmakers in the case of Nollywood was the formula in creating stories that proved to be popular. In 2009, ETV pioneered this type of black township films through its *Ekasi: Our Stories* series propelled by the immense demand for black-centered stories. Subsequently, DSTV in 2012, inspired by the success of Nollywood and its *Africa Magic* channel dedicated to broadcasting Nollywood films, embarked on the formation of a South African black township film channel, namely, *Mzansi Bioskop*. The 2008 and 2009 period in South Africa, was marred by a spike in xenophobic attacks and alarmingly this is the time when ETV and DSTV embarked on creating their version of popular films. Moreover, this maneuver can also be perceived as a ploy by the two networks amidst growing xenophobic tendencies to displace

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<sup>2</sup> Nollywood is also known as Nigerian video films which are dramatic films that are shot on video and marketed on cassettes and more recently on video compact disc (VCD) and they are also exhibited publicly through video projectors and television. The founding of the industry is credited to a businessman who wanted to sell off his stock of blank tapes and the direct to video release of the film *Living in Bondage* in 1992 which was a movie that dealt with a tale of the occult became a commercial success. This film paved the way for the entry of many producers and it established Nollywood. The closing down of public theatres due to civil unrest in the 1990s and the importing of Latin American tele-novellas by Nigeria television led to an era where local productions began to emerge to provide content that focused on the Nigeria people and their stories.

Nollywood. It can further be read as a strategy by South African capital and as an effect of neoliberalism, to introduce local films at a time when Afrophobia/xenophobia was on the rise.

The films by DSTV and ETV on the South African township follow the formula of Nollywood whereby the films that are commissioned are helmed by novice filmmakers and focus on the stories of ordinary people and their living spaces. Nollywood is a type of popular film due to its mass audiences and the discussions people have about its films in public spaces (Haynes, 2000). This is also the case with *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*, as they have been popular amongst audiences and this has led to more films being commissioned by the two networks<sup>3</sup>.

Nollywood is critical as it is illustrative of popular film in Africa and the inspiration behind the founding of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* by ETV and DSTV. Nigerian video films are renowned for their diverse visual aesthetics of Nigerian life from films that are set in traditional villages and to the majority which are city films that reflect all aspects of Nigerian city life, particularly, Lagos (Haynes, 2000). Lagos is depicted “with its freeways and potholed streets, its apartment blocks and slums, its street markets and car dealerships, its street vendors displaying dozens of local newspapers and newsmagazines” (Ibid, 2). It is noteworthy to recall that these representations delivered an extensive view of Nigerian society as they did not exclusively dwell on picturesque representations of the city but exposed all perspectives of it.

The different visual aesthetics of Nigerian spaces were extremely manifest in films made by autonomous filmmakers operating without Nigerian state funding. Brian Larkin (2008: 216) adds that Nollywood films are not apolitical as “they portrayed a moral framework which explains the insecurities in a society full of corrupt politicians, con-men, 419 scammers and unfaithful lovers”. The autonomy that Nollywood filmmakers had concerning to their productions permitted for continuous narratives that challenged inequalities within Nigerian society and that exposed the socio-economic trials of the time. This perspective insinuates a connection between Nollywood and African auteur

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/entertainment/2013/05/17/local-proves-lekker-as-low-budget-series-shine>, Retrieved 15 March 2016.

cinema concerning being politically conscious. However, Jude Akudinobi (2015) argues that sometimes the obsession with profits on the part of Nollywood filmmakers leads to the abdication of political intricacies in the films.

Currently, the Nigerian government is providing financial support to Nollywood because of its significance and contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Ibid). According to Akudinobi (2015: 137), “the government envisions a cinema of public good, a grandiose project embodying the ethos of nation, heritage, cultural conservation, and even tourism, and may conflate nationalist sentiments with artistic merits”. The issue of government supplying funding to films based on the vision mentioned above has the potential to erode artistic autonomy, as films could be high-jacked as tools for government propaganda that could be used to mask social realities, as had happened with African cinemas (see, for example, Harrow, 2007: 9).

Films created before government intervention serve as a yardstick to understand narratives that are common in films that are free from outside forces such as the government of the day and other private funding agencies who might envision their particular cinema. In the case of South Africa, *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* are funded by private television networks and their narratives seem to conceal, to some degree, some social realities of black spaces and identities. The sugar-coated representations of the township space by *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* are ambiguous amidst the complexities of social transformation since the advent of democracy in 1994. The government of the African National Congress (ANC) came into power in 1994 and had the task of improving the lives and living spaces of poor and marginalised communities.

The economic policies preferred by the ANC since 1994 from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and later on the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) have not been able to successfully improve the lives of the majority, who are poor (Williams & Taylor, 2000; Peet, 2002). Unemployment has been high due to the slow growth of the economy<sup>4</sup>. Various protests have been escalating

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<sup>4</sup> See Statistics South Africa,



due to lack of service delivery on the part of government and the failure to deliver on what has been promised to poor and marginalised electorates since 1994 (Mkhize, 2015; Alexander, 2010).

The majority of the poor and marginalized remain within the dilapidated townships and those that have had their lives improve since 1994 have been exiting the space (Saff, 1994). The sugar-coated representation by *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* in township films seems to be failing to reflect on the dynamic challenges confronted by people residing in the townships amidst frustrating economic hardship.

The departure in the representation of the township space from rigorous engagement with social woes to a watering down of socio-economic issues is of critical concern. Films such as *Come Back, Africa* (1959) and *Mapantsula* (1988) reflected on the plight of black people during Apartheid, raised political consciousness and further portrayed the reality of social conditions in the townships (Davis, 1996; Magogodi, 2003; Modisane, 2010).

*Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* are film initiatives created by novice filmmakers with financial support provided by privately-owned television networks. These films are created with finances from television networks, which was not the case with Nigeria's Nollywood at its inception which had financial autonomy and hence provided diverse representations of society. In the case of Nollywood, popular film depicted all spheres of Nigerian life, from luxurious spaces within Lagos to the slums that existed within the city (Haynes, 2000). In its creation of a broad representation of Nigerian life, Nollywood did not rely on finances from the state or broadcasters for its productions. This study focuses on *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies* as popular culture in the South African context and aims to interrogate representations that are generated in an industry where filmmakers do not have financial autonomy. Karin Barber (1989) emphasizes that popular art forms emerge from below or the margins. The case studies presented by this thesis focus on the appropriation of transnational popular art forms by

private television. The conceptual observation that can be made is that the 'popular' in this instance is being commandeered by neoliberal capital to advance its interests.

This study argues that there is a correlation between representations that tend to water down township realities, nation-building and neoliberalism. It further aims to explore how the aesthetic traditions of Third Cinema in South African filmmaking have been manipulated to an extent that they articulate a neoliberal view. Ives (2007: 153) buttresses the hypothesis above by her allusion to the perceptions held by the government concerning the role of television in post-apartheid South Africa:

South African television provides an image of South Africa that serves the government's attempts to construct a nation out of a divided past. In addition to entertaining, television programming aims to foster national unity through the redressing of historical wrongs and to encourage economic growth and foreign investment.

Many governments in Africa, after independence from colonial rule, perceived the media as a tool to be used in rebuilding their nations and this has also been the case with media in the new South Africa (Steenveld & Strelitz, 1998; Horwitz, 2001). This raises the question of media independence in the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies*, which are initiatives by non-public broadcasters.

Images of blackness and black spaces seem to be constructed in a manner that favours the dominant ideologies of post-apartheid South Africa. On the contrary, the argument put forward by the two networks, namely, DSTV and ETV is that their films provide an 'authentic' representation of township life<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, it is critical to interrogate this authenticity and how this conceptualisation is fraught with inaccuracies and leads to the generation of wrong perceptions. The designated images within the films have the potential to conceal the genuine experiences of black lives. This study probes the representation of blackness and the township space from the perspective of self-representation, as films are created by black township dwellers or insiders. However, it

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/entertainment/2013/05/17/local-proves-lekker-as-low-budget-series-shine>, Retrieved 25 September 2015.

is critical to note, as an argument, that insiders into a particular space have an uncanny way of seeing positivity in environments otherwise declared as wastelands and how their incisive observations can be hijacked for nationalist agendas. It further interrogates the filmic representation against political, social and economic transformations which have befallen since 1994.

## **Background to the study**

### *The origins of black representation in film*

Colonialism played a significant role in the misrepresentation of black people. Colonialism in Africa resulted in a system that represented black people from a gaze of colonialists. This was meant to dehumanize the Africans, to justify the conquest for Africa and colonization (Modisane, 2010; Tcheuyap, 2011; Niang, 2014).<sup>6</sup> Peter Davis (1996: 3) states that “the placing of Africans on the cinema screen reflected their dispossession, for their loss of political power on the field of battle determined their sitting in the field of focus: they forfeited the right to appear centre-screen”. The centre positions were reserved for white heroes and heroines. Africans appeared on screen as adjuncts to whites and affirmed the idea of white supremacy, as nothing much is depicted about the life of the African (Ibid.).

The colonial governments introduced a cinema to Africans which was different from the mainstream cinema of Europe and the United States. This, in essence, was to ensure that Africans never saw the negative of white lives.<sup>7</sup> The negative representation of the black subject by white America was motivated by the desire to suppress black people and to justify their position of servitude. This political strategy was also employed by

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<sup>6</sup>Colonialism meant that Africans were denied access to film and television production and this resulted in the misrepresentation of Africa (Harrow, 1999; Harrow, 2007). Africans were blocked from the technology of cinema as the technology was viewed as a tool that could be utilised for propaganda in French, English and Portuguese colonial territories across the African continent (Davis, 1996). The negative representation of the black subject in film was motivated by colonial conquest in the case of Africa.

<sup>7</sup> The creation of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment was solely to educate Africans, to make them adapt to new conditions and to provide recreation and entertainment (Notcutt, 1937). The Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment headed by L.A. Notcutt was able to determine that Africans could work in film production but mostly as assistants to their white counterparts. Notcutt later recommended that British Colonial Office establish local film units in Africa which helped Africans acquire skills in film production.

Europe in its colonization of Africa and its depiction of the continent as the 'Dark Continent'.

The early years of cinema in colonial South Africa sustained the misrepresentation of black people to justify their servitude. *De Voortrekkers* (1916) by Gustav Preller is one such example, it was inspired by the racist, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) as it was hell-bent on portraying the African as a savage, particularly the Zulu people that opposed the Boers (Maingard, 2007). *De Voortrekkers* was declared South Africa's national film as it promoted the propaganda of Afrikaner nationalism and excluded black people in film (Ibid.). *The Birth of a Nation* and *De Voortrekkers* projected an analogous perspective as in both films the birth of a new nation is depicted as predicated on the defeat and suppression of black people (Hees, 2003).

The year 1948 is significant as it is representative of the founding of apartheid hegemony which welcomed white supremacy and separated races above all (Maingard, 2007). Under this political order, race and class were the primary determinants of identity. At this point, independent white filmmakers decided to make a film that would be all black, namely, *African Jim* (1949) (aka *Jim Comes to Jo'burg*) which engaged black audiences with centralized black characters (Maingard, 2007). By the late 1950s, *Come Back, Africa* (1959) was created alongside four other films that centralized black identity and experience, namely, *Zonk!* (1950), *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951), *The Magic Garden* (1951) and *Song of Africa* (1951). These films, according to Davis (1996: 20), are representative of the beginning of 'black cinema' as they focused on black modernity for the first time.

These films on black lives were able to provide for the inclusion of Africans in cinema and to depict their lives under conditions of oppression and racial segregation. The first film to be directed by a black person was *U'Deliwe* (1975) by Simon Sabela which was produced by Heyns Films (Tomaselli, 1993). *U'Deliwe* was successful because it was initially created for radio and it was written by a novelist dramatist who understood the

dynamics of the black experience. *U'Deliwe* was successful in depicting a diverse township life although it was funded under the B-scheme film fund.<sup>8</sup>

Sabela also directed other films that focused on diverse themes around the issue of blackness one of which was *Inkedama* (1975), which was about a young man's struggle to make a success of his life and *Ikati Elimnyama* (1976), which portrayed a black middle-class businessman, Lefty Ndaba, who resided in a middle-class suburb rather than a black township neighbourhood (Maingard, 2007). The aspirations of being part of the black middleclass in the 1970s led Ndaba to engage in criminal activities to be successful. The film utilised the Blaxploitation genre of the 1970s from the United States and the Hollywood film genre for various generic elements (Ibid.). The themes explored in Sabela's films were popular with the black audiences, hence their success (Modisane, 2010). The 1980s, through the formation of black African language television channels TV2 and TV3 by the public broadcaster, presented television drama series that focused on black people and townships. TV2 was for Nguni languages and TV3 was for Sotho languages.

Although, the representation of blackness was largely negative during apartheid, there were attempts made in film to cover up their ideological stance through the use of black popular observations (Mhlambi, 2012). The television dramas of the 1980s are exemplary of this façade as “they featured aspirational content for the black middle class as a logical response to the national identity encouraged by the co-option policy” (Ibid, 101). Television dramas such as *Ifa Lakwa Mthethwa* (The inheritance of the Mthethwa family) and *Hlala Kwabafileyo* (Remain with the dead) supplied a perspective of the imaginary for the African National Congress (ANC) on how they wanted post-apartheid South Africa to be shaped. Mhlambi (2012: 102) argues that both television dramas used “African aesthetics as the pivotal axis through which these neo-liberal, post-apartheid ideologies and representations can be mediated”. African aesthetics are used as they are popular amongst the black majority and are further employed to

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<sup>8</sup> The B-Scheme subsidy was introduced at the request of white filmmakers who saw an opportunity to make money by producing African-language films starring Africans for mass African audiences. The scheme was an opportunity for the apartheid government to subsidize white entrepreneurs and, as a result, the film products of this subsidy can be viewed as the collaborative output of the National Party government and some of the white citizens of apartheid South Africa (Pelekar, 2010).

promote the ideals of neoliberalism and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa. *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* distillate on narratives of blackness in a black space which is the township and this space is critical as it is an integral part of black identity.

### *The township space and the politics of blackness*

The films by *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* are mostly made in Gauteng townships but eventually are viewed by audiences outside of Gauteng. These audiences unwittingly have geographical spaces in terms of planning that are similar to where the films are set. Therefore the films in this study are microscopic reflections of a broader geographical map of township spaces including spaces that are in the periphery. The history of racial segregation in South Africa dates back to Sir Theophilus Shepstone and his policy of administering the Zulu people. His policy of segregation is referred to as the precursor of the later policy of segregation, namely, apartheid (Welsh, 1971). Apartheid was formally instituted as state policy in 1948, but it dated from the first white settlers in the Cape in 1652 where racial segregation was a formal practice. In 1950, The Group Areas Act was promulgated and it propagated for the stringent separation of all the different races in South Africa. It is critical to note that races were separated even before the introduction of the Group Areas Act and this only meant that apartheid was now legislation. Townships originated as South Africa's requirement for inexpensive migratory black labor. The first modern formal townships were in Kimberley, where migrant workers came to work in the mines following the discovery of diamonds in 1867 (Bond, 2000).<sup>9</sup>

The Group Areas Act (1950) was meant to create a political environment where the different races could be granted different privileges. At the core of Afrikaner nationalism was the 'Othering' of black people. The principal idea was to demonize the black subject in order to justify the horrendous living conditions black people were subjected to. The

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<sup>9</sup> Black people were forbidden from owning real estate property except in townships near Johannesburg such as Alexandra and Sophiatown that preceded the 1913 Land Act. Townships increased across Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, East London, the Vaal, Bloemfontein and Pietersburg as industry sought an abundance of black labour during the high-growth era of the 1930s through to the 1960s. Mining companies along with other prominent firms built houses, transportation and basic health facilities (Van Onselen, 1976).

Act allowed for the creation of whites-only zones and black-only zones which further provided the Afrikaner government with the ability to monitor the movements of the black populations.

The townships were created on the periphery of cities and were created as temporary living areas (Ribane, 2006). This could allow the black labourers to commute to white areas to work. During apartheid, black people were evicted from areas designated as 'white-only' and were forced to live in segregated townships. Townships tend to have large informal settlements nearby which also raises the issue of inadequate resources and housing on the part of the government.<sup>10</sup>

In post-1994 South Africa, a leftist basic needs Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was launched as a response to improving the lives of black people in townships. There were fights amongst citizens over RDP houses, corruption existed around the awarding of houses and there were allegations of foreigners being given houses before citizens who had long been on the housing list. These problems created a new cesspool of re-marginalised people and increased the divide between white and black spaces.

Within a space of two years, the government converted to a rightist, neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy accentuating privatization, deregulation and trade liberation (Peet, 2002). GEAR was criticised for failing to deliver economic and job growth and for its failure to redistribute income and socio-economic opportunities in favour of the poor. The government is realizing its failures to improve the lives of township dwellers and has attempted to work on initiatives to improve the townships. These initiatives have focused on revitalising the townships through projects such as the Alexandra Renewal Project and the Orange Farm Renewal Project, to name a few. However, there have been increased service delivery protests across

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<sup>10</sup> The Native Resettlement Act of 1954 created a situation whereby government could forcibly evict black people from places such as Sophiatown and relocate them in township spaces (Gorodnov, 1983). This was fundamental to apartheid policy as it allowed sufficient distance between the townships and the cities that were only inhabited by white people. This arrangement led to the exclusive development of white areas and the neglect of black spaces by the government.

South African townships with citizens blaming the government for failing to fulfill its mandate (Mkhize, 2015; Alexander, 2010).

The advent of democratic rule also led to the creation of a black middle class that opted to relocate to suburbs that were exclusively inhabited by white people during apartheid (Mbembe & Nuttal, 2004). This exodus has created a picture of the township as a space that needs to be abandoned when one has acquired wealth and status. Although initiatives are being taken to develop townships, they are still behind in catching up with the towns and cities and the task of government since 1994 has been to develop these spaces to give dignity to the citizens who still inhabit them. Middle-class housing developments have been facilitated within the townships through ventures such as Cosmopolitan housing projects which require people to pay for houses and inner-city high-density accommodation projects within the City of Johannesburg and elsewhere. These developments perpetuate the spatial demographic problems initiated by colonialism and apartheid and this reflects on the African National Congress (ANC) as failing to create alternative spatial demographic housing projects that reflect rainbow nationalism. Currently, the National Development Plan (2030) has been launched by the government to limit inequality and poverty within the South African populace.

#### *The public broadcaster and the broadcasting of the black subject*

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was established in 1924 with the formation of three radio stations which provided the English and Afrikaans service (Hayman & Tomaselli, 1989). During the Second World War, in order to soothe black labour, a broadcast programme on three mornings a week via the English and Afrikaans channels that were operated in isiZulu, isiXhosa and Sesotho was instituted but was later suspended in 1945 (Ibid.).

Content for black people was only added if it was to the benefit of the state or capital in the case of the SABC. More African languages were added to radio by the SABC in 1960. Hayman and Tomaselli (1989: 59) reflect on the relationship between the SABC and the government of the National Party (NP):



The wide powers given to the SABC in the Broadcasting Amendment Act (no 49 of 1960) reveal the extent to which government and broadcasting began to serve each other's interest more directly.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), in the 1960s, played a role in promoting models of class practice that were aligned to capital (Tomaselli, 1984; Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1989). Additionally, the broadcaster stated that individuals that were appointed to the SABC had to identify with the dominant ideology (Ibid.). This is a crucial argument as broadcasting began in South Africa with the SABC and this validates the early influence of capital in South African broadcasting. The SABC had a task to support the status quo brought forward by capitalism through broadcasting (Tomaselli, Hayman, Jack, Nxumalo, Tomaselli & Ngcobo, 1989). This also manifested through co-optation strategies in the 1970s and 1980s that aimed to advance capitalism and shield Afrikaner nationalism.

The National Party<sup>11</sup> wanted to control the content that was broadcast by the SABC but this control was limited due to the dynamics of a medium such as radio. Gunner (2011) articulates that radio serial dramas in isiZulu by the 1970s had established a large audience in Natal and on the Witwatersrand which was the populous mining centre of South Africa. The radio dramas began broadcasting in the late 1950s and they were subject to cultural and political duress and thrived (Gunner, 2000a). Gunner (2011: 163) argues that “the element of control and social engineering of which the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and Radio Bantu were capable of had its limits”. The manipulation by the SABC of black radio content did not reach its full fruition as radio became “a space of discursive freedom, a place for reinvention in which new identities could be explored and old truths re-evaluated” (Ibid, 164). Radio drama in isiZulu is hailed for being resilient during Apartheid and this is mainly due to “the resilience and restlessness of the language, the addressivity of its genres, the creativity of producers and consumers alike made it impossible to control or even monitor with more than minimal success” (Ibid.). This case of isiZulu radio drama reflects on the modernity that

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<sup>11</sup> The National Party (Nasionale Party) was a political party in South Africa founded in 1915 and it became the governing party of the country in 1924. It was out of power during World War II but returned to power in 1948 until 1994.

was created by black people themselves and to the detriment of the one envisaged by the apartheid state at the time.

Television was only introduced in South Africa in 1976 which was late in comparison to other countries in Africa such as Nigeria and Kenya and this was largely due to the fears of the right-wing sectors of the ruling National Party (NP). The rationale behind these fears was based on the assumption that television could undermine the Afrikaner language and culture (Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1989). The government also required patronage for its policies from white people and it feared that the introduction of television with productions from outside South Africa could undermine the policies of segregation.

In defense of the adoption of television, the Meyer Commission understood communication as a one-way process that allowed specific groups to be taught something rather than offering people the opportunity to express their views and ideas. It was further argued that television could be employed to support the national interest. This was not to be easily achieved with black citizens as the 1970s presented renewed opposition to the apartheid state.

The 1970s were accompanied by increased political intervention by trade unions and students. South Africa was in a recession, the government was struggling to convince international investors that apartheid policies were working and there were retrenchments with a majority of the young workforce returning to school. Strikes were common amongst black workers in the 1970s which was mainly due to the South Africa Students Organisation (SASO) which formed in 1968 under the leadership of Bantu Steve Biko (Lodge & Nasson, 1991). SASO articulated that “it was necessary to liberate blacks from their own attitudes of inferiority and subservience before political rights could be achieved” (Ibid, 7).

SASO had branches nationwide. The labour force, through its federation, organized strikes, rents were not being paid and there was an agenda to make the country ungovernable (Ibid.). The government needed strategies to deal with the unrest in the townships and it turned to the media to mitigate the revolts. Radio Bantu, which was

established in 1960, was the harbinger in the co-optation of black people with capital and it was utilised by the SABC to emphasise the benefits of homelands and the need for an urban-based black middle class (Tomaselli et al. 1989). Television was intended to respond to the difficulties the government had with black citizens; refocusing the attention of black viewers away from political mayhem that was prevalent in the country.

In 1976, only one television channel was introduced and it broadcasted in English and Afrikaans. A black channel was only introduced in 1982 and it was split into two in 1983. The channels were created to reach the black middle class and their content worked to co-opt black people into a coalition with capital.

Tomaselli et al. (1989) state that various programmes, especially documentaries on TV2 and TV3, created a picture of the black middle-class as permanent residents in urban areas, in the ruse to provide sufficient workforce to the economy due to a shortage of skilled labour. The state had a strong influence on television as the medium was used largely to attain its objectives of pressuring black people to supply their labour to the South African economy. The content on TV2 and TV3 presented shifting identities of blackness responding all the time to the political situation they were trying to diffuse.

Television, through TV2 and TV3, was able to provide a service for the black middle class and the rationale being to co-opt this class into an alliance with capital. The reception of these channels was mainly in the metropolitan areas largely due to how the transmitters were distributed (Tomaselli et al, 1989).

The state realized that to ensure conditions of capital reproduction, people needed extensive training to work in the manufacturing sector. Prime slots on TV2 and TV3 were filled with documentaries and magazine programmes that emphasized the importance of education for success (Ibid.). Co-optation also involved the provision of better housing for urban-based workers with the possibility of owning homes (Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1989).

Adequate housing was perceived as criteria for a stable workforce and TV2 and TV3 communicated through their content a “petty-bourgeois orientation which emphasizes the desirability of landscaped gardens, renovations, a pride in the home and the

wholesale adoption of household appliances” (Tomaselli et al., 1989: 156). The rural black dwellers were excluded from the mainstream economy and television content also worked to reassure the urban blacks that their rural counterparts were affluent. Urban dwellers were coerced into subscribing to ideologies of production and consumption through programming provided by TV2 and TV3 and this content did not challenge the interests of capital and white hegemony.

The television drama *Senzekile (It Occurred)* (1981) explored the possibility of black people migrating from the rural areas to the cities and portrayed a picture of them settling there permanently. On the contrary, the drama also contributed to softening the stance on influx control as it assisted the state in creating a positive image on issues of black urban migration. It is critical to note that there were conflicting themes in films and television dramas concerning these issues.

There were also dramas that were apolitical, that represented the occult and the underside of black people. Dramas such as *Lesilo Rula* (1987; 1990) and *Ululu Ubuyile* (1990) which were directed by white filmmakers focused on popular themes such as witchcraft and superstitions which were largely part of colonial discourses. Black people were introduced into writing for television through *Bophelo Ke Semphekgo* (1986 – 1996), *Thlakantsuke* (1991) and many more productions into the 1990s and early 2000s. The film directors were white but the stories were written by black writers who had the knowledge of black experiences.<sup>12</sup> It is evident that black film and television were biased and legitimized apartheid by presenting negative stereotypes of black people but within the same era, some films and television dramas countered this gaze.

Similar to film, the production companies that created these films were owned by white people and most dramas were directed by white filmmakers with a black person as an assistant (Mhlambi, 2012). The black assistant would advise the white director on the stories and hence this led to the insight that made these dramas popular amongst black audiences. The dramas became even more interesting when the scripts for the dramas were written by black individuals that worked on radio dramas (Tomaselli, 1989). Some

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<sup>12</sup> Mhlambi, I.J. Black television dramas since the 1980s: The construction of blackness, identity and production politics. Unpublished article.

writers of the television dramas were theatre writers such as Gibson Kente and others who were drawn from the African language literary tradition such as Sidney Shabangu (Mhlambi, 2012). Television allowed Shabangu “to further explore the complexities and intrigues of contemporary African lifestyles brought about by the interplay between tradition and modernity” (Ibid, 105).

### *The political economy of post-apartheid television*

Television, as a medium with the capacity to depict dramas of everyday life, has the ability to build a normative national consciousness (Ives, 2007). During apartheid, television was used as an instrument to project the views of apartheid and, with the dawn of democracy post-1994, as a tool to forge a new South Africa (Barnett, 1999). Television in South Africa is tasked with entertaining audiences, forging national unity, redressing historical wrongs, encouraging economic growth and foreign investment (Ives, 2007: 156). Ives stresses the quandary South African television finds itself in terms of the diverse roles it has to play and of course some roles will be more predominant than others.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) was created post-1994 to address the issues of broadcast transformation and independence (IBA Act, 1993):

To provide for the regulation of broadcasting activities in the public interest; for that purpose to establish a juristic person to be known as the Independent Broadcasting Authority which shall function wholly independently of State, governmental and party political influences and free from political or other bias or interference; to provide for the representation of that Authority by and its functioning through a council, and to define the powers, functions and duties of that Authority; to provide for the devolution of powers relating to the administration, management, planning and use of the broadcasting services frequency bands to the said Authority; and to provide for incidental matters.

The Act permitted the possibilities of having new broadcasters and also investment by foreign media groups in the South African television market. Furthermore, it created a landscape where broadcasting could be independent of the government and it fostered

the emergence of private broadcasting networks such as DSTV and ETV. The regulation, through the IBA, was meant to encourage diversity in broadcasting (IBA Act, 1993).

ETV was launched in 1998, as a free-to-air private television channel and was founded with the assistance of American investors.<sup>13</sup> Midi TV is the company that won the license to launch ETV and it was owned by Hosken Consolidated Investments (HCI) and Remgro. The HCI group has invested in hotel and leisure, interactive gaming, media and broadcasting, transport, mining, clothing, and properties. Warner Bros sold its 25 percent share of ETV because South African law does not allow a foreign company to own more than 25 percent of a South Africa television channel<sup>14</sup>. Since then, HCI's main shareholder is the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU), which is an affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)<sup>15</sup>. Other shareholders are Opportune Investments and Sabido Investments (Proprietary) Limited, which directly owns ETV<sup>16</sup>. HCI, through Sabido, also holds 41.7 percent share of Youth radio station (YFM).

The channel was involved in broadcasting soft pornographic films from 2001 to 2010 on weekends which created a lot of controversy for the station and later it decided to do away with such content based on grievances by civil society and the state. The Bill of Rights provides for freedom of speech and expression which means that individuals, the press and the media have the right to express themselves without fear of prosecution.<sup>17</sup> However, the pornographic programming of ETV provided a case whereby parliament curbed such freedom to protect certain morals and lately the Secrecy Bill is being

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<sup>13</sup> Midi TV was the consortium that won the broadcasting licence to operate the channel e.tv in 1998. Warner Bros. had a 25 percent stake in e.tv at its founding in 1998. It is currently owned by black empowerment group Hosken Consolidated Investments (HCI) and Remgro, a part of the Rupert business empire. Remgro Group has investments in food, liquor and home care, banking, healthcare, industrial, insurance, infrastructure and corporate finance. Warner Bros. sold its 25 percent stake in ETV as the law could not allow it to exercise full ownership. South African law does not allow foreign television entities to own more than 25 percent of a television channel.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.hci.co.za/media-broadcasting/sabido-to-amplify-e-tv-stake/>, Retrieved 17 March 2016.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.fin24.com/Tech/Companies/Sactwu-HCI-deny-political-plot-in-Golding-saga-20141024>, Retrieved 25 March 2016.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/financial/2015/02/11/hci-denies-rift-with-shareholder>, Retrieved 15 March 2016.

<sup>17</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), Chapter 2: The Bill of Rights

proposed which aims to limit access to state information.<sup>18</sup> The pornographic programming by ETV was part of parliamentary debates and the CEO, Marcel Golding, was asked to appear in parliament but he never did<sup>19</sup>.

There appears to be conformity amongst public and private broadcasters in South Africa on what constitutes suitable news. This highlights the convoluted relationship between the media and the state in neoliberal capitalist societies. The former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ETV, Marcel Golding, upon his resignation stated that the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), wanted to control the station's news content through direct interference<sup>20</sup>. Golding is a former National Union of Mineworkers deputy general secretary who served under the current president of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, 25 years ago. When Golding was CEO, the government accused ETV news of projecting a negative perspective of the country.<sup>21</sup> However, since the resignation of Golding, the news have become balanced and similar to those of other channels owned by the SABC. Although the IBA Act guarantees freedom of expression on the part of broadcasters, the case of ETV is a typical example of state interference, whereby the station had to alter its content to conform to state dictates.

DSTV was launched in 1995 and is owned by Nasionale Pers (Naspers). This was once a National Party-aligned Afrikaner media conglomerate that adopted an international perspective in 1996 in terms of its content amidst an era of increased globalization. Naspers established the Electronic Media Network (M-NET) in 1986, which in post-apartheid South Africa, expanded to satellite television, namely, DSTV. M-NET was the first and only private pay television in South Africa and it did not contribute to better pluralism in terms of ownership and access as it was aimed at the already well-served, white, up-market viewers (Wigston, 2001). In terms of its contribution to local film production, M-NET sponsored four Afrikaans films in 1990 and in 1994 it launched *New Directions* an initiative intended to stimulate skills development and provide

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.r2k.org.za/secretcy-bill/>, Retrieved 15 April 2016.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/66/8559.html>, Retrieved 16 March 2016.

<sup>20</sup> <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-10-27-marcel-golding-resigns-from-etv>, Retrieved 25 March 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Golding resigned from e.tv in 2014 due to allegations that he bought shares from Ellis Holdings without consultation.

opportunities for emerging film practitioners in South Africa<sup>22</sup>. Its shareholding changed in 1995 when it initiated *Phuthuma* which granted a 5% stake to 8000 previously disadvantaged communities and in 1998 with *Phuthuma Futhi* it offered a 30% stake to about 3000 benefactors.<sup>23</sup> Audiences for DSTV have disposable income and subscribe to the network on the basis that it caters to their desired content.

### **Rationale for the study**

There are intricate relationships in post-1994 television in South Africa due to the restructuring of television broadcasting which allowed for the existence of independent private television broadcasters. It is crucial to ascertain how this restructuring has had an impact on television films that are located in black township spaces. A substantial amount of research has been done on the representation of the South African township and blackness in mainstream cinema and television (Ellapen, 2007; Stadler, 2008; Mhlambi, 2012; Sulelo, 2015).

Mhlambi (2012) discovered that new themes that supported nation-building and neoliberal policies emerged in apartheid television drama series. She highlights the politics of television which date back to the 1970s and the co-optation ploy of apartheid that utilised TV2 and TV3 to advance the ideals of the apartheid state. She further elaborates on the relationship between television content for black citizens as content that was created to advance the ideals of capital and nation-building.

This current study focuses on private broadcasters, namely, ETV and DSTV, together with their township films which are expected to represent the township space and blackness from an authentic standpoint. Mhlambi (2012) reveals how middle-class aspirations are sold to black South Africans with *Hlala kwabafileyo* and *Ifa lakwa Mthethwa*. She argues that this representation paved the way for the new dispensation of the ANC in 1994. Mhlambi's study is critical to the current research as it provides an understanding of the political economy of television and the macrofactors, which inform the content of broadcasters in post-1994 South Africa. Mhlambi further helps refocus

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<sup>22</sup> <http://mnetcorporate.co.za/history/>, Retrieved 15 February 2016.

<sup>23</sup> <http://mnetcorporate.co.za/history/>, Retrieved 16 April 2016.



attention to strategies devised to take attention away from serious social issues thus helping the current research to explore the representation of blackness and the township amidst social and economic problems in post-apartheid South Africa.

Neoliberalism and nation-building are put forward as the impetus for the sugar-coated representation of the township in *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*. This is similar to the way Mhlambi was able to demonstrate that the preparation of a neoliberal economy was predicated upon positive representation of black middle-classness. Therefore, extending the argument around media as a tool for constructing society, the current study explores how reality about the township is watered down in favour of images and narratives that highlight black middle-class aspirations while suppressing those of lesser social classes. Its engagement with private broadcasters allows for one to interrogate the relationship between independent television and the state and to further probe the autonomy of the private broadcasters.

Other studies that have looked at the mainstream film representation of the South African township in post-apartheid South Africa discovered that negative stereotypes of the township prevailed in some films (Ellapen, 2007; Stadler, 2008; Parker, 2012). Ellapen (2007), for example, found out that the township space was represented negatively based on images similar to Township Art of the 1950s and 1960s in post-apartheid productions such as *Wooden Camera* (2003) and *Tsotsi* (2005).

Post-apartheid mainstream cinema was stagnant in terms of its representation of the township space and was not reflective of the social change that resulted from the democratic dispensation of 1994 (Ellapen, 2007; Stadler, 2008). Concerning *Tsotsi*, problems of misrepresentation of the township space were also allotted to the fact that the director was white and not an insider on the township (Ibid.).

The current research engages the findings of these scholars (Ellapen, 2007; Stadler, 2008; Mhlambi, 2012; Sulelo, 2015) about the township films by offering new insights on films that are created by novice township filmmakers who are familiar with the space. It does not solely interrogate the binary positions of positive or negative representation but it explores the construction of reality or truth about the township and black identity from

a black gaze even though this gaze is supported by white capital and exhibited in platforms created by it.

*Ekasi: Our Stories* appear to have taken a paradigm shift in the representation of the township space as the representation seems to be positive (Sulelo, 2015). Sulelo (2015) explores the altering representation of black males within the short film series *Ekasi: Our Stories* and observed that the representation had somehow shifted towards being positive. Black men in the films are offered dignity and the study argues that black image construction is continually being redefined due to the influences of political and socio-economic change. Sulelo (2015) further notes that women are represented as progressive in terms of careers but they still rely on having men to solve the problems in their lives.

The shortcomings of films that were studied by Sulelo are that they are reflective of the sugarcoating that is assigned to issues of patriarchal dominance whereby the economic wellbeing of women is used to conceal their social plight. Sulelo's study delves into an inquiry of how the positive representation assists in upholding the current status quo. This research links representation and political economy in the quest to understand the changing representation of blackness and the township space. This study focuses on how middle-class aspirations are used to exclusively represent the township and black identity thereby concealing the true state of black spaces and black lives. Whilst Sulelo only focused on black masculinity, this particular study probes blackness in its entirety and offers a perspective on the aesthetics selected for representing the township and the rural space.

The rise of privately-owned television networks as platforms governed by profit and their provision for the exhibition of black township films is of critical concern. Private broadcasters in the case of ETV and DSTV in post-apartheid South Africa have an obligation to appease their shareholders by yielding substantial profits and on the other hand, as stakeholders in the country, they also have to support nation-building. The study hypothesizes that the decisions to depict the virtuous images of the township while deviating from bad images work to sell neoliberalism and nation-building.

The research utilises township films by private television networks to demonstrate the relationship between private television and the state. Public broadcasting in the case of the SABC has always been central in promoting the agenda of the government (Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1989; Mhlambi, 2012). Additionally, private television can be utilised by its proprietors who use their economic power to “convert media power into public influence and political pressure” (Habermas, 2006: 421).

Ginsborg (2004) elaborates on how media mogul, Silvio Berlusconi,<sup>24</sup> succeeded in changing the media culture of his country by shifting media attention away from political education to depoliticized entertainment. Also, Brazil highlights this problematic political economy of television as its television system is subjected to direct government interference and market forces (de Magalhães Castro, 1990). The largest television network in Brazil, Rede Globo, is privately owned and it was formed before the emergence of the public broadcaster. The television system in Brazil is not only run by advertisers but it is also subject to government interference and political elites’ manipulations through legislations and direct contacts. Broadcasting licenses can be revoked or delayed if television networks oppose the current status quo. Brazilian television has been accused of being too Americanized and promoting superficial consumerism. Furthermore, it has been blamed for having a general conservative bias and failing to represent traditionally oppressed classes such as Afro-Brazilians, Native Brazilians, poor women and favela inhabitants.

Also, the United States television is driven by the market motives which emphasize maximizing audiences by striving for the broadest and conventional appeals at the expense of political and social issues (Ibid.). This research argues that private television networks are not autonomous entities and that they seem to be aligned to the government agenda.

*Ekasi: Our Stories, Lokshin Bioskop and Mzansi Movies* have commissioned a substantial number of films on the township yearly and an investigation of some of these

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<sup>24</sup>Silvio Berlusconi is an Italian media tycoon and politician who previously served as the Prime Minister of Italy in four governments. Berlusconi is the controlling shareholder of Mediaset and has owned the Italian football club A.C. Milan since 1986.

films is expected to generate new knowledge on the evolving image of blackness and black spaces. Limited attention has been granted to the exploration of the positive representation of black spaces in post-apartheid South Africa amidst the altered political and economic conditions. The positive representation can create a picture of black people as being well-off whilst on the contrary, it works to cover the desolations black lives are subjected to, in post-apartheid South Africa.

## **Research Questions**

The research seeks to examine how blackness and black spaces such as the township and the rural areas are represented in films that are created by novice filmmakers for television networks and to explore how narratives in these films conceal the realities of black lives in post-apartheid South Africa. This investigation is guided by the following questions:

1. How do narratives of neoliberalism and nation-building buttress the concealing of township realities?
2. How does black middle-classness work to represent the township in the films?
3. What narratives and aesthetics are utilised to represent the post-apartheid township and the underclass in the films?
4. What narratives are presented about the challenges that confront post-apartheid black South Africa?
5. How are black women represented in the films in relation to the township space and the rural space?
6. How are popular films beginning to establish a particular trope of dealing with selected themes that feed into the neoliberalist worldview?

## **Literature Review**

The review of related studies presented here covers four distinctive but interrelated categories, namely, blackness in South African film and television, the perspectives of African film, popular film in Africa and black spaces. The literature surveyed presents a history of how black people and black spaces have been represented in the past. Furthermore, it helps with an enhanced understanding of the analogies between how

the state-controlled black representation during the apartheid period, how the colonial governments represented black people and how Hollywood misrepresented black people through Blaxploitation films that were produced at the height of black liberation discourses in the United States of America.

## **Blackness in South African film and television**

### *Colonial cinema*

This section covers scholarship on blackness and provides a perspective on the evolving image of the black character in South African film and television. The early years of filmmaking in South Africa resulted in the negative representation of blackness and this was mainly due to colonisation and later the apartheid policy. The colonial experience resulted in the creation of films such as *The Zulu's Heart* (1908) and *A Zulu's Devotion* (1916) that portrayed distorted and biased images of Africans. These films only portrayed Africans as either good or bad based on their actions towards whites. This determined whether they were the "Faithful Servant" or the "Savage Other" (Davis, 1996: 9). These films further endorsed the image of whites as masters over Africans and as worthy of African fidelity (Ibid.).

*De Voortrekker* (1916) is referred to as the first film to be made that confronted the representation of a nation (Shepperson & Tomaselli, 2002; Maingard, 2007). The film was described as propaganda for Afrikaner nationalism as it solely aimed to represent Afrikaner identity exclusively as the South African nation. The black majority were portrayed as villains that posed a threat to the establishment of the white order in South Africa. This focalisation is critical as it offers insight into the origins of the negative representation of black people in mainstream film. *De Voortrekkers* is critical as it provides the first images of black people on screen and it further demonstrates how film was utilised to create a favourable political position for the advancement of whites. In addition, the film, *The Symbol of Sacrifice* (1918), promoted British imperialism alongside the Afrikaner (Maingard, 2007). These films established the foundation for the racist constructions of black people on screen whilst upholding white supremacy.

Alternative representations of blackness were introduced by independent white filmmakers that challenged the representation of white Afrikaner and British filmmakers. *African Jim* (1949) (a.k.a *Jim Comes to Joburg*) and *Come Back, Africa* (1959) were created alongside four other films that centralized black identity and experience, namely, *Zonk!* (1950), *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951), *The Magic Garden* (1951) and *Song of Africa* (1951). These films, according to Davis (1996: 20), are representative of the beginning of 'black cinema' as they focused on black modernity for the first time. The films further engaged black audiences with centralized black characters. *African Jim* portrayed black culture as valuable and it puts Africans in central positions. *The Magic Garden* provided a decent idea of township life, the community, the religion, and the poor conditions black people endured (Ibid). These alternative films directed by foreign white filmmakers portrayed a different perspective of blackness and aimed to reflect extensively on black lives. These representations were critical as they exposed the abject poverty of black people under colonialism and apartheid.

### *Apartheid Cinema*

The B-scheme government film subsidy was initiated to create films for black audiences between 1973 and 1990 and the films were created by white producers (Paleker, 2010). The scheme focused on African-language films and used Africans as actors. The scheme allowed the National Party government to subsidize white entrepreneurs through this scheme (Ibid.).

The B-scheme government film subsidy allowed for the production of the first film to be directed by a black person *U'Deliwe* (1975). It was directed by Simon Sabela and was produced by Heyns Films (Tomaselli, 1993). *U'Deliwe* was successful in depicting a diverse township life (Modisane, 2010). The township was well articulated in the film which appraises the concept of the story being told by an insider, in this case, Simon Sabela. Films from this era that were produced by Heyns Films such as *iKati Elimnyama* and *Ngaka* (1976) promoted racially and ethnically-centered policies amongst the black population and aligned their discourses with apartheid hegemony (Msomi, 2003). Paleker (2010) provides an alternative argument and says that films made by Simon Sabela and Matthews Monika were superior to the ones made by their

white counterparts under the B-scheme and were of high production value with authentic cultural representation. It can be argued that through the state film subsidies such as the A- scheme and the B-scheme, filmmakers were limited in their representation as awarding of subsidy was dependent on conforming to rules stipulated in both subsidies (Tomaselli, 1989). Because television representation of blackness is the main focus of this study, it utilises television content as case studies.

### *Apartheid television*

There are three distinct phases with regards to the construction of black images on television; the first phase covers 1981-1985, the second phase 1986-1990 and the last phase 1990-1993. While black constructions during the first phase drew much from a visual language from mainstream cinema and black cinema, later constructions begin to show a different development.

Mhlambi (2012), for example, reflects on how black television dramas from the mid-1980s were utilised to lay grounds for post-1994 policies of neoliberalism through dramas such *Ifa lakwa Mthethwa* and *Hlala Kwabafileyo*. Television dramas are crucial as they are reflective of the television production environment, which is the focus of the present study. Dramas in this era were produced largely for the black middle-class by the government in order to co-opt them into an alliance with capital. In this instance, certain dramas were meant to reflect on black people as being well off economically while residing within a racist state. In essence, the images of blackness presented through these dramas were supportive of a racial capitalist state and, in a significant way, foreshadowed neoliberal policies and nation-building, a political economy that failed to reflect on the plight of the suffering black majority. The narratives of racial capitalism, same as with those of neoliberalism and nation-building, acted as components that concealed the true state of black lives and their living spaces.

This focalisation relates to this current study whereby neoliberalism and nation-building are central in black representation on *Ekasi: Our stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*. The films on *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* project the township as an improved space since the new dispensation of 1994. Films such as *Uncle Malume* and *Battle of House*

depict the township in terms of middle-class characteristics of big houses that are usually financed by commercial banks and its growing number of shopping centres and malls.

When informal settlements and RDP houses are shown, it is usually with few shots and using a fleeting panning shot. In the film, *Iqiniso (The Truth)* (2015), the problem of unemployment is attributed to alcohol abuse and laziness. No reference is made to the state of the economy and when the character, Sobantu, stops drinking he immediately finds employment. In the film, *Uncle Malume* (2015), entrepreneurship is reflected on as the solution to poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, the tender system which is criticised for enriching a few is glorified as a solution for black township dwellers. The tender system has been accused of widening the gap between the rich and poor. In *Uncle Malume*, foreigner shop owners who are Somali and Pakistani nationals are depicted as creating social problems for township dwellers. In *Maid for Me*, the township is appraised for its cuisine and lifestyle that is different from the suburbs and characters reflect on these as the source of their contentment with township life. Middle-classness is central to *Maid for Me*, as women are represented as successful businesswomen and others as spoilt housewives that have black domestic workers while residing in townships.

### ***Post-apartheid cinema and television***

The post-apartheid government sought to redress major unfair film production practices that have become institutionalised since the beginning of filmmaking in South Africa. These reforms were to affect both television and cinema film production practices. Some of these changes were immediately felt in some television productions to emerge from 1999 onwards.

The programming of the early 1990s led the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), to incorporate social engineering policies such nation-building (Teer-Tomaselli, 1997; Ives 2007; Evans, 2010) and neo-liberal policies (Laden, 1997; Kruger, 2010) which were in line with the political economy of the new dispensation. The shift in policy by the SABC provided an alternative model to the



apartheid past, however, the socio-economic and cultural contexts of production and reception have remained the most daunting task for transforming not only television productions but the South African film production in general (McClusky, 2009; Dovey, 2009; Mhlambi, 2012).

On the other hand, the new dispensation in 1994 led to the formation of the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) which was tasked with improving South African film by creating productions that represented previously marginalised citizens and that engaged social issues (Twiggs, 2003; Maingard, 2007). These productions were meant to focus on the experiences of black people and to reflect on their lives in the new South Africa.

Laura Twiggs (2003) highlights how the film, *Jump the Gun* (1996), was revolutionary in its representation of post-apartheid South Africa. She states that *Jump the Gun* had been able to depart from old models of representation especially concerning gender and that it provided a platform to understand how women choose to represent themselves. *Jump the Gun*, as a film, sensitized people on the issues of feminism and racism in the early years of the new dispensation. These issues were of great concern to the South African state which was being rebuilt following many years of apartheid and censorship in terms of freedom of expression. The film comes across as the bedrock of films that attempt to raise social and political consciousness in post-1994 South Africa.

Moreover, films such as *Hijack Stories* (2000), *Tsotsi* (2005), *Wooden Camera* (2003) and *Drum* (2004) have emerged since the new dispensation and they focus on the township. Maingard (2007) states that the initiatives by the government through the NFVF and the Electronic Media Network (MNET) led to the creation of many films by South Africans which addressed various issues in the new South Africa.

Another significant phase for South African film and television production was the post-1999 era where a television drama series *Yizo Yizo*, which used popular formats, emerged to focus on social ills that inspired debates from their audiences (Barnett, 1999). *Yizo Yizo* was a drama series on television that focused on township schools and blackness. The drama was controversial in its depiction of issues on violence in

township schools and yet it portrayed multiple identities of blackness. It also engaged issues of homosexuality and sexual violence in the township (Andersson, 2004; Modisane, 2010; Mhlambi, 2012). Modisane (2010) states that the television drama series had a captive audience as it was broadcast during prime-time television. He further states that the drama series highlighted many social issues that pertained to the lives of township people and black identity in post-apartheid South Africa. Although *Yizo Yizo* was criticised for romanticizing social issues in some public platforms, the series was able to create debates about the social conditions of township schools and black identity.

*Yizo Yizo* is relevant as it depicts a vast representation of the township and it provided a perspective on the challenges of post-apartheid townships and blackness. The series was able to inspire debate and henceforth provide a podium where reality could be negotiated. *Yizo Yizo* utilised popular forms to communicate its message and was able to portray the reality on the state of townships and blackness. Moreover, Mhlambi (2012) emphasises how *Yizo Yizo* had succeeded in raising crucial issues on the lives of African youth and how colonialism and apartheid history had affected the outlook of youth in the new South Africa. However, she criticises it for portraying crime as an African problem or an African youth problem. This establishes that popular culture can be employed to raise social and political consciousness within the public. Also, *Yizo Yizo* is exemplary of the fact that popular television series can be utilised to raise a multitude of social and political issues in society.

The films on *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* use popular aesthetics in their depiction of the township as in the case of *Yizo Yizo*. However, the narratives of the films do not explore serious issues on the social and political status of black people and the township. The narratives in the films seem to be aligned to neoliberalism and nation-building which is employed to conceal the social reality of the township.

Sulelo (2015) focused on the representation of black masculinities in the first season of *Ekasi: Our Stories*, which is popular television and she observed that the representation of black men was evolving towards being positive. She elaborates that the films offered the black men complex characteristics that deviated from stereotypical roles of being

“animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murderers”. This work is critical as it reflects on the departure from the negative representation of black men and the township. She acknowledges the negative representation of women in the films as she observed that they are portrayed as economically independent but still largely dependent on men.

This study is relevant as it demonstrates the sugar-coating of blackness and the township space in film. The films sampled by Sulelo portray a positive image of black masculinity within the township space and further depict a positive image of the township space. She explores how middle-classness is utilised to portray a good image of the township and blackness whilst ignoring extensive engagement with issues of the poor. The films selected for this current study engage middle-classness in the township setting as a ploy to conceal the political and social woes of the township. Middle-classness is explored as a factor that works to sugar-coat the plight of township life.

### ***The perspectives of African cinema***

The next category of literature consulted for this study is drawn from colonial cinema scholarship. Colonial cinema was developed under conditions of oppression of the African people who were subsequently viewed as subhuman by Europe (Niang, 2014). This circumstance led to the conception of films that mimicked Europe and that appeared as propaganda tools for the colonisers (Diawara, 1992; Bhabha, 1994). These films were further made to reflect on the African as intellectually inferior henceforth legitimizing the colonisation of the African.

Niang (2014: 28) expounds on this filmmaking as “their narratives, mostly articulated by metropolitan voiceovers, posited an ignorant, uneducated audience, unable to distinguish between real and imagined experience”. The colonised people were regarded as “emotionally volatile and easily distracted, it was believed that there could not be a medium more suited to amusing and disarming them than film” (Tcheuyap, 2011: 30). Colonial films did not provide social consciousness for Africans and they deviated from reflecting the genuine reality of Africans.

The ideology behind African cinema is fundamental as it provides the purpose for the existence of African cinema and its objectives. It is essential to the study as it can offer

an understanding of the ideal African cinema and the role it is meant to play in representing Africans and their issues. African cinema was forged to liberate Africans from colonialism and it aimed to provide progressive images of blackness. African auteur cinema is viewed as a cinema that challenges the status quo through its constant engagement with reality (Krings & Okome, 2013).

Between the 1960s and 1970s, African film was at this stage constructed out of a narrative of liberation as with the films of the first generation of African filmmakers who took African modes of artistic construction including the aesthetics of Italian neorealism (Niang, 2008). Furthermore, the filmmaking drew from the French New Wave, Latin American filmmaking, genres such as the Western (Oscherwitz, 2008) and the gangster and the crime (Tcheuyap, 2011).

Cinema for most African filmmakers was a tool of revolution, political education and transforming the consciousness of Africans (Maldoror cited in Barlet, 1996). African cinema was part of the Third World<sup>25</sup> cinema which primarily aimed at decolonising thinking and introducing radical social change (Barlet, 1996; Haynes, 2000). Cinema in the African context was initially utilised to promote the agenda that could lead to the liberation of most African states from colonisation by the West (Niang, 2014).

In the struggle against colonisation, African filmmakers sought to create films that could offer audiences new insight through a revelation that colonialism was a dispossession of space and a deprivation of identity (Ibid.) The African films that emerged in the late 1950s and 1960s were preoccupied with escaping European political and psychological hegemony (Harrow, 1999). Protests of the 1950s and 1960s focused on European colonialists or Europe as an outside force that had created problems for Africa. African cinema from the 1960s and the 1970s started to turn away from the anti-colonialism agenda to protest against African elites, leaders and state corruption.

The cinema of the 1980s and 1990s was post-engagement cinema as it focused on showcasing the people's frustrations with corrupt political leaders and the violence they

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<sup>25</sup>Third World Cinema is a Latin American film movement that started in the 1960s–70s which decries neocolonialism, the capitalist system, and the Hollywood model of cinema as mere entertainment to make money.

imposed upon their citizens (Ibid). African cinema after 1990 became diversified and audiences were no longer subjected to “endless liberationist militant allegories meant to educate them” (Niang, 2014: 49). African cinema elevated from depicting the injustices of colonialism and later started to challenge the corruption of political leaders. The idea of cinema as a tool to challenge the status quo and to reveal the truth about the trials of Africa has always been central to African cinema. This is relevant to the current study as it outlines the ideals of African cinema which are primarily to liberate Africans by depicting reality about their social environment. On the contrary, popular film in the case of Nollywood have emerged and have been perceived by some critics such as Jyoti Mistry and Jordache Ellapen as backward and confirming the western concept of African primitivism.

The scholarship highlights that African cinema aims to challenge the status quo Africans are subjected to by reflecting on African experiences. Popular formats can be utilised in film in the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* but this does not imply that the content must deviate from social and political engagement. The scholarship indicates that African cinema is not guided by neoliberal and nation-building imperatives but rather social and political awareness of Africans. Popular formats can be utilised to lure audiences to content whilst narratives do not dwell on liberating the minds of audiences to think about their social and political environments. The current study explores how neoliberal and nationalist agendas in popular film in the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* work to conceal the truth about the township and blackness. This leads to a state whereby films fail to raise social and political consciousness. This current study argues that films that concentrate on neoliberalism and nation-building agendas tend to deviate from challenging the status quo or even engaging neoliberal and nation-building inadequacies.

### ***Popular film in Africa***

This study drew analytical insights from scholarship that explored popular film in Africa. South African television films, in the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*,

are inspired by the success of Nollywood in Africa. Krings and Okome (2013) state that in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa, Nollywood has been serving as a model of film production and it also inspired the growth of local film industries. They further posit that in the above countries “Nigerian video films are appropriated and reworked into local forms of filmmaking and other cultural models of narrativization with local inflections that borrow and copy heavily from Nollywood” (Ibid, 1).

Previous research highlights that Nollywood had been highly informative for its audiences and that it raised serious social and political issues that existed within the Nigerian society (Larkin, 2008). Nollywood, *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* utilise popular formats in their storytelling and Nollywood remains as a predecessor to other popular film initiatives in Africa. Nollywood, through its Africa Magic channel aired on DSTV, raised awareness to the popularity of African stories which subsequently led to the commissioning of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and later *Lokshin Bioskop*. *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*, as case studies, are examined in this study from the perspective of how they represent the reality of the black subject and the township space.

The popular themes of Nollywood films such as the occult can be looked at as themes that deviate from addressing social woes and reality. However, even the occult is representative of the social problems experienced by ordinary citizens. Most importantly, they reflect on the everyday experiences of people and in the case of Nollywood they are told by people at the grassroots. Haynes (2000: 33) states that the Nigerian video films “are full of examples of modern and traditional elements wrapping around one another until they become a contradictory whole”. The contradictory modernity is facilitated by the thematic conjunctions of consumer commodities and the occult.

Supernatural figures such as mermaids that are light-skinned are used in films to depict the continuous intervention of foreign capital in Africa (Ibid.). On the other hand, popular discourses allow for mass consumption and generate large revenues which are ideal for film and television productions. However, these discourses, to some extent, have the potential to conceal or reflect minimally on the state of people’s lives.

Larkin (2008: 171) states that Nollywood draws “on themes of corruption and betrayal, naked desire for material goods unrestrained by ties of loyalty or love”. Furthermore, Larkin emphasises that the films addressed witchcraft and sorcery which are issues that nationalist elites did not address. In this instance, Nollywood brought to the forefront issues of the marginalised poor which social elites perceived as taboo and primitive (Akudinobi, 2015). This, in essence, highlights how the social concerns of ordinary citizens are facilitated in Nollywood films. As these are outside of the nationalist agenda, Nollywood films work to create an extensive perspective on the realities of ordinary people in Nigeria.

While neoliberal and nation-building agendas are pursued in the films, there is space to depict the overall concerns of common people within the films. The case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* is illustrative of filmmaking that glorifies neoliberalism and nation-building at the expense of depicting the plight of the poor and marginalised township dwellers. Middle-classness is utilised to push for a neoliberal and nationalist agenda that ignores issues of common people in marginalised spaces.

### ***Black Spaces***

The corpus of studies that explore township or black spaces has also been deemed crucial to the arguments postulated in this research project (Ellapen, 2007; Sulelo, 2015). By black spaces, I refer to geographical areas, historically designated as spaces that are exclusively living spaces for the poor or the underclass in most societies around the world. hooks (1994) argues that contemporary popular culture in the United States fails to represent the poor with integrity and dignity. She asserts that the poor are mostly portrayed through negative stereotypes and this negative representation is also assigned to their living spaces.

Ellapen (2007) focused on the representation of the township space in mainstream cinema. He focused on the South African films, *Tsotsi* (2005) and *Wooden Camera* (2003), and noted that there was a negative representation of the space. Ellapen reiterates that the images of the township in mainstream film are fixed on the past and provide little insight into the modern township. He elaborates the view that the space is

negatively represented by both black and white filmmakers and that there is an obsession with maintaining old images of the space. Ellapen focused on mainstream cinema which is not the case with the current study that argues that new images of progress are emerging in short township films by *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*.

However, Ellapen states that *Wooden Camera*, helmed by a black South African, offers much insight on the township in comparison to *Tsotsi* that was directed by a white South African. This argument reflects on insider filmmaking as the key to improving the representation of the township space. Ellapen is essential as the study is the first of its nature to probe the representation of the township space in post-apartheid South Africa. It reflects on the inability of mainstream film to deviate from stereotypical representations that have largely been used to represent black people and their spaces. The literature survey helps trace the history of black representation, whether overtime there has been an amelioration of the representation of black people and what kind of issues that affect black lives are foregrounded by the films.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study applied a theoretical approach that was developed from Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPEM) in conjunction with theories of Popular Arts in Africa, Third Cinema and representation to offer an exhaustive reading of the films. Third Cinema is an oppositional cinema and like popular culture, it foregrounds the issues of the working classes. CPEM is about issues of access, who has access and who does not have it. Also, CPEM entails how people who occupy the counter-culture could also have access that allows them to foreground their issues and how they engage a filmic practice that evolves from a cinema that always wanted to give a slanted view of blackness and its experiences. Representation is the central trope of the study and it entails how the media portrays particular communities and people based on a particular ideological premise. These theoretical approaches provide for a nuanced comprehension of the representations that are facilitated by popular films on *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Mzansi Magic's Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies*.



## **Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPEM)**

CPEM employs a Marxist approach to the study of the media; it considers the question of who owns the media. This study deals with media that is profit-driven, as they rely on advertisers. Moreover, in a capitalist economic system, advertisers invest in television networks that provide content that supports their products. This allegiance by media to support advertised content can somehow limit the existence of alternative discourses that challenge the status quo. In this regard, media proprietors become gatekeepers of content as they decide on what productions they can fund.

*Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* were initiated because of the demand for stories that focused on the experiences of township dwellers and black spaces. Television is the exhibition space for these films and henceforth the political economy of television has to be prioritized. CPEM involves the relationship the media have with various institutions in society, namely, government and other entities that contribute to media sustainability.

Murdock and Golding (2000: 60) describe CPE as follows:

It is holistic in the sense that it views the economic, political, social and cultural life as interrelated to the economy. The line between the political and economic power has become so intertwined to such an extent that media moguls use their power to decide political ends; it is historical because it is concerned about long-term changes in the role of industry players; it is centrally concerned about the balance between the capitalist enterprise and public intervention and it goes beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with the moral questions of justice, equity and the public good.

Critical political economy is concerned with understanding which economic classes have access to the media and it investigates how capitalist ownership of the media affects media content. Critical political economy also investigates whether capitalist media ownership allows for diverse views in media content (Murdock & Golding, 2005). It deals with the economic context in which media is produced, distributed and

consumed (Wasko, 1999). The approach focuses on “processes of consolidation, diversification, commercialization, internationalization, the working of profit motive in the hunt for audiences and/or advertising, and its consequences for media practices and media content” (Boyd-Barrett, 1995: 186). Totale (2003) argues that political economy is concerned with how different economic structures of the media influence the content of the media. This is also attested by Hesmondhalgh (2007) who adds that economic players who are involved in cultural production make and circulate products that influence on people’s understand of the world. CPEM is adopted in this study as it assists with the macro-level analysis of media through examining structural and institutional issues relating to power, exploitation, and class. Furthermore, It allows for the exploration of how CPEM is realised by filmmakers and it further assists with the comprehension of why the films seem to be hijacking popular art forms in the sugarcoating of black experiences. CPEM as a political economy approach views economic activities reductively as wholly self-interested. However, it is worth remembering that issues of dominance and authority are extremely relevant when there is heterogeneity of interests (Drazen, 2000). It would appear that the emergence of new economic action and a new rhetoric of market, media and public discourse in South Africa are often driven by factors that cannot always be fully analysed in strictly economic terms.

### **Popular arts in Africa**

African popular arts or culture theory is critical to this study because the films by *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* utilise popular formats and discourses to sugar-coat the realities shaped by neo-liberalist and nation-building policies of post-1994 South Africa. African popular culture is relevant, as the films are produced by the people at the grassroots which are insiders and novice filmmakers (Barber, 1987).

African popular culture is interdisciplinary in its approach and its key parts were developed by Karin Barber (1987) on the Yoruba traveling theatre. It is defined as a loose category that is comprised of cultural forms that inhabit an indeterminate space between the traditional and the modern-elite and they are largely created for the masses of African cities. Karin Barber (2000) provides a series of analytical

approaches that can be adapted successfully for studying television drama as popular arts. Her generative materialism is said to be founded on a sociologically inclined approach to the arts that explore the economic, social and cultural levels of text production.

Popular arts do not require much capital or formal education to be produced by the people and they are produced in the informal sector of the economy without state support (Barber, 1987). The study of popular arts allows those in power to understand what the people on grassroots are thinking about (Fabian, 1978; Barber, 1987). According to Fabian (1990: 19), “the performances that are found in popular culture become, for the people involved, a way of preserving some self-respect in the face of constant humiliation and to set the wealth of artistic creativity against an environment of utter poverty”. Also, Fabian (1990: 19) emphasises that these should not be dismissed as escaping reality but rather it is the “realistic praxis under the concrete political and economic conditions that reign”.

### **Third Cinema**

The other theory that is key to the understanding of the production and aesthetic politics of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* is Third Cinema. Third cinema is a politically charged cinematic theory (Gabriel, 1979) that proposes a cinema that is alternative to Hollywood cinema which is driven by profits, as it opposes neo-colonialism and the capitalist system.

The term ‘Third Cinema’ was coined by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in the late 1960s. Third Cinema is not created for commercial gain as in the case of Hollywood cinema. The theory rejects the perception of cinema as solely the personal expression of a filmmaker, instead, it views the filmmaker as part of a collective. This cinema appeals to the masses by its representation of truth and inspiring revolutionary activism (Gabriel, 1979). Third Cinema was inspired by the need for independence from colonial rule in Latin American (Harrow, 2007). The struggle for liberation from apartheid in South Africa led to a situation where film theorists in South

Africa turned to Third Cinema “as a way of articulating the politics of anti-apartheid cinema” (Maingard, 2007: 14).

Third Cinema is expected to advocate a cinema that responds to the “cultural tastes and political needs of the society it represents” (Gabriel, 1979: 1). It is engrossed in representing the issues of citizens at the grassroots and raising political consciousness. *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* provide films that seem to sugar-coat the reality of the social and political environments whilst it could be argued that the positive angle is not a true reflection of the social challenges faced by township dwellers. Third Cinema is relevant as it provides an understanding of what liberation cinema should be and how cinema should play a role in raising societal awareness. In this study, Third Cinema is utilised for its aesthetics which entail the use of low budgets in filmmaking, its depiction of underclass realities and its contribution to social and political consciousness. In the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*, Third Cinema has become a cinematic practice in South Africa but its ideology is not adopted as films seem to be driven by neoliberal ideology.

Third Cinema aims to be socially and politically relevant such that it politicises cinema to such “an extent that a new cinematic code appropriate to its needs is established” (Gabriel, 1979: xi). Although the theory originated in Latin America, scholars such as Martin Botha and Adrian van Aswegen (1992) and Maingard (1998) stipulate that the theory has grown to include all films that aim to address political and social issues. Tomaselli (2006) states that a large proportion of African cinema is considered to be Third Cinema due to the issues they address. However, this study illustrates that though these films may be interpreted as addressing social issues, the ideological framework within which they are couched has since shifted from the paradigms that undergird the socialist-stance from which Third cinema theories have emerged. In neoliberal South Africa, the social issues raised in the films have tended towards neoliberal-induced frameworks, which underplay alternative social issues that are not aligned to the neoliberal economic turn and the advancement of nation-building.

Even though the struggles that Africans have experienced as a marginalised group are similar to that of Latin America and a majority of African and Latin American countries

which are also developing countries, their struggles largely remain common, but the political-economic contexts with all of them have since shifted. The study explores the authenticity of the black images and the township that are created in *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*. As this particular study argues that *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies* facilitate a sugar-coated representation of black spaces, Third Cinema can assist with discernment into whether the images of the township space are reflective of the reality of black lives. In addition, it highlights how malleable Third Cinema aesthetics have become because they can now be used not for revolutionary ends but false consciousness.

Representation pertains to how the media chooses to represent reality or the world. Signs are used to represent a particular subject or entity in society. Representation has extensively been associated with aesthetics and semiotics. Besides, it is a process by which signs and symbols are created to convey a certain meaning (Bernstein, 2002). Manning (2001: 50) adds that as representations are constructed they are not accurate, mirror reflections of reality, but instead, develop from processes of construction and “fabrication”. In media representation, what is reality is questionable and the critical task of the practice of representation is trying to make meaning of what is there in the world. It is paramount to note that representation through media cannot provide the whole reality on what or who is being represented. The practice of representation has the power to make truth out of something that is not true at all and in this instance, it used to manufacture or distort reality. This study embarked on exploring the authentic representation of the township and rural spaces in post-apartheid South Africa through its focus on codes and conventions of presentation that are used by films.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section explicates the research methodology that was adopted in this study. The study employed a qualitative research method to explore the narratives and aesthetics that were used in representing a sugar-coated image of blackness and the township space in *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies*. These films were also subjected to textual analysis to comprehend their meaning. A close reading entails deriving as much information from a text to be able to answer as many questions as

possible and to generate as many themes as possible. An amplified reading was applied which entailed reading the verbal texts along with non-verbal expressions namely images and gestures (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996).

Textual analysis does not only involve linguistic analysis but it further entails 'interdiscursive analysis' that involves seeing texts in terms of different discourses, genres and styles they draw upon and how they articulate together (Fairclough, 2003: 3). Fairclough states that textual analysis alone is not enough and that it is best used in collaboration with ethnography as texts have to be read along with how they fit into social life and the material conditions that led to their emergence. Textual analysis needs to be framed with the context of causal and ideological effects of texts which implies that the 'micro' analysis needs to be linked to the 'macro' of how power relations work across networks of practices and structures (Ibid, 16).

A critical analysis of *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies* was conducted to examine how the films utilise certain representations that favour the current status quo in their depiction of post-apartheid township and blackness. The narratives of neoliberalism and nation-building are explored as factors that contribute to a doctored representation of blackness and black spaces in post-1994 South Africa. In addition, a comparative approach was adopted with the chapters as the films that are analysed in each chapter are derived from *ETV* and *Mzansi Magic*. The rationale for this was to demonstrate that the two networks share a similar *modus operandi* when it pertains to representing the township space. The comparative analysis was meant to offer insight into whether there is a diversity of ideas in the private television sector in post-apartheid South Africa.

This study explored the following eleven films which were conveniently sampled based on their subject matter, which is the township, the rural space, and blackness. In the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* namely: *Maid for Me* (2014); *Love at First Sip* (2015), *Piece Job* (2014), *Iqiniso* (The Truth) (2015). On *Lokshin Bioskop*, the following films are examined: *Taxi Cheeseboy* (Taxi Tycoon) (2014); *Tin City* (2014); *Mgosi* (Gossip) (2014); *Uncle Malume* (Uncle Uncle) (2015) and *Battle of House* (2013). On the representation of rural spaces, *Isitulo* (The Chair) (2016) and *Balungile* (They are good)

(2018) were commissioned under *Mzansi Movies* that is owned by *DSTV* and was launched in 2016.

## **Overview of the Study**

This introductory chapter explored issues of black representation and black spaces in popular film and television. Moreover, the chapter focused on Nollywood to understand the role of popular film in representing quotidian life. It highlighted how Nollywood was an aspiration for the conception of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*.

The chapter traces how black people and the township space were represented during apartheid in mainstream film and television. It further provides insight into the representation of black people and the township space in post-apartheid South African film and television. Critical to this chapter is the fact that the political economy of film and television has always created problems for representing blackness and black spaces.

The first chapter investigates how neoliberalism and nation-building are utilised to conceal the problems of township life in the films. It examined the following films: *Taxi Cheeseboy (Taxi Tycoon)* and *Maid for Me*, to demonstrate how middle-classness is employed to project a progressive township. The second chapter explores the narratives and aesthetics that are used when representing the township periphery which is informal settlements and its underclass in the films which communicate the idea that poverty is a problem of the indolent. It demonstrates this using two films, *Tin City* and *Mgosi (Gossip)*.

The third chapter reconnoiters the films, *Uncle Malume*, *Love at First Sip* and *Piece Job* to comprehend how popular film represents the relationships that exist in the township space between citizens and foreigners amid unfavourable neoliberal economic times.

The fourth chapter offers a reading of the films *Battle of House* and *Iqiniso (The Truth)*, to offer insights into the black township extended family structure that is multicultural and multilingual, in support of nation-building and a black nationalism that the new South African democratic dispensation is founded on.

The fifth chapter, through an analysis of *Isitulo* and *Balungile*, explores the narratives and aesthetics that are used to represent rural South Africa in post-apartheid South Africa that has witnessed the underdevelopment of this space. The sixth chapter is the conclusion to the study, which recapitulates the significant findings of the study.



## 1. Chapter One

### **A Ghetto Fabulous Aesthetic: Cultural co-optation, rainbow nationalism and arrested development in *Taxi Cheeseboy* (Taxi Tycoon) (2014) and *Maid For Me* (2014)**

Television and film were indispensable to apartheid in the plot to co-opt the black majority into a partnership with capital through the provision of dramas and documentaries that glorified middle-class aspirations (Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1989). During apartheid, the National Party (NP) government, through the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), was able to create television content that supported the national interest.

In addition, the B-scheme film initiative created films that were helmed by white filmmakers and their focus did not entail rigorous engagement with the politics of apartheid<sup>26</sup>. Mhlambi (2012) reflects on how African languages television dramas of the mid-1980s were utilised to promote policies of neoliberalism with the main objective being to co-opt the black township middle class into an alliance with capital. These representations provided images of black entrepreneurs who had succeeded even under the gruesome environment forged by apartheid.<sup>27</sup>

The South African film and television industry at the time remained dominated by white males and the exception to allow black film and television assistants on productions were part of the strategy to continue on narratives that were against the liberation of black people (Maingard, 2007; Mhlambi, 2012).

Post-apartheid South Africa has seen too many television and film productions that have focused on black identity and the representation of black spaces (Balseiro & Masilela, 2003; Ellapen, 2007; Modisane, 2010; Mhlambi, 2012). Ives (2007: 154) refers

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<sup>26</sup> The B-Scheme subsidy was introduced at the request of white filmmakers who saw an opportunity to make money by producing African-language films starring Africans for mass African audiences. The scheme was an opportunity for the apartheid government to subsidize white entrepreneurs and, as a result, the film products of this subsidy can be viewed as the collaborative output of the National Party government and some of the white citizens of apartheid South Africa (Palekar, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> The television drama *Ifa La KwaMthethwa* and the film *Ikati Elimnyama* (1976) provided images of black citizens who were entrepreneurs who had lived upper-middle-class lifestyles.

to how the medium of television through “its use of language, image and sound reproduces a vision of the world for its audiences”. Television programmes produced locally, in post-apartheid South Africa, depict a black middle-class that is focused on individual advancement and material consumption (Ibid.).

Post-apartheid South Africa has had many challenges concerning development and townships have experienced much especially due to the lack of swift service delivery, the failures of the state to provide adequate housing for everyone and cumulative poverty. Some affluent black citizens have moved from townships to the suburbs, especially previously whites-only areas (Modisha, 2007; Seekings, 2010). The challenge has always remained with the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) to develop policies that can uplift these spaces and improve the lives of township dwellers.

Various policies such as the RDP, the GEAR and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) have failed significantly in improving the lives of township denizens and black people in general. There have been many township renewal projects proposed by the government in an attempt to improve the state of townships in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> The ANC government is now faced with the burden of delivering the promises it made concerning refining black settlement spaces and addressing difficulties emanating from the apartheid spatial planning.

The Gauteng Township Revitalisation Strategy 2014 – 2019<sup>29</sup>, an initiative by the Gauteng Provincial Government to uplift township spaces defines the ‘township economy’ as comprising of enterprises and markets that are based in the township. This economy is helmed by township entrepreneurs who work to meet the needs of the township and beyond. David Makhura<sup>30</sup> (2014: 2) stated that the government envisions that townships should be viewed as places of great economic potential and that the space must be brought into the mainstream economy of Gauteng. This entails

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<sup>28</sup> The Alexandra Renewal Project and the Orange Farm Renewal Project are examples of this initiative.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.gep.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Gauteng-Township-Economy-Revitalisation-Strategy-2014-2019.pdf>, Retrieved 10 May 2017.

<sup>30</sup> David Makhura is currently the premier of Gauteng (the head of government in the province and is a member of the ANC).

government and big business providing support to township enterprises and the paramount objective is to make townships “self- sufficient and vibrant economic centres”.

This rhetoric provides the impression that townships are now perceived as permanent black settlement spaces in the new South Africa that need to be improved for the better. However, it is crucial to note that the priorities of government also include improving how general society perceives the township as this can assist with attracting potential investors to finance township economies. Presently, there has been an influx of massive retailers occupying newly built shopping malls in townships to take advantage of the consuming black citizenry that occupies the respective space and a significant proportion of the country's population. Also, for a township economy to be realized, investors need to be convinced that there is a sufficient and rising middle-class to sustain the investment. The growing number of the black middle-class, in essence, serves as a testimony of some of the successful efforts by the ANC to improve the lives of the black population amidst the blunders of neoliberalism.

Post-apartheid South Africa has led to the implementation of several neoliberal economic policies whilst nation-building remains central to the government in the creation of a progressive South Africa. This chapter demonstrates how neoliberal and nation-building archetypes are central in the euphoric representation of the township and blackness. The township in the films, *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid for Me*, is presented as a space that has developed in terms of its quasi-suburban spaces, and less developed spaces such as shanty towns and highly affluent spaces which are outside of the township are omitted.

Black middle-classness is celebrated and individual effort is highly acclaimed, as it is symbolic of self-help that is a tenet of neoliberal economic theory. I argue that aspirational narratives similar to those arising from the 1980s African languages television dramas are rife, depicting a utopian society that has progressed significantly from the end of apartheid. Moreover, the inclination by the films to represent middle-class standards leads to the conclusion that the texts propagate the government agenda of proving that black mobility has been on the rise since 1994.

In economic theory, the middle-class is preferred on the stereotypical assumption by marketers that such a class engages in conspicuous consumption, hence stimulating economic growth (Musyoka, 2017). Besides, the focus on middle-classness attests that the vast gap between the rich and the poor is being tackled by neoliberal policies.

Mainstream television portrayed black middle-class as part of the white suburbia, namely, *Suburban Bliss* and *Generations*. In their representations, narratives and aesthetics that promote consumption and middle-class aspirations are manifest. Moreover, this chapter contends that the township is represented through a “ghetto fabulous aesthetic” (Ratele, 2003; Mukherjee, 2006). The omission of poor spaces conceals the township reality and point to a new fetishization with gentrified spaces that depict capitalism as triumphant. Furthermore, the fetishization with neoliberal principles and nation-building by so-called ‘popular film’ in the South African context of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* seem to be lucrative business justifying advertising spending and promising a progressive career path for novice filmmakers. Against this background, the following questions are posed: How is the township represented through narratives and aesthetics that are aligned to neoliberalism and nation-building? How do these narratives and aesthetics work to buttress the concealing of township realities? To offer a rejoinder to the questions posed by the chapter, the following four themes are formulated: Black salvation as contingent on black enterprise; cultural co-optation and conspicuous consumption; township rainbow nationalism in *Taxi Cheeseboy* and the township as the new homeland and permanent.

The representation of black spaces and identity has also been a concern to American scholarship that has endeavoured to comprehend the co-optation of Black Cinema and black celebrities by Hollywood. Rapooli Mukherjee (2006) in *The Ghetto Fabulous Aesthetic in Contemporary Black Culture* examined the representation of black spaces and black identity in the films *Barbershop* (2002) and *Barbershop 2: Back in Business* (2004) which were created by Hollywood. Murkhejee observes that these films highlight a departure from film texts such as those of New Jack cinema in the nineties whilst they present a self-conscious move away from sombre race dramas. The films present “light-hearted tales of working-class black life in the urban ghetto” (Ibid: 605). As such, these

films started to represent blackness and the ghetto in a fabulous manner. Central to this observation is the fact that the ghetto film became a cultural co-optation tool and the films tended to assign an “allure to working-class life, one that celebrates black business spaces as salvational spheres, sites of refuge and renewal (Ibid, 606).

These new ghetto fabulous films, according to Mukherjee, tend to invite hip hop stars and established black stand-up comics to appear in them. The rationale being that these films can capitalise on ‘rich cross-market synergies, drawing in racially mixed audiences, both urban and suburban’ (Ibid, 606). Cultural co-optation in this regard entails winning over black icons into the capitalist fold and making such icons advocates of excessive consumption and defenders of neoliberal hegemony. Both films starred Ice Cube as the protagonist who is historically associated with NWA (Niggas with Attitude) which is the group that elevated the gangster rap genre of music. Neal (in Mukherjee, 2006: 601) asserts that a bulk of recording and studio contracts in the 1990s were set aside for hip hop artists who were willing to be co-opted by hegemony and who were willing to create songs that “championed black commodity fetishism and ‘getting’ mine as the only plausible responses to entrenched black disempowerment”. This co-optation assisted in collapsing the dynamic heterogeneity of hip hop and the post- soul culture grew to be associated with performers who would modify the anthems of Black Power to the drumbeats of the market (Ibid.).

The ghetto fabulous genre has mass appeal and its sustainability rests in its ability to pull in substantial numbers of audiences. Part of the mass appeal resonates from the films engaging “contemporary cultural tensions about class and consumerism, their narrative containment of the promise of a transformative black politics, and their reconciliation of post-soul priorities with hegemonic discourses of the market” (Ibid, 607). The ghetto fabulous aesthetic provides intuition into how neoliberalism works to create a society that is in line with its objectives of consumption. As Mukherjee explored the representation of black spaces and identity in the United States through film, there are some studies that inform black spaces and identity in post-apartheid South Africa (Ellapen, 2007; Sulelo, 2015, Shabangu, 2015).

Jodarche Ellapen (2007) in *The cinematic township: cinematic representations of the 'township space' and who can claim the rights to representation in post-apartheid South African cinema* explores the representation of the post-apartheid township space in the films *Tsotsi* (2005) and *Wooden Camera* (2003). He focused on the space as central in the representation of black experiences in post-1994 South Africa and discovered that the cinematic representation of the township was filled with 'place myths' that were formulated during apartheid.

Moreover, according to Ellapen (2007: 113), the filmmaking of the two films seemed to be "a 'fixing' or 'freezing' of an authentic black experience within the 'township space' which works to essentialise black identity and the black experience". Ellapen argued that the township has transformed and this is not visible from the films *Tsotsi* and *Wooden Camera* because the space is hybrid, encompassing both developed and underdeveloped aspects since 1994 but filmmakers seem to be preoccupied with a fetishized cinematic trope that resembles the Township Art of the 1950s and 1960s. The study foregrounded the obsession with representing underdeveloped images of black living spaces by mainstream film in post-apartheid South Africa whilst affluent spaces within black settlements are omitted from cinematography.

Nande Sulelo (2015) in *Re-narrating and re-masculating the 'brute' in the first season of EKasi: Our Stories* examined the representation of the township space in post-apartheid popular film. *Ekasi: Our Stories*, which is also one of the case studies that are examined by this thesis. Sulelo (2015) refers to the changing image of the township that deviates significantly from that of Ellapen (2007), of a space that has remained portrayed as impoverished. Sulelo notes that middle-class ideals are promoted in the film *Secret Lovers*.

The space is represented with the backdrop of quasi-suburban areas of the township reflecting development. "The quasi-suburban areas of the township negate the traditional depictions of the township as they boast luxurious houses instead of the common shantytown townships inhabited by common thugs struggling to make a living" (Ibid, 60). Moreover, the study discovered that the perpetuation of middle-class standards by the film, on the contrary, alienated the underclass in the films, implying

that the gentrification of the space meant that the poor were excluded in the discourses of social class mobility.

The films, *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid for Me*, were exclusively shot in the township, particularly in its quasi-suburban spaces that were erected in the 1980s as the apartheid government augmented the wages of black civil servants as part of its co-optation ploy. In their representation of affluent spaces, the films move towards denialism of inequality in the South African township and their aspirational narratives, to some degree, shield neoliberalism and the inadequacies of nation-building. Moreover, the films are critical as they offer insight into the borrowing by popular film from the mainstream circuitry such as Hollywood with the ghetto fabulous aesthetic approach.

The films provide a perspective for understanding how film and television in post-apartheid South Africa conforms to global capital demands. Moreover, the one-dimensional representation of the space does not conform to the aesthetics of a liberating cinema such as Third Cinema (Solanas & Getino, 1976). The lack of multi-dimensional spatial representation allows for the arrested development of blackness and its everyday experiences, resulting in an apocryphal form of representation. Class issues are a scorching subject in post-apartheid South Africa as government policies have resulted in a few citizens that have benefited from the new democratic dispensation. However, the films present a developed space that is used to exclusively represent blackness.

Also, the films are significant as they demonstrate, through their aspirational narratives, how popular formats have been co-opted into neoliberal and nation-building narratives that cement and justify the extant status quo. It is vital to explore, historically, the narratives within film and television that have deviated from raising the political consciousness of black people globally and particularly in the United States. The South African film and television industry has been influenced extremely by these developments in the conceptual West. The late arrival of television in the country due to apartheid and of course the prominence of Hollywood are some of the reasons.

### **Summary of *Taxi Cheeseboy* (Taxi Tycoon) (Tebogo Mogola) (2014)**

*Taxi Cheeseboy* is a South African comedy adaptation of the Hollywood film, *Barber Shop* (2002), as it presents a young man by the name of Reggie (Riky Rick) who stands to inherit a multi-million-rand taxi business from his late father. He spent much of his life in the United States of America and his return to South Africa makes him experience a culture shock. At first, he does not understand his roots which are in South Africa but after learning about the people in his Soweto community and the taxi business, he decides to stay in the country. Pule is a white taxi driver who was raised by Reggie's father (Mthimkhulu) and he is a *skhothane*<sup>31</sup>. He teaches Reggie about the commitment his late father put into his taxi business and how that resulted in the wealth he accumulated before his passing. In the end, Reggie decides to share the taxi business with him as his new-found brother. Aunt Linda is Reggie's aunt and also the domestic help around Mthimkhulu's house. She is the only blood relative Reggie is left with. She plays a pivotal role in informing Reggie about individuals that might want to steal his inheritance from him by making him believe that the taxi business is worthless.

Bra Zakes is a township criminal who wants to steal Reggie's business and he plans to shut down the community centre that was sponsored by Mthimkhulu to open a nightclub in the same space. He engages in many criminal activities to coerce Reggie to sell him the taxi business including assaulting Pule but to no avail. Thandi is Reggie's childhood sweetheart whom he seems to have forgotten as he was away from home for a long time. She also becomes his life partner and assists him to realise his true potential as a taxi boss who is also a philanthropist.

### **Summary of *Maid For Me* (Muntu Zwane) (2014)**

This drama film is centered on the lives of two middle-class families in the quasi-suburban township. Tebogo is a state prosecutor by profession and has a daughter (Sammy) from his first wife. In addition, Tebogo has remarried and has a wife (Fiona) who is a housewife who is obsessed with excessive consumption. Tebogo is trying to

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<sup>31</sup> Isikhothane is a singular term for an individual who belongs to a township subculture that engages in conspicuous consumption regardless of their socio-economic status.



cope with his stressful profession and has no support from his wife in this regard except the sympathy from his domestic helper (Keneilwe).

Fiona is selfish and seems to not even show affection for Sammy. She is having an affair with Tebogo's brother (Julius) who is a womaniser and is failing to impregnate his wife (Phindi). Moreover, Fiona does not get along with the domestic helper as she is envious of the relationship the helper has with Tebogo and Sammy. Julius has been lying to his wife about focusing all his energies on them conceiving a baby whilst he spends most of his afternoons engaging in sexual intercourse with Fiona. Julius is a local businessman who owns a pub and a car wash and he cares less about the wellbeing of his stressed wife who is a chief executive officer (CEO) in a reputable organisation. Sammy is a respectful young lady who does not get along with her stepmother (Fiona) who is always imposing her values on her. Sammy is strained as she has to write her matriculation exams and decide on whom to take with her to her matric farewell. In the end, Julius and Fiona are discovered for their infidelities by Tebogo and Phindi at a surprise birthday party that was planned for Julius. The plan to expose Fiona and Julius was instigated by Keneilwe who was the first person to discover the affair.

### **The politics of the black middle class in South Africa**

"The middle class is generally regarded as the strongest pro-democratic social stratum in society" (Garcia-Rivero, du Toit & Kotzé, 2003: 6). Garcia-Rivero et al. (2003) argue that the middle-class maintains a stable democratic order due to the belief that its creation is towards eliminating the widening gap between the rich and the poor in society. It is assumed that a substantial middle-class indicates that the level of inequality is being reduced in society (Robinson & Quilan 1977; Muller 1995). The new middle-class that existed in post-colonial societies is comprised of individuals that are employed by the state and private corporates and who do not own any factors of productions but are mere managers subordinated to capital-owning proprietors. Southall (2004: 2) avoids the empirical definition of the middle-class due to the intensified debates on the subject by stating that:

the middle class (or petty bourgeoisie) is characterized by its drawing of primary income (directly or indirectly) from non-manual employment, as 'white-collar employees', managers, self-employed business persons, or professionals.

Race is critical in defining a middle class especially in the context of South Africa whereby the white, Indian and coloured middle-class have been more privileged than the black middle class due to apartheid and colonialism. The Indian merchant class in Natal was able to develop under apartheid which advanced ahead of the black petty bourgeoisie that was restricted extensively concerning how it engaged in private enterprise. These developments hindered the advancement of black wealth and were designed to ensure that black citizens remained as workers for the white racist South African economy. Bantu Education contributed to this inequality as it ensured that black people do not acquire educational skills that surpass those of their white countrymen.

The 1980s saw a critical shortage of skilled labour for the apartheid regime and incentives such as salary increments for black workers were introduced to tackle the crisis and this subsequently led to the creation of a black middle-class in the urban spaces. Adequate housing was procured for the black middle-class to sustain a steady and ready workforce for the manufacturing sector (Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1989). Black workers were presented with the possibility of owning their own homes which led to the creation of quasi- suburban spaces in old townships such as Soweto, Sebokeng and many other black townships. Workers with their substantial salaries in the manufacturing sector and the upsurge in wages for black civil servants such as teachers and nurses led to the conceptual creation of a black middle class. These exertions, on the part of the apartheid regime, were meant to co-opt black people amid protests to view themselves as having a stake in apartheid South Africa.

Many boycotts, at the time, by young people had threatened to shut down apartheid industries in the fight for the liberation of black citizens. Arguably, the black middle-class was created to diminish black protests in a time when the rest of the world had imposed sanctions on South Africa. The black middle-class existed before the new dispensation and its resources had worked to gentrify some areas within the township.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the triumph of capitalism worldwide steered the ANC which was baffled on how it was going to correct discrimination and oppression that had lasted centuries for black citizens. Post-apartheid South Africa presented opportunities on the part of the ANC in the project to offer black citizens dignity as residents of the Republic.

The RDP succeeded in providing access to free basic healthcare and established a welfare system (Heymans, 1995). The strategy botched because of the insufficient skills government managers had and its implementation of policy co-ordination and implementation methods that were not tested and were not effective. The GEAR strategy was adopted to replace the RDP and it helped in reducing inflation and, for the first time, providing growth in the economy which had begun decreasing drastically from the early nineties.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) criticised the strategy for its neoliberal economic turn and the policy failed to accelerate job creation and attract private investment, amongst other factors. The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) was introduced under the Thabo Mbeki regime to address the inadequacies of GEAR and there were certain achievements made by the programme but failures to discuss its plans by bureaucrats led to its demise.

The Jacob Zuma presidency ushered in the New Growth Path (NGP) which was meant to tackle structural unemployment as the inequality gap between citizens had widened. In 2013, the government adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 as a long-term development strategy for the country throughout sluggish economic growth. The strategies that have since been adopted since the dawn of democracy in 1994 have not significantly improved the lives of black people and this has affected the growth of the black middle class in South Africa. As economic theory dictates, the middle-class is the main driver of economic growth as it is known for its conspicuous consumption (Musyoka, 2017). Although there has been a rise in the average income for black households since 1994, this growth has only benefitted a few in comparison to the greater black populace. Consumption also becomes a contentious issue as it cannot solely be assigned to the black middle class and this is evident with certain groups that

live below the breadline that practice conspicuous consumption (Naidu & Mazibuko, 2015; Mnisi, 2015).

### **The political economy of television**

Nick Browne (1984) discusses the origins of the made-for-television film in the United States. He states that such productions became feasible in the late sixties and they had the potential to draw in significant audiences. Their production was cheaper than acquiring the licensing of theatrical films for the television networks. Browne (1984) adds that the made-for-television movie has a format that efficiently addresses and reaches commercially significant segments of the television audience. This is the audience that uses products that are advertised on national television.

Additionally, Browne states that these movies tend to have narratives that fall into the genres of drama, comedy, crime- mystery, biography and significantly they are variants of the family melodrama. The made-for-television movies on *Ekasi: Our Stories and Lokshin Bioskop* seem to be composed mostly in the forms of the genres highlighted by Browne for the made-for-television film in America. The made-for-television movie is cost-effective for television networks as it attracts audiences who are captivated by the popular genres put forward by these made-for-television films. Also, television, as a medium, is considered to be linked to the economy as it disseminates information that helps sell products and it facilitates the socialisation of citizens. In essence, television is viewed as “active in the material and symbolic reproduction of capitalist relations” (Rajagopal, 2001: 4).

Sarah Ives in *Mediating the Neoliberal Nation: Television in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2007) examined the political economy of South African television through the theoretical framework of feminism, post-structuralism, cultural geography, cultural studies, and anthropology. Ives (2007) provides an understanding of South African television discourses that sort to forge a foundation for neoliberalism and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa. This work is significant as it addresses nation-building and neoliberalism as reflected in the medium of television. Ives (2007) posits that South African television, since its inception in the 1970s, played a role in entrenching

ideologies. First, it was employed to guard the apartheid establishment and later it was utilised to promote the idea of a new South Africa. During apartheid, television was used to project a divided South Africa and to promote nation-building that embraced the segregation of different races within South Africa. In the new South Africa, it seems to be utilised to build national unity and to advance neoliberal objectives.

Television in the new dispensation has been deployed to entertain and yet also “to foster national unity through the redressing of historical wrongs and to encourage economic growth and foreign investment” (Ibid, 153). Furthermore, television with its depictions of everyday life provides a compelling medium for influencing a normative national consciousness (Ibid, 154). The use of language by the medium, image, and sound allows television to forge a vision of the world for its audiences. Thus, television is closely linked to the political economy of nation-building. Ives (2007) demonstrates how television programmes in the new South Africa portray a black middle class that is engaged in material consumption and individualism. This role of television was also evident in black television dramas that were produced on the last days of apartheid such as *Ifa lakwa Mthethwa* (1995) and *Hlala Kwabafileyo* (1994) (Mhlambi, 2012). These neoliberal depictions of black society serve the government’s agenda of constructing a “neoliberal post-apartheid national imaginary” (Ibid, 154). According to Ives (2007: 155):

The construction of the nation put forth by some South African television programming can mask enduring racial and economic inequalities and move responsibility for these inequalities from the state to the individual. These material effects play a role in reasserting hierarchical relations of power, especially along race, class, and gender lines.

Television, in post-apartheid South Africa, seems to be engaged in depicting successful black society. This masking of inequalities within new South Africa assists in shielding the status quo and the position of the ruling party which is what this current study seeks to explore through its examination of township films. Television, in a capitalist society, to a certain degree, promotes neoliberalism which deviates from criticising the state for the lack of service delivery. These observations by Ives were based on studying content

from the public broadcaster (SABC) which should have been at the helm of highlighting inequalities created by apartheid.

Antonio Gramsci (in Hall, 1986) argued that the hegemonic culture in society establishes its way of thinking about the world which is then perceived as common sense. This common sense is said to assist in maintaining the status quo that privileges the bourgeoisie often at the expense of the poor and the working class. In capitalist societies such as South Africa, private television is owned by the elite and it still facilitates the role of supporting the advancement of capitalist enterprise.

### **The architecture of misrepresenting black liberation**

The civil rights movements in the United States of America engaged in numerous protests to achieve political freedom for African Americans. Blaxploitation is a genre that arose to entertain mass audiences. However, it was devoid of appropriate political context in its representation of black people. Similar to black television dramas of the 1980s in South Africa, it intended to represent a trajectory that veered from representing the political injustices faced by black people under white-rule and capitalism. Blaxploitation, as a genre, provides valuable knowledge on the origins of representations that tend to deviate from challenging the status quo.

Robinson (1998) offers insight into how Blaxploitation created powerful images of black people as heroes and heroines but was unable to deliver the pertinent issues of black liberation in the United States. These films diverged from discussing pivotal civil rights matters that black people faced in the United States. This approach is also critical to the study of black film and television in South Africa as South African film and television was also influenced by Blaxploitation. The apartheid government, through its B-scheme subsidy which funded films for black audiences that were similar to Blaxploitation, aspired to control every aspect of black lives (Paleker, 2010). However, in these

representations, black people were introduced to other representations that were inspirational and promising a better future<sup>32</sup>.

Blaxploitation emerged in the 1970s in the United States and it is a subgenre of the exploitation film. The exploitation genre produced films that were sensational and lurid and were aimed at massive audiences.

Initially, Blaxploitation films were made for black audiences with black casts, as they later attracted other racial groups. The films, *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* and *Shaft*, both released in 1971, led to the coining of the term Blaxploitation (James, 1995). The genre went on to inspire major Hollywood films whereby Blaxploitation stereotypical characters would be featured, for example, in *Live and Let Die* (1973), *Enter the Dragon* (1973), and *The Inglorious Bastards* (1978). Johnson (1998) offers an argument against Blaxploitation films as he described some of the films as a disgrace to black liberation in the United States with a few exceptions.

Blaxploitation films arose between 1969 and 1975 when black liberation discourse was at its highest. Robinson (1998) states that some Blaxploitation productions ridiculed black liberationists. Blaxploitation was a degraded cinema that succumbed to market and political exigencies (Ibid.). The genre allowed Hollywood studios to embark on representing black freedom movements as outlawry and in the other subgenre of Blaxploitation, black women were portrayed as vigilantes. This was amidst the political upheavals brought upon by the struggle for civil rights by African Americans and television had prominently presented images of black people being ill-treated by the police. In its ploy to misrepresent black liberation, Hollywood continued with the genre of Blaxploitation by representing black political activist Angela Davis's public image in a slanted manner. Film, in this instance, was able to portray Davis as an "erotic black nationalist devoid of historical consciousness" (Ibid, 5- 6). This misrepresentation of Davis was carried out by eviscerating her intellectual sophistication, political and

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<sup>32</sup> Representations that inspired black people to hope for more also existed in these films, for example, *Ikati Elimnyama* whereby the main character is a successful businessman and this was made in an era where the apartheid government did not want to have black people as entrepreneurs.

organisational context, doctrinal commitments and the exclusion of her criticism of capitalist society and its employment of gender, race, and class.

Furthermore, two black female actresses, Pam Grier and Rosalind Cash, who bore similar physical features to Angela Davis were employed by Hollywood to portray the political activist. Grier's voluptuous figure licensed an eroticisation of Davis which consisted of sexualised violence. Robinson (1998: 6) refers to this enactment as "cinematic deceit that transmuted liberation into vengeance, the pursuit of a social justice which embraced race, class, and gender into Black racism, and the politics of armed struggle into systematic assassination". Robinson's views provide an understanding of how film can be utilised to deviate from sombre social issues whilst it fortifies the prevailing state of affairs. It is crucial to raise questions of how black liberation and identity are being represented in post-apartheid popular film: *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid for Me*? And how popular films create narratives and aesthetics that feed into the ideals of neoliberalism and a false political consciousness that circumvents critical issues about the current status quo?

### **Black salvation as contingent on black enterprise**

In *Taxi Cheeseboy*, black business is represented by the minibus taxi industry. The industry, in the film, is used to symbolise black entrepreneurial zest and to project the benefits of capitalist enterprise. The minibus taxi industry in South Africa is part of the informal economy and this sector remains a cushion for a majority of South Africa's unemployed (Fourie, 2003).

The industry, in essence, is ideal in forging a dogma that is sympathetic to neoliberal philosophies as individuals are coerced to believe in their effort for their success and not on the state. The use of the taxi industry as a black-owned industry provides decent grounding for projecting a society that should depend on its efforts to flourish economically. This stance emerges at a point when the government has been making many calls for black citizens to create their own businesses even though the state has been criticised for not providing sufficient support for such interventions.



The minibus taxi industry came to existence as a result of the apartheid policy of situating black settlements on the periphery of urban areas. Black township inhabitants required transportation to the workplace in white-owned urban areas. The minibus taxi industry in South Africa experienced tremendous growth as it came to be regarded as a “shining example of black entrepreneurship” (Ingle, 2009: 74). The industry prospered due to high demand as individuals that resided in the townships that were in the periphery needed to get to work, shops, and conduct business in areas that they were not permitted to reside in. The industry remains the highest exemplifier of black entrepreneurial zest and it is symbolic of black working-class effort.

However, it is important to note that the taxi industry has been marred by violence emanating from disputes over taxi routes since its inception. Although the industry operates under a cloud of uncertainty when it pertains to violence, in the film the industry is never associated with violence. This is in contrast to other popular representations of the taxi industry such as *Isibaya* by Bomb Productions on *Mzansi Magic* whereby the taxi industry has been represented extensively as an industry that is prone to violence due to turf wars. Also, it is critical to acknowledge that the taxi industry was part of the informal economic sector during apartheid and it continues to be to this day. Furthermore, the utilisation of the taxi industry as a symbol of black success is problematic as its informality curbs its impact on the economy. This is evident as the industry is exempted from contributing to the fiscal in terms of tax revenues.

In *Taxi Cheeseboy*, Aunt Linda refers to how Reggie’s father (Mthimkhulu) worked hard in the taxi industry to build the life that he had. Aunt Linda and Pule emphasise the individual effort and hard work that Mthimkhulu put in creating his taxi empire. The film provides the promise of a middle-class status on those that work hard and embrace the notion of being solely responsible for their livelihood. The middle-class in the film is commended through the assets Mthimkhulu has acquired through the years working as a taxi driver and owner. Mthimkhulu was able to build a luxury modern home in Figure 1 and is proprietor to a multi-million rand taxi business.



Figure 1: The quasi- suburban section of Soweto in *Taxi Cheeseboy* with the Mthimkhulu mansion in the forefront.

The low angle shot of the Mthimkhulu mansion (Fig. 1), makes the viewer feel dominated by the structure and its tower. A tower symbolizes the superiority of the structure and it implies that the Mthimkhulu mansion is exceptionally in its surroundings. On the other hand, this mise-en-scène displays the social inequality that transpires with the architecture of the township space. The aesthetic symbolises that, even in gentrified spaces, inhabitants do not possess equal economic power. Inequality is presented subtly as the focus is on middle-class spaces that are unequal. This provides the perception that there is hybridity even within gentrified township spaces. The visual representation in this instance provides an alternative discourse of inequality which contradicts the prominent tropes of wealth, gentrification and black class mobility. Also, the Mthimkhulu mansion was funded with money from the taxi business, which attests to the fact that black business is presented as the solution for rapid upward black mobility.

Pule explains how Mthimkhulu built a mansion in the township of Soweto after demolishing the apartheid four-roomed house. Reggie is fascinated by what his father has achieved even though he is coming from the United States, a developed country. This depiction of black success by *Taxi Cheeseboy* is in contrast to mainstream film

representation of black citizens as criminals that have to commit acts of crime due to the lack of economic opportunities in the new dispensation (Ellapen, 2007). The new images in *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid for Me* of black middle-class presents individuals who rely on their effort to succeed through legal means. At this current epoch, due to the high unemployment figures in South Africa, black business is presented as a scapegoat for the failures of the government to provide employment.

In *Maid For Me*, Julius is a middle-class businessman who owns a local pub and a car wash and lives a middle-class lifestyle residing in a quasi-suburban area in Soweto (Fig. 2). The long-shot with the natural lighting of the quasi-suburb is comprised of houses of similar size to each other and the discernment that is generated is that its inhabitants have equivalent economic stature.



Figure 2: The quasi-suburban space in *Maid For Me*.

The continuous reference to Mthimkhulu in *Taxi Cheeseboy* and his industrious character in the film encourage working-class ideals, especially the fact that wealth accumulation is a result of hard work. Reggie gets to admire this success. This sentiment is also evident in *Maid For Me*, as Julius and Phindi are projected as a couple living a comfortable lifestyle based on their economic exertions. Phindi emphasizes how

her hard work has led to her being rewarded with a managerial position and Tebogo is always depicted as exhausted and stressed by his work. Julius in *Maid For Me* is living a comfortable life as he owns a bar and a carwash in the township. The taxi industry, as an informal business, does not offer its workers benefits that are similar to state and private sector employees. However, in *Taxi Cheeseboy* a picture of Pule as an excited and well-compensated taxi driver is projected and at no point does Pule assert that there might be better opportunities of employment elsewhere besides the taxi industry. In *Maid For Me*, Keneilwe, too, is also projected as a domestic helper who is content with her work and does not harbour any thoughts of other employment opportunities.

Concerning the unemployment debacle of young people in South Africa, the representation of black entrepreneurial spirit and working-class culture through the taxi industry and other small township businesses conceals the greater structure of hegemony in the economy. Moreover, the films *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid For Me* champion black entrepreneurial zeal as the key mechanism for political transformation and personal fulfillment (Murkhejee, 2006). The taxi industry might be generating millions in terms of revenues but it is insignificant in comparison to big business which is listed on the stock markets. Besides, the pub and car wash owned by Julius are insignificant in comparison to the greater economy that is still not within the grasp of a majority of black citizens.

### **Cultural co-optation and conspicuous consumption**

*Taxi Cheeseboy* provides a chronicle of a black middle-class citizenry that indulges in conspicuous consumption and that which advocates that consumption is justified when one has worked industriously. The production company, *Don't Look Down*, that was tasked with making *Taxi Cheeseboy*, is based in South Africa's economic hub, Johannesburg and it is involved in multiple media production platforms from broadcast, internet platforms to events management. In addition, it is involved in productions such as *The Voice South Africa* and *Idols SA* and it has an international outlook when it comes to production as it is in the forefront of adopting internationally efficacious television programmes and facilitating their local adaptation by networks such as the *Mzansi Magic* and the *M-Net* channel. The production company is global in terms of its

production choices and it utilizes popular culture as has been done in other countries. With *Taxi Cheeseboy*, the production company chose to cast two South African celebrities Ricky Rick, a South African hip hop icon and Pule Welch a white South African comedian. Stars in films are signifiers of meaning like symbols and codes because they manage the audience's expectations. In addition, the score of the film is based on South African hip hop and beats that are synonymous with Ricky Rick's music. The score complements the film as the protagonist (Reggie) is presented as a hip hop enthusiast. Hip hop as a music genre is notorious for its music videos that lionize conspicuous consumption at the expense of challenging the status quo. Township amateur actors were not selected in the leading roles for *Taxi Cheeseboy* but instead, Ricky Rick and Pule Welch were chosen as celebrities that engage in conspicuous consumption in reality.

The ghetto fabulous genre suggests creating films that cast black stars with credibility in other entertainment platforms with the hope of benefiting from cross-market synergies (Murkhejee, 2006). Ricky Rick (Fig. 3) made a song titled "Sidlukotini" (we wear designer labels) which mainly bolstered the fact that black youth should consume expensive designer label clothing<sup>33</sup>. In the case of *Taxi Cheeseboy*, Reggie is played by the South African hip hop mogul Ricky Rick who is known for wearing designer labels that are mostly produced in the United States. In this instance, whilst popular arts or culture is recognized for providing opportunities for novice actors (Barber, 1987), in this instance individuals who are already in the public spotlight are cast.

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<sup>33</sup> Rikhado Makhado (known as Ricky Rick) is a hip-hop artist, actor, fashion pundit, and music producer who was born in KwaMashu (Durban) and most of his upbringing was in Austria. In 2016, the artist released the hit single 'Sidlukotini'. Moreover, the article has been featured in many fashion editorials because of his fashion consciousness as an artist. The performer first released a single 'Barbershop' as a mainstream artist which can be linked to the adaption of the film *Taxi Cheeseboy* from the American Barbershop franchise. Popular arts or popular culture is understood for its borrowing of content from other geographies and boxing it for local audiences.





Figure 3: Reggie (Riky Rick) (left) and Pule (Pule Welch) (right) in *Taxi Cheeseboy* dressed in their posh apparel inside the Mthimkhulu mansion.

By casting Riky Rick (Reggie), the film was able to have mass appeal as the celebrity is well known in South Africa. Figure 3, depicts Reggie and Pule in bright colours which is a convention of the comedy genre that also includes bright tones and the use of bright music. In most obvious terms, the ghetto fabulous genre has been proven fruitful with black audiences. The ghetto fabulous aesthetic was initially used to symbolise youth rebellion but lately, it has been co-opted and transformed into “a formulaic, and profitable, market commodity” (Neal in Mukherjee, 2006: 604). According to Mukherjee (2006: 605), the ghetto fabulous genre films have been successful because they present “light-hearted tales of working-class black life in the urban ghetto”. The South African hip hop artist, Riky Rick, is associated with the culture of conspicuous consumption and his casting in *Taxi Cheeseboy* seems to be a continuation of his excessive consumption. Mukherjee (2006: 600) stipulates that ‘bling’ “encapsulates key aesthetic signifiers such as luxury cars, designer labels, fur coats, gold and diamond jewellery”.

Reggie in the film is presented as a young man who is fashion conscious in the sense that he is always dressed in designer labels that are created by international

conglomerates which also symbolise the entrenchment of global capitalism in post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, conspicuous consumption is evident in the film with the character Pule who claims to be an “isikhothane” and who is always dressed in designer labels although this lifestyle is not realistically affordable for a working-class taxi driver.

‘Izikhothane’ are young African males who reside in townships and are known for their expensive bright coloured designer label clothing (Naidu & Mazibuko, 2015). These young men are said to be obsessed with fashion and styling their bodies. Moreover, they are excessively clean and well-groomed. According to Naidu and Mazibuko (2015: 212), “clothes play an important role in the representation of how they see themselves and appearance is perceived as the ‘first skin’, as they believe that “what a person wears says a lot about who they are”. In their representation, clothes play an important role and the ‘isikhothane’, who wears the most expensive designer labels, is given the utmost respect. It is about the price of the designer labels and the appearance of the clothes is less important (Ibid, 219).

Pule symbolises conspicuous consumption with his assertions of being an ‘isikhothane’ and highlights excessive consumption ideals that are propagated by the film. Mnisi (2015) states that ‘izikhothane’<sup>34</sup> engage in aspirational consumption to depict their yearning for a better life and wealth. This better life was derailed by apartheid and recently by the failures of the economy under the new dispensation to improve the livelihoods of the majority.

Pule, as a taxi driver, is not earning a substantial amount of money but his consumption of expensive clothing reflects the desperation to ascend to a better economic standard. In addition, Pule as a white ‘isikhothane’ brings to the fore the poor white problem in South Africa, as generally the ‘izikhothane’ are not wealthy but are individuals who, through their spending, reflect how they hope to spend in future.

The subject of whether Pule can afford the lifestyle he is living in terms of his excessive consumption as an ‘isikhothane’ is never raised in the film and ultimately narratives that

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<sup>34</sup>Izikhothane is the plural form of isikhothane.

challenge conspicuous consumption are not presented. The sole explanation is to comprehend that 'izikhothane' engage in aspirational consumption regardless of their circumstances. Also, *Maid For Me*, depicts Julius (Fig. 4) as an older version of an 'isikhothane', as he wears gold chains, bright coloured clothes and has a gold tooth. Moreover, he drives a Volkswagen Microbus which is associated with 'izikhothane' and their dance battles where they engage in various group rituals.



Figure 4: A close-up shot of Julius in *Maid For Me* as the older version of an 'isikhothane' in his Volkswagen Microbus.

Julius is a township entrepreneur who has the money to buy expensive clothes and one can assume that he is illustrative of what the young 'izikhothane' envision themselves to be as senior citizens (Mnisi, 2015). Julius is no longer the aspirational consumer but is the nouveau riche consuming from abundance. Ironically, the young 'isikhothane' we see being depicted through Pule in *Taxi Cheeseboy* has an older version in *Maid from Me* through Julius.

Fiona in *Maid For Me* further depicts the abundance of resources as she is a housewife who can afford a lavish lifestyle courtesy of her husband. She also indulges in the latest fashion and boasts about her taste for expensive designer clothing. Her excessive



consumption and abuse of her husband (Tebogo) is further communicated by the mise en scène that includes the use of Henry Moore's Mother and Child (Fig. 5). In the low angle shot, the picture that refers to the sculpture is shown every time in Tebogo's background when he confronts Fiona about her animosity and cantankerous temper. The picture is used as a symbolic code in the film. The sculpture was created by the artist Henry Moore in the 1950s to reflect on the misery caused by the Second World War<sup>35</sup>. The sculpture distorts the figures of the mother and child to suggest the submission of the mother to the aggressive feeding needs of the child as it tries to suckle from her breast. Suggested in the symbolic artwork, is that Fiona is an individual that is harmful to Tebogo's wellbeing as she is abusive and spends his money carelessly to feed her conspicuous consumption. However, the symbolic code of Mother and Child by Henry Moore also presents an alternative narrative that challenges conspicuous consumption as Tebogo is frustrated by the state of affairs in his marriage.

The central theme in both films is that excessive consumption is worshipped through the embracing of the controversial 'izikhothane' subculture that has swept the township landscape in post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, the subculture is notoriously associated with consumption at all costs or aspirational consumption without taking into account the social wellbeing of that individual at the time. This allegory of aspirational consumption can be applied to the gentrified images of the township that we witness in the films whilst a majority of its inhabitants are economically deprived. Ellapen (2007) argued for hybridity in the representation of the township space and these films, *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid for Me* engage the space from one dimension which is that of the quasi-suburban areas that communicate the existence of black mobility. 'Izikhothane' are not wealthy individuals but engage in conspicuous consumption only to reflect their aspirations and the township through its gentrified spaces also reflects an unrealistic perspective of wealth. As the 'izikhothane' is a subculture and a minority within the township, the gentrified images in the films are also representative of a small proportion of the township landscape that has improved since the 1980s and onwards into the post-1994 dispensation.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/moore-mother-and-child-t00389>, Retrieved 30 November 2018.

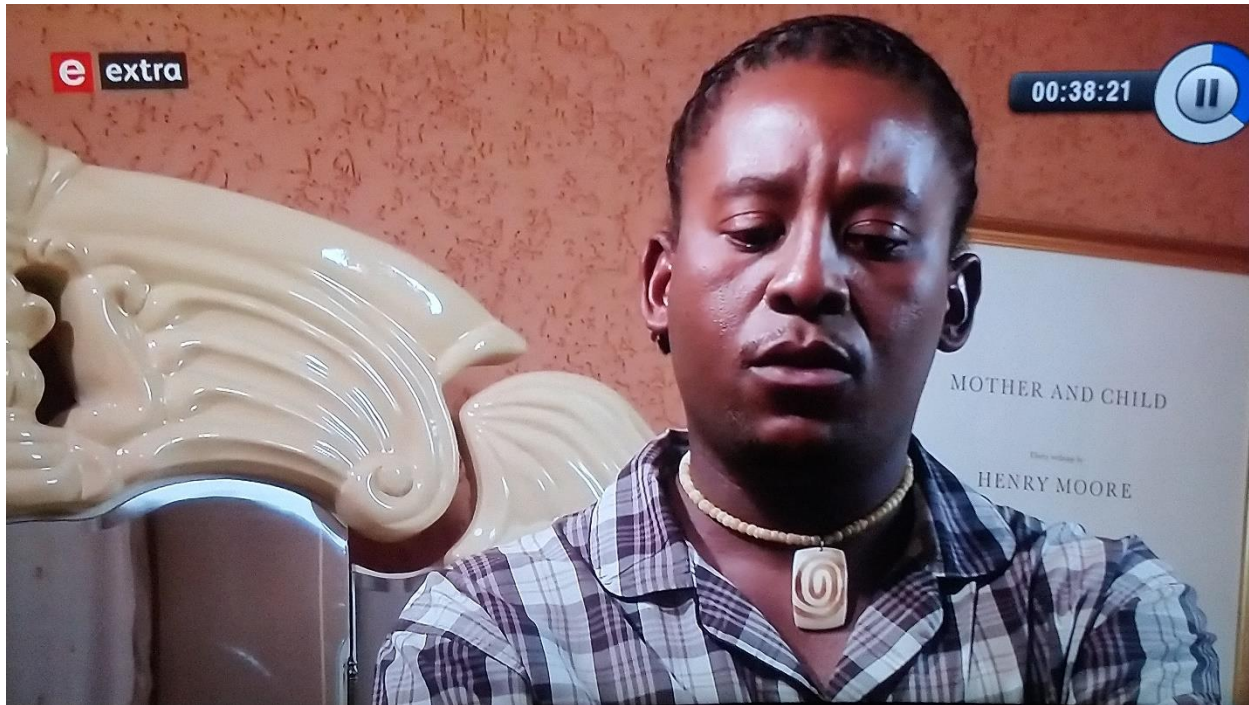


Figure 5: A low angle shot of Tebogo in *Maid For Me* with the background that refers to Henry Moore's *Mother and Child* sculpture.

Another trope that is aiding the agenda of spin-doctoring images of the township, is rainbow nationalism which is an ideal of a new South Africa that was envisioned by the late Nelson Mandela.

### **Township Rainbow Nationalism in *Taxi Cheeseboy***

A rainbow nationalism narrative is given in *Taxi Cheeseboy*, as Pule is a white young man who is staying with the Mthimkhulus and his origins are not explained in the film except that he was assisted by Mthimkhulu. This aspirational narrative depicts the township in virtuous light as white people also reside in the space previously assigned to the black labourer during apartheid. Pule played by Pule Welch who is fluent in African languages contributes to the notion of a rainbow nationalism envisioned by Nelson Mandela and the ruling African National Congress (ANC). The ANC government and former President Nelson Mandela personally encouraged the celebration of the 'rainbow nation' at international sports events such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup (Nauright, 1998; Steenveld & Strelitz 1998).

Rainbow nationalism, as a concept, proposed unity amongst all South African racial groups after 1994, regardless of the injustices experienced by selective groups during apartheid. According to Bornman (2006: 383), “symbols such as the Rainbow Nation and the new national flag have been hailed worldwide as representative of optimism that the new political dispensation would bring reconciliation and unity in the diverse South African society”.

In *Taxi Cheeseboy*, the myth of a ‘rainbow nation’ is made to come alive through Pule. Pule epitomises the notion of a rainbow nation, as he is multilingual. However, it is essential to note that a few white people can speak African languages in South Africa. Also, the concept of the rainbow nation is endorsed by Pule being able to speak African languages fluently which allows one to easily associate him with the township space. Pule’s character provides a depiction of the township space as not solely the domain of black citizens but more as a space of racial unity. Pule creates the signifier of the township space as deracialized. This is on the backdrop of the exodus of several black middle-class citizens in post-1994 to seek settlement in previously white-only suburbs. In essence, this depicts that wealth or privilege is fluid and is not determined solely by race. Moreover, a white person in a black space reflects the crisis of the new dispensation that has been able to empower certain individuals and deprive others.

Ironically, a white ‘isikhothane’, Pule, appears to have also been deprived opportunity in South Africa which works to create a narrative that since 1994 there has been a shift towards equilibrium in the standards of living for both blacks and whites. However, Statistics South Africa has been continuously recording that white households remain affluent in comparison to other racial groups in South Africa. In 2017, Statistics South Africa stated that the annual household income of black households was at R92, 893 when compared with R444, 446 for white households<sup>36</sup>.

Disappointedly, the film does not deal with issues of reconciliation between black people and white people in the new South Africa. The film deviates from critical debates on race and Pule is never at any point addressed as white in the film. This is in

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<sup>36</sup> Statistics South Africa's Living Conditions Survey (2017), <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0310/P03102014.pdf>, Retrieved 20 January 2019.

contradiction to representations of a mainstream film such as *Jump the Gun* (1996). The film worked to sensitize people on the issues of feminism and racism in the early years of the new dispensation. These issues were of great concern to the South African state which was being reconstructed following many years of apartheid and censorship in terms of freedom of expression. The film came across as the substratum of films that attempt to advance social and political consciousness in post-1994 South Africa (Twiggs, 2003).

The film *Taxi Cheeseboy* highlights the poor white problem in South Africa and this is demonstrated through Pule who was adopted by a black taxi owner, Mthimkhulu. Pule points out that Mthimkhulu took him off the streets, implying that he was a street kid and brought him into his home to raise him as his own. In this representation, it is implied that Mthimkhulu was well-off financially than a white person (Pule), as he can shelter a white child and raise him in the township. Also, the film explores the philanthropy of township dwellers, as Mthimkhulu is renowned in the film for his contributions to the local community centre. In the beginning, Reggie does not know that the taxi business his father operated maintains the community centre. In this regard, black township business takes charge of township upliftment and depends less on state intervention. The curbing of welfare from the state that intervenes to improve the lives of people who are deprived of the means to better their lives is an economic strategy, founded on the principles of neoliberalism. Black business is ushered in by the films as the messiah of the township in the absence of the state and the black majority that has voted politicians into power is left to depend on corporate social investments (CSI). The film does ideological work by exonerating the state and politicians from the failures of the socio-economic system. In addition, one of the intriguing issues about *Taxi Cheeseboy* is the inter-racial friendship and how Reggie's social distance from the taxi industry is bridged by his white friend Pule. This is significant to note, as it illustrates that the conscientization of the Americanized Reggie is mediated by a white consciousness that can perform Nativity.



## The township as the new homeland and permanent

The films further engage in a political ploy by embarking on the exclusive representation of the quasi-suburban area of post-apartheid township as a superlative space that has undergone gentrification, which results in its inhabitants being content with the space. In the texts, black spatial mobility is restricted to the quasi-suburban township space. *Taxi Cheeseboy* repudiates the notion of black flight from the township as Mthimkhulu demolished his four-roomed house and built a mansion in the old township of Soweto. Furthermore, *Maid For Me* has professionals in the case of Phindi who is a chief executive officer and Tebogo who is a state prosecutor, who continue to reside in the township regardless of their upward social mobility. Their professional accomplishments did not motivate them to live in a space that surpasses the township in terms of stature.



Figure 6: The old landline phone in the kitchen in *Maid For Me*.

Townships were not initially planned by the apartheid regime to be permanent spaces for black people but rather as temporary spaces for black labourers who at some point had to return to the homelands (Bond, 2000). The notion that the space is old is reflected by a long shot (Fig. 6) that includes the old telephone in *Maid For Me* which works to symbolise old privilege as the landline in the past solely required a monthly

rental fee that was mostly attainable by the black middle class. The old landline demonstrates that the people have been residing in the space for a considerable amount of time to have been emotionally attached. Moreover, what is conveyed in this film is that black flight to the northern suburb of Johannesburg is not a simple decision for one to make, hence, professionals in *Maid For Me* remain in the township. This is different from the new development houses that are built by post-apartheid private capital such as Cosmopolitan Projects along with commercial banks.

In addition, Mthimkhulu in *Taxi Cheeseboy* had acquired considerable wealth but he still chose to remain in the township. The idea that upward class mobility does not result in black flight from the township is communicated. Reggie has been away working in the United States of America and he returns to find that he is to inherit a mansion in the township of Soweto. Reggie never, at any point in time, mentions that the mansion should have been bought elsewhere or built outside of the township. He is immediately impressed by the structure and does not question its location although he comes from a developed country where the majority of the infrastructure has undergone gentrification.

These films do not provide any alternative to the township space and do not even show any images of Johannesburg. With the alternative space, which is the city and its well-developed infrastructure being absent in the film, there is no choice but to perceive the township as a decent space. The township, as a space, still exists for black settlement although it has improved since the 1980s with quasi-suburban areas that were funded by commercial banks and of course the RDP houses that were built post- 1994 by the ANC government.

The affluent spaces that are omitted by the aesthetics of the films are the suburbs where the ruling elites reside. The general argument is that the films do not allow for the contrasting of the township with the suburbs and hence these films do political work of not representing black mobility in its entirety in post-apartheid South Africa. Most political ruling elites visit the townships around election times to campaign for their incessant stay in parliament with the masses who are confined in these spaces. When the elections have ended, the politicians return to parliament and their posh lives in

affluent suburbia and fail to work on the implementation of their election manifesto that assured a better life for the masses.

Lately, increased service delivery protests have erupted in the townships due to the lack of service delivery and the consequences entail the majority of black township dwellers are disgruntled in this space (Alexander, 2010; Mkhize, 2015). This is the reality the films do not address and in that way fit into the government's agenda of reworking perceptions to say that the townships are fine, only black people need to work toward a middle-class position. It is important to note that these discomforts are the cause of black flight from the townships (Phadi & Ceruti, 2011).

The township is depicted by the two films as a permanent space for black settlement and salvation which Murkhejee (2006), through the reading of the *Barbershop* franchise, highlights the black ghettos in the United States as salvation spaces for black citizens. For Reggie, the United States of America is a place he worked and his return to South Africa and particularly his return to the township offers the impression of the township as the new homeland<sup>37</sup>. Reggie, in this instance, is back home in Soweto to use his skills to better his community and is no longer in a space he does not belong to. This representation is similar to that of 'Back to the Homelands' films by Tomaselli (1989) where the films were hell-bent on portraying the homelands as progressive to convince people to stay there. The recycling of themes is an integral component of popular arts or popular culture (Barber, 1987). To easily usher in this change on the part of Reggie, we are not introduced to Reggie's life in the United States of America or made aware of any of his acquaintances there except the bank that calls him concerning his mortgage payments. City life was depicted as difficult for black people in some of the films under the 'Back to the Homelands' umbrella which allowed for the homelands to receive greater prominence. In the case of *Taxi Cheeseboy*, Reggie's stay in the United States is demonized to endorse his settlement in the township space.

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<sup>37</sup> The apartheid government granted black workers permits to work in the cities and not be permanent residents of those cities and upon the termination of employment, these black workers were expected to return to their homelands or Bantustans. The rationale was that these workers should go back home to improve their land and leave the white South Africa to white inhabitants.

The fact Reggie was owing money in the form of a mortgage, shows that he never settled well in the United States and Soweto is his salvation space. He also falls in love with Thandi in Soweto. Soweto, thus, offers him insight into what he needs in his life and it introduces him to philanthropy just like his father. This shows that there was nothing worthwhile for Reggie in the United States and the obvious choice for Reggie is Soweto.

In an earlier scene, Reggie arrives from the United States being chauffeured in a Chrysler vehicle into the township of Soweto. The brand, Chrysler<sup>38</sup> on its own symbolises the United States and the fact that the driver is rude and leaves Reggie deserted in the streets of Soweto latently communicates some form of deportation. This can further be linked to the apartheid era in South Africa, where if a black person failed to have the necessary legal papers (Dom pass) in the cities, they were arrested and deported to their homeland. The protagonist is being dumped in Soweto to symbolise that he is somehow in his motherland and at this juncture, the township is his only home.

## **Conclusion**

The films, *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid For Me*, present progressive and aspirational narratives that are in support of neoliberal and nation-building ideals that have been adopted in post-apartheid South Africa. Black professionals and black businesses are celebrated as enablers for black economic sustainability. It was argued the films further depict narratives that endorse conspicuous consumption on the part of township citizens which is aligned with global capitalism. Furthermore, excessive consumption is represented through Pule and Julius, who are 'izikhothane', that is, individuals who believe in the excessive consumption of designer clothing. The two films, unlike the Barbershop franchise, fail to address the predicament of conspicuous consumption but rather adore it as it symbolizes the existence of black mobility which is essential in proving that the ruling ANC has made significant socio-economic strides.

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<sup>38</sup> The brand is a successor of the Maxwell company which manufactured automobiles in the United States of America from about 1904 to 1925. Currently, the brand trades as Fiat Chrysler Automobiles.



The nation-building narrative of rainbow nationalism is depicted in *Taxi Cheeseboy* through the white character Pule who collapses the boundaries of spaces that were based on apartheid spatial planning. Pule represents the imagined post-apartheid South Africa where all races are united and live alongside each other in prosperity and harmony. Also, through the character Pule, the township is depicted as a de-racialised space and poverty as transracial.

The films *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid For Me* further reject the notion of a black exodus from the township to upmarket suburbs of Johannesburg. The apartheid B-scheme films tended to portray the homelands of black people as peaceful in comparison to the cities. Alternative spaces for settlement are not provided by the films which allow the notion that the post-apartheid township is the new homeland and a salvation space for black people. The deployment of a ghetto fabulous aesthetic can be viewed as a shield to the reality of the space in its entirety. Aspirational narratives are central in positioning the current regime in good standing with the electorate as images of gentrification feed the perceptions of progress.

## 2. Chapter Two

### Poverty and its citizenry: narratives and aesthetics from the township periphery in *Mgosi* (Gossip) (2014) and *Tin City* (2015)

#### Introduction

The media has a history of representing the underclass unfavourably with attributes that work to discredit their humanity (Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Sidel, 1996). Moreover, this negative representation has manifested in the depiction of the poor in news media with traits such as criminality and helplessness (Speak & Tipple, 2006). These negative representations have arisen in film and television productions where the living spaces of the poor are also projected as breeding grounds for crime and deviance (Mendes, 2010).

*Tsotsi* (2006), as a mainstream film and an academy award winner, is evidence of this adverse depiction of shanty towns as settlements that harbour the impoverished and those that are engaged in criminal enterprises to forge a living. *Gangster's Paradise: Jerusalema* (2008) further upholds this projection of the economically disenfranchised, as the main characters emerge from the township as desperate citizens that are willing to engage in illegal ventures to secure a place in post-1994 South Africa.

The township space in South Africa shelters the majority of the black poor and in its entirety, it tends to be inclusive of informal settlements located in its periphery. This space was initially envisioned by the apartheid state as a containment space for the black majority and became overcrowded as black majorities flooded it in pursuit of employment in urban areas. The township has been historically characterised with “poverty, the underclass, overpopulation, violence, criminality and decay” (Ellapen, 2007: 4). However, various productions in the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* have depicted a township that is diverse and is developing in line with the standards envisioned by the ANC government. What is of certainty about the status of the black poor class in post-apartheid South Africa is that they still largely reside in the township.

This chapter aims to engage the representation of the township periphery and its inhabitants who are the underclass. The township periphery, as an informal settlement space, remains inhabited by the underclass and the space has been neglected to some extent by the government in terms of development (Alexander, 2010). These spaces exist because the government has failed to provide sufficient housing for the majority of the poor. Moreover, the existence of these spaces serves to highlight the failures of neoliberal policies adopted by the ANC.

The space, in essence, depicts the conditions that poor citizens have to live in. However, it is essential to focus on the narratives that are assigned to the underclass in popular film to determine whether the poor are represented with diversity and not solely based on negative stereotypes. Binary representation is prevalent in mainstream film whereby the representation of poor tends to be on a measure of good and bad. However, it can be argued that more nuanced ways of representation can be depicted by popular film to capture more experiences about the indigent in their living sphere.

Negative stereotypes of the poor have dominated the media for a considerable number of decades which aids in the ploy to shift blame away from the government for its insufficiency and lack of responsibility to deliver services to all citizens. In addition, the negative stereotypes of the underprivileged are essential in diverting the perceptions people have about the failures of service delivery on the part of the government. The undesirable typecasts of the indigent help to decrease empathy for the social group. The space that is featured in the films as a living space of the poor provides accurate representations of a space that lacks proper infrastructure and adequate housing. The space is depicted as dirty and overall with all the features that equate it to a slum. However, it is essential to explore the character traits that are assigned to the poor in these spaces. Negative character traits that are allocated to the poor support justifying why society, in general, should assume that the deprived deserve the lives that they have. Negative traits help to shield government failures, as sympathy is shifted away from the poor and the justification on the minds of ordinary citizens is that the poor are deprived of opportunities because they fail to work for their livelihoods.

Moreover, negative representations help to shift liability away from failed policies of post-1994 South Africa and towards blaming the disadvantaged for their misfortunes instead of reverting to why the state has failed the poor for so long. In essence, negative traits of the poor feed the perception that the poor are left behind in development due to their lack of ambition and not because of failing neoliberal policies implemented by the government.

I argue that there is a tendency within the grassroots productions by *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* to represent the poor and their spaces in a more nuanced manner whereby a multitude of narratives are represented, that to some extent offer justice to the poor and broader comprehension of their life experiences. The films *Mgosi (Gossip)* and *Tin City*, both commissioned by Mzansi Magic, are exclusively shot in the township periphery (squatter camps). In the commissioning of these films, it was stipulated by the channel *Mzansi Magic* that they should go beyond the themes of Nollywood which are primarily love stories and the occult. In essence, the South African platform is meant to provide stories and issues that South Africans can relate to.<sup>39</sup> *Mgosi* is directed by a woman, Felicia Molusi hailing from the production company Blq2wrk and *Tin City* by a male director, Thabo Mphelo of Thabo Mphelo Films. Blq2wrk has been making films for both *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*. The questions that are addressed in this chapter are: What narratives and visual aesthetics are utilised to represent the township periphery and its underclass citizenry in the films? And, what unique nuances are presented by the films about the poor? This chapter, as it focuses on the representation of the underprivileged, delves into the representation of poor women in *Mgosi*. Moreover, the film *Mgosi* is helmed by a woman and evokes the questions of self-representation.

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<sup>39</sup> Brian Letlhabane was commissioning editor of *Mzansi Magic* in 2012. This is the insight he provided on the rationale behind the creation of *Lokshin Bioskop* to an independent newspapers interview. He highlights the success of the channel and how the viewership has increased due to the channel commissioning such film initiatives. He further states that they are dependent on the black youth market in terms of viewership. He highlights that the brief to filmmakers self-contained stories set against a township backdrop and they wanted stories that experimented with the comedy genre and its other comedy sub-genres – romantic comedy, action-comedy, dramedy – and melodrama.

In addition, popular arts or culture producers tend to be more acquainted with the spaces they represent, which to some degree, can guarantee some authenticity of everyday experiences. The chapter focuses on four themes in order to outline the representation in these two films: transient spaces and lives: the uncertainties of the indigent; crime is in the spatial DNA: the representation of lawbreaking in the township periphery; boxing as emancipator: capitalism and poverty in *Tin City* and a toxic sisterhood: alcoholism and men as escapism in *Mgosi*.

Kenneth Harrow in *Trash: African Cinema from Below* (2013) confers how the trash, human waste dumps, squalor and poverty depicted in African cinema since independence from colonial rule has never been an area of critical study for African film scholars. He proposes an innovative and unconventional way of looking at African film. Harrow emphasises that African cinema has transformed and it should be considered as a “recovered” (récupéré) art representing new forms and themes that posit critical humanist questions of our era (ibid, 282). Furthermore, he reiterates that it is essential to take African cinema out of the critical discursive framework of the aesthetical or postcolonial and their typical areas of revolution, social-realism and engage. This is essential as there is a need for focusing on the art of cinema in terms of how it is enmeshed in the socioeconomic global systems of the contemporary era, as a product to be consumed. “Trash is a stage in the trajectory attached to objects of worth in the economies of value, the economics of trash” (Ibid, 2). Moreover, this is not to stipulate that African cinema is “trash” but it proposes studying the art in line with what it shows about the developing world, the socio-political, environmental, cultural, and historical challenges that have faced and are facing the continent. Harrow’s view allows for the fact that a particular space communicates the issues that are faced by the people residing there.

Harrow mentions how the proliferation of Nollywood films is symbolic of the powerful transformation of African film in the last twenty years. Nollywood works on trashy themes which have led to the success of the industry. He reiterates that “Nollywood is not the answer to trash: it is the answer to African culture’s quest for a viable economic basis that rests upon an African audience and its taste” (Ibid, 60).

Nollywood succeeded in refashioning film into a consumed and commoditized product as it changes the structure of what an African film should be (Harrow, 2013). He alludes that African cinema has been for long driven by African politics until Nollywood as an industry came along which created a situation whereby it became obsolete to think of art and politics as mutually exclusive. He examines the films *Osuofia in London* (2003) and *L' assujetti* (1999) to demonstrate how the Nollywood formulae have mass audience appeal both in and outside the continent. Moreover, before the commodification and consumption of Nollywood film, “art and politics remained at loggerheads” (Ibid, 31). The rising costs of making films on the continent, limited systems of distribution, and the closing of cinema houses all over Africa led to the emergence of Nollywood. Nollywood has succeeded in making trash, a new art form that is sustainable and appealing.

Ryan Connor (2013: 51-52) states that as “the notions of the nation, the just distribution of wealth and value in society, the experience of history from below, and the aims of political liberation change, so too do representations of waste”. Furthermore, he argues that we cannot simply view waste as unsettling and then dismiss it “as merely an uncommon aesthetic curiosity” (Ibid, 52).

Connor and Harrow refer to the text’s regime of waste which implies that waste is always framed within a particular relationship between aesthetics and politics. This regime is said to consist of the language and images through which waste is made visible and intelligible. Harrow (2013) notes that the notion of waste shifts from one regime to another, making it available for recuperation, adaptation, and recycling.

Sulelo (2015) examined the representation of the township in the *Ekasi: Our Stories* series focusing on the film *Secret Lovers* and observed that crime, poverty, manual labour and lack of housing are characteristics that were assigned to the poor. On the contrary, the work exposed that progressive and positive characteristics were assigned to middle- class township women and men in *Secret Lovers*. The study established that negative traits remained assigned to the indigent even by popular film. The findings on the deprived were limited as the study did not engage the lives and living spaces of the poor extensively.

Ellapen (2007) asserts that different social spaces have different sets of images, languages, and behaviours associated with them, they are demarcated as appropriate or inappropriate, legitimate or illegitimate often according to race, class or creed. "Place-circumstances of a community determine the type of individual that arises from that community" (Ibid, 2007: 90).

According to Shields (1991), social spatialisation plays a significant role in the way people live their lives daily, how decisions are made and the manner through which policy actions are rationalised and legitimised. It is through such spatialisations that people define themselves and others and create notions of 'belonging-ness' or alternatively, 'otherness'. Shields (1991) adds that social spatialisation amounts to spatial metaphors that become part of the everyday experiences and people utilise the metaphors daily to create and provide their opinions about certain places and spaces and the people who inhabit them. Moreover, connotations and metaphors connected with certain spaces and places can be historically traced and often spaces still carry with them traces of a past that have evolved with time. Shields (1991: 47), concerning images of places or 'place-images', highlights the following:

...over-simplification (i.e. reduction to one trait), stereotyping (amplification of one or more traits) and labelling (where a place is deemed to be of a certain nature). Places and spaces are hypostatized from the world of real space relations to the symbolic realm of cultural significations.

In the mid-1980s, due to the shortage of housing, repressive urban policies, the recession and the problems encountered by the homelands and farming areas led to the creation of large amounts of shack settlements in the urban areas of South Africa (Sapire, 1992). Informal settlements ranged from closely packed shanty towns within townships to more dispersed settlements in the peri-urban areas of the metropolitan (Ibid, 673).

The post-apartheid township, due to the problems of service delivery and the lack of economic opportunities for the majority of the poor, has led to the continuance of squatter settlements. These squatter camps are erected on the periphery of the

township and most of them are a result of the government's subsidised housing for the poor programme. The cumulative population and the lack of significant economic growth have also been at the forefront of the proliferation of squatter camps. The films *Mgosi* and *Tin City* are shot exclusively in this space, which is also deprived of basic services. Ellapen (2007) refers to how mainstream films in the case of *Wooden Camera* (2003) and *Tsotsi* (2005) utilised visual representations of the 'township space' as the 'shanty town' or shack settlement that focused exclusively on portraying the space as reduced to that of poverty, unemployment, and criminality. The films created the impression that 'township spaces' are similar and are conflated with only one type of township experience (Ibid, 125).

Townships have developed rapidly since 1994 with the erection of shopping malls and the development of complex transport infrastructure. The majority of the black poor live in the township periphery. This space is occupied by those who are deprived of employment and also those who for several years have been on the government housing waiting list for RDP houses. This space, due to its lack of basic services, is considered to be a settlement space for the economically marginalised. Poor citizens have always been linked to crime and this is also evident in the representation of the poor and their living spaces in film. Films such as the academy award winning *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) portray the slums of Mumbai, India as infested with violence and criminal activities. The Academy Award winning film *Tsotsi* (2006) portrayed criminals as part of the poor class and as individuals residing in the slums. Also, popular television in South Africa in the case of *Yizo Yizo II*, links the poor with delinquency as young people from the township periphery or slums were the individuals constantly shown as committing acts of crime (Mhlambi, 2012). Poor spaces are mainly associated with criminality. Slums are known to denote crime and poverty in stereotypical representations in film, literature, and television (Mendes, 2010).

Ivana Bentes (2003) explored the representation of the sertão and the favela in contemporary Brazilian film. The sertão (arid backlands) as mythical lands laden with symbolism and signs and the favela (slums). She infers that these spaces are "places of misery, mysticism and disinherited, non-places and paradoxically places of picture



postcard beauty, with their storehouses of 'typicality', where tradition and invention are extracted from adversity" (Ibid, 121). She adds that many films of the 1950s and 1960s were filmed in the sertão and the favelas which are poor spaces. These places are inhabited by desperate and rebellious characters and they are signs for displaying the failures of modernity. In these old films, people from that period from the sertão who traveled from rural Brazil to the cities became slum-dwellers and marginalised, ignorant and 'depoliticized'.

In the films of Glauber Rocha, slum dwellers are portrayed as are "primitive rebels and revolutionaries, capable of radical change" (Ibid.). Bentes states that the representation of these spaces has changed with the films of the 1990s. She focuses on mapping out the different forms of representing territories of poverty in contemporary Brazilian cinema. Bentes highlights the fact that the sertão and favela in contemporary films are given multiple narratives as spaces and not only portrayed from one perspective of criminality, poverty, and despair. In essence, New Brazilian Cinema has been attempting to provide diverse representations of poor spaces which should be a general trend for all forms of representation in the contemporary.

The films to be read in this chapter are wholly filmed in the township periphery, a space inhabited by the underclass. *Tin City* departs momentarily from the space to depict the affluent suburbs of Johannesburg to reflect on the life the protagonist should be living whilst *Mgosi* remains in the squalor to depict all experiences of the indigent. The plot of the films of being exclusively in poor spaces can be linked to a fetishization with the space (Ellapen, 2007). However, the arresting of the poor within their spaces of poverty by the cineastes attempts to capture the realistic experiences and the trials and tribulations they endure regularly.

### **Stereotyping, representation and the underprivileged**

Michael Pickering in *Stereotyping: The politics of Representation* (2001) states that stereotyping as a practice is a conundrum that tends to be resilient. Representation refers to the process by which signs and symbols are constructed to convey certain meanings (Bernstein, 2002). Hall (1997) states that the signs and symbols can be

created in any medium and are an important feature of social life; they are said to allow people to communicate and make sense of their surroundings. Manning (2001) argues that as representations are constructed, they are not accurate but instead, develop from processes of construction and fabrication. Bernstein (2002) refers to representation as a performance of resemblance (as an act of image-making) or even imitation.

These observations show that representation is a social construct that attempts to portray various objects/subjects in society. In this regard, reality is questionable. On the other hand, it must be taken into consideration that stereotypes, as a form of representation, are a product of human construction and are also determined by people's need to make sense of the world or to understand the so-called "Other".

Stadler (2008) examined the films, *Shaft* (2000) and *Hijack Stories* (2000), he stated that the movies had attracted wide criticism from reviewers and critics as they propelled stereotyped representations of black men. The representation by two films underscored the fact that black neighbourhoods and townships are spaces populated with criminals that engage in crime daily. Richard Dyer (1993) states that for 'reality' to be represented, codes and conventions of presentation have to be used, without these elements, media texts cannot be understood by audiences. Stereotyping is generally applied to assist audiences in comprehending particular matters in society.

Gillens (1996) provides the stereotypes associated with the poor from examining news magazines between 1988 and 1992 in the United States. Gillens discovered that poverty was extensively portrayed as a black problem. He argues that black people make up one-third of the poor but media sources would lead citizens to believe that two out of every three people are black.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the black elderly poor and black working poor were rarely portrayed. He discovered that in the coverage between 1950 and 1992 black people were comparatively absent from media coverage of poverty when there was heightened sympathy for the poor. Clawson and Trice (2000) expand on Gillens' research by investigating whether common stereotypical traits associated with the poor are depicted in the media. They highlight that society believes that poor people harbour

many undesirable qualities that violate mainstream American ideals. This includes the belief by many people that the poor are suffering because of their “lack of effort”, “loose morals and drunkenness” (Kluegel & Smith, 1986: 79). Many people believe that the poor are taking advantage of the benefits provided by social welfare. Moreover, poor mothers are believed to be having many babies to benefit more from the welfare system.

There is a sentiment that poor families tend to have larger families in comparison to the middle-class (Sidel, 1996). Several studies in media attest to the above stereotypical representations of poverty (Golding & Middleton 1982; Martindale, 1996). In addition, the media is further accused of describing the underclass in behavioural terms, as criminals, alcoholics and drug addicts (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). They are further linked with pathological behaviour in urban areas (Gans, 1995). Parisi (1998) analysed the news in the Washington Post, focusing on poverty, and discovered that the media perpetuated stereotypes of the underclass as lazy, sexually irresponsible and criminally deviant.

Another revelation is by Coughlin (1989) who discussed the term “welfare queens” which pertains to poor women who defraud the welfare system to live lavish lifestyles. There is a tendency to justify the suffering of the poor by claiming that the poor are responsible for their misfortunes. The traits that have dominated the media about the poor are profoundly negative traits about the social group. Generally, it seems there are more negative stereotypes about the underclass than positive traits.

Anthamatten (2013: 145) provides an alternative perspective on crime that is pro-poor. He refers to “crime as society revealing to itself the aspects of its psyche that have been silenced, oppressed, buried, those parts of the psyche that must speak, sublimate, return”. Poor spaces are extensively associated with crime. Criminals in most societies are mostly “the poor, the neglected, the exploited, the alienated, the marginalized, the ignored, the forgotten” (Ibid). Moreover, individuals have various assumptions about criminals such that they are “lazy, poor, irrational, dark and their motivations - greed, sadism, natural depravity—cover and excuse the environmental elements that penetrate, influence, and sustain crime” (Ibid).

The Gaze and Otherness in film and television enable one to conceptualise the representation of the underclass as these citizens are mostly socially and economically disempowered to have access to means of production. However, at the crux of popular arts or culture is to have producers that are familiar with a particular setting to represent it. This is envisioned to facilitate the authentic experiences of people that are depicted. The Gaze is pivotal in the critical reading of film as it focuses on bringing to the fore the perceptions around images that have been chosen in a film. In film, the Gaze is concerned with how the filmmaker looks through the camera and it further entails how a character views other characters in the film. Ellapen (2007: 4) describes the concept as follows:

The position a filmmaker employs when casting his lens on his characters. The 'Gaze' of the filmmaker either refers to an 'insiders' or 'outsiders' position. It is important to consider what position the filmmaker assumes when filming as this can influence the type of images constructed and the manner in which images are stereotyped.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (2000) adds that filmmakers are conscious of the decisions they make about the type of images they produce. In essence, the political ideology the filmmakers assume when constructing images and their gaze on characters is also far more critical in representation.

South African film and television during apartheid was largely propelled by white filmmakers who applied a white Gaze on blackness (Ellapen, 2007). Moreover, Ellapen (2007: 112) states that "the power to control the image in post-apartheid South Africa has become an ideological battle over the control of black identity". Mulvey (1986) clarifies the concept of the Gaze, from a feminist perspective, stipulating that the Gaze has a lot to do with positions of power over the marginalised. She further articulates that there is pleasure for the filmmaker in employing a Gaze that strongly harbours his/her ideological affiliations. As a feminist, she posits that within films that are shot by males, one can detect the male gaze even when the marginalised such as women are represented. Said (1978), in his theory of "orientalism" also known as the "post-colonial gaze", explored the representation that manifested when colonizers represented the

colonised. This entailed representing the colonised as the “other” and as truly not in a position of power but rather subservient to the colonizers.

### **Inequality in South Africa**

South Africa has the highest rate of unequal distribution of income in the world and occupying the same category as countries such as Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Brazil, Paraguay, and Guatemala. In the case of South Africa, the legacy of this inequality can be traced back to the apartheid era. Apartheid engineered a system that fortified income inequalities which sought to advance the white minority at the expense of the black population.

The public sector was the most obvious case of this discrimination in South Africa, as white civil servants received higher wages in contrast to their black compatriots (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). White nurses, police officers, and school teachers were remunerated with higher salaries in comparison to their black counterparts and this was the case with old-age pensions that favoured only white senior citizens.

Race was a criterion for opportunity and the denial of prospects to black people by the apartheid state such as denying the black populace the right to own property and measures to restrain black people from partaking in private enterprise worked to exacerbate disparity. Moreover, discriminatory expenditures on health and education existed which offered black citizens inferior services which guaranteed their servitude to the apartheid state. Apartheid allowed for the increase of salaries for white workers whilst depressing those of a black workforce.

The new dispensation in 1994, meant that since black people had a history of being denied opportunities under apartheid and were in a hostile position in comparison to their white compatriots. However, a small proportion of black citizens received high incomes which guarantee their exodus from poverty whilst a majority of the black populace remained in poverty due to the apartheid legacy.

Workers in the agricultural and domestic sectors were the epitome of low wages and poverty in 1994. The de-racialisation of public old pension grants helped to uplift some

households but many of the deprived households were not eligible for such welfare at the time. Seekings and Nattrass (2005) point to the detail that there were continuities of circumstances that existed under apartheid in the first decade of the new dispensation. Upper classes increased their wealth and urban workers benefited substantially from rising wages. On the other hand, unemployment persisted as the informal and smallholding agricultural sectors remained stagnant, which exacerbated the strain on the poor. These conditions intensified inequality even further as growth opportunities only existed in the top structures of society that required skills for admission.

Most unemployment surveys in post-1993 South Africa indicated that “unemployment was higher for Africans than for other population groups, higher for women than men, and higher in rural than urban areas” (Ibid, 317). Statistics South Africa, in 2015, provided data that stated that 9 out of every 10 poor people in South Africa are poor of which is 93 percent of the poor were black. In addition, households headed by black African women, rural parts of the Eastern Cape and Limpopo were the most hit by poverty and were likely to attain little or no education (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

### **Summary of *Mgosi (Gossip)* (2014) (Felicia Molusi)**

*Mgosi* is set in a squatter camp on the outskirts of Soweto and this is the only space depicted in the whole film. The protagonist, Zanele, is a single mother with an excessive drinking problem and is on the verge of losing her only child (Phila) to the social welfare system. Zanele was abusive to Phila which led to Phila being taken away. Phila is struggling at school and Mam' Gloria states that Phila is suffering from depression. Mam' Gloria is a social worker assigned to Phila's case. She is the voice of reason that champions the idea of Zanele finding new friends who will invite some positivity in her life. Also, she is caring and content on helping Zanele overcoming her toxic drinking habits which have led to her losing custody of her child.

Zanele commits to Mam' Gloria that she will stop drinking but Mam' Gloria raises the point that Zanele has been failing to stop drinking. Zanele has two friends whom she drinks with, Xoli and Thabs. They dream about finding men who will be able to rescue them from their sordid lives. Xoli is informally employed as a domestic worker for a

white couple in the suburbs of Johannesburg and Thabs is unemployed. The conflict arises in the film when Xoli and Zanele date the same guy (Sifiso) who happens to be a middle-class male dealing in illicit drugs in disadvantaged communities. As Xoli discovers that Zanele is romantically involved with her boyfriend, she embarks on a path to ruin Zanele's life by endangering the safe return of her son. Xoli can procure cocaine and she spikes Zanele's juice after she broke into Zanele's home and this jeopardises Phila's return as Mam' Gloria is devastated with the positive drug test. Zanele tries to convince Mam' Gloria that Xoli is vindictive and is responsible for her positive drug test. Zanele decides to change her life after Mam' Gloria gives her a second chance and believes her story about Xoli. Zanele finds help from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) to quit her alcoholic lifestyle. She later decides to leave her friends and creates a support group to empower people in the informal settlement.

### **Summary of *Tin City* (2015) (Thapelo Mphelo)**

Similar to *Mgosi*, the story is told in an informal settlement known as Tin City which implies its zinc makeshift structures. It presents a story of a boxing underdog (Enoch) who failed to reach the pinnacle of his boxing career and due to life's demands is forced to fight in the streets illegally. He owns a shack, where he resides with his wife (Mamsie) and son (Lesiba). The family is frustrated by the state housing waiting-list that has not delivered their RDP. As a result, they are stranded in the squalor of Tin City. Enoch is a hard worker who does odd jobs such as cleaning people's yards along with gardening. Enoch and Mamsie have neighbours, Boi Boi and Wendy, who are involved in underhand dealings. The couple acquired an RDP house illegally before their neighbours Enoch and Mamsie, who had been on the waiting list for a long time through corruption. The departure of Boi Boi and Wendy from Tin City puts pressure on Enoch to seek other avenues to raise the required amount of money to purchase an RDP house from Boi Boi's contact. Bab' Mthenjwa, who is Enoch's father-in-law, is a central figure in the illegal boxing arena and he is approached by Bab' Zondo, a loan shark who wants to arrange a high-profile match between the current champion (The Rose) and the underdog Enoch who is hailed as a Tin City champion. Bab' Zondo is a ruthless businessman who used to work for a commercial bank and he now offers loans with

high-interest rates to the needy in Tin City. At first, Enoch is reluctant to fight but agrees as he is compelled by his need for redemption after he was cheated as an aspiring boxer of a championship title with The Rose and the yearning to have decent housing. Enoch manages to beat The Rose and departs from Tin City to his new RDP house.

### **Transient spaces and lives: The uncertainties of the indigent**

Tin City, as the name for an informal settlement, infers that the structures people live in are created from zinc and this is also the case with *Mgosi*. These makeshift zinc structures demonstrate that the space is a temporary living space but on the metaphorical level it also talks to the transitory lives of its inhabitants. By temporary lives, what is implied is that the inhabitants have occupied the space in the hope that adequate housing will be delivered by the state.

Temporary shelters in South Africa and the rest of the world are associated with the poor as the spaces tend to have limited government services and in most instances, it entails the occupation of land by unlawful means. The temporality of the space informs us of the transient lives the people live, as they are not assured of what the future brings or when evictions might be sanctioned by bureaucrats. The space, in both films, has been occupied illegally. Hence, it lacks basic infrastructure. What we see in *Tin City* and *Mgosi* is that the inhabitants are not content with their homes and the habitat in which they have to raise their children. Most of the citizens of these environments like Enoch in *Tin City* and Xoli in *Mgosi* engage in odd and temporary jobs where there is no social security for rainy days and disregard for the minimum wage. The temporary work these people do in society and their dependency on what is not guaranteed mirrors the state of their quotidian lives in their zinc habitat. We see Enoch and his spouse Mamsie baffled about how they are meant to survive on the paltry income earned by Enoch from the informal work he does. The uncertainty about where their next meal will come from is made clear in both films and their yearning to depart from the space is reiterated constantly through their assertions and aesthetical presentations.

Bab' Zondo as the 'mashonisa' in *Tin City* also adds to the temporality of this space as he harasses those who have acquired loans from his informal and illegal money lending



establishment. Zondo engages in acts of intimidation as he forcefully removes valuable movable assets from the shacks of inhabitants who owe money to his informal bank. The poor in this portrayal are compelled to bid farewell to the items of value in their lives with the hope of accumulating them again in the future. Zondo emphasizes how he worked for a commercial bank that loaned people money and he claims that he started his business to help people. Moreover, he stresses the fact that he is a moneylending messiah in *Tin City* that has come to help those who cannot attain financing from conventional banks.

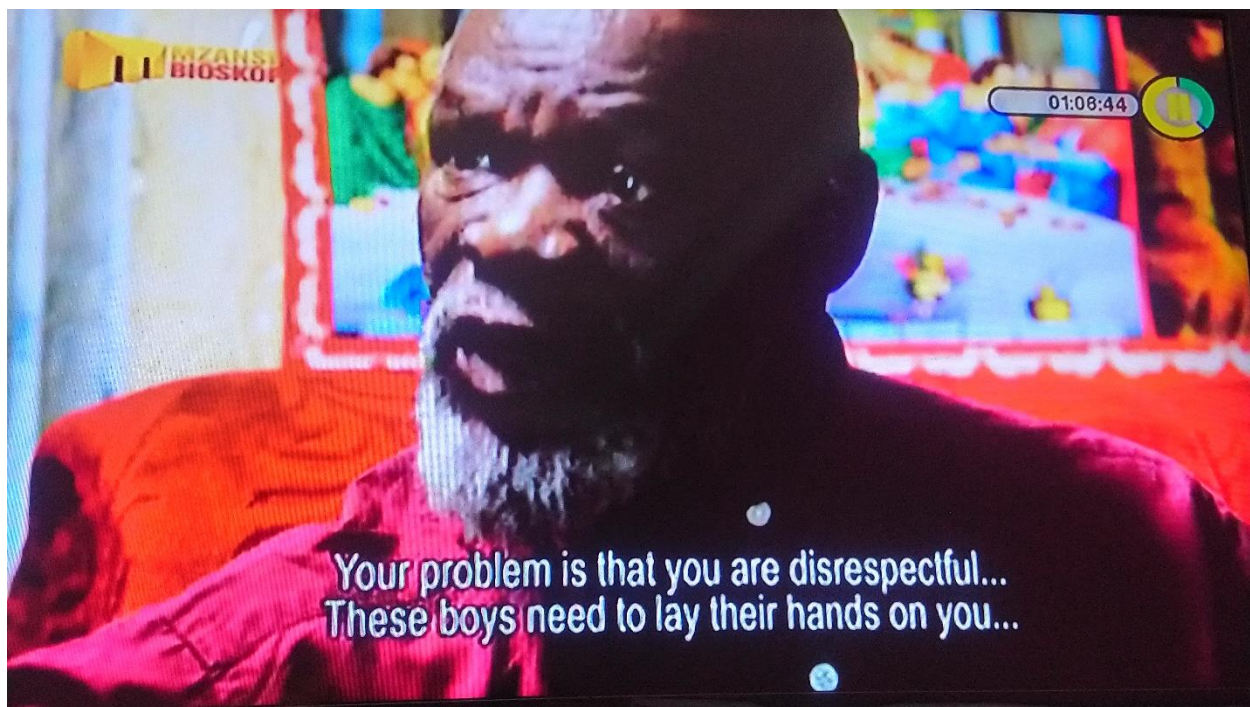


Figure 7: Zondo in conversation with a debtor that has defaulted on instalments.

The close-up shot of Zondo offers a specific detail on the mise en scène, with the picture of the Last Supper in the background. The close-up shot is used to make the audience feel close to Zondo and be uncomfortable with his character since the shot allows for one to observe his bloodcurdling, facial expression. The low angle camera position makes the viewer feel powerless within the action of the scene and it further creates a sense of confusion to the viewer. This dramatic effect is further propelled by the low key lighting in the scene which casts shadows and dark tones.

The scene also elaborates on the lack of certainty and the temporary lives of the poor as Zondo even paints himself as the deliverer that can be equated to Christ. The use of the Last Supper picture as a prop behind Zondo reinforces his assertions of being a godsend and the fact that he is eating in the scene intensifies the Christ analogy. In this instance, a picture is used to reveal aspects of Zondo's personality. However, in the Last Supper, Christ does not eat alone but with his disciples and this scene covertly communicates that Zondo is a selfish man. We are offered a perception that Zondo is the opposite of good, the anti-Christ which is a mythological figure in Christian eschatology. The dialogue along with the mise en scène is imperative in communicating the messiah allegory:

*Kulamanye amabhangi bakunikeza i-junior clerk ukhulume nayo. Ubungena ID, payslip, ubungena address. Ngiyi CEO, ngiyi Head Office yabo mashonisa bonke lana eTin City. Ikinga yakho wena mfana ukuthi une dimoni elingafuni ukukhokha.*

*In other banks, you deal with a junior clerk. You did not have an ID, a payslip and an address. I am the CEO, the head office for all the moneylenders here in Tin City. Your problem, you boy is that you have a demon within you that does not want to pay.*

The temporary space has rendered the citizens helpless as formal banks do not recognize them and their space because of the lack of official documentation and physical addresses. The informal work the inhabitants do outside of their space does not render them creditworthy to a formal institution and hence Zondo exploited this opportunity to start the lucrative moneylending business. Moreover, the lives of the dwellers can be temporary due to their lack of citizenship as some are foreigners in South Africa and their only way of accessing finance is through ruthless moneylenders. Another matter adding on the transient lives of shack dwellers is the issue of shack fires that are common in informal settlements that lead to people losing their vital documents and other valuable items that they have amassed over time through sweat. The shack community is not a stable environment and hence the lives of citizens can be rendered impermanent at all times due to the uncertainties posed by their life experiences.

## **Crime is in the spatial DNA: The manifestation of unlawful practices in the township periphery**

Citizens who have been economically marginalised since the new dispensation in 1994 reside in spaces of squalor that are fertile ground for criminal enterprises. We are offered insight into this life by the film *Mgosi* on where the space is situated when Mam' Gloria informs Zanele that her child Phila will be assigned to the Soweto Children's Home. This shows that this informal space very close to the informal space to the township of Soweto. Besides, this township periphery is in a metropolitan area that has vast numbers of people who place considerable demand on service delivery and resources.

The squatter camp in *Mgosi* was preferred by Sifiso for his drug business as there is a steady and substantial demand for his product and individuals that are willing to distribute it for him. Due to the woes that prevail in the space, Sifiso can establish his business that serves to offer people a diversion from their daily plight. He is a middle-class heterosexual male who parades in a luxury German sedan in the informal settlement as he conducts his illicit trade. He does not sell his product in the affluent suburban area where he lives but is comfortable with selling to the indigent. The lavish lifestyle that Sifiso wields and his arresting physical appearance shields him from being viewed as an outlaw. Additionally, he dates women that are residents of the periphery to justify his constant presence. The chaotic spatial arrangement of the space and the sizeable populace also aids his business to thrive and not be easily detected. Moreover, criminal activity in *Mgosi* is not cast out as taboo as Xoli informs Sifiso that she is aware of his drug enterprise. She does the unexpected by bargaining with the criminal and she even threatens Sifiso that she has her illegal connections that guarantee her safety in her living space. Crime, at this juncture, is portrayed as attractive as Xoli does not despise or report Sifiso for his underhand dealings but negotiates her way back into his life. Xoli goes further to buy illicit drugs with ease and without Zanele's consent, she uses the substance to intoxicate Zanele so that she fails her routine drug test with Mam' Gloria.

*Tin City* presents a criminal Boi Boi, who resides in the periphery and who does not want to do hard menial labour to earn a living. Boi Boi is a mysterious and dodgy character who is never portrayed in the act of committing a crime. He frequently refers to the hustles he must pursue to maintain his lifestyle of lazing all day whilst mocking Enoch for being a worker. His activities are exemplified by a conversation between himself and his spouse. The scene is composed of a high angle shot with low-key lighting of Boi Boi and Wendy in their shack, which visually works to represent them as less significant and as dubious characters.

*Boi Boi: Wa bona Baby majita atlo tlisa gunga ele, nna ke e lukise ke qakazise ebe mjojo. Baby wena o seke wa wara. Ketlo ajasta. O tla bona mhlankhona, o tla be o cwebezela/ Baby, look the guys will bring that gold dust and I'll fix and polish it. Don't worry my Baby, very soon you'll be loaded.*

*Wendy: Eya, nawe Baby kufanele ungibonise ukuthi uyangithanda, uwabonise Amandla akho njenge ndoda uyabona/ You need to show me that you love me, you need to show me that you are a man.*

*Boi Boi: Baby, mara lewena ke kopa o shapele fatse, pele dintja tsena se di dregela ko segateng watsheba/ Yes, Baby but you also need to be discreet these people are talking to the police.*

*Wendy: Mara why bekhuluma ngathi uyantshontsha. Uyantshontsha?/ But why? Why are they doing that? Why do they treat you like a criminal? Are you a criminal?*

*Boi Boi: A ke ntshontshi, my Baby. Ankere gunga ele majita bai shaya, be etlisa mona, nna ke ya qakazisa, nou dipidi tsahi, mazekeng, wa ditseba le wena. Ke de involve/: I am not a criminal these guys bring that thing and I just finish up the job, you know our secrets.*

*Wendy: And so? Bafuna ukuthi wenzeni, angithi uya zisebenzela? Bafuna uthi wenze izingadi nje ngo Enoch/ What is it that they want you to do? You are self-employed. They want you to clean yards just like Enoch.*

*Both: Ncabanga Baby/ Just imagine Baby.*

*Boi Boi: Baby, watseba Baloyi bona bajwang, ba batla o pona kele fatse/ Baby you know how witches are, beware of who you are talking to because you talk to the wrong people.*

The dialogue above presents Boi Boi as a criminal who is oblivious of the fact that what he is committing is felonious. His use of the tsotsitaal in his statements is also meant to disguise his criminal enterprise and his reference to gold dust as 'gunga' is deceiving to anyone who is not familiar with the dialect. Also, within his home, he possesses items of value which Enoch, as a working man, does not own and we are presented with the assumption that whatever he does is criminal. Moreover, Boi Boi's criminal enterprise is well connected as he knows individuals that do underhand dealings with the public sector. He manages to purchase an RDP house which is an item that is not for sale and is state property. He obtains it swiftly and is the first person along with his spouse Wendy to depart from Tin City. In this revelation in the film, crime does pay and Boi Boi is never at any stage in film harassed by law enforcement. The criminal network in *Tin City* is vast as a meagre hoodlum Boi Boi is acquainted with state officials who wield power to execute service delivery. Enoch is compelled to become a criminal in order to leave Tin City and find a better place for his family, his criminal act allows him to get an RDP house swiftly whilst there is a waiting list for the general public that has existed for decades. Crime has become a service provider that delivers and an enterprise that upholds promises.

Bab' Zondo in *Tin City*, operates a lucrative, well-connected illegal moneylending business and his criminality is not petty but can tap into the conventional world. He succeeds in persuading a conventional boxing champion, the Rose, to leave his place of comfort and accept an illegal bout with an underdog in *Tin City*. The criminal underworld is portrayed as having the capability to deliver much more than the state and other legitimate institutions. Crime is represented as possessing a long arm that can reach into the upper echelons of society when the need arises.

### **Boxing as emancipator: capitalism and poverty in *Tin City***

In the 1920s, it was believed that boxing amongst African people in the Witwatersrand area, now Johannesburg promoted “ideals of civility, discipline, respectability, independence, and self-defense, all considered necessary by many in order for Africans to survive in the urban setting of the Rand” (Fleming, 2011: 47). The sport cuts across classes as black working class and black petty bourgeoisie were tremendously interested in the sport. Significantly, the sport became a mechanism to manage black anger in the urban spaces of the Witwatersrand.

On the other hand, the sport assisted with maintaining the status quo as the containment of black anger secured the advances of capitalism as workers were provided with a pastime during the colonial years. During the 1950s, in the early years of apartheid, the sport reached the climax in terms of its popularity within black communities in Africa (Ibid). Africa had produced several black boxing champions who were able to compete internationally except for South African champions who were repressed by apartheid from competing internationally and against their white compatriots. Images of popular black boxers in the diaspora, who won boxing titles fighting white competitors became regular reportage by the black press in South Africa and the South African black public saw the victories of the black boxers in the diaspora as assisting in the fight for freedom. Boxing became a liberation tool in the observances of black people in repressive political settings. The admiration of the sport led to the creation of boxing films by Hollywood in the effort to profit from the already captured audience of the sport. The boxing film genre as a Hollywood marvel has been able to capture audiences worldwide and deliver substantial financial results at the box office. Hollywood embarked on the boxing film genre in the 1930s offering roles only to white American boxing champions. For a considerable number of years, African American boxing champion, Joe Louis, remained undefeated and Hollywood failed to create a boxing feature with a black protagonist<sup>40</sup>.

The film, *Rocky* (1976) was bestowed with an academy award and this was symbolic of the potential, the boxing film genre had and its popular appeal. The genre was also

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<sup>40</sup> Newland, C. 2016. How boxing movies put black heroes in the frame. <https://lwlies.com/articles/boxing-movies-creed-ryan-coogler/>. Retrieved 18 December 2018.

adopted by South African film and television in the plot to create local heroes for black audiences who had consumed Blaxploitation content excessively. Black film in South Africa has always been aligned with the “state’s hegemonic discourses” (Mhlambi, 2012: 109). Barber (2000) refers to the interplay between the global, international, transnational and local in the creation of contemporary popular culture.

Moreover, while artistic products draw from international popular culture, they can edify recipients through the demonstration of moral messages that have been modified by local interpretation. As the theory dictates that narratives originate from everyday life which creates a regeneration and recycling of past themes, plot structures, lessons and styles of characterisation (Ibid.). The film *Stoney: The one and only* (1984) centered on boxing and even popular black television presented dramas such as *Inkomane* (1993), *Moipolai* (1994), *Keletso* (1996) and *Poo tsa Motsako* (1998) which depicted the resilience of the human spirit through boxing. The apartheid regime wanted to ensure that black South Africans stopped their admiration of African American heroes who had surpassed South Africans in terms of their civil rights struggles. An encompassing narrative within the boxing film genre is poverty as there is a hero/heroine that must work industriously to achieve his/her dream. Moreover, it contains the ‘rag to riches’ narrative whereby poverty is overcome by hard work that the boxer devotes.

Like the alpha boxing films with a winning formula, the protagonist Enoch is a poverty-stricken family man who failed to reach his boxing prime due to underhand tactics used by boxing administrators to deny him his prize when he was at his prime. The unscrupulous tactics administered by boxing promoters on the part of Enoch reflects on the everyday obstacles that the poor have to endure to survive. It echoes the unjust systems that have been ushered in by capitalism and favour a few at the expense of the masses. Furthermore, the boxer narrative mirrors people who have failed to attain their goals or provide sustainable livelihoods for themselves and a story that offers redemption for a past mistake is extremely attractive. The fight scenes are predominantly created with bird’s eye view angles which situate the audience to view the actions from a godlike position. In this projection, people in the scene can be viewed as insignificant and as audiences rarely see the world from this angle, confusion is

created. Additionally, these scenes offer substantial insight into the topography of the shantytown and can be regarded as establishing shots. The environment that is presented, is only composed of shacks that are in an unhygienic setting.

Individuals like Enoch labour tirelessly to attain the wages they receive which are meagre in comparison to their quotidian needs. He is a boxing hero that is similar to Rocky Balboa in *Rocky* (1976) that has suffered tremendously in life and is determined to be industrious to obtain his dream. The sweat we see on the boxer when he is engaged in his training represents the diligent citizens that work for their share in the economy. The hero who starts from nothing through training and determination attains his dream is the ideology of capitalist enterprise which the ordinary citizen identifies within neoliberal society.

Enoch provides hope for the poor in a harsh environment where being righteous does not benefit the indigent. Only his effort can guarantee him his chance to live in an RDP house, as the state cannot help him. Boxing in this instance can be said to conceal the failures of capitalism as the ordinary Joe in the case of Enoch is allowed to achieve glory and punch above his weight. The society that has viewed him as a failure for a long time can at this juncture see him for his true talent and he paints a picture of hope for all the indigent. He must not engage in a regulated and official boxing match and must fight bare-knuckle, an indication of the primitive nature of boxing as a sport. To fervently illustrate the plight of the poor who engage in menial work regularly and who get their hands dirty from their work, bare-knuckle fighting is comfortable for Enoch as he is not soft. His hands have been strengthened by the work he does which is gardening and other odd jobs that require him to work using his hands.

We know that our protagonist has been bare-knuckle fighting for small bets without his wife's knowledge in the film and we assume that he has been toughened by this exercise. He is a bare-knuckle champion in *Tin City* and in the end, he is challenged by a conventional boxing champion in his arena and space. This represents a picture of the underprivileged world not being entirely forgotten by prominent environments as even the well-off citizens such as a conventional boxing champion can challenge a 'nobody' in the case of Enoch who is in despair.



The conventional champion was able to recognize the effort of an individual who felt useless and offered him a chance at glory and redemption. The conventional world, in this case, offers an opportunity to the scalawag in society, the so-called economically disenfranchised to shine and be recognized for excellence. The conventional champion wants to prove his prowess against a champ who has been fighting unprotected by gloves for years and for trivial bets.

In the popular *Rocky* (1976), Rocky Balboa is given a chance by Apollo Creed who is a conventional champion to have a shot at his title and Rocky has to get fit to meet the champion in his tuff. *Tin City* creates a situation whereby a champion in his world, the conventional champion, The Rose, brings himself to the level of the commoner that is Enoch to prove his worth as a titleholder. The conventional champion deserts what he knows for a chance to win a 'meagre' title in Tin City just for the grandeur and because of the popularity of the sport in the indigent zinc space. As a spectacle, boxing has a history of providing a liberation vision for the oppressed (Fleming, 2011).

This space, as an environment of poverty, has inhabitants that are too hungry, physically and spiritually, to improve their lives. Boxing strives on contenders who are physically and spiritually hungry and are underdogs in society. It can be said that the conventional champion perceives the squalor as a space that reflects the fighter's entirety. Also, the strong passion that existed for the sport in the previous century in South Africa now remains fueled by the poor who still want to have a chance at life and opportunity. The fact that Enoch can defeat the conventional titleholder, firstly, reaffirms the importance of the poor for the economy as they are depicted as 'sleeping giants', and, secondly, is that the impoverished have a way out of poverty in this world. Moreover, boxing is represented as a mechanism that advocates for self-help interventions. As Enoch was denied a chance at the championship in his prime, the opportunity he is granted by the *Tin City* duel is similar to how the capitalist economic machinery works whereby today there is work and tomorrow there is nothing. However, in this instance, the machinery has returned to rectify an injustice of the past which is not a frequent occurrence in the real world. The film communicates that the

contemporary capitalist/neoliberalist system will find a way to remedy its woes and redeem itself.

### **A toxic sisterhood: Alcoholism and men as escapism in *Mgosi***

New black cinema celebrated sisterhood and unity amongst black women with films such as *Waiting to Exhale* (1995), *Set it off* (1996), *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* (1998) and *For Colored Girls* (2010). Post-apartheid South African film and television also put forward similar narratives of unity amongst women in films such as *Gaz' lam* (2002 - 2005), *Society* (2007 – 2010), *It's Complicated* (2015 – 2017) and *Happiness is a four-letter word* (2016). These mainstream films and television productions encouraged sisterhood amongst women of colour (Harris & Hill, 1998). The strength that women required to survive was projected as dependent on durable relations with other women who were going through similar challenges.

The film *Mgosi* presents a sisterhood that is founded on excessive alcohol consumption. The three women characters in *Mgosi* are powerful figures as they head their households but their discontent is reflected by their binge drinking, which attests that they are not fit for the task. They are represented as overwhelmed by their own lives and struggles within their poverty-stricken setting. Moreover, alcohol abuse is linked to their social woes of poverty and lack of opportunity. The impression that the main characters can drink excessively and endure the bitter taste of alcohol as a routine can be associated with the bitterness in their lives. Furthermore, they consume their beer from a quart (Fig. 7) which is roughly a 750ml bottle without using a glass, which further paints a picture of them as alcoholics. Shadows are common features as low-key lighting is preferred for dramatic effects and to suit the conventions of the genre.

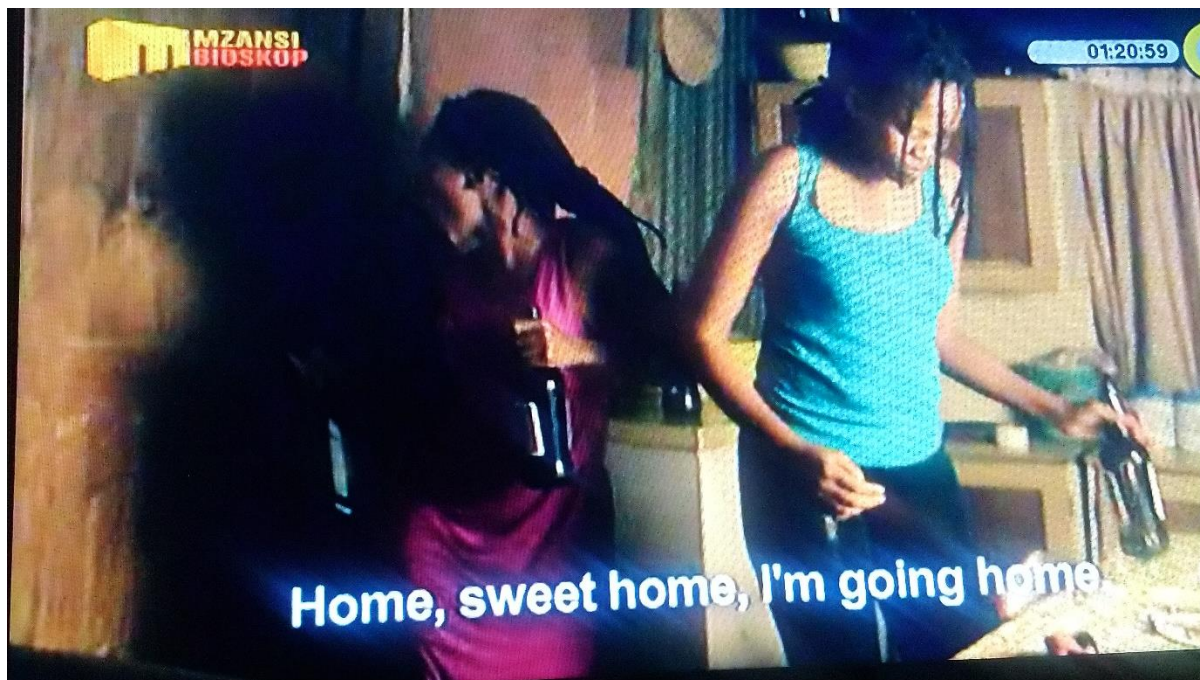


Figure 7: Zanele and Xoli in possession of alcohol in one of their binge drinking sessions in *Mgosi*.

The calamitous circumstances they live under, in the squatter camp have prepared them for the bitterness that they have to endure to survive. However, we are introduced to the revelation that Zanele tends to have epileptic seizures that are caused by excessive alcohol intake which can jeopardise her life in the future. At this juncture, Zanele has to find other means to deal with the unpleasantness of her life as the alcohol further results in her losing her son as he is placed in the social welfare system. We are not granted the nurturing images of women that are historically a common practice in the representation of women in film and television over time but we are offered an alternative perspective of feminism through sordid images (Paneva, 2008). The images that are prevalent about the characters are those of failing mothers in the case of Zanele who has her son taken away and as irresponsible individuals who fail to opt for a better life or work towards building one based on their efforts.

Alcohol usurps a pinnacle in their lives as everything has to fall into order after they have devoured liquor. In the film, we are introduced to images of Zanele drinking to forget her life's woes and the absence of her son. The narrative of alcohol as a substance that allows one to overlook difficulties is depicted, as Zanele falls into despair and is oblivious of her obligations towards her son. A critical factor is the easy

availability of alcohol within poor spaces which the film depicts extensively as empty bottles lie in the streets and drunkards are filmed in illegal beer taverns within the shantytown. The film from the onset establishes the narrative that alcohol is a form of escapism or pastime for poor people and is prevalent within underprivileged surroundings.

Men are perceived as a solution by the three women characters at first as they wish to be rescued from their miserable lives by a 'prince charming' who is wealthy. Xoli finds a rich boyfriend, Sifiso, who is cheating and conniving who later makes advances at Zanele. Sifiso is a womaniser who takes advantage of women that reside in the informal settlement as he promises them eternal love and to show his disregard for these women, he takes them to the same restaurant to lure them to his bed in the suburbs of Johannesburg. Sifiso is aware of the women not being familiar with fine dining and hence he offers them what they feel they cannot offer themselves due to their socio-economic status. When Sifiso decides to enter into a love relationship with Zanele abandoning Xoli, this ruins the friendship between Zanele and Xoli. Moreover, the relationship Zanele starts with Sifiso seems to become the zenith in her life as she works on love whilst her son is absent.

The shot in Figure 8, provides an image of Zanele as an irresponsible mother, who is content with dating Sifiso whilst her son is with social welfare. The over-the-shoulder-shot of Zanele and Sifiso communicates their connectedness and it introduces the idea that they have common interests. The picture on the wall behind Zanele, which is a symbolic code, has a mother and her infant that still needs to be nurtured to grow, which latently communicates what Zanele's priority should be at this stage. The notion that Zanele has her back to the picture is to emphasize her neglect of her son as she is shown to be excited with her new man. In this scene, we are offered the impression that she has found her happiness and comfort in the arms of a man who promises a contented life. Sifiso becomes a distraction for Zanele and later he destabilizes her life, as it is revealed that he is also dating Xoli and the latter unleashes havoc in Zanele's life because of Sifiso. Xoli forgets her obligation to her friend Zanele because of Sifiso and Zanele because of the latter disremembers her pledge to ensure the safe return of her

son. Later in the film, we are introduced to a reformed Zanele who decides to get rid of her friends and focus on her life as she leaves the toxic sisterhood.

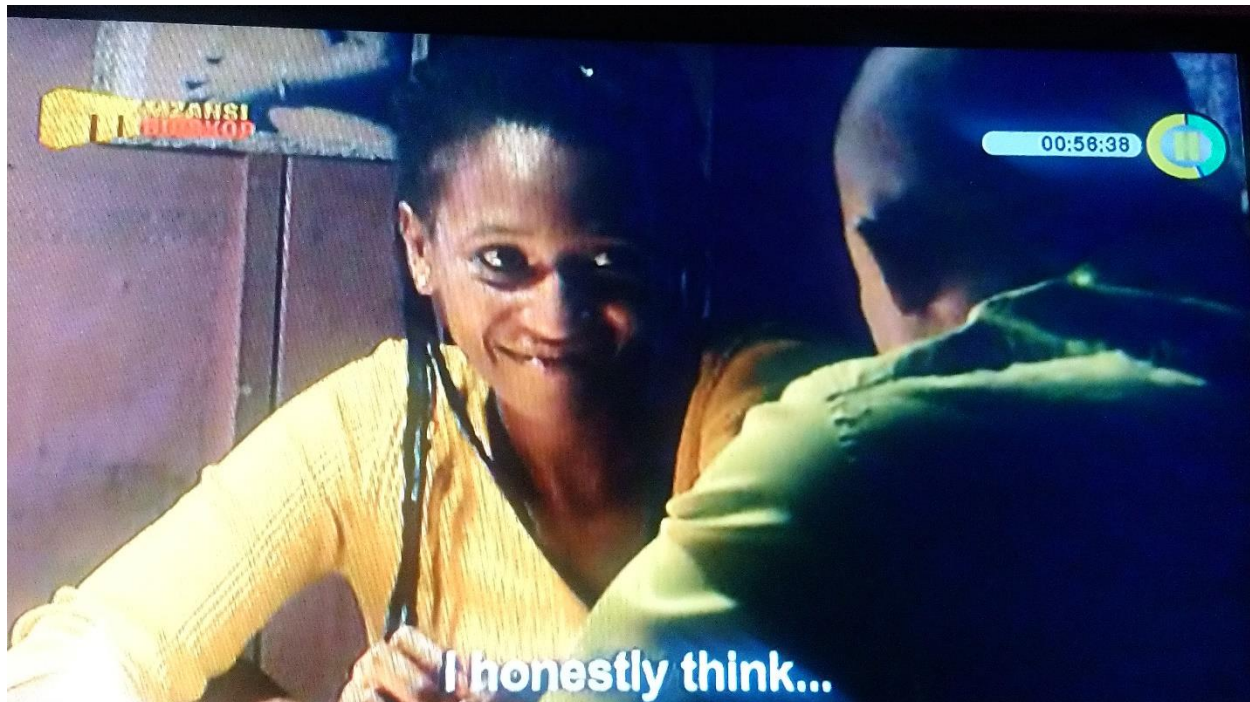


Figure 9 : An over-the-shoulder-shot of Zanele and Sifiso having a conversation in Zanele's shack before their first date.

With *Mgosi*, the sisterly bond existing in the beginning of the film between Zanele and her friends is portrayed as toxic for Zanele as she has already lost her son because of its harmfulness. Moreover, Xoli with her jealousy and envy commits a heinous act of drugging Zanele to an extent that she jeopardises the chances of Zanele acquiring custody of her offspring. Xoli risks losing her friendship with Zanele over a man and being imprisoned for the acts she commits against Zanele. Duck (1983) and Kutnick (1988) (in Mhlambi, 2012: 178) focused on girls' subcultures and they note that such relations had "positive elements but were also marred by jealousy, conflict and emotional tension". In the case of *Mgosi*, black women are depicted with such tendencies that can be linked to girls' subcultures and a strong sisterly bond is repudiated by the film. Xoli further blackmails Sifiso to sleep with her hence ruining his relationship with Zanele as she threatens to report him for his drug dealing business. She does not report him because she is hell-bent on being with him and she will rather protect him than her friend Zanele. Xoli and Zanele's friendship ends because of a feud

over a man who is a liar and who is using both of them. The relationship that Xoli had with Zanele had lasted for many years but is simply wrecked by a man coming into the picture.

In addition, when Zanele decides to quit her friends she is seen to be liberated and focused as a woman. She manages to fix her life and gets her son back from social welfare whilst also running a support group in her community for substance abusers. A picture is created that as Zanele has cut ties with her friends she can make many strides in her community. She becomes an empowering figure for most people who are troubled by their social problems. She only does this when she is detached from her toxic friends.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of *Mgosi* and *Tin City* reveals that popular film in South Africa presents a multitude of perspectives on the lives of the poor and their living spaces. The township periphery is represented by its realities of squalor and its lack of adequate infrastructure. There is substantial visual representation of the space to elaborate its various typographies. Moreover, the poor are represented as having aspirations of departing from poverty and becoming better than their present selves. Popular film, in this regard, offers perspectives on the value of crime for the underclass and how crime becomes normalised in spaces of poverty.

Narratives that justify capitalism and its promises are communicated through the sport of boxing which tends to glorify a 'rags to riches' narrative in *Tin City*. A sport that is in a decline in South Africa is revived to awaken the spirit of the less privileged to continue forward. The casting of poor women as central to poverty with *Mgosi* informs the current poverty debacle in South Africa, as the most economically deprived are black African women. Popular film in this regard works to inform society of the realities of the country which is traditionally the domain of Third Cinema. On the contrary, the negative stereotypes presented by *Mgosi* of poor women raises concerns about how outsiders, in this case, middle-class filmmakers represent the indigent. The film was helmed by a woman, Felicia Molusi and the justification might be that such narratives of failing

women are stereotypically cast because of the reliance of some filmmakers on the old stereotypes of the poor that are dominant in mainstream film and television.

There are conflicting perspectives in the films as *Tin City* glorifies capitalism through boxing and demonizes it through the character Bab' Zondo. There are negative and positive traits of the poor that are represented simultaneously which adds to the notion that popular arts or culture are informed by everyday experiences that are multifaceted and informed by multiple sources. The aesthetics and narratives in the films communicate various aspects of the space and its inhabitants. There is a departure from representing the poor as unambitious and undetermined to improve or seek avenues that can allow for class mobility. Stories of perseverance are represented by the films as individuals work on improving their way of life. Superior aesthetical presentations are prevalent in the films which highlight the level of skills the filmmakers possess which reflects on their formal film schooling being deployed in the field of popular film. Moreover, on the issue of authenticity concerning issues of poor spaces and the poor, there is a greater insight into the space provided to claim that the producers are familiar with the environment they are representing. Whilst previous representations of the underprivileged in mainstream film and television were significantly negative, the popular films in this chapter reveal a departure from a binary representation of negative and positive towards miscellaneous representations of human experiences. The aesthetics and narratives in the films communicate various aspects of the space and its inhabitants.



### 3. Chapter 3

#### **Narratives from a cosmopolitan township? Citizens and non-citizens in *Uncle Malume, Piece Job* and *Love at First Sip***

##### **Introduction**

The media in Europe has a history of granting minimal coverage of ethnic groups except when those entities engage in acts of “violence, illegality, crime, or ‘strange’ cultural behavior, that is, with deviance of many kinds” (van Dijk, 1989: 218). Also, van Dijk states that news reports tend to be filled with prevailing ethnic stereotypes and represent minorities with negative stereotypes of “problem people, as causing trouble (riots, demonstrations, protests) or as having problems (work, housing, language or education). The causes or the contexts of such problems are seldom analysed in the media, and hardly ever explained in terms of White racism” (Ibid).

Van Dijk reiterates the overall bias the media has towards minority groups or groups of limited resources. Danso and McDonald (2001) examined the South African English-language media coverage from 1994 to 1998 and argued that the coverage and editorial commentary on cross-border migration was extensively anti-immigrant and unanalytical. Both van Dijk (1989) and Danso and McDonald (2001) highlight the failure by the media to analyse the contentions confronting minority ethnic groups. Moreover, impoverished minority ethnic groups all over the world share a common experience which is extensive injustice in terms of media coverage.

The year 1994 signaled the inception of a new democratic dispensation in South Africa, which was founded on the principles of the late Nelson Mandela. The philosophies of a ‘rainbow nation’ and ‘national reconciliation’ were central to the new state. At the time, the ANC that had just usurped power chose to focus on other critical domestic political matters to the neglect of the grave topic of immigration.

South Africa had been a pariah to the world and to the African continent that harboured South African liberation movements, namely, the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC). The 1994 election victory for the black majority of South Africa



resulted in significant political power and lesser economic control. This implied that the majority had insignificant power vis-à-vis their economic status and remained impoverished as under apartheid (Nyamnjoh, 2005). This is, of course, a consequence of the sunset clauses established at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) between 1991 and 1992.

Post-1994 policies such as the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) created a handful of black elites and excluded a hefty percentage of the black majority from economic liberty. These practicalities established after 1994 created groundwork for the tensions that continue to exist within South Africa. Moreover, the ANC government has been marred with escalating accusations of corruption which further intensifies the disgruntlement of all South African citizens.

The status of the world economy has not resulted in favourable conditions for developing countries and South Africa has been experiencing jobless growth in the previous years (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). However, regardless of these struggles, South Africa is still considered as the most fruitful economy in Africa and hence the country continues to attract various foreign nationals. A large proportion of immigrants that come into South Africa are African immigrants although lately there has been an influx of immigrants from South Asia<sup>41</sup>.

In this chapter, I argue that popular film in the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* offer multifaceted narratives about citizens and non-citizens in South African townships. Popular film, in this regard, offers perspectives on the experiences of locals and foreigners in the township that have not been confronted by post-apartheid mainstream film and television extensively. A handful of films in the mainstream exist that depicted relations between citizens and non-citizens in the township space such as *Man on Ground* (2011).

Popular film offers an alternative perspective as it is attached to the lived experiences of people in the township space. The films attempt to do justice to the complexity of the

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<sup>41</sup> Meny-Gibert, S. & Chiumia, S. 2016. <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/geography-migration/>, Retrieved 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2019.

immigration issue in South Africa as they unravel contentious matters that often result in hostility towards foreigners. Moreover, the township space is different from the city in terms of the various trials the inhabitants confront on a quotidian basis. Popular productions such as *Yizo Yizo III* opted to create a story of harmony between black locals and African immigrants by setting the story in the cosmopolitan space of Johannesburg.

Townships, unlike cities, have remained severely affected by the lack of service delivery, joblessness and diminishing opportunities for participating in the economy which result in the postulation that there is amplified rivalry for the diminutive resources that exist. However, this is not meant to imply that cities do not harbour spaces of deprivation, as is the case with the inner-city slums of Hillbrow, Jeppestown and Yeoville in Johannesburg.

South African mainstream film and television in the early years of democratic rule created cinematic fictions that presented narratives of city life as hopeful and as promising a cosmopolitan future (Kruger, 2009). However, the neoliberal economic order that has failed to improve a majority of black lives in the past twenty years of democracy, the xenophobic/Afrophobic attacks on foreigners in 2008, 2015 and lately in 2017 with the attacks in Rosettenville, Johannesburg, have altered the South African landscape from the euphoria of early post-1994 ambitions.

This chapter aims to provide the multitude of narratives embedded within popular film that engage the subject of relations between locals and foreigners in the context of South African townships. The chapter poses the following questions: 1) How do the films narrate the relations between locals and foreigners in the township? 2) What issues are confronted by the films on the post-apartheid township? The chapter assigns four themes in order to provide an answer to the questions posed above namely: a negative unity: citizens and non-citizens in crime; unsolicited enterprises and companionship: discontents and frustrations of citizens and non-citizens in *Uncle Malume*; taking back black spaces: a narrative of selective expropriation in *Uncle Malume* and a narrative of dispossessing locals in *Love At First Sip* and *Piece Job*. International migration has increased due to various economic and social pressures in

the twenty-first century. This has forced people to leave their nation-states in search of other nation-states with improved conditions to forge a living.

### **The dilemma of international migration in a neoliberal economic system**

International migration is a tenet of neoliberalism but politicians in Europe have alluded to problems created by migration which in turn assists to shift blame for their failures in improving the lives of electorates (Demmers & Mehendale, 2010). Political officials can unite people under populist rhetoric that tends to make the majority perceive their plight as being exacerbated by immigrants, especially those from developing countries. Furthermore, South Africa presents a different case whereby largely foreign nationals that are not welcome tend to be indigent individuals from Africa and South Asia whilst on the contrary Caucasian immigrants do not experience resentment from locals (Crush & McDonald, 2000). Understandably, the township does accommodate, to some degree foreign nationals from Africa and South Asia. The latter are mostly confined to the township as small-scale entrepreneurs who commonly operate small grocery stores. In addition, these Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals are perceived by some publics as fierce competition that drove South African citizens in the townships out of business. These South African citizens were in the business of selling basic household items through tuck-shops (spaza shops), during apartheid and in the early years of the new dispensation.

On the contrary, Malan (2017) argues that tuck-shops owned by locals were driven out of business by big supermarket chains that targeted a growing black middle class in the townships. At the crux of this thesis is also the argument that films by *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* seem to be attached to the propaganda that does not want to represent government as failing but would rather assign blame to other global forces such as migration. A model illustration of this conspiracy is the violence that occurred in Durban when the Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu in 2015 was accused of inciting violence on African foreign nationals due to his rhetoric that foreign nationals must leave South Africa and its jobs so that the large numbers of unemployed youth could get work. This resulted in the unifying of South African nationals towards a detrimental goal of attacking poor African immigrants and asylum seekers. These assertions by powerful

elites who are compensated by tax revenues are perilous and reflect on leadership that does not look at itself for failing the majority of poor South Africans.

Rhetoric by government officials seldom blames the government for economic failures and societal decay but tend to look at forces that are outside of the state to create harmony with the electorate. The current President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, has constantly been criticised for his stance on illegal immigrants that enter the United States from the Mexican border. He had a conservative election manifesto that proposed the building of a wall that will ensure that immigrants find it excruciating to access the United States. The American electorate was able to have him appointed as president with his odious notions of keeping immigrants out. The United States of America, although it was founded by immigrants, is ill-reputed for its intolerance of immigrants and a history of xenophobia (Fuchs, 1995).

Moreover, the country discriminated mostly those immigrants who were non-European and who were coming from penurious states in the applications for citizenship. It is palpable that the scuffles of the global economy have led to the augmented hostility towards immigrants in this epoch. Europe countries and the United States of America have been resisting the excessive influx of immigrants from poor nation-states through aggressive immigration policies that disallow the easy integration of foreigners into their societies.

Throughout history, xenophobia has been rife when there is high unemployment and locals engage in blaming foreigners for their calamities (Kersting, 2007). The recent refugee crisis in the European Union (EU) has brought to the fore the xenophobic tendencies of the developed world whereby states within the EU are hell-bent not to provide shelter to refugees. Whilst the EU has a policy that is welcoming to refugees, some member states fail to oblige by such commitments.

Some North African states have also refused to host these refugees, stating that they pose a security threat<sup>42</sup>. From these accounts, it is noticeable that xenophobia is on the

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<sup>42</sup> Gabriela Baczyńska, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants/eu-migration-policies-seen-building-blocks-for-fortress-europe-idUSKBN1JY07X>, Retrieved 15 November 2018.

escalation globally and it is no longer only a spectacle of less developed nation-states. On the other hand, South Africa has been engaged with the issue of immigration before the new dispensation of 1994 whereby there have been animosities concerning the welcoming of foreigners especially those of African descent and from South Asia. Popular film and television in South Africa have created dramas and films that engaged immigration issues in post-apartheid South Africa. The question that arises is: what have these productions, through their narratives and aesthetics, presented about foreigners, xenophobia, and relations between citizens and non-citizens?

Television, SABC, has commissioned various television programmes that represent the positive side of neoliberalism and that endorse the concept of nation-building in post-1994 South Africa. Sarah Ives (2009) states that at the inception of democratic rule, the SABC had a task to provide programming that spoke of national unity which further entailed representing South Africa as a country with porous borders, as stipulated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In essence, post-apartheid television worked labouriously to portray neoliberalism as virtuous for the new dispensation in South Africa.

Kruger (2009: 237) in *'Africa, Thina'? Xenophobic and Cosmopolitan Agency in Johannesburg's Film and Television Drama* proclaims that "the characterisation of Johannesburg as a city of crime perpetrated by foreigners and other outsiders is as old as the city itself". This, in essence, is linked to the history of immigrants in South Africa, as the Boers blamed the European foreigners in the 1890s for profiting from the mines and engaging in illicit trade that threatened their livelihoods. Kruger argues that post-apartheid cinematic fictions, for at least a decade, offered narratives of city life as hopeful and with the promise of a cosmopolitan future. She analysed productions set in Johannesburg such as *The Foreigner* (1997), *The Line* (1994), *Yizo Yizo* (2000- 2002), *Gaz'lam* (2002- 2006) and *A Place Called Home* (2006). She observed that these films and serials provided "portrayals of encounters between locals and strangers, the effects of built environments on character and action, and posit the roles of 'hosts' and 'guests' as alternatives to violent nativist attempts to expel strangers even if those 'strangers'

turn out to be citizens” (Ibid.). Furthermore, the films *The Foreigner* (1997), *The Line* (1994) to *Yizo Yizo* (1999–2002) and *A Place Called Home* (2006) depict the hospitality offered to foreigners which paved the way for the government to acknowledge migrants as valuable to the country.

Kruger (2006), in *Filming the Edgy City: Cinematic Narrative and Urban Form in Post-Apartheid Johannesburg*, refers to Johannesburg as an ‘edgy city’ because of what transpired between nativists and foreigners in this space. Johannesburg has been considered as a perfect destination for apartheid and post-apartheid films namely *Mapantsula* (1986), *Wheels and Deals* (1991), *Jump the Gun* (1996), *Hijack Stories* (2000), *Tsotsi* (2005) and *Jerusalema* (2008). The city has also been utilised as a film location for television serials from *Soul City* (1994- 2007) to *Gaz’lam* (2002- 2006), *Hard Copy* (2005- 2007) and *Crossing the Line* (2005). The serials were able to offer both filmmakers and audiences the opportunity to follow a hypothetical but plausible narrative of city life and so ponder the impact of changing urban form on newcomers and denizens alike” (Ibid.). This facilitated a scenario whereby newcomers and citizens could be able to imagine the city as a space that is evolving. Kruger (2009) further refers to the films and television serials as having similar production conditions and common themes as they were produced by the SABC. *The Foreigner* (1997) was funded by the Multi-Choice Network (M-Net) and they shared the same production staff as the serials on the SABC.

*The Line* (1994) portrays the notorious space of Hillbrow as a home for locals and foreigners who share the same status of newcomers to the city. Additionally, the serial pioneered the notion of being hospitable to strangers which in essence echo “a vernacular of cosmopolitanism” (Ibid, 248). Women were positively represented in the serial as agents of urban civility and foreigners were portrayed as integrated into the Johannesburg community as they constantly interacted with the locals. Zola Maseko with *The Foreigner* (1997) presents the portrayal of African migrants as contributors to the South African economy and as honest business people. *Yizo Yizo III* (1999-2002), facilitates a representation of foreigners as aiding the locals in Johannesburg and as thoughtful. *Yizo Yizo* presented the possibility of communion between locals and

foreigners which resonated the ideals of a united Africa. The productions examined by Kruger provide a narrative or theme of being hospitable to foreigners and she refers to these productions that engage the relations between locals and foreigners as dramas of hospitality.

*Gangster's Paradise: Jerusalema* (2008) by Ralph Ziman which was later also called *Gangsters' Paradise* due to controversy surrounding the title is a mainstream film focusing on Johannesburg as a space that is occupied by African foreigners who were criminals engaged in hijacking buildings, prostitution, and the illicit drug trade. *Gangsters' Paradise: Jerusalema* (2008) disengages from the narratives that are predominant in the dramas of hospitality to African immigrants as proposed by Kruger (2009). *Jerusalema* failed to get funding from the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) and it was created with the hope that it was to be submitted into the Academy Awards in the category of Best Foreign Language Film. The film was criticised by the ANC\ Military Veterans for its portrayal of struggle heroes who were in exile and certain church organisations criticised the use of the holy name, *Jerusalema*, as a title for a crime film.

Shabangu (2016) in *Representations of Black in Post-1994 Black-Centred Films: An Analysis of Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon (2005), When we were black (2007) and State of Violence (2011)* offers an analysis of *Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon* (2005) which depicts the experiences of locals and foreigners in Johannesburg. She states that the stylistic features of the film drew from genres of fiction and documentary. The fiction side of the film allowed for the imaginative representation of blackness and the documentary element showcased “the realities experienced by African and non-African foreigners in South Africa” (Ibid, 82). Khalo Matabane, the director of the film was able to offer another aspect to the representation of the ‘Other’, in this case, black foreigners amidst black South Africans. Matabane was able to, through the fictional aspect of the film, provide “creative representations of blackness, while the documentary aspect foregrounds the archiving of South Africa’s social, economic and political realities of black experiences in South Africa” (Ibid, 58). Shabangu exposed the Othering foreign nationals in the film.

Khan (2016) in *Representations of crime, power and social decay in the South African post-colony in the film Gangster's Paradise: Jerusalema*, states that *Jerusalema* (2008) moves away from the mainstream film projections that sort to forge a rainbow nationalism. She further states that *Jerusalema* provides a paradox for South Africa as a gangsters' paradise. The film engages in critiquing national reconciliation and the concept of the 'rainbow nation' in a country that has a majority that is still economically marginalised. Khan argues that the representation provided by *Jerusalema* is that of alternative cinema that was proposed by Tomaselli (1989), Botha and Van Aswegen (1992). Moreover, she states that the film offered 'contesting subjectivities' and the multiple subjectivities that are part of South Africa.

Mainstream film and television are viewed as predominantly attempting to homogenize the post-independence experiences of a majority of South Africans by invoking discourses that embrace 'rainbow nationalism' and national reconciliation (Ives, 2007). This official rhetoric fails to reflect the reality, the economic and social woes that ordinary South Africans face on a quotidian basis (Khan, 2016). Furthermore, Khan (2016: 3) assumes that the trope that criminalizes *Jerusalema* which is symbolic of South Africa as a 'gangsters' paradise' signifies "the underground workings of the discourses of colonialism that view Africa as constituted of nations harbouring criminals".

*Jerusalema* offers some truth concerning South African society, which is the fact that the majority of non-white citizens, during apartheid endured economic marginalisation. Khan further argues that *Jerusalema* moves away from discourses that tend to paint South Africa as rosy and all black people as economically emancipated. She further expresses that *Jerusalema* provides representations in post-apartheid South Africa that tend to deviate from "homogenizations and sweeping generalisations". According to Khan, *Jerusalema* brings to the fore the notion that South Africa is not "paradise but a space marked by intense struggles to own material resources and create a sense of 'belongingness'" (Ibid, 7). Moreover, the alternative discourses of *Jerusalema* reflect that "the presence of crime, power struggles, xenophobic attitudes, and social decay is symptomatic of post-colonial aberrations whose roots lie in the history of apartheid and



the failure of the present government to deal with issues of present-day economic inequality” (Ibid). Additionally, *Jerusalema* does not highlight the positive contributions made by foreigners. Instead, it concentrates on exposing the negative dealings of some African immigrants.

*Jerusalema* affords a reflection of the anarchy that can ensue if political leadership in South Africa fails to respond to the economic disparities of the majority who are black. The film diverged from conventional discourses to an alternative discourse that sort to highlight the inequalities that continue to exist in the South African post-colony forged on the ideals of the ‘rainbow nation’ and ‘national reconciliation’.

This chapter aims to contribute knowledge on the experiences of foreign nationals in a non-cosmopolitan space that has since the advent of democracy in 1994 faced severe socio-economic challenges. There is substantial research that has focused on the representation of foreign nationals but with a focus on news media (van Dijk, 1989; Danso & McDonald, 2001, McDonald & Jacobs, 2005; Demmers & Mehendale, 2010). Little research has been done on South African mainstream film and television representation of foreign nationals (Kruger, 2006; Kruger, 2009; Khan, 2016). Grassroots film productions such as *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop* have the potential to yield in new perspectives on everyday experiences of citizens and non-citizens in South African townships. Moreover, it is critical to assess how popular film portrays immigration at a juncture where there have been two atrocious crimes committed by South Africans on African and South Asian immigrants in 2008 and 2015. The latest incidences of xenophobic attacks befell in Rosettenville, Johannesburg and Mamelodi, Pretoria in 2017<sup>43</sup>. The incident in Rosettenville was an outright attack on Nigerian nationals who were suspected of being involved in human trafficking, child prostitution, and drug dealing. Odinaka Emejuru in an opinion piece on the xenophobic attacks in Rosettenville acknowledges that some Nigerian nationals do deal in illicit

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<sup>43</sup> Govan Whittles, <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-02-13-00-xenophobia-a-convenient-scapegoat-for-rosettenville-mamelodi>, Retrieved 14 December 2018.

trades but they are not solely responsible as other nationalities are involved in the total value chain<sup>44</sup>. Thus, crime tends to be transnational.

Also, immigration remains contentious matter in post-apartheid South Africa, as the state has failed to prioritize the matter on its agenda. The films that are explored, namely, *Uncle Malume*, *Piece Job* and *Love at First Sip* have storylines that involve immense interactions between locals and foreign nationals. Post-apartheid film and television focused extensively on interactions between citizens and non-citizens in the cosmopolitan setting of Johannesburg and has not focused extensively on the township space, which is the forte of this chapter (Kruger, 2009; Khan, 2016).

### **Summary of *Uncle Malume* (Thabo TT Mahlangu, 2014)**

The film focuses on the leading character, Malume, who is in his fifties, has never married while his tradition stipulates that he, as the eldest, must be wedded first before his sibling (Thoko). He is unemployed and is not searching for employment. Moreover, he is always up to mischief as he continuously does eccentric acts to get a wife.

On one occasion, he invaded a church service and told the pastor that God had come to him and told him that a certain young woman in the church is meant to be his wife. One of his favourite pastimes is Fafi (a Chinese number game) gambling that he engages in with his best friend Mango. Malume is financially dependent on Thoko and he is notorious for harassing a Pakistani shopkeeper Abdul. Abdul is desperate because he has an expired permit, so he is trying to find a South African woman who can guarantee him citizenship. Thoko is willing to enter into marriage with Abdul as long as he can financially remunerate her for all her troubles. Abdul is suspected of many horrendous acts by the community which include local church members accusing him of impregnating young women in the community. Thoko is a young woman who is a divorcee and has to live with Malume and her son, Sipho, in her parents' home.

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<sup>44</sup><https://www.news24.com/MyNews24/the-rosettenville-wars-from-a-decorated-drug-dealer-community-perspective-20170214>

Sipho is a pupil in a multiracial school and is always reprimanded for not speaking English at home. Thoko is also desperate to get married to Abdul but she needs to find Malume a wife first, as this is what was revealed to her in a dream. Abdul has sworn to take care of Thoko and her son, by paying the school fees that has been a quandary to her. Thoko's plans backfire as Abdul is arrested by the police who had come to arrest Malume for the suspicion of kidnapping. The community through Mango usurped the keys to Abdul's store. Malume manages to get the keys from Mango and gives them to Sipho, thus, declaring him as the new owner. In this act, Malume ignores all the claims made by other people in the community to the store including his sibling Thoko.

### **Summary of *Piece Job* (Uvelile Bangani, 2014)**

This film presents a story about a young woman (Aphiwe) who is from a child-headed family and has just started her first year at university. She lives with her older sister (Phumla) who has two children in the township of Soweto. Phumla's business is not doing well. Aphiwe finds a friend by the name of Ntombi who introduces her to an electronics repair shop owner who is known as Mr. G who is a black man with a foreign African accent. Mr. G hires Aphiwe to work at his shop and she is instructed to deliver sealed packages which she should not open. The electronics store acts as a front for illegal drug dealing and credit card fraud. Mr. G. entices Aphiwe with gifts for her to stay on the job. Aphiwe makes substantial amounts of money from delivering the packages and her lifestyle changes as she can support her family.

Aphiwe has a boyfriend, Sifiso, who is a police officer. Aphiwe gets busy such that she is limited time to spend with Sifiso and Phumla. She tells Phumla that she is tired of being poor. Aphiwe gets arrested for transporting drugs and Mr. G is never found. Aphiwe is left to take all the blame for the crimes and is given a two-year jail sentence that jeopardises her education prospects.

Sifiso manages to get Aphiwe to continue with her studies in prison. Phumla's life is presented as a mirror to Aphiwe's life. Phumla is being physically abused by her boyfriend, Sipho, on the basis that she is dependent on him for maintenance as she has a job that offers her a meagre income. Phumla manages to dump Sipho and decides to

work hard on her own business to lessen the financial burdens in her life, which led to Aphiwe being tempted easily by offers from strangers.

### **Summary of *Love at First Sip* (Muntu Zwane, 2015)**

Juju (Joel) is an alcoholic high school educator who possesses a masters' degree and is excellent at his job. He is a bachelor that resides alone in a family home that he inherited from his parents. He further possesses two mini-bus taxis and this makes him relatively wealthy. His life is blissful until he meets Dipuo who works at a popular tavern owned by Mam' Sylvia where Juju indulges excessively in alcohol consumption. Juju is arrogant and brags about how educated he is and refers to people who are not educated as illiterates. He is a boaster as he opens his wallet that is loaded with banknotes in front of everyone at the tavern. His smugness lures Dipuo into his life as she works in devious ways to have him commit to her in marriage. Dipuo is a Botswana national who is posing as a citizen as she was able to procure an illegal identity document that allows her to proclaim that she was from Mafikeng in the North West province of South Africa.

Dipuo seeks help from a witch doctor to have Juju fall in love with her because the latter failed to pronounce his love to her after they had spent a night together. The spell works and Juju responds by proposing marriage to Dipuo and the newlyweds reside together in Juju's home. Dipuo reveals her true intentions as she brings her boyfriend, Terence, into her marital home and tells Juju that he is her brother. Dipuo succeeds in swindling Juju off his home and assets as she is now fictitiously married to him in community of property. Juju discovers after he has been weakened extensively by the love potion Dipuo had administered to him that Terence is Dipuo's lover and that he was a target to be defrauded.

Juju had two friends whom he relied on for advice and whom he drank with excessively daily, Makoka and Mzeke. Makoka after witnessing Juju being evicted out of his own home by Dipuo and Terence embarks on a mission to find out what Dipuo is hiding about her life and past. Makoka through his various connections can understand that the marriage between Juju and Dipuo is fictitious as Dipuo had used false

documentation to enter into the matrimony. This was the solution that would have Juju retrieve all he has lost because of his relationship with Dipuo.

### **Demystifying immigration in post-apartheid neoliberal South Africa**

This section aims to present the complexities of immigration in post-apartheid South Africa and to foreground the experiences of immigrants in South Africa. It further offers insight into the complexities of neoliberal South Africa that create an environment that makes citizens unwelcoming of foreigners.

White governments, under colonial and apartheid rule in South Africa, pursued “racist and highly selective immigration policies” (Crush, 2001: 108). Immigration is old in South Africa as a vast majority of its white citizens are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants who arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Peberdy & Crush, 1998).

According to Steinberg (2011), it is estimated that there were 600 000 immigrants in South Africa in the 1950s and more than half of them were undocumented. At this stage, the black population was at 8.5 million and the deportation of foreign nationals was common. Steinberg further refers to the policing of foreign nationals by the ANC as a tool to combat the urban poor and that the police had asked citizens to state the various areas they thought needed police attention. Citizens prioritised the issue of illegal foreigners in the country which resulted in the hyper-vigilance by police of immigrants. Citizens harboured negative feelings towards immigrants hence they were aggressive in their quest to remove illegal immigrants from South Africa. These forms of policing exacerbated the immigration problem and laid the foundation for acts of violence towards immigrants.

Crush (2001) notes that white governments looked at immigration as a key to survival and that black citizens viewed immigration as another form of racial oppression. These adverse sentiments by black citizens on immigration have continued into the new dispensation. This has been made worse by that the ANC government which appeared to be strongly anti-immigration in 1994 as the administration looked at migration as a threat to South African jobs (Peberdy, 2001).

Legal immigration is said to have declined by the late 1990s and temporary residents became hard to obtain. The era represented the possible end of apartheid and was also bombarded by the democratic negotiations at CODESA that prioritised black citizens who had been deprived of opportunities by apartheid. Since other African states had obtained their freedom years before South Africa's in 1994, the ANC government felt threatened by the level of skills immigrants could offer to the South African economy leading to the redundancy of its low skilled black citizens (Ibid.).

Crush (2001) adds that negative approaches to immigration by the government were happening at a time when the country sought to be welcomed back into the global community after apartheid. The business community complained about restrictions on acquiring skilled personnel outside of the country. However, a vast majority of black and white South Africans believed that there were a lot of foreign citizens being allowed into South Africa in the late 1990s (Ibid.). Furthermore, Crush noted that South Africans remain most intolerable and hostile to outsiders and they support policies that work to curb or put up strict limits on immigration. Crush adds that xenophobia has not been given considerable attention by various stakeholders in South Africa when compared to racism and this illustrates that anti-immigration inclinations are not prioritized.

Crush and McDonald (2001) acknowledge that post-apartheid South Africa has made advances in terms of its migration policy by shifting from the racist policies of the apartheid state. However, the post-apartheid government has not shown a precise position on immigration and has also shown no significant interest in it. According to McDonald (2000), South African ruling party decision-makers and their grassroots supporters showed minimal support for immigration.

Immigration, according to the figures presented by Crush and McDonald (2001), were higher during apartheid and declined drastically in the late stages of apartheid and into the new dispensation of the ANC. However, Posel (2004) refers to a movement of immigrants and refugees into South Africa since 1990 that aimed to settle in the country permanently. Moreover, Crush and McDonald (2001) state that although the ANC worked to attract foreign capital for investment and embraced neoliberal economic principles, the party never took into account the value of immigration for the economy.

Also, the ANC is said to have considered immigration due “to perceptions of a massive brain drain and the entreaties of the private sector” (Ibid, 5).

Because the post-apartheid South African government is signatory to the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), it was obligated to have a refugee protection system. In addition, the escalation of tensions in other states in the African continent led to asylum seekers opting for South Africa as a perfect destination for evading persecution. Additionally, the inception of a new Refugee Act in 1998 showed South Africa’s commitment to its international compulsions. There were, however, various suspicions that some of the asylum seekers were not threatened violently in their home states but were mere economic refugees (Ibid, 6). There is a general perception in the South African public domain by citizens that most immigrants are economic refugees and this has been at the nub of arguments put forward to justify xenophobia (McDonald 2000; Danso & McDonald, 2001).

In the 1950s and 1960s, all black people in South Africa were policed by the system of influx control which worked to limit the number of black people in urban cities. The system of influx control collapsed before apartheid ended (Bonner & Segal, 1998). In 1994, the ANC came into power and the system that monitored undocumented migration ceased to exist. The ANC government had plentiful deliberations relating to immigration and disagreements existed. However, in 1996 the party announced amnesty for immigrants from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) who could prove that they had worked in the country for more than five years or those who were married to South African citizens could be offered permanent residency. This gesture, according to Steinberg (2012), was generous but it further entailed that there would be policing of migration after the amnesty. The early years of the new dispensation resulted in numerous deportations of illegal immigrants by South Africa.

Some of the negative perceptions that are harboured by citizens about legal immigrants are a result of the thinking that they steal South African jobs, corrupt officials to get residency papers, engage in crime and stress the country’s scarce resources. McDonald (2000) states that the numbers of illegal immigrants in South Africa are

fallacious and inflated whilst the same illegal immigrants are victims of crime themselves and not perpetrators.

This literature on immigration in South Africa underscores the fact that the South African post-apartheid government has not prioritised the issue of migration and the draconian restrictions posed by apartheid legislation on migration continued into the democratic establishment. The reluctance to address immigration extensively by the South African parliament is also a factor that has contributed to the negative sentiments, harboured by citizens about immigrants.

According to Kalitanyi and Visser (2010), some immigrants have come to South Africa, not in search of employment or migrant work but to engage in business, especially those from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Additionally, entrepreneurship is said to provide the means for immigrants to integrate into society and it offers them an opportunity to escape poverty (Ibid.).

Kalitanyi and Visser further refer to the value of immigrant entrepreneurs in the South African economy as they create Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMMEs) which, to some extent provide, employment even for local citizens. These SMMEs, according to economic authorities, are one of the main contributors to job creation in any economy that is developing (Joubert, Schoeman & Blignaut, 1999; Antonie, 2001). This, in turn, the SMMEs lessen the load on the South African labour market, as certain immigrants can sustain themselves and create employment.

On the contrary, Malan (2017) states that Somali, Bangladeshi and Pakistani shop owners traditionally choose to hire their nationalities or individuals who are religiously affiliated to Islam as them. In South African townships, the majority of the black population is not employed by these immigrants simply because they are not affiliated with Islam. Such discriminatory practices heighten tensions that already exist with locals. Kalitanyi and Visser provide success stories of immigrant entrepreneurs and demonstrate their contributions to the South African economy. Locals are not content because they cannot match the robust business competition wielded by Ethiopian, Somali and South Asian immigrants.



Negative attitudes by locals towards outsiders are referred to as xenophobia, Morris in *Our fellow Africans make our lives hell': the lives of Congolese and Nigerians living in Johannesburg (1998)* explains xenophobia as the manifestation of the frustrations of poor and unemployed citizens who blame foreign nationals for social glitches that range from crime, unemployment to the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Moreover, Tshitereke (in Matsinhe, 2001: 297) adds that there is "dissatisfaction and frustration with the inadequacy and slowness of redressing the inequalities of apartheid that are leading the deprived masses to turn against foreigners" (Matsinhe, 2001: 297).

Morris (1998) further notes that the exclusion of South Africa from the rest of Africa during apartheid is one of the causes of hostility towards African immigrants. The pariah status of the apartheid state meant that black locals perceived themselves as not part of the African continent. As a result, the end of apartheid resulted in increased exposure of black locals to African immigrants, which fueled xenophobic or Afrophobic attacks.

Afrophobia is relevant as it explains the hatred for African migrants but lately, South Asian migrants namely Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals have also been targeted in the 2015 Durban xenophobic attacks. According to Liedeman, Charman, Piper and Petersen (2013), the township has had an influx of businesses owned by foreign nationals and this has led to fierce competition between local spaza owners and non-citizen spaza proprietors. Spaza shops are small convenience stores that sell groceries and the name 'spaza' is derived from township slang meaning an imitation of a real shop (Ibid, 2). This has intensified tensions between locals and immigrants, as foreigners are now viewed as invading black spaces (townships).

Furthermore, foreign-owned businesses are said to be dominating the spaza market as foreigners tend to have strong social networks providing them access to labour, capital and which allows them to engage in 'collective purchasing and market domination' (Ibid, 1). Moreover, the altering ownership of spaza shops has been central in research that seeks to understand the primary causes of xenophobic violence. Foreign-owned shops were targeted in the xenophobic attacks of 2008 and 2015 and have been targeted lately for looting even if there are service delivery protests that are aimed at the

government. These acts of xenophobia are often carried out with tacit endorsement by communities (Crush, Ramachandran & Pendleton, (2013).

Spaza shops have been providing “household groceries to township communities for decades and are seen as incubators of entrepreneurship as they provide a business foundation for generations of South African families whilst bringing additional income to households” (Liedeman, et al., 2013: 2). In post-apartheid South Africa, this space, where black business dominated during apartheid, has been invaded by big businesses that are billeted in newly built shopping malls and this has also been a factor in decreasing the profit margin of spazas (Ligthelm, 2008). The big supermarket chains that now operate in most townships have left a smaller share for informal, small businesses which leaves a diminished market share for local and immigrant merchants which could result in further animosity between the two groups.

In the case of South Africa, the 2008 xenophobic attacks that began in Alexandra township involved locals brutally attacking immigrants of African descent. This was followed by the 2015 xenophobic attacks which involved the attacking of South Asian immigrants, that is, Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals who operated convenience stores in the Durban inner-city. This illustrates the complexities of abhorrence as initially it was believed that South African only attacked fellow Africans which amounted to the term ‘Afrophobia’. In this instance, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants have invaded the township space as business people who compete with locals and they have been subjected on several occasions to acts of violence by locals.

Charman and Piper (2012) in their study *Xenophobia, Criminality and violent Entrepreneurship: Violence Against Somali Shopkeepers in Delft South, Cape Town, South Africa*, highlight another complexity to the immigrant agenda. They argue that attacks on businesses owned by Somali nationals in Cape Town are not purely attacks based on xenophobia but that in most instances it is simple acts of criminality. Besides, local business proprietors experience the same ferocity from criminals as townships tend to have high crime rates (Harris, 2001).

It is well-known that foreign spaza owners have dominated the spaza market although the levels of crime exerted at foreigner owners is equivalent to crime committed on local proprietors. Moreover, Charman and Piper (2012) state that it is essential to locate arguments about xenophobia in a broader context of crime and violence in South Africa. Violent entrepreneurship is on the increase as the violence exerted on immigrant spaza owners is increasing and is largely a result of the fact that locals create criminal networks that target foreign immigrants who are their competitors.

### **Negative unity: Citizens and non-citizens in crime**

The films, *Uncle Malume*, *Love At First Sip* and *Piece Job* demonstrate a union between citizens and non-citizens that is forged by the desire to commit a mutually beneficial crime. *Love At First Sip* and *Uncle Malume* present locals and foreigners conniving to defraud the state on the issue of citizenship.

They depict the uncertainties foreigners have to endure, especially if they do not possess the required residence papers. Citizenship, as shown in these films, can be procured by pecuniary means. Dipuo in *Love At First Sip* was able to plot with South African Home Affairs employees to receive a fake identity document (ID) that allows her to keep up the act of being a citizen to lure Joel into marrying her. What is latently communicated is that at the right price, South African citizenship is for sale and that some government bureaucrats are unethical as they do anything when they receive a bribe.

Dipuo is a Botswana national who has been able to disguise herself as a citizen as she carries an ID that she has bought. Moreover, the government employees have been enticed by the extra income that derives from this act of criminality. She is not interested in Joel but in his money. Her intentions are morally questionable as she works to take everything from Joel and later unveiling that her true love is Terrence whom at first, she claimed was her brother to sway Joel to accommodate him in his home.

Abdul in *Uncle Malume* has been conspiring with Thoko to enter into a fictitious marriage that will permit Abdul to gain citizenship in the country and circumvent deportation. Thoko obtains money from Abdul to finance her son's school fees and

provide *lobola* money (bride prize) for Malume. These financial transactions by Abdul are to secure his arrangement with Thoko for citizenship. Abdul conforms to Thoko's demands and he does not appear to complain about the amounts of currency he must inject into a fictitious marriage. Whilst Thoko is extorting money from Abdul, Malume is stealing from him which also leads Abdul to not act on Malume's discourtesy as he is tangled in a transaction to attain citizenship through marriage to a citizen. Abdul tolerates harassment by Malume because the latter is going to be his fictitious brother-in-law and so his thieving was going to be deducted from the lobola money. Nevertheless, Malume is not aware of the arrangement between Abdul and Thoko. Furthermore, Mango in *Uncle Malume* is scheming with Abdul and extorting certain monetary privileges from him as he also promised Abdul that he is also on the task to find him a South African spouse, who can deliver citizenship. Mango is unemployed just like Malume and his plotting with Abdul displays his desperation for income.

In *Piece Job*, a young woman from a struggling township family has to attend university whilst she has many needs that require money. She comes from a child-headed household where her old sister has worked for many years as a hairdresser to put her through school. She meets a new friend (Ntombi) at university who dresses in fine clothes and who seems to have a lot of money since she works for Mr. G. Ntombi has been living a luxurious life as she employed by Mr. G. Aphiwe is later offered a job by Mr. G who operates a computer repair shop as a cover for a drug enterprise in the township. She does not seem to care about why she is receiving exorbitant amounts of money for just delivering mysterious packages she is not meant to open. She starts living a lavish lifestyle as she improves her wardrobe and helps her sister financially. They establish a solid relationship with Mr. G. However, the monetary gains blind her from asking questions about her work and finding out the true identity of Mr. G since he is her employer. Aphiwe profits from the drug trade only to claim ignorance when she is captured by the police who are bamboozled about why she never checked the contents of her deliveries. The substantial fiscal compensation Aphiwe was receiving from Mr. G and her underprivileged social background made her oblivious to the crimes being committed with her as an accessory.

Aphiwe in *Piece Job* is hired to work in a computer repair store owned by Mr. G. who is not honest about the kind of business he operates. Mr. G. applies his resources to make Aphiwe not question the eccentric dealings that take place at the computer repair store. Aphiwe is caught transporting drugs for Mr. G and forfeits her educational prospects because of her capture. A foreigner can dispossess Aphiwe of her bright future by incriminating her. An undesirable stereotypical representation is provided by Mr. G. who seems to speak with a Nigerian accent and is accused of drug dealing and credit card fraud. Foreigners in *Love at First Sip* and *Piece Job* are portrayed as deceitful and willing to betray locals to attain their gains.

**Unsolicited enterprises and companionship: Discontents and frustrations of citizens and non-citizens in *Uncle Malume***

*Malume*, in *Uncle Malume* continuously informs Abdul that he is not his friend when Abdul uses the term 'my friend' to refer to him. This is contrary to the dramas of hospitality towards foreigners that are outlined by Kruger (2009) that sought to forge an understanding of immigration as a social phenomenon in post-apartheid South Africa. The term 'my friend' is common amongst Ethiopian, Somali, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, that is, non-citizen shop owners who want to befriend locals.

*Malume: Sure.*

*Abdul: Hello my friend.*

*Malume: I am not your friend, my friend.*

*Abdul: What you want?*

*Malume: Fish oil, sugar, eggs, mielie meal.*

*Abdul: You come here, you don't greet me my friend.*

*Malume: I told you. I am not your friend my friend.*

*Abdul: Okay. Pay fast.*

*Malume: What is that?*

*Abdul: Cremora?*

*Malume rushes to lock the safety gate at the store as Abdul is distracted by what Malume is pointing to, on the shelves. As Abdul is locked up, Malume can be able to make his escape without paying for the items and as Abdul cannot chase him.*

*Abdul: Why lock this gate? I will kill you. Why lock this gate? Give me key. Give me key.*

*Uncle: Call the police my friend. Call the police.*

*Abdul: Told you last time, will kill you. Next time you come here I will bomb you.*

Malume is adamant to reprimand Abdul from referring to him as a 'friend'. Moreover, the assertion by Malume discloses the severities that exist between certain non-citizens and citizens in the township space. The space has been marred with despair due to the lack of opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa and the closing down of many tuck-shops owned by locals has deepened hostility. Malume by questioning the friendship Abdul is referring to, introduces a narrative that he does not want foreign shop owners in his community. In the film, a shop in an old building is presented which shows that the enterprise of selling household convenience goods existed longer than the 1994 dispensation which became convivial to immigration. We know from this that Abdul cannot be the first tenant but probably locals were. In the *mise en scène*, the store is heavily guarded with steel reinforcements that reflect the perils of the environment. The symbolic code of steel palisades inside the shop introduces the notion that the owner does not feel safe in that space.

*Yizo Yizo I* and *Yizo Yizo II*, dramatised "youth marginalisation, diminished respect for the law and crime as a way of life" (Mhlambi, 2012: 173). Also, the television series also depicted images of senior citizens in townships engaging in acts of vigilantism and with disregard for law enforcement. Malume's theft of goods from Abdul is illustrative of the constant looting we see in the news media when township dwellers loot foreign-owned shops. These acts of looting are embedded in South Africa's history with the struggle for liberation that encouraged violent protests that included rent boycotts in the townships and the hijacking of vehicles carrying merchandise owned by private entities that were

perceived as being allied to the apartheid regime and profiting from the system. Malume portrays these archaic ways of dealing with disgruntlement emanating from the deprivation of opportunities in his locale. Breaking the law to upset the apartheid machinery was a common norm and Malume as a citizen in his fifties has been denied a better life as he has not managed to find employment and is sustained by his sibling. Malume was in his youth when the various destructive tactics were introduced by township dwellers to aggressively confront the apartheid system.



Figure 10: A scene from Uncle Malume shot in Abdul's store. On the left, Abdul and on the right Mango in the heavily guarded structure.

Malume, as a character, was probably introduced to the life of thieving items as a form of remonstrance against a system that disadvantaged him and other community members in his locale. Arguably, the young man that was a rebel frustrated by apartheid is now acting in a manner that he is accustomed to, by taking items by force from non-citizens who did not consult with his community before establishing enterprises. This inkling is comparable to that of Minga (2015) whereby he refers to the recycling of violence from the 1970s, where black youth fought against apartheid by killing black policemen who had conspired with their oppressors. Minga states that the same youth that is violent in the film *Sarafina* (1987) remains alive in *Jerusalema: Gangsters'*

*Paradise* with the vilest intent as they have a new enemy in the form of African and South Asian immigrants as a substitute for the Afrikaner who was once reviled for apartheid.

However, Malume resembles a generation that committed the acts of violence in *Sarafina*, in the township of Soweto, that has survived and now reside in the new dispensation, with Bantu Education or no education, with no job prospects and have to forge a life. To exacerbate the problem, foreign shop owners do not integrate into the communities they operate their businesses especially in the townships and they keep within their inner circles that are founded on religion and nationality (Malan, 2017).

The main distraught in post-apartheid South Africa is an economy that was only able to deliver occupations that required skilled workers whilst lower-skilled workers had to endure joblessness (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). South Africa has the assimilation and integration policy which allows refugees to enter communities and stay within them, unlike other states that confine refugees to camps away from citizens such as in Europe. Like the apartheid regime that did not consult with black people concerning their needs and anxieties in their spaces, the ANC government is applying the same ideology of not consulting the locals on their notions and perceptions regarding the migration of non-citizens into poor and lower-income black residential areas such as townships.

The enterprise of selling convenience goods for the household existed before the influx of Ethiopian, Somali and South Asian merchants in South Africa. The local spazas that were owned by citizens were expensive and were immediately shut down when large retail chains entered the township market in pursuit of the cumulative black middle class (Malan, 2017). The words of Malume about Abdul not being a friend reflect the animosity by an individual denied prospects by apartheid and now by the ANC regime.

The circumstance that most foreign shop owners arrive in the country penniless and strive in collaboration with their fellow countrymen reflects opportunity for those that did not endure the harshness of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. On the contrary, Abdul the shopkeeper from the dialogue above appears to be a resilient merchant who



has experienced Malume's criminality before as he states that he told Malume before about what he is going to do as retaliation. We are provided with insight that Abdul has been subjected to the exploitation numerous times and has persevered in the space. Moreover, a negative narrative of Muslims as terrorists is created when Abdul states that "*Told you last time, will kill you. Next time you come here I will bomb you*". This is rather a regressive form of representation as there is a generalisation that is portrayed about Muslims having easy access to bombs. Malume further asserts his disregard for the law in the film as he is unafraid of the police in the scene when he instructs Abdul to call the police. Besides, he is demonstrative of a youth that did not revere the police, as the force was notorious for harassing black citizens in townships during apartheid and resulting in communities losing faith in law enforcement officers. On the contrary, at the end of the film, we are made aware of the fact that Abdul has been in the country with an expired permit and Malume was taking advantage of his situation as he knew that he would not summon law enforcement as he would be risking deportation. Malume has been engaged in the act of dispossessing items of value from Abdul's enterprise on the knowledge that the police would not arrest a citizen for a crime against an illegal immigrant who is not meant to be in the country. Abdul as an illegal immigrant in the township, who operates a store reflects that immigration control is not robust in South Africa in comparison to other nation-states.

### **Taking back black spaces: A narrative of selective expropriation in *Uncle Malume***

Black South African television dramas of the 1980s and films by the B-scheme apartheid film subsidy provided narratives that worked to hide issues of black marginalization from the public gaze (Tomaselli, 1989; Mhlambi, 2012). This entailed the provision of narratives that disguised black plight in favour of those that depicted black mobility. In these dramas, the apartheid state was not attacked for its racist policies that made black people significantly indigent. In essence, the greater political and economic structures were not challenged which is also the case with the representation in *Uncle Malume*. On the day Abdul is arrested, the community is elated, celebrating the departure of Abdul from their space and they utter words that imply that they perceive some prospects since Abdul has been deported back to his domicile state

in South Asia. *Uncle Malume* illustrates the handover of Abdul's store to the community by deceitful means. Abdul gives Mango and the community the keys to his shop when Mango asks for them and promises to safeguard the structure until Abdul returns. This is an anomalous gesture by Abdul as one would expect the South Asian shopkeeper to leave the store to his countrymen that operate businesses throughout various townships.

Malan (2017) refers to the strong networks African and South Asian shop owners have, which entail the constant support for each other's wellbeing. Nonetheless, the film provides a representation of Abdul as being secluded in a South African township without the protection of a brotherhood that is based on nationality and religion. This is uncommon for African and South Asian merchants in South Africa. The irony is in the act of him giving his shop to locals to be custodians of his assets whilst he is away. On the other hand, Abdul has occasionally been accused of fathering the children of some young women in the community in the film but he had denied such accusations heatedly. Consequently, the performance of leaving the shop with the community is some form of justice whereby he is leaving behind an inheritance for his progeny.

Mango surrenders the keys to Malume who decides to do what he desires with the shop since he is informed that he has been able to secure a government tender with his new lover Sophie. In the act, Malume chooses to overlook all the other community members who claim to have a share in Abdul's shop and offer Sipho, who is a boy, the keys to the business. The deportation of Abdul has allowed the community to inherit a store that has items that can be sold at a profit. Arguably, the film portrays a youth with Sipho that should be entitled to inherit benefits that were not accrued by their family members. There seems to be a narrative of having the youth in townships profit from something that they never worked for in their lives. Sipho, as part of a future generation, represents the return of the township economy to its native inhabitants and a generation that is compelled to be entrepreneurial and innovative in its approach to life.

In the portrayal of the absence of the South Asian merchants, one would assume that the township is free from aggressive competition by supermarket chains that have historically led to locally owned tuck-shops being out of business. The only property that

is offered to the community in the film, is the property that is owned by a South Asian who has not benefited lengthily from the exploitation of black people as colonialism and apartheid did for other races. However, the only expropriation is posed at the South Asian immigrant who was born in a developing, poverty-stricken country and who, in this case, is not big business. Abdul does not employ any shop assistants or locals in his store which makes him a loner and as someone who does not create opportunities for the local community. Moreover, the enormous retailers that are commonly propelled by white capital that dominates the township market are not challenged by the communities for shares, as in the case of Abdul's store. When everyone is claiming to be entitled to shares in Abdul's enterprise, dividends they never purchased and compensation for loss of business due to unfair competition exerted by the South Asian merchant. On the contrary, this animosity is not directed at big conglomerates who have miscellaneous shareholding that include old white capitalists and prominent black South Africans. Most of these supermarket chains are owned by conglomerates that have benefited directly and indirectly from colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. However, *Uncle Malume* represents the South Asian merchant as a susceptible target that cannot afford the superlative security afforded to big retail conglomerates and hence his property is easily usurped from him. *Uncle Malume* has demonstrated a narrative of locals dispossessing foreign nationals of what they own. Alternatively, *Love at First Sip* and *Piece Job*, offer a negative depiction of foreign nationals as conniving to dispossess locals of items of value and aspirations.

### **A narrative of dispossessing locals in *Love At First Sip* and *Piece Job***

In *Love at First Sip*, Dipuo succeeds to illegally obtain South African citizenship by claiming that she is from Mahikeng in the North West Province of South Africa. Dipuo manages to disguise her nationality since she speaks Setswana as a native language, which is one of the official languages of South Africa. This is also the situation with other non-citizens from some nation-states within the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Unlike Abdul in *Uncle Malume* and Mr. G in *Piece Job*, she is not noticeable by language, accent, and physical appearance. Moreover, she is not harassed by the

community or accused of stealing a job in the community because of how Setswana grants her the aptitude to disguise herself as a citizen. Joel, who is Dipuo's victim is an alcoholic who has been able to attain affluence from his parents' inheritance and his teaching profession since he does not have a family of his own to maintain. He does not have substantial responsibilities and prides himself on being unmarried and independent, to be entitled to drink as much alcohol as he desires in this life. Joel can be perceived as a parable for a thoughtless and politically unconscious society that does not pay attention to its affairs and that disremembers how hard it was to attain the privileges that it has. Joel's excessive drinking leads him to be oblivious of any acts that happen around him and Dipuo takes advantage. South Africa has been referred to as vulnerable to various threats due to how several public and private entities fail to adhere to national security and safety protocols (Vigneswaran, Araia, Hoag & Tshabalala, 2010). The latest debacle to illustrate this mismanagement and negligence is the listeriosis outbreak in the country which exposed the shortcomings of the Republic's public healthcare system and procedural safety mishaps by the private sector. The theme of foreigners dis inheriting locals can be linked to undertones of how colonialism and apartheid dispossessed black people.

Black people were illicitly dispossessed of their assets in terms of cattle and land by colonialism and apartheid. They were left destitute and without the finest land for their subsistence farming. The narrative of dispossession in the film represents a new form of colonialism by another African, who is portrayed as determined to make Joel penurious. This narrative also brings to the fore, the numerous accusations by citizens who blame foreigners of bribing government officials to enable them to qualify for state housing which is the privilege of citizens only. This is alleged to happen while citizens have not received their RDP houses after being on the state's waiting list for several years. The case in Alexandra township recently has led to citizens forcefully evicting foreigners from houses whom they claim to have bought legally<sup>45</sup>.

*Love at First Sip* presents a non-citizen who is determined to appropriate assets owned by Joel. Dipuo realizes that Joel is cognizant of his situation as he sternly states that he

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<sup>45</sup> <https://ewn.co.za/2018/12/19/officials-to-take-back-rdp-houses-from-foreign-nationals-in-alex>,

will never marry because a woman will only be a source of his discontent in the long run. Thus, the former uses *muthi* (a love potion) to make Joel fall in love with her and propose marriage to her. Dipuo is compelled to depend on witchcraft to seize what she desires in the film. As a foreigner, she is associated with the ability to gain powerful enchantments to bewitch Joel. For her to procure the *muthi*, she travels home possibly to Botswana and returns with *muthi* that succeeds to control Joel into submitting to her. Botswana as a nation-state is associated with sorcery and is placed in a position of being perceived as the 'Other'. Moreover, as a destination where powerful *muthi* can be obtained in the Southern Hemisphere. This negative stereotypical representation can be perceived as insensitive to migration and as painting other nations unfavourably hence fueling Afrophobic/xenophobic inclinations.

## **Conclusion**

The reading of the films discussed above discloses complex relations between locals and foreigners in the township space. They engage in mutually beneficial relationships in certain instances that enable both factions to survive and navigate their way through difficulties posed by their circumstances. Also, the films bring to the fore the difficulties of migration experienced by foreign nationals and the negativity locals have towards immigration.

The films are central in depicting how certain citizens perceive themselves as being deprived of prospects because of foreign nationals. These negative narratives assist in shifting the blame for the current detrimental state of townships, away from the government towards external forces such as immigration. The chapter has revealed that the films extensively transmit narratives that reflect the failure for citizens and non-citizens to unite within the township space. Additionally, the films further convey representations that forge a picture of the township as being colonised by foreign nationals and citizens as being oppressed by such developments.

Furthermore, there is a narrative of citizens and non-citizens uniting and working together when it pertains to committing crime. The xenophobic stereotype of foreigners as fraudsters resurfaces in the films. The films depict a regression from the dramas of

hospitality observed by Loren Kruger (2009). On the contrary, they are imperative as they provide various descriptions that explain the origins of xenophobic sentiments by citizens. They further reflect the complexities foreigners experience concerning documentation and living within spaces such as the township where the majority of citizens are destitute. In conclusion, the films represent issues of migration in a space that is not as cosmopolitan as the inner city of Johannesburg.

#### 4. Chapter 4

##### **The family as black nationalism: Multilingualism, Multiculturalism and conflict in *Battle of House* (2013) and *Iqiniso (The Truth)* (2015)**

The apartheid state in 1956 formed a national film subsidy that was premised on the tenets of separate development as there were distinct schemes for films for black and white audiences (Maingard, 2007). The films for black audiences were constructed based on language and ethnicity (Paleker, 2010). Also, the films had to propagate the notion of homelands as they were mostly produced in a single African language to further advance segregation amongst miscellaneous black ethnic groups.

This subsidy has been criticised recently for “how specific ethnic characteristics are brought into sharp focus strongly differentiating between different identities based on language” (Maingard, 2007: 133). Msomi (in Maingard, 2007: 133) analyses a scene from *Ikati Elimnyama* (1974) where a Zulu man is shocked to discover that his friend has a mother in law who speaks IsiXhosa. Additionally, he further refers to a scene in *Ngaka* (1976) where a Setswana patient refuses to consult with a traditional healer who speaks a Nguni language. It is indisputable that there were numerous exertions made by the films produced under the B-scheme subsidy to forge divisions between black people and embolden tribalism.

The scandal concerning Heyns Films and the Department of Information proved the existence of a conspiracy to advance the interests of a white supremacist state by creating content that promoted the ideologies of the apartheid establishment (Tomaselli, 1989; Maingard, 2007). There was a ploy with the films to portray black ethnic groups as dissimilar and incapable of peaceful coexistence within the same locale. This scheme ensured that the idea of homelands would be strongly entrenched and that the white minority could maintain their dominance in South Africa. The ruse entailed emphasizing the differences between black ethnic groups to curb the development of a united black nation.

The ANC post-1994 has encouraged black unity and at the same time endorsed ethnic identification through the granting of rights with the 1996 South African Constitution.

However, ethnic identification was perilous during apartheid as the state wanted to utilise the 'divide and rule' strategy to derail black unity that was meant to fight oppression (McNeill, 2016).

In the early 1990s, there were ethnic conflicts between the different black ethnic groups in South Africa. There were accusations that CODESA was being delayed because of ethnic conflict between the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). In this instance, the IFP was painted as solely determined to only advance Zulu nationalism in the new South Africa (Simpson, 2012). Numerous allegations were made that KwaMadala hostel dwellers who were predominantly Zulu speaking were behind the 1992 massacre in Boipatong aided by the apartheid police (Ibid.). Although the conflict was based on political contestation, in some instances with the sole advancement of Zulu nationalism by the IFP, it appeared to also convey an ethnic element.

This era represents the pinnacle of what could be described as imminent threats of ethnic conflict in South Africa as a civil war nearly ensued to upset the creation of a democratic state. These images of Zulus as instigators of conflict during the CODESA negotiations were depicted by the film *The Bang Bang Club* (2010). The IFP in the film is portrayed as being exclusively Zulu as they even converse with the white journalists in isiZulu to reflect their side of the story in the skirmish. There were assertions amongst citizens that the IFP was a Zulu party which only worked to advance Zulu nationalism in South Africa at the expense of other ethnic groups. Furthermore, there was even evidence to support the theory that the IFP colluded with the National Party (NP) government to sabotage black liberation movements (Nixon, 1997; Ellis, 1998; Simpson, 2012; Gump, 2014). The IFP, as a Natal organisation under the leadership of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, was able to establish itself as a Zulu ethnic party that aimed to extensively fight for the Kwazulu Natal province as a Zulu homeland at the expense of broader black unity. The IFP leader represented a minority in the Zulu nation and during the negotiations at CODESA, he threatened that KwaZulu Natal province will secede from South Africa if the negotiations did not support the idea of promoting separate ethnic identities (Nixon, 1997).



The television film, *The Line* (1994) by Brian Tilley, caused pandemonium amongst Zulu migrant workers who perceived the film as demonizing the IFP by portraying Zulus as terrorists.<sup>46</sup> The film had created a picture of the Zulu ethnic group as being the instigators of conflict during the last days of apartheid and as being embedded with the IFP and the apartheid state apparatus to destabilize the new democratic dispensation (Kruger, 2009). *The Line* was further criticised by critics and IFP officials on the basis that it threatened the reconciliation process and it was asserted that such depictions would not be rendered on the ANC led by Nelson Mandela.

*The Line* had succeeded in portraying the assassins on trains as people of Zulu descent as in their encounters they exclusively conversed in the language. The makers emphasized that such a production marked that South African broadcasting was evolving and progressing away from the stagnation it suffered under apartheid. The film was made in the new dispensation but it portrayed South Africa before the first democratic elections to offer insight into the violence before the new order.

However, the film was ill-timed as South Africa was at the time busy with reconciliatory and nation-building programmes. It failed to assist in the process of establishing a nation-building platform in South Africa as it solely focused on the binary of good and evil whereby the IFP and the police were depicted as troublemakers and the ANC as freedom fighters and virtuous.

Post-apartheid South Africa has resulted in the creation of many film and television productions that advance African languages and even minority languages. *Emzini Wezinsizwa* (1994 - 2004) portrayed migrant workers from various regions within Southern Africa who stayed in a hostel in Johannesburg conversing in their various native languages with each other without encountering any hostility. A soap opera such as *Muvhango* worked extensively to promote the Tshivenda culture and language in its inception in 1997 and it added other African languages to avoid depicting only Tshivenda exclusivity in a multilingual and multicultural nation-state. Although black

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<sup>46</sup> Keller, B. (1994) *South African TV Drama Angers Zulu Party*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/08/01/world/south-african-tv-drama-angers-zulu-party.html>.

ethnicity has not been a major predicament such as racism and xenophobia presently, there are various efforts for television and film to project ethnic diversity in South Africa, especially in cosmopolitan urban spaces.

This chapter explores a nation-building narrative that aims to counter tribalism in post-1994 South Africa. Malan (1999) refers to popular culture as a tool that is utilised to offset the legacy of apartheid in the interest of creating a unified new nationalism that is inclusive of all citizens. Moreover, popular culture is acknowledged for tabling difficult societal issues and it is idealised for its ability to advance “the concept of a shared collective” (Ibid, 122).

The chapter poses the following questions: How do township themed family plot films represent black ethnicity in post-apartheid South Africa? What do family plot films narrate about black identity in urban spaces? It utilises the following four themes to offer a nuanced discussion that aids in answering the questions that have been proposed; unity through diversity: a choice assorted affair; divide and rule: a third force in the family, the crowded family home as black socio-economic plight and relocating ethnic stereotypes.

Apartheid South Africa very instrumental in creating divisions amongst the various races and ethnicities with its policies, one being the homeland system. The rationale behind the homeland system was to have different ethnic groups develop separately from each other. This of course was strongly founded on the ‘divide and rule’ principle which implies that as long as black people differentiate themselves according to their ethnicity it would be easy to control them as they would not be united. Furthermore, the apartheid state only recognised Afrikaans and English as official languages and excluded African indigenous languages to bolster the homeland objective. The 1996 Constitution allowed for eleven official languages that were inclusive of African indigenous languages and this was meant to encourage a new unified, multiracial and multilingual nation. This chapter argues that the films on *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*, through their utilisation of family plot films, eulogise multilingualism and multiculturalism as part of the new South Africa which aides to promote all indigenous languages that have been recognised by the Constitution.

In so doing, this eliminates the perception that some languages have been preferred more than others as films employ even those perceived as marginalised. The films embark on social engineering which helps to define black nationalism which is multilingual and not fixated on issues of tribalism. Moreover, I argued that the films seem to promote an ideology of a society that understands all languages that are official in the Constitution.

Moreover, the family in the films and the conflict in the plots epitomises South African black society after 1994 that is still confronting the matter of diverse ethnicity alongside other nation-building predicaments such as racism and gender equality. Popular arts are central in the task of representing critical issues within societies and facilitating conversations around such representations of everyday experiences of ordinary people (Barber, 1987).

The films portray multi-ethnic relationships that have existed even during apartheid and by this, a picture is painted about black ethnic groups as being in harmony with their differences. The films narrate that tribalism has never been a grave subject within the black nation in South Africa even during apartheid when the old regime worked to make it appear as so. There have been a considerable number of productions in post-1994 South Africa that have depicted the diversity of black people. Assimilation into a single dominant language such as isiZulu or isiXhosa is absent in these films as a minority language in the media such as Xitsonga is spoken unapologetically symbolising black unity.

There has been significant research undertaken in popular culture vis-à-vis its relation to nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa (Roome, 1998; Barnard, 2006; Milton, 2008; Mhlambi, 2012). Much of this scholarship has engaged nation-building concerning the mandate and programming of the SABC in the new dispensation, interrogating themes of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Roome (1998) in her thesis *Humour as "cultural reconciliation" in South African situation comedy: an ethnographic study of multicultural female viewers* explored the connections between gender, race, class and social relations focusing on multicultural female groups and their comprehension of situation comedy in the early years of the new dispensation.

The study observed that situation comedy tried to normalise the relations between blacks and whites and made fun of racism without offending any particular racial group. In essence, the sitcoms functioned to endorse cultural reconciliation and further secure the hegemony of the ANC by winning active consent from those whites who were not committed to the new South Africa. Roome further asserts that the SABC at the time had been suffering from a financial crisis as its advertising revenues were significantly reduced due to the mandate of the state to utilise all the indigenous languages in the constitution. This alteration reduced Afrikaans content which contributed a large quantity to the advertising income stream.

Barnard (2006) in *The language of multiculturalism in South African soaps and sitcoms*, focused on South African prime time television on the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and applied a close reading to popular sitcoms and soap operas. He theorised that the programmes “metaphorise the political processes that are marking the country’s transition from apartheid, becoming striking political documents in genres usually known for their apolitical insistence” (Ibid, 42). The primary argument made by the work is that popular television programming although regarded by some critics as oblivious to politics in society (Barber, 1987; Dodge, 1996), on the contrary, seems to provide much insight into the political realm of post-apartheid South Africa. Popular television through the findings of the study is referred to as “progressively shaping the imaginations and expectations of a population struggling to overcome its apartheid past” (Barnard, 2006: 42). Moreover, the work refers to the power of popular culture to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism whilst engaging issues of gender and race in post-apartheid South Africa.

Milton (2008) in *‘Local is lekker’: Nation, narration and the SABC’s Afrikaans programmes* examined the mandate of nation-building by the SABC concerning the Afrikaans language which was historically viewed solely as a language hell-bent on promoting an Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa at the expense of other ethnicities. Just like Castello (2007), she argued that media texts advance “national identity through referential elements in fictional discourse, which are territorial, linguistic, historical, institutional and cultural” (2008: 256).

The study interrogated media policy alongside identity politics and analysed the Afrikaans-language programmes by the SABC considering the nation-building mandate the SABC has been subjected to, post- 1994. Moreover, the inquiry only focused on SABC 2, which is a channel owned by the public broadcaster that caters for Afrikaans and African languages programmes. The findings reveal that although national building was central to the programmes, there were several representations of historically marginalised communities such as the coloured community in a stereotypical manner that is comparable to the historical misrepresentation of black people in popular film and television globally. Also, the programmes seemed to be multilingual with the inclusion of English subtitles although Afrikaans was the main language which implied that the nation-building element was being fulfilled on the part of the language. The failures of the writers to write content in Afrikaans that considered inter-linguistic diversity about various racial groups that are not of white Afrikaner descent is observed. Black and coloured characters were portrayed to speak 'pure and untainted' Afrikaans without any accent that can link to their ethnic identity (Ibid, 268). Moreover, the programmes advanced an image of an idealised South Africa where there is no conflict between various cultural groups.

Treffry-Goatley (2010) in *South African cinema after apartheid: A political economic exploration*, provides a political economy analysis of the post-apartheid South African film industry and refers to the industry as having been co-opted by the state to support the nation-building mandate in its cinematics. The film industry became one of the propellers of national unity as it was viewed as a force that could drive economic growth. The study observed the impact of neoliberal economic policies on the mandate of nation-building in an era of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy. The work illustrates that the commercial environment can be threatening to black creative freedom as certain films can "encounter commercial censorship through the commodification of films for an export-orientated market" (Ibid, 54).

Market-driven filmmaking is considered ideal for the economy whilst, it has the potential to militate against the creative spirit of the industry, thus, limiting diversity and

authenticity in the narrating of stories<sup>47</sup>. A significant number of studies focused on content produced by the SABC in the post-apartheid era, as the entity had a mandate to facilitate national reconciliation, neoliberalism and nation-building (Roome, 1998; Mhlambi, 2012).

The studies discussed above explored the political economy of the SABC whilst Treffry-Goatley (2010) engaged the political economy of film production. This chapter is unique as it focuses on grassroots film production created by private television companies not mandated by state policy on content but profit. It delves into an arena that was traditionally that of the public broadcaster which is exploring narratives of multiculturalism and multilingualism in post-1994.

Private broadcasters (MNET and ETV) were established with an international focus implying that they started by catering international television content as an alternative to a society confronted with apartheid on the part of *Mnet*. Besides, ETV, as a free to air television network, relied on international broadcasters who offered foreign content and was sustained by advertisers that desired to be associated with such content at its inception. Lately, these private entities have evolved to create content that is multicultural and multilingual which was initially the focus of the SABC.

*Mzansi Magic* which is a channel owned by the MultiChoice Network focuses on local stories, telenovelas, films and reality television<sup>48</sup>. It primarily focuses on black centered stories and it has been in partnership with newly formed black production companies that continue to deliver stimulating content. In this regard, the channel works to develop the local film and television industry. The channel is housed on a pay to view platform and is additionally funded by advertising revenues.

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<sup>47</sup> John McManus in his book, *Market-driven Journalism: Let the citizen beware?* (1994) focuses on the pressures journalism is experiencing as it needs to work to maximise financial returns for shareholders whilst the news product suffers as there are limited voices and journalism stories are drawn from similar locations to save costs. This curtails diversity in terms of news stories that are produced for society in general. In this current study, market-driven filmmaking is utilised to refer to the dynamics that filmmakers have to be subjected to, in order to receive funding for their stories.

<sup>48</sup> The MultiChoice Corporate website, <https://mnetcorporate.dstv.com/channel/mzansi-magic>, Retrieved 8 August 2018

ETV is a free to air channel that is sustained extensively by advertising income and through its *Ekasi: Our Stories* project has been facilitating the production of dramas that tell South African stories. It was initially formed with an international flair but has overtime, managed to expand to even forming a 24-hour news channel<sup>49</sup>. The two films that are read in this chapter, *Battle of House* and *Iqiniso (The Truth)*, present narratives of multilingualism and multiculturalism in post-1994 South Africa. The films depict urban township life and focus on matters of black ethnicity in the new dispensation without engaging black and white relations. The films are relevant as they address black ethnicity which has been a momentous issue in post-colonial Africa leading to civil wars and secession in some African states. To my knowledge, there is little academic work that explores the representation of black ethnicity in post-apartheid South African film and television (Motloun, 2004).

### **Summary of *Battle of House* (Felicia Molusi, 2013)**

*Battle of House* is a drama that is centered around black family relations in the urban township of Soweto. The film features three main characters namely Themba, Mlungisi and Bongi who, by the death of Mr. Mazibuko are in line to inherit a home. Mr. Mazibuko had two sons (Themba and Mlungisi) with two women from different ethnic groups. Mr. Mazibuko stipulated in secret to the executor of his estate that should his two sons fail to be civil towards each other they are to forfeit the home to charity. Themba is the eldest and his mother tongue is Xitsonga and he is engaged to be married to Bongi who is Zulu speaking. Themba is a struggling entrepreneur who has fallen on bad times since he has been failing to buy his fiancé Bongi a home and the family home offers him the opportunity to make things right. Bongi is a woman who does not work but relies on asking Themba for money to go on expensive shopping sprees that result in Themba become financially blacklisted. After Bongi discovers that Themba is broke she does not hesitate to leave him and she later enters into a love relationship with a sangoma they were consulting together with Themba.

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<sup>49</sup> The ETV official website, <http://www.etv.co.za/about-us>, Retrieved 8 August 2018

The couple moves into the home assuming that they solely own the home until Mlungisi arrives at the door to introduce himself to Bongi who was never informed that Themba had a sibling who was entitled to a share in Mr. Mazibuko's estate. The couple plans to get Mlungisi to leave the home and they decide to consult a sangoma and acquire 'muthi' that will make Mlungisi depart. The muthi fails to work and an error leads to Mlungisi discovering that Themba and Bongi are bewitching him. Bongi creates further tension between Themba and Mlungisi as she later reveals to Mlungisi that Themba has been bewitching him. Mlungisi speaks isiZulu since he had a mother who was Zulu and he is a troubled young man who has been unlucky in his conquests in life and has loan sharks as creditors. Mlungisi is the sibling that had failed to visit his father while he was still alive and so he is not aware that the home the couple lives in is his father's. He later discovers that Themba has been lying about owning the home and that he is also entitled to inherit. Mlungisi is disappointed with Themba and this affects their brotherly bond severely as the two begin a long battle to assert their authority and rights to the home. Their quarrel results in the executor of their father's estate deciding to put up the property for auction and donate the proceedings to charity.

### **Summary of *Iqiniso (The Truth)* (Sgweje Sotobe, 2015)**

*Iqiniso* is a drama that addresses conflict that arises when siblings in their adulthood reside together in their township childhood family home which has been handed to them due to the sudden passing of their mother. Sobantu, Nozi and Mvikithi are siblings who share the same mother whilst they were fathered by different men of different South African ethnic origins. Sobantu, as the eldest, had a father who was Shangaan who initially stayed with their mother before the home was extended. Sobantu has little regard for the law and engages in excessive alcohol consumption whilst he is not looking for employment. He relies on his younger brother Mvikithi to provide for him and his sister Nozi who has a little girl child out of wedlock. Sobantu makes his claims known to the greater family that the home belongs to him since he is the eldest. Nozi is the second born and her father was a Pedi man. She is a calm and kind-hearted individual who works as a constant voice to remind the family of how they are meant to stick together even during harsh times. She loves her brothers and harbours some



animosity towards Sobantu when Asanda who is Mvikithi's wife makes witchcraft allegations against Sobantu. Nozi is further transformed into a bad person by the mysterious passing of her daughter as she chases Sobantu out of the family aided by Asanda.

Mvikithi is the youngest and he was fathered by a Zulu man and his father is responsible for extending the old four-roomed home into a bigger house. He is burdened by the fact that he must support his siblings and his wife (Asanda) and son. Mvikithi feels more burdened when his wife Asanda makes him feel as if he is being exploited by his siblings and this makes Mvikithi choose to be hostile to his siblings to get them to contribute financially to the household. Mvikithi puzzlingly becomes blind and is left helpless in the household to take care of himself as his wife starts an extramarital affair with another man. Asanda is a nurse by profession and she has always been the individual administering medication on all the family members in the household. It is later discovered that Asanda has been poisoning the family and that she was responsible for the death of her mother in law and Nozi's daughter. She is further responsible for making Mvikithi lose his sight and for Nozi to become mentally ill. She had lied about the paternity of her son to Mvikithi. Asanda is chased out of the family home when her plotting is unraveled and she becomes mentally unstable and homeless.

### **Problematising the nation-state: colonisation and ethnicity**

Many nation-states are heterogeneous in ethnicity and colonialism with its drawing of borders in developing countries exacerbated the problems for the twenty-first century as various ethnic groups are not only confined to one nation-state (Smith, 1981). However, ethnic difficulties are not only experienced by the global south but also in Belgium, Canada and Northern Ireland (Welsh, 1993). The nation-state is a creation of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries formulated to shelter people of common interests of "culture, descent and territory" under a single government in a state (Ibid, 63).

According to Rubinoff (2000), nationalism has been legitimised by statehood and the proliferation of states after the disbanding of colonialism has led to contending ethnic

claims. Moreover, the rise of ethnic consciousness in the 1950s and the democratic enfranchisement in Western Europe led to its height. Welsh (1993) further states that the creation of nation-states entails, to some degree, discrimination against other ethnic groups which in South Africa was the conscious decision by the apartheid regime to only recognise white citizens as belonging to the Republic.

In the United States, the Declaration of Independence in 1776 only recognised the rights of white Americans to the exclusion of African Americans and Native Americans. It is indisputable that there has been an attempt in history to solely work to produce nation-states that work to advance a single ethnicity.

The colonisation of Africa by European powers came with the burden of nation-state formulation in 1885 that did not take into cognisance the assortment of African people and this has led to civil wars at various junctures (Banton, Mason & Athow, 2001). Boundaries between nation-states in Africa were established without or with little consideration of the indigenous ethnocultural groups and the collapse of colonisation resulted in the most fragmented states. States such as Rwanda and Burundi have experienced significant ethnic conflicts whilst Angola has experienced “extremely violent instances of ethnically based revolution” (Ibid, 474). Ethno-regional minorities have also engaged in separatist revolts with the secession of Eritrea in Ethiopia and the Biafran secession in Nigeria. The colonisation of the French in Africa was founded along an assimilation principle whereby the rationale was to create a ‘Greater France’. This meant that the colonised groups in Africa had to be assimilated into the French system and had to learn the French culture. However, the governors that were in charge of the French colonies tended to undermine traditional African leaders who had immense knowledge of their people and their ethnicity.

Under French rule in these colonies, certain ethnic groups received more privilege than others, especially if such a group resided close to the colonial administrative capital (Clapham, 1985). These developments led to the exclusion of other ethnic groups concerning class mobility which fueled ethnic conflicts between those who were privileged and those who were left out. On the contrary, the British left the traditional

system of the locals intact in the states they colonised and traditional leaders were been coerced by the empire to do administration on its behalf.

The British employed a 'divide and rule' strategy, whereby they maintained opposing traditional structures and this assisted them in curbing any efforts by the colonised to form a coalition against them. The indirect rule adopted by the British was to avoid the problems experienced in India with the model of anti-colonial nationalism (Wilson, 1994). The British in multi-ethnic societies chose the minority ethnic group and offered it British education and better employment in comparison to other larger groups. The British system established a platform whereby disparities would be interpreted through ethnicity as colonial administration was built-in into a substructure of ethnic government (Horowitz, 1985: 150). The British used ethnic conflict as a strategy to rule in its African territories and this too fueled ethnic conflicts.

In the effort to entrench ethnicity, the South African apartheid government between 1948 and 1990 created ten African 'nation-states' also known as Bantustans which were extensively based on divisions based on linguistic differences (Christopher, 1995). This maneuvering was inspired by the British who had colonised South Africa and it was adopted by the apartheid state to divide African tribal groups to reduce the peril to its minority rule (Marks & Trapido, 1987). Africans began to migrate into white South Africa in search of economic opportunities. The discriminatory laws that were passed the white minority rule in the mid-1980s were lifted later (Kane-Berman, 1990).

### **Measures to derail black unity: ethno-linguistic zoning in apartheid townships**

The migration of Africans from the homelands into a major city like Johannesburg in search of economic opportunity also resulted in the continuation of the segregation of black ethnic groups. Ethno-linguistic zoning was introduced in the 1950s by the apartheid state which argued that such zoning was meant to "pre-empt tribal conflict, ease township administration, promote mother-tongue education and forge palatable black nationalism" (Pirie, 1984: 291).

This segregation policy was first practiced by the mining industry which separated its workers in hostels along ethnic lines. Ethnic grouping was however rejected by various

organisations such as the Institute for Race Relations and the Institute of Administrators of Non-European Affairs but was firstly implemented in Benoni in the township of Daveyton before it became official policy. Moreover, in 1954, the government was able to persuade the Johannesburg City Council empowered by the leverage that the land was state-owned to implement ethnic zoning.

Ethnic grouping allowed the government to adequately plan for schools on mother-tongue language. The argument that was used referred to establishing a school in a neighbourhood that spoke the primary language the school offered. Education, in this regard, was utilised to advance the segregationist policies of the apartheid state and of course to bolster the 'divide and rule' apparatus. The grand plan additionally entailed appointing ward leaders who would have to establish strong links with the chiefs in the Bantustans (Ballinger, 1969). The Johannesburg City Council referred to incidents of violence in black worker hostels that were segregated based on ethnicity to argue against ethnic zoning in the townships (Pirie, 1984).

In Daveyton, where ethnic zoning was implemented, street names were named after a particular ethnic group that resided there. The apartheid state worked extensively to defend ethnic zoning in townships even claiming that the violence experienced in the worker hostels was caused by single men living together and not by families in a community. Intra-tribal factionalism was used as the scapegoat for township violence instead of it being viewed as inter-ethnic clashes by the champions of the policy (Mathewson, 1956). Moreover, the pro-National Party press worked vigorously to disseminate information that put forward arguments in defense of Verwoerd's policy of ethno-linguistic township divisions (Pirie, 1984). Ethno-linguistic zoning as a policy limited possibilities of black unity during apartheid.

### **The politics of language in post-apartheid South Africa**

Under British rule in South Africa, African languages were not recognised as official languages (Pampallis, 1991). The Bantu Education system introduced in 1953 was intended to encourage the usage of indigenous languages in the Bantustans and this ensured that black people would be disadvantaged from taking jobs reserved for

Europeans as they would have little command of the official languages of South Africa (Desai & Taylor, 1997).

Moreover, the emphasis on mother tongue education was intended to illuminate the differences between different people and encourage divisions embedded in the apartheid policy. Ngcobo (2009) asserts that although the implementation of the mother tongue was to disadvantage black people and their homelands, on the contrary, it worked to advance the indigenous languages as black writers were able to develop their languages. The 1996 South African Constitution officiated eleven languages and this was done to curb any possibility of ethnic conflict. The document was drafted with the notion of multilingualism and “the impetus behind language legislation is clearly political and ideological, aimed at the creation and strengthening of national identity in close association with national political power” (Ngcobo, 2009: 96). At the CODESA negotiations, the National Party argued for the protection of Afrikaans in the new dispensation and the ANC was hostile to the idea due to its experiences with the Afrikaner nationalist state which was responsible for the Soweto uprising in 1976 that occurred due to black school pupils protesting against being taught in Afrikaans. However, the compromise reached at CODESA predestined that South Africa should be multilingual and that guaranteed the protection of Afrikaans (Heugh, 2003).

The language policy of the country emphasises that people should be integrated and united. According to Ngcobo (2009: 98), at the core of the policy is a discourse of identity which works through concepts such as unity, diversity, nation, rainbow, multilingualism, multiculturalism, and so on”. Language decisions in South Africa have been shaped by the fear of ethnic and racial conflicts which can arise due to the failure to acknowledge various indigenous languages. Also, recognising that various languages represent social fragmentation and difference that the government has been able to provide a policy framework that is accepted broadly and this has led to a point where language is not associated exclusively with ethnicity (Ibid.). Language policy is said to be an instrument for rectifying past injustices brought upon by colonisation and apartheid which tended to promote certain languages at the expense of indigenous languages (Ibid.).

In the complexities of language planning, politicians have anticipated for unity to be forged through hegemony. This has entailed the increased use of the English language in South Africa and the fact that there are no limitations on the usage of the language. Various groups within South Africa have been utilising English in many domains and the language has not been abandoned even by former Anglophone colonies. Moreover, Ngcobo (2009: 98) stipulates that the language has been “associated with modernism through political control and education”.

Terreblanche (2003: 421) contends that South Africa’s nation-building programme post-1994 uses “English as lingua franca and de facto assimilationism into an Anglo-American cultural and socioeconomic construction”. The new democratic state has been trying to integrate itself into a single unified nation that can accommodate the globalised economy at the expense of ethnic differences and indigenous languages (Louw, 2004: 323). The ANC was founded by elites who were anti-tribal in their perspectives and the party at its inception represented urbanised westernised Africans who wanted to be assimilated into western-Anglo culture (Gerhart, 1978). There was a consensus in the ANC that tribalism and ethnicity would only serve to dismantle exertions to launch a black nationalism to combat colonial and apartheid oppression.

The preference for English implies that African languages have not received comparable status to the former which has been triumphant throughout the world because of Anglo-American economic expansion (Louw, 2004). Fishman (1968) refers to how colonialists at the end of colonialism in Third World countries assigned power to westernised African and Asian elites who had acquired a western education and had become detached from their ethnic communities. The rationale behind this move by the western powers was to safeguard their privilege and they only dealt with individuals that understood their ways and that sympathized with their expansionist ideals. In summary, it was to impose a neo-colonialism that was deracialised since the new masters were natives.

The ruling elite tends to have vested interest in nation-building that is linked to neoliberal economic structures and they work to detribalise their citizens to assimilate them into Anglophone society. Moreover, as these leaders have been educated by

former colonialists in return insist that the state must educate citizens in English or French henceforth manifesting their patronage to these cultures. Terreblanche (2003) asserts that the South African westernised elites negotiated a corporatist deal with local capital which was owned by Anglo-South Africans. The arrangement led to “neoliberal and globalisation agendas of global capitalism” (Louw, 2004: 326).

The post-apartheid state under these pacts was affiliated to an Anglo-American neoliberal agenda that discouraged an interventionist and protectionist state. The protectionism utilised by the National Party (NP) government before 1994 has been eradicated by ANC elites and their Anglo compatriots who want to assimilate South African society into English because of globalisation and the role the English language plays in it. According to Bond (2000), the ANC elite has found itself at the mercy of local corporatists who continue to invest in the country and from international capital that propels globalisation.

Louw (2004: 329) refers to how “Gauteng culture” has facilitated Anglicisation and as a space, Gauteng has been a melting pot because of its importance to South Africa and the rest of the African continent. Gauteng and its metropolitan hub Johannesburg, attracted different ethnicities when gold was discovered in the nineteenth century. Besides, since the ANC has a stronghold in urban Johannesburg, “Gauteng culture” has been associated with the nation-building agenda of the post-apartheid state. Moreover, Gauteng has offered a glimpse of a cosmopolitan space that can accommodate many people of different ethnicities and as a means of communicating in these spaces, English has been victorious. The ANC is said to envision “a single unified nation that favours the promotion of Gauteng culture as the archetype of what a future unified South African culture will look like” (ibid, 330).

### **Unity in diversity: A choice assorted affair**

Unity in diversity is the motto on the South African National Coat of Arms which was inspired by the Khoi Xam expression which means diverse people unite<sup>50</sup>. *Battle of*

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<sup>50</sup> South African Department of Arts and Culture, <http://www.dac.gov.za/content/14-what-unity-diversity>, Retrieved 5 August 2018.

*House and Iqiniso communicate a latent message of unity by ignoring differences in language and ethnicity. The apartheid state applied its co-optation policy by depicting illusions in television programmes that acknowledged black aspirations (Tomaselli, 1986). These illusions propelled the ideology of nation-building which sustained the apartheid regime. Battle of House and Iqiniso utilise family plots, the message of multilingualism and multicultural is accelerated based on the fact that the family has greater ties in comparison to the greater community. The following conversation from Iqiniso narrates a multilingual family as Sepedi (Northern Sotho), IsiZulu and English are spoken though there is some code-switching here and there.*

*Nozi: Ntlo ena ke ya rona rele bararo, so there's no need hore hobe le motho a movang/  
This house belongs to the three of us. There is no need for anyone to move out.*

*Sobantu: Uphoqakele. Awuyitholanga into kade uyifuna/ You are disappointed because you did not get what you wanted.*

*Mvikithi: Ungaphinde ungifune imali yamaBeer/ Don't ever again asking for money to buy beers.*

*Nozi: Lona le lebabedi. Please kegopela hore le tlogele hoitswara seka dikolobe.  
Asseblief/ You two must stop acting like pigs and behave decently. Please!*

*(There is mumbling from Mvikithi and Sobantu).*

*Nozi: That's enough. Stop this fighting ya goloela ntlo. Kganthe bothata ba lona keng and le issue ya hore renale different fathers. Why e tshwanetshe etloba issue ka lapeng lena. Hape there is so many people ba hore they have different fathers but bakoana/  
That's enough. Stop fighting over this house and the fact that we have different fathers does not have to be an issue in this home. In fact, there are many people who stay together and have different fathers but they get along well with each other.*

*Sobantu: Hagore ke ntho emama ana e batla. Ga obe jwalo/ If that is what our mother wanted for us. So be it.*



Moreover, the scene alludes to the diverse extended black family structures that are common in the urban areas. The ANC, since its seizure of power, has always attempted to endorse a society that is multicultural and multilingual and that is not divided based on racial and ethnic lines to maintain the current South African state. The idea of promoting multiculturalism and multilingualism has always been central to the ANC to build a black nationalism that could challenge apartheid (Louw, 2004).

The ANC has long understood that ethnic divisions can only result in a divided South Africa that could also be vulnerable to secession attempts that could revert the country to an establishment similar to the Bantustans. This disintegration will not benefit the current South African state that has such extensive economic prowess because of its geographical footprint. Nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa entails respecting people's ethnic background and promoting unity amongst different groups. The two films were shot in Soweto, which is the ground zero of what Louw (2004) terms a 'Gauteng culture' whereby Gauteng, as an ANC stronghold province, reflects unity in diversity to assimilate black people towards a black nationalism envisaged by the ANC. In essence, Gauteng has become a space to reflect the melting pot agenda of the ANC which is aligned to nation-building and the neoliberal economic turn adopted with GEAR post-1994.

The films present extended black township families that converse in different African languages without encountering any linguistic difficulties. This diversity is common in the urban space such as Gauteng where people in the nineteenth century flocked to the mines in Johannesburg in search of better prospects when the agricultural markets were dwindling.

Additionally, Soweto is projected as a melting pot in the films. The nuclear and extended families of this space are multilingual and multicultural. The notion of an ethnically diverse extended family can be read as an analogy of South African society that is confronted by various disagreements but yet at the end of the day, the people are all black and have similar dreams and hopes for their lives. The use of the family in the films intensifies the message of unity amongst black people and it empowers black nationalism which complements the nation-building project of the ANC.

The motto of unity in diversity is propagated by the films as the relations that exist in the family are unusual. In *Iqiniso*, the siblings are all ethnically different and have different fathers but they were all raised by the same mother who was able to keep them ethnically distinct by having them speak the languages of their ethnically diverse fathers. In this regard, none of the ethnicities of the children is given better status in comparison to the other. Xitsonga which is considered as a minority language in the media is given equal representation in the family. Importantly, all the siblings do not compromise their identity by assimilating into a dominant language such as isiZulu at home but continue to show off the heritage of their fathers. Moreover, there is the 'Choice Assorted' phenomenon within popular discourses in black communities in South Africa and this highlights a situation where a woman has children that are fathered by different partners or a man has children with different women (Moshoetsi, 2016). The fathers in the films were of different ethnic background which projects a notion of ethnicity as not having been a determining factor for black people in urban spaces during apartheid to have love relations.

*Battle of House* presents two sons who share the same father but have different mothers that belong to different black ethnic groups. The 'Choice Assorted' phenomenon although perceived as a negative marvel is utilised in the films to depict the diversity that exists within some urban black families. The 'Choice Assorted' phenomenon assists in portraying a multi-ethnic society that epitomises the black nationalism that has created the post-apartheid state.

There are quarrels within the families and sibling rivalries that are experienced by most households. There have been marriages and love relationships between different black ethnic groups which have led to the space being cosmopolitan in terms of black ethnicities. Apartheid had created policies that worked to segregate black ethnic groups in urban areas and in worker hostels to be able to divert black unity against apartheid (Ballinger, 1969).

Spaces such as Sophiatown and Soweto were filled with different ethnic groups that lived together and interacted with each other (Bailey & Rosenberg, 2016). The films reflect on a long history of hospitality between different ethnic groups in urban spaces

and the loosening of tribal affiliations. Although concerning townships such as Daveyton and Soweto in Gauteng where ethno-linguistic zoning was introduced during apartheid (Pirie, 1984), the films expose that such divisions were of no relevance and did not divide black ethnic groups as intended by the apartheid regime.

### **Divide and Rule: A third force in the family**

In the films, the third force exists in the form of the women that marry into the families. The general assumption provided is that although the family differs in terms of ethnicity it has always been united. The women, as a third force, employ tactics that outline the differences between the various siblings. This representation assigns negative traits to women who are mothers of nations as they are responsible for life. Lindsey Green-Simms (2012) on occult imaginaries in the Nollywood film refers to women who are determined to acquire power and resources by all means even by employing evil spirits to ensure their success. The conversation between Mvikithi and his wife Asanda in *Iqiniso* demonstrates the scheming, Asanda engages in, to turn Mvikhithi against his older brother Sobantu and his sister Nozi. Asanda can identify and communicate the differences between the family members which Mvikithi has seldom acknowledged and later we see Mvikithi confront his siblings about the fact that they are not born of the same father. In the scene, where the dialogue below has been derived, shadows through low-key lighting are introduced in the mise en scène to create an atmosphere of deception.

*Asanda: Don't tell me she didn't have life policies.*

*Mvikithi: Besekuyiminyaka uMa eyekele ukuyikhokhela/ It has been years since my mother stopped paying.*

*Asanda: How we going to get back the money we used for the funeral?*

*Mvikithi: Ungakhathazeki Baby. Ngizobona ukuthi ngenzenjani/ Don't worry Baby. I will see what I can do.*

*Asanda: I have an idea. Kick Nozi and Sobantu out of the house.*

*Mvikithi: Ngobani?/ Why?*

*Asanda: They are grown-ups. Ba nduba ka kelelong (They are stressing my mind).*

*Mvikithi: Ngeke ngikwazi ukuyenza leyonto ku mfowethu no dadewethu / I cannot chase my brother and sister out of the house.*

*Asanda: Half mfowenu and half dadewenu/ Half-brother and half-sister.*

The women in the two films manipulate their partners into conforming to their desires and later, they connive with them to obtain a superior status in comparison to the other family members. In *Battle of House*, the fiancé incites her partner to work on a plan to get rid of his stepbrother so that they can inherit the home. The woman advises her partner that it is important that they even employ the services of a *sangoma* (a traditional healer or diviner) to chase the stepbrother away.

This is also the case in *Iqiniso*, as the wife prompts her husband to engage in acts of denying his siblings the food that he bought for the household which he has been buying even before his wife arrived. The wife later works in secret to divide all the siblings by mentioning issues of inheritance and who has the right to inherit the house. Inheritance in African societies was complicated by European colonisation which enforced its systems on Africans. Customary law on succession is deemed to be intestate as it did not allow for the drafting of wills (Tebbe, 2008).

Postcolonial Africa adopted colonial systems of governance, language, religion and in many other spheres (Wa Thiong'o, 1989). These systems to, a great extent, conflicted with some indigenous African practices such as African customary law and its approaches to succession. In the South African context, it has been noted that the Constitution of the Republic bestows some liberties that conflict with customary law. The common law (Roman-Dutch law) in terms of intestate succession allocates all property to the surviving relatives of the deceased, if it is a husband that is deceased, the wife is entitled to inherit and all their offspring in the household. African customary law of succession was originally governed by the principle of male primogeniture, whereby the eldest male child is meant to inherit everything to the exclusion of his younger siblings.

In *Iqiniso*, the mother of all the siblings passes away without having a will and due to the adaptation of Roman-Dutch law as common law in South Africa, all the siblings assume that they are all entitled to a share in the house. This results in a setting where they all reside in a claustrophobic environment, where there are continuous disputes on a day to day basis. African customary law was unfairly discriminating against women in terms of inheritance, as it denied them the rights to inherit from their husbands and fathers. Sobantu's proclamations in *Iqiniso* about the house being his inheritance arises from the knowledge of what customary law had stipulated about succession and male primogeniture. African society was made complicated by the riotous past of "colonialism and racial capitalism which created multilayered existences" (Mhlambi, 2012: 105).

*Battle of House*, on the other hand, presents a state of affairs whereby Mr. Mazibuko had created a will that is governed by the common law which stipulated his wishes on how his estate should be allocated. Nonetheless, the eldest son (Themba) assumes from his familiarity with customary law that he is the sole heir and his sibling Mlungisi should be excluded from inheriting. The conflict in the two films is further exacerbated by the two legal systems that govern some black South African societies. In these films, customary law and common law conflict. On the other hand, the neoliberal economic turn adopted by the South African government after the desertion of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) has not bettered the lives of ordinary citizens. The unemployment rate has been increasing in the new South Africa which has made many people impoverished and unable to provide for their shelter.

Neoliberalism has advocated for the privatisation of most state-owned enterprises and has often worked to diminish the power of labour unions which has led to the disempowerment of workers, reduced employee benefits and retrenchments. Another consequence of neoliberalism has been a growing number of a rich minority alongside a majority that is becoming even more penurious (Narsiah, 2002).

South Africa has been experiencing a housing problem dating back to the apartheid era, into the new dispensation under the ANC. The state has failed dismally to provide adequate housing for all South Africans under the RDP that was short-lived and subsequent neoliberal economic policies in the post-1994 dispensation. The housing

conundrum, which is the root of all conflict, is played out in *Iqiniso* and *Battle of House*, as all the siblings do not have alternative living spaces other than their parents' homes. The divide and rule strategy alienated the siblings from realising that they are better off when they are together and that their unity is the vision their parents envisioned.

The insidious manoeuvres by the women in the films are motivated by the socio-economic status they find themselves in. It is shocking that in both films the women that dismantle the family relations are of Zulu ancestry which is some sort of confirmation of the idea of the Zulu nation as being against black unity in South Africa. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi of the IFP always proclaimed that the IFP promoted the idea of separate tribal identities (Spitz, 2000). The families become divided as there is no sharing of resources and differences are pointed out by the women. The women benefit from having a divided family as they can attain their greater goals of actually owning the extended family home. Whereas in both films, the siblings scarcely spoke or addressed their ethnic differences, they address them as soon as the women are there, raising questions of who should inherit. Through the differences highlighted by the women, the siblings hate each other and become enemies while residing in the same household. The departure of the women in both households leads to harmony amongst the siblings which epitomizes a united cosmopolitan South Africa.

In *Battle of House*, the failure by the stepbrothers to be civil towards each other leads to the unfortunate result of them losing the family home. The women in this instance were a third force that hid their sinister intentions by filling their partners with thoughts that only worked to divide the family and ruin its ties. The women are represented as the outsiders that come to destabilise family bonds that have existed for decades. Moreover, apartheid attempted to apply tactics to divide ethnic groups that have always had relationships dating back to pre-colonial times. The Zulu nation although its conquest was through war, when it defeated certain tribes it assimilated what was left of that tribe into the Zulu nation which exemplifies archaic inter-ethnic relationships.

## **The crowded family home as black socio-economic plight**

The lack of housing in urban townships such as Soweto has resulted in backroom structures being erected to house all the members of the extended family. The two films reflect on the dreadful socio-economic status of most township dwellers or specifically most township households that have to accommodate siblings that are failing to find employment and move out of the family home. Low-key lighting is predominant in both films, which creates shadows to symbolise the turmoil, the families are experiencing. It is also used to highlight the secrets in the two households and the evil scheming that persists.

The crowded family home is, on the other hand, an archetype of a South Africa that has overcrowded urban spaces, that is struggling to provide for all its citizens and that lacks resources to move forward towards positive growth. In the films, the two love relationships, that of Themba and Bongzi in *Battle of House* and Mvikhithi and Asanda in *Iqiniso*, because of limited financial means, have to be accommodated in the family homes where family members belong to different ethnic groups. Themba, in *Battle of House*, has a struggling business which he is operating from home and the fact that he cannot afford to rent office space further exposes the predicaments of post-apartheid neoliberal debacles. Themba's sibling, Mlungisi is unemployed and this has cornered him to an extent that he is owing ruthless illegal moneylenders (mashonisas) substantial amounts of money, which results in him being desperate for his share of his father's estate.

Mvikhithi, in *Iqiniso*, is employed at a local fuel service station and is most likely paid a minimum wage which cannot allow him to qualify for home financing with commercial banks. The mise-en-scène in *Iqiniso* is significantly comprised of low-key lighting that casts shadows in the house in the effort to capture the adversity the family is enduring. Also, marriage is projected as not ideal in a situation where the newlyweds have to reside with their siblings in the extended family home. The women in this regard connive to get everyone out of the family home because there are no other avenues for them to be able to obtain their own home. Alarming, this reflects on the larger problem of housing facing the national government as neoliberal policies fail to improve the

standard of living for the majority of citizens. These family homes are in urban townships where there are many employment opportunities and henceforth the family home remains highly populated unlike in the rural areas whereby family homes are left abandoned because the occupants have flooded the cities seeking greener pastures. The films reflect the constraints on black aspirations as economic woes make life agonizing for the extended family that resides together. It is the poor socio-economic standing of the family that results in family members quarreling with each other. In *Battle of House*, there is Themba who has a struggling courier services business and his sibling Mlungisi who is unemployed and indebted to ruthless illegal moneylenders. In *Iqiniso*, it is Sobantu who is frustrated by joblessness and results in excessive alcohol consumption and Mvikithi who has to fend for the entire extended family from his meagre salary. Mvikithi's sibling, Nozi has been attempting to start a day-care centre business to assist Mvikithi but this has not materialised.

The calamities that befall the characters are similar to those of many ordinary black South Africans who anticipated prosperity in the post-apartheid era but have remained penurious because of government policy decisions that fail to accelerate economic growth. The producers of popular arts tend to be part of the community they represent and at certain junctures can capture the sentiments of the people at the grassroots of society (Barber, 1987). Moreover, Barnard (2004) expounds that popular film in society can act as an important political document reflecting contentious issues of the time. In the films, none of the siblings stay in the family home for sentimental values while possessing the resources to migrate to their own space but in essence, they reside in the home as it is their last opportunity to have a roof over their heads.

### **Relocating ethnic stereotypes**

There are negative stereotypes of ethnic groups such as the Shangaan, the Vhavenda and the Bapedi as practitioners of the occult in South Africa. The Limpopo province, which is in the north of South Africa, has been notorious with cases associated with witchcraft and in the early 1990s, the government embarked on a task to halt the witch killings administered by communities in the province (Minaar, Wentzel & Payze, 1998).



Occult related crimes became a major preoccupation for the state to an extent that many official seminars were facilitated to comprehend the phenomenon. Moreover, the crisis was so severe that the SABC commissioned a television drama series *Ke Bona Boloji* (1997) which was aimed at addressing the threat of occult activities to public order (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2004). However, witch-killing incidents arose from diverse localities within South Africa with some cases emanating from the Eastern Cape (Petrus, 2011). The television drama series *Ke Bona Boloji* was filmed in the Limpopo province with a bias towards addressing occult practices.

The two films depart from portraying individuals who are of Shangaan lineage as instigators who summon occult spirits to attain what they desire. Bongi in *Battle of House* who is of Nguni ancestry convinces her fiancé Themba (who is Shangaan) that they should engage in acts of bewitching his sibling Mlungisi. Themba seems reluctant and he is portrayed as clueless and as a non-believer in the supernatural as he questions the validity of what the *sangoma* is doing.

In *Iqiniso*, Sobantu (who is also Shangaan) is from the onset suspected of bewitching everyone in the family because he wants to inherit the family home based on the fact that he is the eldest son. It later turns out that Sobantu was not engaged in the practice of witchcraft to eliminate his siblings and he is a man who believes in the African religion.

Asanda who is Nguni in this instance is the culprit who bewitches the family and African religion is deployed later to restore things to normality. This reversal of stereotypes depicts how any ethnic group can engage in witchcraft, particularly in post-colonial Africa and more precisely post-apartheid South Africa, where the living standards of the majority are appalling due to the austerity of capitalism or neoliberalism penetration (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999).

Occult imaginaries have been on the rise as Africans attempt to comprehend the accumulation of wealth by some elites in a manner that does not seem to be explainable by common wisdom (Mhlambi, 2016). Barbara Frank (in Lindsey Green-Simms, 2012: 39) adds that “fraud, speculation, pyramid schemes, and scams are also

sources that are inscrutable, and wealth in these economies appears as if by magic, even when magic per se is not involved". In *Battle of House*, Ntate Jiyane, the sangoma, takes advantage of the desperate need of Themba and Bongi to resolve their skirmishes with Mlungisi, as he scams them by not offering them what they desire. Additionally, he is an old man who has worked his entire life and feels that he can make a capitalist enterprise from people who believe in the occult world. In layman's terms, he exists because of the excessive demand in the postcolonial and neoliberal economy for such interventions. In this context, it is not only the penurious that demand the services of the occult but even those who can be perceived as middle class with the case of Themba and Bongi.

When Themba is reluctant to turn to witchcraft for a solution that will make Mlungisi depart from his father's home, Bongi replies by stating that a lot of people use witchcraft to resolve their quandaries. This assertion by Bongi highlights the existence of occult imaginaries in contemporary everyday experiences of black people. After the departure of Asanda in *Iqiniso*, Sobantu finds employment as if occult spirits harboured by the former were the reason for his joblessness.

In summary, the films allow for individuals to re-imagine the identities they prejudicially allocate to various ethnic groups. The stereotypes of ethnic groups from the north of South Africa as practitioners and believers in occult activities is challenged by these films as witchcraft is depicted as multi-ethnic. Moreover, the films deconstruct stereotypes that are formulated around ethnicity that can work to curtail black nationalism. By virtue, this further encourages the nation-building agenda of the state, as stereotypes are transferred from one ethnic group to another highlighting the heterogeneity of black ethnic groups. The illumination of homogeneity more than differences assists in portraying a united black nation that is aligned with the developmental goals of the neoliberal South African state. However, it critical to note that the films, in depicting women as instigators of witchcraft, revert to archaic stereotypes of women as witches, which is detrimental to the gender project (Okuyade, 2011; Dipio, 2014). Nollywood as popular film has been accused of demonizing women and unfavourably representing them. Bryce (2012: 71) refers to how Nollywood genres

are strongly influenced by “male-defined values”. Also, Wa Thiong’o (2000: 94) refers to the filmmaker who is an “outsider who may gaze upon subjects in an anthropological, ethnographic or voyeuristic manner and constructing images that tend to essentialise identity and reiterating stereotypes that are historically and politically outdated”.

Although stereotypes about witchcraft have been shifted based on ethnicity, they remain imposed on the female gender. Moreover, women are considered to be mothers of nations as they are responsible for giving birth to future generations. Contrariwise, Nozi, a female character in *Iqiniso*, provides a voice of reason and is an impartial mediator dedicated to resolving the conflict between her brothers. So, in the exertion to eradicate tribalism in the imaginaries of black South Africans, women are used as sacrificial lambs. In conclusion, the films work to make ethnicity more salient than gender.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has engaged the question of black ethnicity in post-apartheid South Africa and has posed questions that aimed to establish a link between the nation-building agenda of the state and black ethnicity. The discussion of these grassroots films that concentrate on the family reflect that South African urban spaces have always been diverse in terms of ethnicity.

The post-apartheid township families that are portrayed by the films depict the archaic inter-ethnic relationships that have existed between black people before colonialism and after, especially the apartheid era. The films work as a metaphor for the South African society that is confronted by pressures emanating from the adoption of neoliberal economic policies that have exacerbated unemployment and poverty. The films support a nation-building agenda that is aligned to the state as they emphasise unity amongst the various ethnic groups that comprise contemporary South Africa.

Additionally, the films reflect the social woes of a majority of South Africans who have not benefitted from the new democratic dispensation in terms of economic freedom. Through depicting multilingual and multicultural environments that tolerate difference they champion a black nationalism that has long been envisioned by the ANC. This black nationalism is responsible for awarding the state to the ANC and has been

fundamental in retaining their political stake in the country circa 1994. Interestingly, the films also challenge the stereotypes assigned to various black ethnic groups and they point out that these typecasts are fluid and can exist within any black ethnic group. On the contrary, the films have demonstrated a reversion to long-standing typecasts of women as practitioners of witchcraft and therefore defeating the gender project. This spectacle of demonizing women has been prominent in Nollywood films.

Nollywood has been observed as an industry that has compromised the gender project with its constant casting of women with negative traits (Ibbi, 2017). Disturbingly, *Battle of House* was directed by a black woman, Felicia Molusi, who should demonstrate extensive comprehension concerning representing women justifiable. However, it is critical to note that the dominant systems of representation that are somehow discriminatory to other groups tend to exist because of the unwillingness by filmmakers to oppose mainstream conventions. It cannot be assumed that since a filmmaker is black or in this instance, black and female that they are not capable of essentialising the black experience (Ellapen, 2007).

Moreover, these mishaps by women filmmakers can be allotted to their lack of knowledge of the struggles of women over the centuries. As Nollywood has been instigated of such unfair representation of women as the seminal works of popular film in the African continent, one can formulate that popular film in South Africa has also adopted these negative tropes. Furthermore, the chapter has demonstrated that although popular culture is considered apolitical in some academic theoretical circles, in this instance, it has been utilised to communicate the social and economic matters of present-day South Africa and harbours some degree of Third Cinema.

## **5. Chapter 5: The periphery at the centre: Gender equality, tradition and film induced tourism in *Isitulo (The Chair)* (2016) and *Balungile (They are good)* (2016)**

Rural areas and Bantustans have featured extensively in black popular film and television during apartheid where there was a ploy to portray the space as a utopia for black people. Essentially, the ploy involved ensuring that people perceived rural life as rosy and tranquil, far superior to that in the urban space.

The B-scheme film subsidy created films that depicted separate development which was a policy of the apartheid state (Paleker, 2010). Heyns Films produced films such as *uDeliwe* (1975), *Inkunzi* (1976) and *Setipana* (1979) which projected a contrast between the rural and the urban and as a consequence the rural was depicted as the perfect place for an African. This dichotomy entailed scenes in films that represented the downside of urban life as black people failed to sustain themselves. Tomaselli (1989: 71-73) referred to the all-encompassing themes of these films as 'back to the homelands' or the 'conditional urban'. Presently, in post-1994 South Africa, the same periphery (rural space) is at the centre of political debates with the proposed Bill on the expropriation of land without compensation and the NDP plan for rural development. *Mzansi Movies* has commissioned films that depict life in the rural spaces of South Africa in this epoch of momentous political revolution.

*Lokshin Bioskop* devised stories that represented the black urban township experience hence the term 'lokshin', which means location and describes previously disadvantaged black spaces in the urban areas.

In 2016, the *Mzansi Magic* channel made an all-encompassing turn by renaming this film platform to *Mzansi Movies* which premieres its films on Saturday nights. The manoeuvre of including the periphery (the rural) by the channel embraces all forms of spaces in pursuit of demonstrating all experiences of blackness and everyday life. *Lokshin Bioskop*, as a concept, could not define the complexity of stories that sought to depict alternative spaces such as the rural environment, which harbours immense stories about blackness and its traditions in the new South Africa.

*Mzansi Magic*, through *Mzansi Movies*, seems to be reactive to the political economy of the day, which necessitates relooking at rural areas, amidst a time when the space is of utmost importance, politically and economically. In this chapter, I contend that popular film in the case of *Mzansi Movies* depicts rural life as attractive and this helps to bolster rural spaces as places that have hidden potential for development.

As the films are shot in spaces that are not ethnically diverse as metropolises, they tend to offer that exclusive distinct ethnic tradition which is attractive even to tourists that aspire to experience African traditions. Furthermore, I argue that the exclusivity the films depict evokes the aesthetics and narratives of films made during apartheid under the B-scheme subsidy that glorified Bantustans as places with growth potential (Paleker, 2010). Moreover, narratives of 'Back to the Homelands' by Tomaselli (1989) seem to be re-emerging in post-apartheid popular film focused on the rural space. The aesthetics in these films by *Mzansi Movies* project the rural setting as serene with nature, as wide picturesque views of the countryside landscape are displayed and high shots of infrastructural developments are shot to communicate progress.

The narratives, on the other hand, carry messages of the city as an intimidating place that can disintegrate the family. The chapter addresses the following key questions: 1) What aesthetics and narratives are assigned to advance rural development in the films? And 2) How are gender relations represented in the rural space? In its attempt to address the proposed questions, the chapter presents four themes namely: Rough diamonds: the rural as special in *Balungile*; a tale of two countries: feminism is from the city in *Isitulo*; the chair as a symbol of the patriarchal aesthetic for the rural in *Isitulo* and *Balungile* and a pre-colonial space for the contestation of heteropatriarchy in *Balungile*. Rural development has occupied political debates since the advent of democracy in 1994, as the space has always been neglected by the government since apartheid, in favour of urban development.

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 also proposes a plan for developing rural areas in South Africa<sup>51</sup>. The policy document describes rural development as a challenge since there is more poverty in rural spaces in comparison to the urban areas. The plan further points to strategic sectors within rural communities that need to be advanced. This is the vision of the South African government for rural areas which entails creating rural economies that can sustain communities. The fundamental concept is to convey economic prospects from the urban spaces to rural economies for growth to transpire.

Neoliberalism, as an economic policy, intends to limit the dependency of citizens on the state (Mosedale, 2016). The crucial argument is that communities must be able to sustain themselves without depending on welfare and so the NDP aims to fulfill these neoliberal goals in non-urban spaces.

*Mzansi Magic* has been central to the representation of rural spaces through its productions such as *Isibaya* by Bomb Productions which is a telenovela that offers a binary of experiences between the urban and rural spaces in terms of its film locations. A telenovela, *The Throne*, by Ferguson Films, is exclusively representing only the non-urban space in its depiction of a story of a Tswana royal family that is beleaguered by succession squabbles. These productions point to an investment in the rural space in terms of film production which can lead to augmented prospects for rural denizens.

*Mzansi Magic* invests in rural areas by utilising the space as a film location which contributes to the agenda of the NDP. In some instances, cultural villages that are central to tourism are used as film locations that can communicate exclusively an African tradition. Cultural villages are an integral part of tourism that is meant to contribute to the fiscus of rural areas. The low growth rate of the economy has resulted in amplified unemployment and overpopulated urban spaces where people search endlessly for scarce jobs prospects (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005).

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<sup>51</sup> Chapter 6: An integrated and inclusive rural economy of the National Development Plan 2030 drafted by the South African National Planning Commission.  
[http://www.nationalplanningcommission.org.za/Documents/devplan\\_ch6\\_0.pdf](http://www.nationalplanningcommission.org.za/Documents/devplan_ch6_0.pdf), Retrieved 28 July 2018.

The homeland system championed by the apartheid regime sought to limit the number of Africans in white South Africa. The regime aimed to curb overcrowding by supporting a policy of separate development with the Bantustan initiative. In the post-1994 dispensation, the cities can no longer sustain the increasing population and there is jobless growth which leaves people feeling useless and susceptible to illicit temptations such as crime to survive. Decentralization of the economy becomes vital to politicians as they need to lessen the burden on the cities that are failing to provide services for the growing populace. Decentralization is a tenet of neoliberalism and it dictates, to some degree, for the decentralization of politics in a state.

The Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Bill were proposed in 2017 by some members of the ANC to enable traditional leaders to enter into business arrangements with private entities without requiring endorsement from the state<sup>52</sup>. It is at this point that rural economies need to sustain their communities to halt the migration to cities in pursuit of economic prospects.

While the apartheid government policed migration for black people to the cities through pass laws, the current government has to embark on economic measures that can accelerate growth for all the constituencies in South Africa. The present government cannot simply make decisions that are based on denying prospects to certain ethnic or racial groups. All constituencies are valued in the country for the ruling party to maintain its majority.

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<sup>52</sup> The article was in *The Conversation* (2017); it alerts us of the neglect rural areas experience with regard to various services in post-apartheid South Africa. It emphasises the importance of rural areas as deciders of who will govern in the 2019 national elections. The Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Bill was up for amendment to offer traditional leaders in rural areas, the discretion to enter into commercial deals with various entities such as mining companies without the intervention of the state. This Bill was up for discussion due to some members of the ANC who desire for such an amendment to be made. This means under neoliberalism that political power is being decentralized from the centre (the state) to traditional leaders. The strategy to introduce the amendment by the ANC signifies how they want to influence rural development and how they want to be favoured by traditional leaders.

<http://theconversation.com/south-africans-in-rural-areas-are-saying-no-more-why-it-matters-87028>.



Separate development or secession is not expected in the new dispensation. However, the Bill on the Expropriation of land without compensation<sup>53</sup> has led to threats of war by the Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini which jeopardises the current dispensation which includes the Kwazulu Natal province. This sensitive issue is being handled by President Cyril Ramaphosa and the ANC, to show that they do not want to offend the Zulu King and the Zulu nation<sup>54</sup>. This scenario further highlights that the ruling party has a substantial interest in all spaces that make up the Republic. Thus, policies that aid development in all areas is critical to maintaining power<sup>55</sup>.

In some instances, the land that will be expropriated will be rural land which has been held by the white minority since colonialism and apartheid. The rationale behind the Bill is to address the landlessness of the majority of the population, who are black people. Interestingly, the film *Isitulo* (2016) confronts the issue of black landlessness as the land in the film is said to be owned by a missionary church that decides on who stays and who leaves, a pattern that was established itself during colonialism (Weideman, 2006).

The missionary church decides on which individuals are suitable to reside in the space as it pleases and religious affiliation to the church is a prerequisite. *Balungile* (2018) offers insight into agrarian land ownership through Sabelo's employment at a commercial sugarcane farm that is owned by a white man. In both films, we are made aware of the importance of land and who is currently in possession. The expropriation of land without compensation will bring the rural space to the centre of political debate as questions of rural development will be intensified. Additionally, it is imperative to understand where the land debacle emanated and the countless debates that exist in this arena in post-apartheid South Africa.

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<sup>53</sup> The Expropriation of land without compensation bill infuriated the Zulu King on the basis that he is also in possession of land in the Kwazulu Natal province which he oversees under a trust which he formulated. The Ingonyama Trust leases the land on behalf of the King to various tenants such as corporates. The royal house makes a substantial monetary gain from its administration of the land that is held by the Trust. The Bill was initially interpreted to mean that all land that could be used for the public good will be usurped by the state and distributed to all citizens who need it.

<sup>54</sup> Ed Stoddard, *Ramaphosa: Government will not grab land under Ingonyama Trust*, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/ramaphosa-government-will-not-grab-land-under-ingonyama-trust-15868518>, Retrieved 3 August 2018.

The subject of land redistribution has been a thorny issue in South Africa since 1994 whereby land claims by black communities were made and some were honoured by the state with compensation. However, the elephant in the room is that a minority remains in possession of substantial hectares of land whilst the majority is landless (Hall, 2004). The land issue has been raised by critics who focus on the failures of the ANC since its seizure of power. Although the perception is that the ANC has most of the majority of its voters in major cities (Louw, 2004), there has been a sharp decline in the stake of the ANC as the party has lost key metropolitan areas such as Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria in the 2016 local government elections. In this regard, the rural vote also becomes paramount in the task to remain in power.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) formed coalition governments that ensured the overthrow of the ANC in these metropolitan spaces. These developments signal a new dawn whereby even the rural electorate has to be considered significant for the ANC to remain at the helm as the country's government. The Limpopo province, which is composed mostly of rural communities, has been the constituency where the ANC has always registered a record win in the past years<sup>56</sup>. However, it is important to note that the importance of traditional leaders that are responsible for these communities is recognised by the 1996 Constitution of the Republic. Additionally, the leaders are financially remunerated by the state.

In summary, the land debates and the declining electorate in urban areas for the ruling party have shifted political focus to the periphery where the land debacle, as a populist agenda, will be staged. Moreover, with respect to film, it is imperative to consider the historical and predominant representations of rural spaces, to ascertain the narratives and aesthetics that have come to be associated with the latter.

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<sup>56</sup> The ANC obtained 78.60 percent of the votes in the province in 2014 which reflects that some rural communities are loyal to the ruling party.

<http://www.elections.org.za/content/Elections/Results/2014-National-and-Provincial-Elections--Limpopo-results/>, Retrieved 10 August 2018.

In addition, Former President Jacob Zuma has long been considered as a president who received his support from rural communities and not as much in the urban spheres.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/07/world/africa/jacob-zuma-under-siege-finds-political-refuge-in-rural-south-africa.html>, Retrieved 10 August 2018.

There have been productions in the African continent that have explored the representation of rural spaces in contemporary popular African film. Nollywood has been at the forefront of this development lately through films that address the life and experiences of people in rural spaces. Uwah (2008) in *Nollywood films as a site for constructing contemporary African identities: The significance of village ritual scenes in Igbo films* provides insights into Igbo Nollywood films as utilising much of the tenets of Third Cinema in depicting the everyday experiences of Nigerian society.

Moreover, he offers precepts on what constitutes a Nollywood village film concerning aesthetics. The village films tend to be bereft of class consciousness and the narratives tend to dramatize life as in pre-colonial times where there is no interference by Western culture. The films portray the vastness of nature (Teshome, 1989), as the rural landscape is filmed with its beauty of rolling hills in open view. For the character in the films to be going back to the village is to find one's self and regenerate strength (Uwah, 2008). Moreover, the Nollywood village aesthetic creates a feeling of the human as being one with the environment and there is no attempt to develop the land but rather to retain it as it is, as "this has both ecological as well as cosmological significance" (Ibid, 100). This perspective by Uwah assists with the comprehension that when issues of tradition are to be dealt with, it usually requires a rural setting similar to pre-colonial Africa. In essence, tradition is challenged in a space where it was generally practiced which is the rural space. In the case of apartheid film and television when the rural was utilised as a space for representing blackness and its traditions, it was to make black people only perceive the euphoria of rural life and the challenges posed by such a space were downplayed.

Paleker (2011) in *'Ethnic Films' for Ethnic Homelands: 'Black Films' and Separate Development in Apartheid South Africa, 1972–1979* refers to how the black film subsidy of the early 1970s created films that reflected on the dichotomy between the urban and the rural. The strategy was to safeguard apartheid through projecting separate development as a necessity for the African people. She acknowledges a contradiction that existed whereby through pass laws and labour bureaux, Africans were allowed into white South Africa as long as they were employed. Films mostly by Heyns Films were

good at portraying “Africans within the paradigm of the ‘tribal native’ and the ‘rural innocent’ who is displaced within an urban context” (Ibid, 134).

Moreover, the films only projected African social and economic mobility as only attainable to individuals that resided in the Bantustans. The studies by Paleker (2010; 2011) provide a political economy comprehension of the state as interfering with cultural production and unleashing its propaganda through such creative platforms. These studies highlight how the state can employ resources to advance certain ideas or glorify certain spaces to advance a political agenda.

Paleker (2010) in *The B-Scheme subsidy and the ‘black film industry’ in apartheid South Africa, 1972–1990* notes that these B-scheme films would portray the unusual where the youth will only aspire to reside in the Bantustans and not have a yearning to experience the city life in urban South Africa. Moreover, these representations entailed narratives whereby senior citizens would be taught by the youth to accept their homeland position and this is rather ironic when considering the history of youth and rebellion in South Africa.

The films represented the desires of the apartheid state to exclude the black populace from major cities to be able to provide sustainable lifestyles only to whites. *Inkunzi* (1976) by Heyns Films presented a development aesthetic of the Bantustan of Transkei with “neat rows of box houses, industrial buildings and wide expanses of scrubland” (Ibid, 97). These studies are important as the ANC government is confronted by burning issues of urban overpopulation and a decline in voter empathy. It can be argued that a previously neglected space which is the rural has reappeared at the center of political contestation because of its potential to retain the ANC in power after the debacle that occurred when it lost, most the metropolitan cities. At this juncture, it is relevant to pose the question of how do films work in relation to the locations which they depict? This, of course, has to take into consideration, the relationship between film and the political economy of film locations.

Tomaselli (2001) in *The Semiotics of Anthropological Authenticity: The Film Apparatus and Cultural Accommodation* examined the relations between film and cultural tourism

focusing on Shakaland where the 1980s Shaka Zulu television series was filmed in Kwazulu Natal.

Film induced tourism, as a theory, offers insight into how film can construct certain characteristics about a location or destination which in the long term may improve the tourism industry of a particular rural setting. Cultural villages in Kwazulu Natal offer an African traditional experience for cultural tourists that fantasize about experiencing the African 'Other' and this has been a norm in cultural tourism in Africa.

The success of *Shaka Zulu* (1986) led to the prominence of a tourist destination and upliftment in terms of income for the rural communities that occupied the space. This perspective of film-induced tourism helps with the understanding of why certain spaces are used as film locations and endorsed by various film offices. Tomaselli (2001) and Beeton (2004) in *Rural Tourism in Australia — Has the Gaze Altered? Tracking Rural Images through Film and Tourism Promotion* concur on the perspective that images presented to tourists must not conflict with images in a fictional representation such as film for a particular destination to be promoted optimally.

Beeton (2004: 134) refers to images that promote Victoria as remaining "influenced by Romantic notions of rural idylls and the picturesque, even when presenting particularly Australian images". Also, she stipulates that even if a film is popular it will not stimulate tourism if its images do not correlate or are predominantly negative. Film producers on various occasions are not concerned with the effects of film-induced tourism for a destination but are absorbed in the process of telling a story. Beeton (2004) states that as long as tourism organisations do not contribute financially to filming, they will remain powerless in their control of images that are popular about their destinations.

The film *Rickshaw* (2014) by Durban Motion Pictures which is the company that made the two films that are read in this chapter, provides a story on the tourist attraction of rickshaws which are popular with Durban tourism. Such representations of the rickshaw which are symbolic of Durban somehow benefitted the city in terms of tourism as images did not create dissonance on the minds of tourists. Interestingly, the City of eThekweni hosts the annual Durban Film Festival which has gained popularity locally

and internationally (Nyokana, 2013). Popular film is strongly based on the principle of filming on location unlike in the conventional film and television industry and so the destination by default is marketed to audiences (Gibson, 2018). Uwah (2008) associates Third Cinema with popular Nollywood film and refers to how the films enter into aesthetics that display a multitude of sights on a location that can undoubtedly be linked to tourism promotion.

Hudson and Ritchie (2006: 388) in *Promoting destinations via film tourism: An empirical identification of supporting marketing initiatives* provide a model for film-induced tourism which involves the “following five factors: destination marketing activities, destination attributes, film-specific factors, film commission and government efforts, and location feasibility”. Moreover, they stipulate that increased competition in the tourism industry has led to destination placement in films and television programmes which is a prodigious marketing tool that increases awareness, improves a destination’s image and increases tourism numbers. The State of Georgia in the United States has capitalised on its use as a film location for films such as *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989) and *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991) and this has led to the creation of a film and television company Georgia that is supported by the State and attracts filming in the state<sup>57</sup>. As the study by Hudson and Ritchie (2006) is based on an international survey of destinations across the world, it provides significant knowledge on this new marvel of film-induced tourism.

Motsaathebe (2013) in *Presence as absence: A black feminist analysis of the depiction of black woman in three post-apartheid South African films (2004-2008)*, examines the representation of rural South Africa in mainstream film. In the study, he examined *Yesterday* (2004) directed by Darrell Roodt which was nominated for the best foreign film at the academy awards. His analysis of *Yesterday* assists with some aspect of post-apartheid rural South Africa in film. The rural in the film is “a poverty-stricken environment, with challenges in the area of health care” and women have to go through difficulties as they raise children alone while their husbands work as migrant workers in

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.georgia.org/industries/entertainment/georgia-film-tv-production/>, Retrieved 19 August 2018.

urban areas (Ibid, 12). These challenges women have to face regarding HIV/Aids in rural areas were also depicted by the popular SABC television drama series, *Phamokate* (1994).

The protagonist *Yesterday* is shown in the rural environment as experiencing difficulty with her being ostracised for her HIV status and the lack of comprehension of the disease by community members. Yesterday is infected with HIV by her husband who is a migrant worker and he is unapologetic to her about this which depicts the deep entrenchment of patriarchy in rural societies in post-apartheid South Africa. The space is portrayed as stagnant as women continue to fetch water from wells and wash clothes at the river which is an old occurrence that has continued into the new South Africa. Motsaathebe in this regard delivers an in-depth account of women's struggles and the harsh environments they have to live under, in poor underdeveloped rural spaces of post-apartheid South Africa through a reflection of a mainstream film.

The two films to be read in this chapter, *Isitulo* (2016) and *Balungile* (2018), were produced by Durban Motion Pictures which is a Durban based organisation. The detail that the name of the city is attached to the organisation's name implies that the location of Durban is central in its film productions. On its own, it invokes a tourism element as an audience from the beginning of a production will associate all images with Durban. The company has connections with the Durban film office and has filmed several productions in the greater Durban area<sup>58</sup>. Film locations that are generally utilised by the production company tend to have various tourism sites attached to them. The film *Isitulo* was filmed in Umzinyathi District Municipality in Dundee, Kwazulu Natal, which has tourist attractions such as Mhlopheni Nature Reserve, Isandlwana, Talana Museum, Umvoti Vlei Nature Reserve, Greytown battlefield route<sup>59</sup> and Lake Merthley<sup>60</sup>. Whilst *Balungile* (2018) was filmed in Ecabazini Traditional Zulu Village which offers tourists

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.durbanfilmoffice.co.za/Filming-In-Durban/Filmography>, Retrieved 20 August 2018.

<sup>59</sup> The Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906 took place in the Greytown battlefields and it was a battle between King Bhambatha and the English colonial authorities over the refusal by King Bhambatha to pay taxes to English authorities. The town was also a site for the Anglo- Boer War, <https://showme.co.za/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/battlefields/greytown/greytown-battlefields-kwazulu-natal/>, Retrieved 12 November 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Umzinyathi District Municipality has also been the space for the filming of *Isibaya* on Mzansi Magic highlighting the significance of the area as a film-friendly location.

the experience of Zulu traditional life as the facility accommodates guests in traditional Zulu huts and it further educates individuals about Zulu culture and tradition<sup>61</sup>.

The films that have been chosen are filmed in rural settings which articulates Zulu culture and tradition as there is limited ethnic diversity in such spaces. Moreover, the films tell a story about women's struggles in the rural areas which are spaces expected to be less transformed in comparison to the urban spaces. The films were made at a time when parliament was involved in passing the Expropriation of Land without Compensation Act that will have a significant impact on rural communities.

### **The socio-political status of rural South Africa**

South Africa is an unequal society whereby the gap between the rich and poor is quite substantial and the hardest reality is that the poorest of all are citizens in the rural areas (Carter & May, 1998; Binns & Nel, 1999). The legacy of this poverty can be associated with apartheid spatial, social and economic segregation which strategically allocated resources to white areas at the expense of black spaces.

The majority of rural land during apartheid was held by the white minority and this included even land in the Bantustans whilst black people, though they are the majority, had a little stake on land. The reality in the post-1994 new dispensation is that the former homelands "are still characterised by severe poverty, disempowerment, dependency and outmigration of skilled and educated people" (Binns & Nel, 1999: 396).

The foremost exposé is that some of the homelands ended up being overpopulated due to the forced removals of black people from white urban spaces to the former (Fox & Nel, 1997). The homelands were composed of inferior land which could not yield satisfactory agrarian revenues and as such the land could not be worked to lessen poverty but rather the communities had to depend on migrant worker salaries and old age pension grants (Binns & Nel, 1999; Oberhauser & Pratt, 2004).

In the Bantustan rural areas, only one percent of black farmers could be classified as commercial farmers and less than ten percent of income in these spaces was attributed

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<sup>61</sup> <http://ecabazini.co.za/about-ecabazini>, Retrieved 20 August 2018.



to farming ((Bembridge, 1987). A substantial number of men from the homelands worked in urban white-controlled areas and were merely regarded as a workforce to sustain the white capitalist machinery (Petersson, 1997). Amidst such historical accounts, there has been “a need for innovative rural development strategies and the enhancement of local self-reliance has become absolutely critical in the post-apartheid period” (Binns & Nel, 1999: 396). The new government has been constrained by policy and resources concerning implementing radical reforms in rural areas and this has yet not resulted in amplified employment for the space.

Top-down rural development strategies implemented at the behest of state bureaucrats have failed in the project of boosting rural economic sustainability (Binns, Hill, Nel, 1997). The entrenchment of white capital has created a non-competitive agrarian market whereby there are considerable barriers to entry for newcomers which are the previously disadvantaged inhabitants of the homelands.

The quandary is compounded by the lack of capacity by local government in poor rural areas to assist with overriding some of these hindrances to engage in agri-business. Bill and Nel (1999) discuss various self-reliant rural development initiatives entered into by the local communities which have worked to the betterment of former homelands which include communal ownership of farms and of course in the inclusion of such services as tourism.

Some of the community initiatives about local economic development have empowered women who were traditionally marginalised (Maleleni, 1995). Success stories tend to be emanating from areas with “antecedent factors that include the presence of a skilled labour force which is familiar with local conditions, the presence of abandoned farmland and equipment, a key historical site, areas with considerable tourism potential, and a cadre of respected and capable local leaders” (Bill & Nel, 1999: 405). Understandably, there have been fruitful initiatives by rural communities, however, there are still huge disparities between rural and urban South Africa with the former as the worst affected.

Rural citizens are also subjected to the leadership of communal area elites which include traditional leaders and often their grievances are not well understood by the

respective bodies as if it were the case with labour and political movements (Kepe & Cousins, 2002). The government passed ineffective legislation in 1996 through the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Acts of 1996, and this has resulted in the vulnerability of farmworkers and labour tenants as there have been cases of them being illegally evicted on commercial farms and a few being land recipients through redistribution (Lahiff, 2001). Land restitution has been implemented but most of the land restitution claims were concerning forced removals in urban areas during apartheid and not about viable agrarian rural land held mostly by white commercial farmers (Ibid.). The rural areas have remained the most impoverished with women at the epicentre of this vicious circle.

Oberhauser and Pratt (2004) focused on the former Venda Bantustan in rural Limpopo province and observed community-based economic projects and informal sector activities. The fact that South Africa's efforts to elevate its role in the global economy through implementing recommendations by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have resulted in privatisation and economic liberalisation which has exacerbated the dire conditions of working-class citizens including women (Hart, 2002).

Another contributing factor to poverty in rural areas is the unavailability of productive land which has led to high figures of unemployment as a large proportion of productive farmland is possessed by the white minority. Oberhauser and Pratt (2004) revere the agency of rural women, their strategies to create income and sustain their households whilst patriarchy is still deeply entrenched in their environment. The patriarchal system that has been imposed on rural women in South Africa has led to them being excluded from being employed, owning land and no means to have access to financial assistance (Davison, 1997).

Moreover, in the traditional system of rural areas, the chiefs controlled the land and they leased it out to the women's families. The erosion of women's privileges is also recorded and it shows that it was escalated by the colonization of Southern Africa by Europe (Levin & Mkhabela, 1997; Wilson, 2000). Beinart (1994) affirms that the colonial system, through forced removals, relocated black people away from decent agrarian land to the Northern areas of South Africa where the land was of inferior quality. In

contemporary South Africa, rural development is still subjected to the authority of traditional leaders and their councils who prescribe on the utilisation of land. The chiefs and their councils in the case of Vhavenda have been playing a key role in supporting women with their informal activities. On the contrary, traditional systems have long been considered to be patriarchal and unsupportive to women's initiatives. The traditional leadership system is rarely occupied by women in the South African context and one can argue that patriarchy in this governance system is still relied upon to decide on the advancement of women.

Women in rural South Africa have had to find solutions to their poverty through informal and subsistence activities and gender equity is said to have the potential to yield in better prospects for women (Ibid.). The projects the women engage in are familiar endeavours for most women in rural sub-Saharan Africa (Aspaas, 1998; Francis, 2000). Central to the dire circumstances of rural environments is the legacy of colonialism and apartheid whilst recently the struggle has not been diminished by neoliberal policies. Studies focusing on the impact of HIV/Aids report high infection rates in rural environments, as the migrant labour system provides fertile ground for the disease (Oberhauser & Pratt, 2004). There is a high level of stigma attached to HIV/Aids within the rural setting where the disease has deprived many households of men leaving women at the helm to struggle to sustain a livelihood.

Women have to become heads of households and when the male heads die, caregivers to other family members (Dayton & Ainsworth, 2003). The post-apartheid South African government is praised for its social grant system which enables various households to forge a livelihood and lessen poverty, however, the grants are not enough (Booyesen & van der Berg, 2005). HIV/Aids has been hard-hitting on families that do not have inter-family relations with other relatives which provide stability for each other (Schatz, Madhavan & Williams, 2011). AIDS widows tend to be young, which means they only rely on child grants as they cannot access the old age pension which limits income in their households and if they are also diagnosed with HIV/Aids, they will also leave a household without a head. HIV/Aids is an additional impediment to the development of rural areas together with the inheritance of non-productive land and neoliberal policy

mechanisms that have widened the gap between the rich and poor even further. The crisis in the global economy has also marginalised rural areas as the agricultural sector goes through restructuring, a decline in rural industrialisation and the out-migration of higher educated youth to urban areas. These calamities have led to rural communities in many western nations to search for other economically viable prospects for sustainability and tourism (Dernoi, 1991; Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004).

In Eastern Europe, where there have been large numbers of unemployed rural citizens, the solution has been to deploy tourism to revive economic growth (Simpson, Chapman & Mahne, 1998). Additionally, the tourism option has been observed as a panacea to improve rural life in sub-Saharan Africa (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). The lack of proper planning and the urgency to implement tourism strategies by governments leads to the exclusion of the rural communities that are meant to be developed. Governments strongly argue that tourism development will develop rural infrastructure. However, the social costs to the rural areas tend to be underestimated. In some cases, the rural communities who are meant to be recipients of benefits remain impoverished (Friedmann, 1992). The rural communities tend to accept all solutions proposed to them as they are desperate and this often leads to such communities not considering the impacts of their decision in the long term.

### **Summary of *Isitulo* (The Chair) (Philani Sithebe, 2016)**

*Isitulo* is a drama that narrates women's plight with tradition, patriarchy, and religion. The film is presented as being based on true events, this is a myth to make the story appear more authentic and more dramatic. The protagonist (Tana) is a young widow who recently lost her husband whom she financially depended on. Her late husband had a white chair and when he was still alive, he vehemently stated that he was the only one allowed to sit on it, at a church service at home in the rural areas of KwaZulu Natal.

Tana fights to remain in possession of the chair and allows no one to take hold of it. She cannot sustain her standard of living in the city and has to return to the rural areas to live with her mother-in-law (Gogo). However, she finds that the community is deeply entrenched in old traditional practices that seem to oppress women. She has to be

integrated into the community by attending a traditional church that has a hostile reception for widows as they have to sit at the back of the church and on the floor to signify their mourning.

Tana, as a woman from the city, finds these traditional practices as oppressive to women and she fights the church over gender equality. She wins this battle for all women although women still sat on the floor at the back of the church. Tana later learns to be self-reliant regardless of her late husband's pension pay-out as she secures employment for herself.

Gogo constantly reminds Tana that it is important to follow tradition and that a widow is expected to wear dignified mourning attire which is not meant to look beautiful. However, Gogo is petrified of being exiled from her community should she choose to encourage Tana to pursue her gender equality battles. Nkabinde is the church deacon, who is a widower, but who is not forced practice the same harsh tradition Tana is subjected to. He is a womaniser, who engaged in extra-marital affairs with women in the congregation before his wife's passing. Nkabinde can use the women he has affairs with to divide women as they selfishly put their marital ambitions above feminist struggles in the church. Nkabinde is banished at the end with Khanyo who decided to betray the female struggle. Mandelu is an old woman church leader who is hellbent on maintaining patriarchy and discrimination in the church. She is later removed from her position of being head of women in the congregation because of her unfair practices

### **Summary of *Balungile* (They are good) (Philani Sithebe, 2018)**

*Balungile* is a drama shot in the picturesque rural Kwazulu Natal portraying the life of a young, respectful and shy woman, Balungile, who has ambitions of starting her own fashion business in Durban. She was raised solely by her father and had never experienced the love of a mother. Balungile fails to understand the position her father takes regarding her life as he wants to impose a husband on her. Her father Mkhathini, a patriarchal and traditional man, who is diagnosed with cancer, works hardtop get a husband for Balungile and he fails to comprehend that not having an heir does not mean life has been unfavourable. The man her father introduces her to is Mhambi,

whom Mkhathini hopes he can control his estate after he passes. Mhambi is an alcoholic who depleted his family's inheritance and is now plotting to marry Balungile with cruel intentions of stealing her inheritance. The two become a couple but Balungile is reluctant to enter into this union doing so only to please her ailing father. Mhambi betrays Balungile and steals the money given to her by her father which was meant for depositing a working workshop in Durban.

Sabelo, a young man who works for Mkhathini, comes from a poor family and is undermined and ill-treated by Mkhathini. Nonetheless, he is the voice of reason and can see the sinister intentions harboured by Mhambi. Moreover, he is in love with Balungile but because of his social class, he fails to propose his love. Because Sabelo exposed the knowledge of who Mhambi is in terms of his larceny character, he is fired from his job by Mkhathini. Sabelo is later brought back as he assists the family to capture Mhambi. Towards the end, Sabelo is accepted by Mkhathini as a potential life partner for Balungile. Balungile has an aunt (Bazini) who is the only woman in her life, who tries to teach her about the role and expectations of being a young woman.

### **Womanism and African society**

Scholarship on the representation of women in mass media in Africa points to a history of sidelining women's agendas along with stereotypical representations and a lack of understanding for the violation of the rights of women in general (Okello-Orlale, 2006). However, lately, women have been vocal concerning women injustices in South Africa about the sexual allegation cases of Jacob Zuma and Mbulelo Goniwe (Sesanti, 2009). Black feminism is a critical departure in understanding the social challenges confronting black women in contemporary South Africa, as both films to be read in this chapter extensively depict the experiences of women in rural South Africa. Black feminism, as a movement, originated in the United States of America when black women felt that mainstream feminism ignored issues of black women and homosexual women (Carby, 2007).

However, the experiences and challenges of black women in the United States, the Caribbean, Africa as a whole and South Africa, in particular, are not entirely mutual but

focus mostly on the issues of colonial exploitation, patriarchy, and racism (Barriteau, 2011). Black feminism is also known as womanism and it is Afrocentric in its approach to gender relations as it takes race and class into account (Koyana, 2001). Also, Gqola (2001: 14) defines the movement as “the integration of Afrocentric, multicultural, and feminist theoretical interpretations of political, economic, historical, social and cultural events”. The movement is entrenched in the appreciation of black history and the ideals of black life while striving to provide “a balanced representation of black womandom” (Koyana, 2001: 65).

Simphiwe Sesanti (2009) offers a womanism perspective on the cases of Jacob Zuma and Mbulelo Goniwe. She asserts that colonialism interfered with gender relations in African societies resulting in culture being wrongfully exercised by oppressing the traditional roles of women. Certain voices in these instances spoke of the subservient role women played in African traditional society from the knowledge of a distorted history. Womanism demystified the historical distortion that women never entered into significant societal discussions in pre-colonial society focusing on how African cultural practices always had women also involved at the forefront.

Arguments are put forward by Magwaza (2001) and Habasonda (2002) concerning pre-colonial African society and they assert that women did not possess significant political power and succumbed to the authority of men. On the contrary, Clarke (1985) and Amadiume (1989) refer to women as being involved in platforms that made political decisions and as militarists that led armies in battle.

The pre-colonial era is also defined by these scholars as a time when men gave women, the liberty to engage in many activities based on the talents they posed but some men believed in the passive role of women in this setting. Kunene (1984) paints a picture of women in the Zulu nation as resisting oppression by men. He refers to King Shaka Zulu’s mother Nandi who refused to be confined only to the domestic environment but felt obliged to be part of structures that made concerning various matters and argued with men to articulate her beliefs.

Mndende and Motsei (in Sesanti, 2009) allude to the significant leading roles women play in African rituals amongst the Vhavenda, Basotho and AmaXhosa. Joubert (2011) refers to the Lobedu people who are from the Limpopo province whom for six generations have remained ruled by women who bear the dynastic title of Modjadji, the Rain Queen. An approach from womanism enables a theoretical dais whereby the imposition of tradition and patriarchal practices on women can be questioned based on authenticity. Against this background, questions that arise are: what does womanism outline about the role of black women in the postcolony? And how relevant are rural areas, as spaces that resemble pre-colonial Africa, for the re/negotiating of issues that uphold women liberation from patriarchy?

### **Rough diamonds: The rural as special in *Balungile***

*Balungile* seems to be deploying the strategies proposed by film-induced tourism as the images of the Zulu cultural village that emerge in the film are familiar to tourists. The location provides traditional Zulu huts that resemble pre-colonial Africa which is an aesthetic that attracts tourists who have been fascinated by cultural villages such as Shakaland which was made famous by the television series, *Shaka Zulu* (1986). The score of the film is based on the popular 'maskandi' music that is based on IsiZulu folklore. The music is said to speak of people's experiences in its lyrics, as it plays isiZulu traditional music through the guitar (Ntombela, 2016).

Moreover, rural development in KwaZulu-Natal seems to comprise the co-optation of film and tourism. The rural space in the film is projected as competing with the city of Durban as Balungile is determined to start her fashion design business there. She does work for rural women who buy attires from her but she is not content with her space and feels the city can offer more. These narratives that favour the rural space are similar to the narratives of 'Back to the Homelands' films and television series that depicted the homelands as progressive (Tomaselli, 1989). The protagonist's father, Mkhathini, fails to see value in the herdsman, Sabelo, as a future son in law because of his lower social standing whilst he has worked for him for a long time with loyalty. Mkhathini also fails to see the potential his daughter Balungile has but interferes in her affairs solely because he thinks she is a woman who cannot decide the path for her life.



The rural space is portrayed as a locale that needs individuals who can work towards its betterment. Balungile and Sabelo are rough diamonds that need polishing to prosper. Mkhathini's failure to see potential in Sabelo led him to seek a wrong man to marry Balungile, a man from the city of Durban who views rural people as stupid and naïve. The following is a dialogue from the film narrating how Mhambi, a man from Durban perceived the rural space and its inhabitants:

*Balungile: Ingani wena ubiza uSabelo ngo bulongo? Namhanje uzobona kahle ukuthi yini ubulongo.*

*Mhambi: Awu sithandwa sami.*

*Balungile: Sithandwa sakho? Kahle hle wena ucabanga ukuthi thina siyizilima.*

*Balungile: Why do you call Sabelo by the name cow dung? Today you are going to see what is cow dung.*

*Mhambi: Oh! My love.*

*Balungile: My love? You seem to think that we are idiots.*

Earlier in the film, Mhambi refers to Sabelo as cow dung which informs us that the former undermines the rural community by implying that Sabelo is unclean and has a bad odour that can be equated to the smell of cow dung. On the contrary, Sabelo is responsible for the traditional economy of preserving cattle which guarantees the survival of the people, and this is what Mhambi fails to comprehend and respect.

Moreover, Mhambi, after he has finished the money that was meant for establishing Balungile's enterprise in Durban, returns to claim that he was robbed of the funds by criminals. He expected Balungile, Sabelo, and Mkhathini to believe his preposterous tale. Mhambi is a swindler, who wants to make a quick buck to feed his alcohol and gambling addictions. Additionally, the name, Mhambi, means traveler which latently implies that he is unstable, cannot settle in one place and is even disowned by his sister. His ghastly actions of stealing money from Balungile reveal that he never planned on settling as Balungile's spouse. Efforts by Balungile to secure a place of work

in Durban fail and as she has an ailing father, she decides to work from home instead of migrating to the city as most young people do. In the 'Back to Homelands' (Tomaselli, 1989) films under the B-scheme subsidy, such decisions by young people to remain in underdeveloped spaces were unusual and were presented as propaganda by the apartheid state to retain black citizens in the Bantustans (Paleker, 2010).

From Balungile's interaction with the real estate agent, we observe the impatience of the city agent as she cannot understand Balungile's plea and this highlights the hostility that she might face in the city as a single woman. A similar trope is also observed in *Isitulo*, as it briefly outlines the hostility of the city on black women and, as the protagonist, experiences, for the first time, the wrath of her landlord in the city who seems to not understand her plight and loss. This narrative was present in the B-scheme films whereby urban life was portrayed as grim for the black single woman and now resurfaces as recycled (Tomaselli, 1989).

Also, the television drama series *Gaz'Lam* (2002- 2005) which was broadcast on SABC, presented narratives of black youth, who had migrated from rural Kwazulu Natal to forge a life in Johannesburg, only to encounter countless difficulties posed by city life (Mhlambi, 2012). This encounter works to demerit the city as a destination for her development and the fact that the property has been given to another individual demonstrates the intense competition she will face in the city. The treachery of Mhambi who is from the city and who was viewed as a prospective son-in-law by Mkhathini further demonizes the city and its dealings. In the end, Balungile understands the value of her rural space and the difference she can make by being there with her father and her business which is shown to be successful, even in a rural environment where the expectations will be that people would not be engaging in such commerce and let alone be interested in tailor-made clothing. Moreover, Mkhathini begins to value the rural denizen Sabelo and he realises that he was undermining someone who is part of their community, the same way Balungile undermined her rural space in favour of the city. The metaphor of rough gems in the film endorses rural areas as spaces with economic possibilities that are hidden and yet to be discovered.

### **A tale of two countries: Feminism is from the city in *Isitulo***

The aesthetics of the film on the rural depict mountains and valleys illustrating the stunning Kwazulu-Natal countryside that has become semi-rural because of tared road infrastructure and modern homes that have been erected by some residents. Gibson (2018: 106) refers to the “visual pleasures of watching landscapes as a significant televisual attraction, where the landscape functions as realist place, narrative space and spectacle”. In this representation, the audience is involved in the narrative and also acts as a spectator of the view (Ibid.). Moreover, Gibson (2018) states that television enables the audience to enjoy the visual pleasures of a particular location that is being filmed. The homes depict a picture of a water crisis as most homes have JoJo tanks which are used to store water but this still reflects on the development rural areas have experienced lately. However, as the space appears to be developing based on infrastructure, its patriarchy is at its peak. The narrative with *Isitulo* is accompanied by a ‘spectatorial gaze’ which entails “the collective glancing at and collecting of different signs that have been very briefly seen in passing at a glance” (Urry & Larsen, 2011: 20).

*Isitulo* portrays a picture of old traditions as being entrenched in rural areas, as a woman from the city has to leave her city life to liberate rural women from unmerited patriarchal practices. The narrative points to a space that is extremely governed by an oppressive tradition that favours patriarchy. Unity amongst women in the community does not exist as they connive against each other in favour of tradition and religion that does not liberate them.

The stereotype that knowledge and enlightenment are virtues from urban areas is deployed as the protagonist Tana is the only individual who seems to view the traditional practices that are imposed on women as outrageous. In so doing, the city remains painted as a beacon of light which further justifies the need for rural citizens to migrate to the cities. The perception that rural citizens are backward is emphasised as a city dweller invades a space and finds a community of passive women that accept the status quo without interrogating it.

The two spheres, the rural and the urban, in one country reflects on the lack of penetration of the South African Constitution with its Bill of Rights which guarantees equal rights for all its citizens. In this instance, the rural leadership is portrayed as hell-bent on overlooking the advancements that South Africa has been making in terms of gender equality. The rural in the film can be perceived as a pariah, a space that is detached from the Republic and that is progressing at its own sluggish pace. This illustration can be associated with how the Bantustans were depicted in the “Back to the homelands” films, as spaces that had their development that was gradual in comparison to urban South Africa (Tomaselli, 1989).

Figure 11, visually displays the repressive nature of the rural church and the community at large. The *mise-en-scène* reiterates the theme of the film which engages with the oppression of women in rural communities. The hills in the background and the vast landscapes are the codes for the rural space. The signage is placed on a fence and is encircled by barbwire. Tana is placed in front of this signage that appears behind her and she is also represented as enclosed by the barbwire. Also, the hills can be interpreted as symbolizing the upheavals in the lives of the women in the rural space and the trials they encounter. Tana is dressed in a black outfit, which is a mourning attire in African tradition, this is to honour the memory of her husband. However, black as a colour is considered to trap space in film and hence it escalates the notion of an enclosed space. On the other hand, the ‘spectatorial gaze’ is provided which ensures that varying images are presented unlike with film-induced tourism. The Bantustans might have been abolished in 1994 with the new dispensation but their legacy of being last recipients of benefits is brought to the fore by the narrative of the film when the rural is used as a film location.



Figure 11: Tana and the church signage that represents the institution as oppressive to women in *Isitulo*.

On the contrary, Tana returns to her rural environment to recoup her strength so that she can be independent and the struggle with patriarchy at the church prepares her for the city as a single woman. The place she calls home, that was harsh, becomes a place where she is prepared for life's challenges that she might confront in the city. The rural space in *Isitulo* seems to be the harshest environment for the protagonist in comparison to the city, but at the end, the space has prepared her for the hostility of the life and the city. Contrariwise, Nollywood village films present the village as peaceful and as a space that is friendlier when compared to the urban space (Uwah, 2008).

The Nollywood film genre that tells stories from rural settings portrays the space as a locale that offers one, who has suffered from city life, some form of redemption through its provision of a journey of discovery. The individual is offered a chance to interact with his or her tradition and reaffirm their identity (Uwah, 2008). In this regard, the rural setting is a location where an individual's roots are and a place where they can attain strength to confront life's trials. In the case of *Isitulo*, the government plans to develop rural spaces due to grievances about underdevelopment and lack of investment in the space. The film, in its portrayal of an intervention from the city by the protagonist, idealises that help can only come from outside the rural environment. Furthermore, this

legitimizes government intervention as an outsider in the space, especially in the era of expropriating land without compensation, where there is great economic benefit to be gained from rural areas. The general trope is that the rural on its own does not harbour its own liberators and has to rely on the urban for emancipation.

### **The chair as a symbol of the patriarchal aesthetic for the rural in *Isitulo* and *Balungile***

*Isitulo*, to communicate the predicament of gender equality in post-apartheid South Africa, employs a white chair which is in the custody of the protagonist who has inherited it from her late husband. It can be read as a white man's chair that was used to subordinate Africans and now it is used to challenge African forms of patriarchy.

In the film, the white chair belonged to the protagonist's husband who never encountered gender discrimination. He states in his earlier appearance that he is the only individual who can sit on the chair at church back home in the rural areas. Tana makes it her mission to use the chair to assert her role in society as a woman seeking fair and equal treatment in her period of mourning. She refuses to lose possession of the chair and fights vigorously to retain it even when her city landlord wants to have possession of it until his rent revenue that is owed by Tana is paid to him. The chair is underscored as an imperative prop that will be used to negotiate the unequal society in rural KwaZulu-Natal.



Figure 12: Tana's white chair is on the left side of the screen in *Isitulo*.

In Figure 12, the church council that is headed by men accuse Tana of disrespecting the laws of the church. The lighting in the scene is low-key, with dark tones and shadows that produce an ominous and suspenseful mood. These techniques further highlight the dramatic nature of the film. The laws of the church in this regard are laws that are similar to patriarchal rules, as they reinforce patriarchy disguised as church laws. The church is the patriarchal men in the scene that are emphasizing the laws of the church, as the protagonist is asked to sit on the floor and not on her beloved chair.

Additionally, the white chair affirms the protagonist's desire to be elevated to the position of her late husband as she has to be the head of the family and raise a boy child on her own. Zulu tradition has always been represented as a practice that dictated that women in the presence of men, as a sign of respect, must sit on the floor on a grass mat (*icansi*) before they can converse with men. On the contrary, black feminists contend otherwise raising arguments that women held influential positions in pre-colonial Africa and that oppressive traditions imposed on women were because of the distortion and corruption by colonialism which disrupted the African way of life (Kunene, 1984; Sesanti, 2009).

The grass mat ensures that women in the company of men sit on the floor as a way of projecting male hegemony as the women are relegated to the position of subordinates while their male counterparts occupy chairs. Patriarchal constructions are defied by the protagonist as she yearns to sit on a chair in the company of men to break the circle of subordination. Tana's resilience and insistence of retaining the chair is to symbolise the reclaiming of the prestigious position women held in pre-colonial times. The image of a woman who is petrified of life and its challenges including the experiences of the city is overcome by the character. Images of rural women who failed to survive in the city are challenged by the film as Tana ends up making a life for herself and her son in the city. This indicates a shift from the narratives of the 'Back to the Homelands' films (Tomaselli, 1986) and a move away from the terrible experiences of rural women of urban spaces in *Gaz'lam* (Mhlambi, 2012). Alternatively, as the chair is white it can also be viewed as a symbol for peace as it is in the possession of someone who is there to question patriarchy on a nonviolent quest with virtuous intentions.

In *Balungile*, Mkhathini always sits on a chair in his household. Bazini, who is Mkhathini's sister, is always instructed to sit on the grass mat by Mkhathini. Mkhathini does this to enforce his position as the head of his homestead. Bazini does not challenge this practice or what is asked of her but is in tune with the custom, that Mkhathini tends to impose on her. Bazini has no sense of agency and as a mature woman adheres to the status quo of what she is familiar with. What the film narrates to a great degree, is that mature women tend to conform more to patriarchal demands. In a similar vein, Mandelu, who is a loyal custodian of patriarchy in *Isitulo* is also an older citizen.

In *Balungile*, Mkhathini, at this juncture reaffirms patriarchy on his sibling by emphasizing the seating arrangements that he is comfortable with before speaking to her about important matters. The chair is thus symbolically referencing the position Mkhathini is elevated to, by sitting on the chair in comparison to his sister who occupies the floor, connotatively communicates a society that does not practice gender equality.





Figure 13: Bazini in Balungile, sitting on the floor on a grass mat while in conversation with Mkhathini.

### **A pre-colonial space for the contestation of heteropatriarchy in *Balungile***

*Balungile* offers a narrative of a transforming African society contrary to the distorted historical accounts of pre-colonial Africa. Gender roles are depicted in a tourist cultural village which is meant to illustrate pre-colonial Africa with its traditions and customs still intact. The narrative of heteropatriarchy plays out substantially in *Balungile* as the association of pre-colonial Africa with sluggishness in terms of gender equality is refuted. Scholars on pre-colonial Africa have argued that women had been central to the way of life in pre-colonial times with some employed as warriors that fought wars in defense of their communities and certain kingdoms (Kunene, 1984; Joubert, 2011).

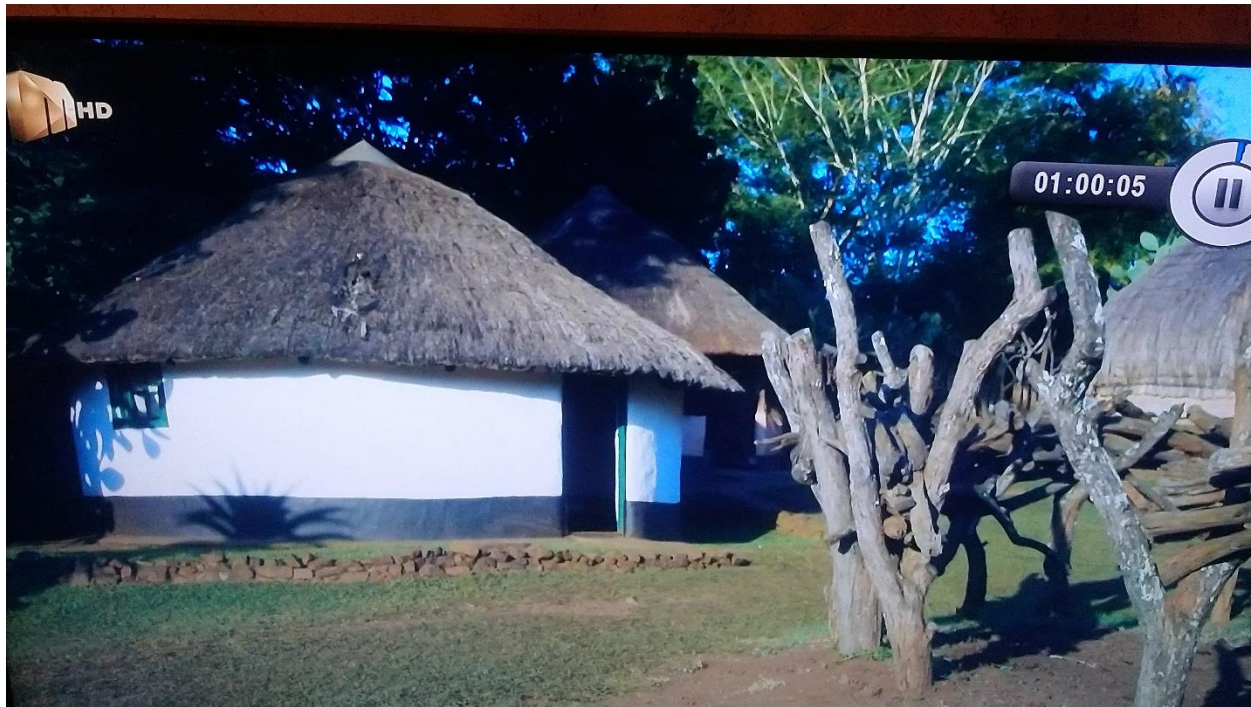


Figure 14: A long-shot with natural lighting of the cultural village in *Balungile* that aesthetically aims to represent a pre-colonial Zulu homestead.

In the film, Mkhathini who is Balungile's father, without Balungile's consent, decides that she is now an adult and needs to have a man who will marry her and help her administer the estate he will soon leave behind. Mkhathini finds Balungile a husband in the village and vouches that the young man is honest and wealthy. In this regard, Mkhathini a heterosexual male imposes his ideals on a female Balungile and assumes to know what a young woman needs in life. The perception by Mkhathini of women as in need of marriage to be validated is projected at the beginning of the film. Ironically, Mkhathini chose to be single after the death of Balungile's mother and never felt that he needed a companion to help him raise his daughter. He is entitled to his own liberties and is granted the peace to remain unmarried despite his patriarchal outlook on life. His choice to remain alone despite his fragile health and not remarry, to raise his daughter is never challenged by anyone.

Moreover, it is ironical for Mkhathini to wish to impose marriage on his daughter and this is indicative of his shortsightedness, as his life is witness to the fact that a single parent can manage without a partner. Balungile is a shy woman who is reluctant to enter into love relationships but Mkhathini assumed she needs to be married and that she is a

heterosexual female. In her shyness to enter into love relationships with anyone, we are further introduced to the fact that she has never dated anyone in her life. Mkhathini also loses sight of Balungile's perceptive objections to being married. In her protestation, Balungile cites that she was not sent to school to study so she can be subjected to a husband who will decide things for her. She refers to the times having changed and that women can do things on their own without male intervention. Her resilience can also be attributed to her motherless childhood where she had to adjust and engage in mature tasks of managing a household at an early age which aided her with the mentality of being independent.

On the contrary, we see that the absence of a mother in her life has left her unaware of love relationships and the general expectations of society about the role of a woman. This absenteeism of a mother creates a situation whereby Balungile is oblivious to her sexuality in pursuit of her economic goals. Whilst the general norm has been to assume that all women glorify and aspire to enter into a matrimonial union to be content in life, Balungile views marriage as an obstacle and as a destabilizer to her goals. In the end, Mkhathini understands the role of a woman as a leader and assumes that Balungile can ascend as an heiress to his estate. This is depicted even aesthetically as we were accustomed to the *mise-en-scène* of Mkhathini requesting women to sit on the floor on an *icansi* whilst he is in a chair before they can converse about any issue. However, later as Mkhathini is bed-ridden and Balungile is now standing beside him as he lays in bed and they converse whilst visually he is in a lower position to Balungile, this resembles the ascending of Balungile to a position of power as an heiress to the estate. The pre-colonial setting of the cultural village resonates pre-colonial Africa and the narrative of gender roles being debated and contested in the film reflects some element of a progressive and converting African society that did not possess fixed traditions that failed to meet the needs of the time.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has demonstrated that the rural is projected in some popular films such as *Mzansi Movies* as progressive. This is done through the depiction of tarred roads that have been constructed and several RDP houses that have been erected in rural

spaces. Also, the two films centralize the rural space as a locale that is a model for the contestation of patriarchy and tradition. Black feminism as a movement is highlighted in the narratives of the films as the central women characters challenge their environments for progress to emerge on gender equality. *Isitulo* further represents the urban space as a place of enlightenment and liberation. This is to justify the intervention of outside forces such as the state in rural development. On the contrary, the urban space is also depicted as a harsh environment for a single black woman (Tomaselli, 1989).

The centrality of tourism to the film locations selected with particularly *Balungile* invoke theories of film-induced tourism which entail that film and tourism images must be aligned to each other to maximize tourism gains. Popular film in this instance has been deployed to contribute towards tourism development and hence to assist in the work of neoliberalism and nation-building. A 'spectatorial gaze' (Gibson, 2018) which tends to provide various images for audiences is strongly applied in the visuals that present the countryside in *Isitulo*.

Additionally, the rural space is perceived as sluggish in comparison to urban areas and as narratives of patriarchy, heteropatriarchy, and gender equality are played out in the rural locale in the films, it reflects on the need to transform such spaces in an epoch whereby the ruling party is at jeopardy with a declining electorate. The popular discourses of rural citizens and their spaces as the most socially and economically deprived are overcome by narratives of transformation in the films.

## 6. Conclusion: It's A Wrap

The principal objective of this study was to explore the narratives and aesthetics that are used in representing blackness and black spaces particularly, the township by *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*, and the rural space with *Mzansi Movies*. The underlying premise of this thesis is that the narratives and aesthetics embedded in the popular films in question comply with the post-apartheid government's attempts to endorse while putting into play, procedures of nation-building based on neoliberal matrices and black middle-class aspirational narratives. The thesis underscores how the films in question, which are inspired by the success of Nollywood video films, especially on DSTV's *Africa Magic* channel. The use of similar popular formats, discourses, and strategies of production aim to advance the cause of black nationalism, patriarchy and neoliberal ideals under the present post-1994 dispensation. In doing so, the author perceives the narratives portrayed in the films as fraught with inaccuracies and wrong perceptions. The films further imply that the plight of the township underclass is not the outcome of government shortcomings but rather the result of people's flaws and inadequacies. The common thread that arises from the plot summaries is the moral messaging and recurrence of characteristics that are similar to Nollywood films, namely the occult, conspicuous consumption and the representation of women.

The films do ideological work by presenting tropes that favour the concealment of calamities created by the neoliberal economic turn in post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, the findings of this study demonstrate that nation-building narratives were also embedded in the films. There are instances whereby the narratives represented a particular issue and the visuals would oppose such a narrative by presenting its opposite. Popular film and television played a key role even during apartheid in the ploy to endorse the status quo and the prevailing economic order in favour of the ruling elite (Tomaselli, 1989). It is a case of, 'the return of the old' whereby in post-apartheid popular imaginations by *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies*, a considerable amount of tropes that were prevalent in the black television dramas of the 1980s (Mhlambi, 2012) and in the films produced by the apartheid B-scheme film subsidy (Paleker, 2010, 2011) are recycled. These tropes entailed glorifying middle-

class ideals that ensure the entrenchment of capital for the economic machinery to function and the depiction of disadvantaged black spaces as environments with considerable viability. It is Fairclough (2003) who emphasized that texts in textual analysis need to be read with how they fit into the social life and the material conditions that led to their emergence.

The recycling of old narratives in post-apartheid black (African languages) popular film is alarming, as these productions by *Ekasi: Our Stories*, *Lokshin Bioskop* and *Mzansi Movies* are not commissioned by the SABC, but by private television networks. Moreover, this revelation unveils that the political economy of the day has significant ideological reach into various echelons of society, whether private or public enterprise. Their aesthetics and narratives have come to resemble those of the 1980s black television dramas and the films of the B-scheme subsidy. To comprehend the narratives and aesthetics of false consciousness in popular discourses that are in favour of nation-building and neoliberalism, the theory of popular arts in Africa by Karin Barber (1987, 1997, 2000) was deployed. This theory was valuable in the process of assessing African popular film as an integral part of African popular arts or popular culture. Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPEM) informed the analysis of the context that these films are made and presented, in post-apartheid neoliberal South Africa, whilst Third Cinema as a theoretical departure further aided in the assessment of narratives that presented a false consciousness in favour of the prevailing status quo.

Moreover, theoretical departures such as the Ghetto Fabulous Aesthetic presented a conceptual underpinning that allowed for the comprehension of capitalist and consumerism narratives that arise from popular film in the case of *Ekasi: Our Stories* and *Lokshin Bioskop*. The Gaze and Otherness and the approach from Trash by Kenneth Harrow and Ryan Connor abetted with recognizing representations that appeared antagonistic because the representation of the space was facilitated by filmmakers who are middle-class or have middle-class aspirations. The theory of film-induced tourism was instrumental in understanding the cleaning up of the rural spaces in the films by *Mzansi Movies* and for ascertaining how film can be co-opted by tourism,

government and private capital in favour of certain film locations that depict social, economic and political advancements since 1994.

*Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid for Me* depicted aspirational narratives and aesthetics that were central to the films through their use of the affluent quasi-suburban township space. The films focus on exhibiting the quasi-suburban areas and gentrification within that space but fail to expose underdevelopment. However, there are visual aesthetics that presented an alternative view of black mobility as not rapid across all township strata. The argument that was put forward was that the films demonstrate nation-building and neoliberal archetypes that communicate a euphoric representation of the township and blackness. The films presented narratives that celebrated black business and black professionals as being content with the township space.

Cultural co-optation and conspicuous consumption were depicted through the presentation of the izikhothane subculture in both films, as an integral subculture in the township that indulges in excessive consumption. Rainbow nationalism, as an idea that was founded by the ruling ANC in the new dispensation, is pushed into the quasi-suburban areas of the township for a positive narrative of nation-building to be communicated. The township in this regard has black and white people living together in a space that was previously demarcated solely for black settlement. Furthermore, there is a deracialisation of poverty that is depicted by the film, *Taxi Cheeseboy*, with its narrative of a white orphan who is looked after by a black man. This narrative works to dislocate the notion that poverty is only a black plight and it raises the concerns of the 'poor white problem' that also haunted the apartheid regime.

The two films are dissimilar to the *Barbershop* franchise on the conspicuous consumption narrative, whereas the *Barbershop* franchise raised issues of black consciousness and excessive consumption as a problem. *Taxi Cheeseboy* and *Maid for Me*, evade this important debate by endorsing black conspicuous consumption. A narrative that repudiates the notion of black flight from the township is observed in the two films as characters are content with the space. Moreover, the township is portrayed as a new homeland for black salvation space (Murkhejee, 2006).

The B-scheme films under apartheid carried tropes that idealized 'homelands' or 'Bantustans' to restrain black masses from migrating in large numbers to urban South Africa. In this study, the popular films do the ideological work of glorifying the townships by presenting the few signs of gentrification that have occurred since the new dispensation. The omission of other spaces that are more affluent than the quasi-suburban areas assists in the creation of a doctored narrative of black affluence and class mobility. The application of a ghetto fabulous aesthetic by the filmmakers, aides the narrative of a progressive township and cements the concealing of imperative spatial quandaries. The images of township gentrification through quasi-suburbia assist in the trope of a space that has been developed by the post-apartheid ANC government, with its neoliberal economic policy decisions.

*Mgosi* and *Tin City* present the poor and their spaces in a more nuanced approach that facilitates a multitude of insights, with some representations offering justice to the impoverished. Moreover, the films provided a broad aesthetical representation with diverse features of the township periphery (squatter camps), which is the space that is utilised by the films to represent black poverty. A 'spectatorial gaze' is present in the depiction of the space as variable images of a poor locale are presented in *Tin City*. The lack of adequate infrastructure and substandard living conditions are manifest in the films (Harrow 2013; Connor, 2013).

Moreover, the impoverished are depicted as possessing aspirations of departing from spaces of squalor. Crime was presented as a valuable means of forging a living for the poor and it was depicted as normalized in spaces where poverty is rife due to unemployment and lack of opportunities. However, narratives of crime work to negatively portray the underclass as citizens that do not abide by the law and they further isolate them and lessen empathy for their woes. Boxing in the film, *Tin City*, is utilised as a sport that is closely linked to the standards of capitalism with its 'rags to riches' promise that seems to reward blood and sweat. Boxing as a sport in decline in South Africa, is adopted by a popular film to impose a narrative that the underclass can escape their miserable lives.



The multitudes of representations by the films involve the depiction of black poor women, who are confined to a life of squalor, which is an authentic poverty demographic of South Africa. In this exceptional circumstance, popular film does the work of Third Cinema as it informs about the realities of slums in the country. On the downside, negative stereotypes of poor women are displayed by the film *Mgosi* which raises concerns about how middle-class filmmakers apply their insight that is informed by their middle-class perception of economic and social deprivation. Moreover, the film *Mgosi* was directed by a woman and it boosts a discourse of a poor black sisterhood that is destructive to its members. The causes for such negative representation can be attributed to the argument that middle-class individuals fail to talk from a position of the lower social classes in society because they are already influenced by the popular stereotypes assigned by older narrations of the poor (Axel, 1998).

Conflicting perspectives are presented by *Tin City* about capitalism, as it is glorified through boxing and demonized through ruthless loan sharks that exploit the plight of the underclass. In essence, negative and positive traits are displayed about the poor through multifaceted narratives that reflect on popular culture as significantly driven by everyday experiences. There is a departure from the binary representation to a complex manner of portraying the multiple personalities that make up the underclass in the respective films.

On the representation of foreigners and citizens in the township space by the films, *Uncle Malume*, *Love at First Sip* and *Piece Job*, complex relations are depicted as prevailing between the two factions. There are instances where foreigners and locals forge relations to commit acts of crime that are mutually beneficial on both sides. Some difficulties faced by foreigners are highlighted in the narratives and the aesthetics of the films. Narratives that present xenophobic tendencies by locals exist in the films and aide in shifting the blame for the ailing state of townships away from the state and direct it, at external forces such as foreigners. The films significantly move away from the 'dramas of being hospitable to foreigners' (Kruger, 2009), towards being hostile to foreign nationals, as there are rare representations that reflect on the positive contributions foreigners make in the township space. The xenophobic stereotype of foreigners as

fraudsters resurfaces in the films. On the positive, the films reflect the various sentiments harboured by locals which help in the comprehension of how xenophobia originates.

*Battle of House* and *Iqiniso* focus on the concept of black ethnicity in post-apartheid South Africa and they chant the agenda of black nationalism that solidifies the nation-building foundation of the Republic. The intuition created by the films is that townships, in urban spaces have for long had strong black inter-ethnic relations that have resulted in multilingual and multicultural families. The films present a metaphorical account for South African black nationalism by employing dramas that showcase multi-ethnic families. Furthermore, they portray 'third force' elements that work to outline the differences between the various black ethnicities to divide and rule and further disintegrate the current nation-state. The economic plight in the families is highlighted as the cause of all conflict, which jeopardizes the family if such woes are not confronted by all family members for an amicable solution to be found. Moreover, the films expose the predicaments caused by the neoliberal economic system which has negatively affected business opportunities and employment. The films, through their representation of black nationalism, champion nation-building imperatives that are aligned to the values of the ANC. Additionally, old ethnic stereotypes about black ethnic groups that are associated with witchcraft are challenged. On the contrary, these negative ethnic stereotypes are extended to women in the obsessive mission to promote black nationalism. With these negative stereotypes of women as practitioners of the occult in the films, the gender project is regressed. An injustice is committed again with *Battle of House*, as the director of the film is the same woman who helmed *Mgosi* and offered unfavourable traits of poor women. These negative tropes that demonize women are prevalent with Nollywood films, which divulge that there is borrowing of negative narratives that fail to advance the gender project.

*Isitulo* and *Balungile* under the umbrella of *Mzansi Movies* present a rural aesthetic that is similar to how the 'Back to Homelands' films (Tomaselli, 1989) represented the rural, as a space of tranquility and unlimited potential. The rural space was used in the films, as a location where patriarchy can be confronted. The powerful images of women's

struggles for liberation in the films can be perceived as aligned to the principles of Black feminism.

The films depict the urban space negatively and also positively, as in *Balungile*, the city is portrayed as unfriendly whilst in *Isitulo*, later on, the city is portrayed as a space that can be hospitable to a single black woman. This narrative by *Isitulo* deviates from the popular imagination of the 'Back to the Homelands' films, which were hell-bent on portraying the city as detrimental to the life of a single black woman. Another observation of these films was that the films can be associated with tourism as they work well to depict the picturesque sights of the rural space. *Balungile* was filmed in a cultural village that attests to the theory that popular film in this regard has been co-opted by tourism development initiatives to promote various tourism destinations. Progressive images of women are narrated by the films although the films were helmed by a male filmmaker and this reflects that justice in representation is an enormous conundrum that cannot solely be dependent on the race, gender and class of the filmmaker.

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## Filmography

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