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Representation of African Circumcision Rituals in Post-Colonial Films: An Analysis of *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007*)* and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009)

Sisipho Dinizulu

Representation of African Circumcision Rituals in Post-Colonial Films: An Analysis of *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009)

By

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts

(African Languages & Linguistics)

In the

Department of African Languages

School of Language Literature and Media

At the

University of the Witwatersrand

2019

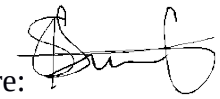
Supervisor: Prof. I. J. Mhlambi

To my mother, enkosi Mdange!

Declaration

I hereby declare that this is entirely my own work. All primary and secondary sources have been acknowledged where necessary. This dissertation is being submitted for the very first time and has never been submitted to another institution or academic purposes by any other person.

This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of a Master of Arts Degree in African languages and Linguistics at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Full Name: Sisipho Dinizulu
Date: 15 November 2019
Signature: 

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all those who provided me the possibility of completing this dissertation. A special gratitude I give to my supervisor Professor Mhlambi for her critical guidance and encouragement in the supervision of this study. Thank you for harnessing the potential and passion in me.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank my family and friends for their support throughout this journey. My mother's daily prayers and sacrifices have carried me through and with this I hope I make you proud. To my friends and colleagues, thank you for the long nights filled with enlightening engagements.

Abstract

The reliance of media on stereotypes has proven problematic since its inception, and one of the major concerns is its representation of minority groups. Throughout the history of media, and specifically cinema, Africa has always been portrayed as the 'Other' that needs saving from its savagery and backwardness. With regards to the politics of representation, the purpose of this paper is to offer a critical investigation of the representations of circumcision rituals in the films *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009). Using post-colonial reading of the above texts, this paper aims to deconstruct simplistic representations of black African gendered identities in these texts, by foregrounding the historical complexity and the socio-cultural specificity of the rituals of circumcision and initiation. With the application of a thematic analysis, this paper discovers that the representation of black identities has not changed, but are disguised under current politically correct issues such as human rights and gender politics. The films were oblivious to the complex, nuanced and rich cultural practice of circumcision.

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Chapter 1: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Throughout the history of cinema and television, the (mis)representation of black people has been predominantly performed by white film-makers (Tomaselli, 1978). In the context of South Africa, Uys's *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980,1989) is an example of popular films with problematic images of black people created by a white film-maker. Many of Uys's critics read the two films as documentaries rather than as fiction. This is because Uys' cinema is not one fixed style: it is a mixture that usually starts with documentary or ethnographic codes accompanied by mocking narratives of indigenous people being in tune with nature (Tomaselli, 1978). Other misrepresentations of black people and their cultural beliefs are evident in *Dingaka* (1964), which follows an African traditional healer who takes advantage of the vulnerable masses by giving them false medication. However, the misrepresentation or biased representation of black people in South Africa dates back to the Afrikaners' revered epic film *De Voortrekkers* (1916), which narrates the story of the Boers' Great Trek at the end of the 1830s, concluding with a hegemonic reconstruction of the 1838 Battle of Blood River, where a few hundred-armed Afrikaners defeated several thousand Zulu people (Botha, 2012). In this context, my study looks at how African culture, more specifically circumcision, is represented in post-apartheid film in South Africa and across the world. It will conduct a close analysis of three films which cover the scope of circumcision in Africa: *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2010).

The history of South African cinema bears testimony to the exclusion of black people as participants or viewers. During the introduction of cinema in South Africa in the 1930's the ruling government was sceptical of black producers and consumers of film. The government therefore required the monitoring and censoring of content given to black people, so that it would not encourage behaviours like inter-racial marriages, which were prohibited in South Africa (Bevan, 2009). As a result, black South Africans could not create their own narratives and relied on white film-makers to produce "relatable" content. Hall (1996) speaks of the theory of enunciation, which highlights that in the politics of representation, the position from which we speak or write is of importance. Theories of enunciation suggest that the speaker and the subject spoken for are never exactly in the same place. This representation of the Other was dominant during colonial conquest, where Africans and their culture were consistently misrepresented and

under-represented by the Western media (Ayisi and Brylla, 2013). These often reductive and offensive visualisations of Africans and African culture are heavily influenced by the histories of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonial relationships with the West, where derogatory stereotypes of black people have been dominant (Ayisi et al, 2013).

The misrepresentation of black people and African culture in South African film follows the legacy created by the American B.W. Griffins in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), where black people were stereotyped, and blackness was portrayed as insignificant and an utter mockery. In South Africa, Uys, under the apartheid government, followed in the footsteps of Griffins (1915) with his films *Dingaka* (1964) and *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980). *Dingaka* (1964) follows the story of a tribesman, Ntuku Makwena, who avenges the murder of his daughter according to traditional tribal laws. His act of revenge leads him to be tried under government laws, where justice for black people does not exist. The film shows traditional healers as criminals who prey on the vulnerable, and whose medicines do not work. The misrepresentation/biased interpretation of the role of traditional healers in African society is evidenced in the translation of the term '*ngaka'* or '*dingaka'*. The word *ngaka/dingaka* simply translates to 'doctor(s)'. However, the film uses the derogatory term 'witch doctor', which denigrates the validity of the work that they do. The Western power to change the meaning of terms and their translations will also be discussed in relation to female circumcision being classified as 'female genital mutilation'.

Most films produced under the colonial and apartheid government created a narrative that juxtaposed African rituals and belief systems with those of the West, where the latter becomes victorious. *Lesilo Rula (1979)* is an example of such a movie, where Raitlhoane uses a scary creature, thought to be a dead man raised from his grave using *muti* (African medicine), to make life a living hell for those he envies or despises. The same creature helps its master elude the police after committing these crimes and the only way to get rid of the creature is prayer or reading the Bible. The use of *muti* is part of the African religion; however, in *Lesilo Rula* (1979), it is portrayed negatively and associated with greed and occultism.

After regaining independence in the early 1960s, most African countries had the freedom to represent themselves, leading to new kinds of black images and representations becoming prevalent. The Nigerian Hollywood (Nollywood) film industry is currently popular across the globe and the film biggest industry in Africa. Nollywood film production is autonomous; it is by

the people, for the people, or as Ukadike (1994: 2) has said, "…it was also at this time that film was used meaningfully as a voice of, and for the people." Harrow (1999) also notes that the whole production crew and process is either exclusively or mostly Nigerian, which brings authenticity to the stories told.

In engaging with the female and male circumcision rituals, this thesis does not seek to offend nor defend circumcision. It also does not intend on dwelling on the nature, history and practice of circumcision in Africa. Rather it seeks to engage the discourse of circumcision and in the process expose a long lineage of imperial and colonial discourses.

Aims

Institutional activities have become invisible to the lay viewer due to the growing size and complexity of our societies. As a result, it is the responsibility of those who work in the media to mediate between 'the world outside' and our imagination (Takeshita, 1997). The media becomes the source of information for our mental pictures or how we imagine the world to be. Lippmann (1992) termed this a "pseudo-environment". However, this raises questions regarding the manner in which the media mediates between external reality and social reality. There are multiple studies on how and to what degree television's portrayal of reality influences and normalises the viewers' conception of reality (see Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994; Lang & Lang, 1953, 1984).

Lang & Lang (1953) found that TV portrayals of society have a large influence on viewers' understanding of social reality, based on their survey of an event called MacArthur Day conducted in 1951. The study attempted to compare the parades experienced through television and on the spot, and found out that people experienced the parade as more cheerful on TV than it was on the spot. While Gerbner et al. (1994) focused on TV portrayals of reality, I extend this research to filmic representations of society.

Given the existing research that shows that the manner in which television portrays reality influences the viewer's perception of reality, the analysis of *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2010) provides a larger argument on how the media has widely shaped accepted social views on circumcision in Africa. This study aims to bring insight into the power dynamics that come with representation. It will also investigate how

various representations in the media, namely cinema and television, reinforce certain stereotypes about Africans and their culture. This study also aims to challenge the western gaze through which the three texts are produced and disseminated.

Background

The misunderstanding of what circumcision is about has led to various anti-circumcision campaigns around the world. With the aim of creating awareness of what is termed "harmful practices", films have been made by feminists and other parties, and laws have been made by governments. Currently, the primary argument against circumcision is that it infringes on human rights, and the quickest method to bring awareness to this issue is through films and documentaries. The last two decades have seen a rise in feminist discourse, and its primary focus being gender issues, naturally the topic of circumcision is within its ambit. Alongside the rise of the criticism of circumcision through film, there has been a growing concern about the use of cultural stereotypes in media production. To raise awareness, the anti-circumcision advocates have relied on the use of stereotypical representations of Africans, as it is where most of the cultural circumcisions occur. Oblivious to the denigrating images of Africa in the history of cinema, these films tend to reproduce a representation of African cultural practices as backward and uncivilised.

In speaking of the politics of representation, Hall (1997) argues that media often relies on the use of stereotypes in which there is a tendency to reduce groups of people to oversimplified characteristics that are not a true representation. Oversimplified observations about minority groups reoccur in the three films discussed in this thesis. For example, violence is a recurring theme in *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) and it is at the crux of a defining moment where Xolani kills Kwanda. Although the scene has multiple interpretations, with the prominent one being the silencing of other forms of masculinity and the secrecy behind *ulwaluko*, the not-so-overt meaning is the violence and aggression of black men.

Circumcision is a crucial rite of passage in the socialisation of boys and men throughout the African continent. For young men in Africa, as for young men worldwide, sexual experience is frequently associated with initiation into adulthood and achieving a socially recognised manhood (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). However, manhood is associated with subscribing to heteronormativity, and anyone who does not follow subscribe to this or who exhibits elements of

‘femininity’ is considered less of a man. Throughout history, young black/African men have been stigmatised and seen as criminals, delinquents, potential or actual troublemakers, or predators (Abdullah, 1998). The language used to refer to them is often demeaning. For example, in Sierra Leone, they are called “rarray boys” (footloose youth), a pejorative term for low-income youth, or a rebellious youth culture. In East Africa, they may be called *bayaye* (rogue people) (Abdullah, 1998). The derogatory labelling changes in reference to the young men in the ANC who used violence to overthrow the apartheid regime (Marks, 1992). These young men are referred to as “young lions” and they are revered for their contribution to overthrowing the apartheid government, but are also viewed as mischievous (Marks, 1992).

In examining male circumcision and what it means to be a man, there is no single African version of manhood. The term and concept of masculinities – referring to the plurality of ways of being a man – has been used for more than 10 years in the field of gender studies (Connell, 2005). In terms of this construction, there is a wide spectrum of masculinities that are forever changing. This is the argument posed by the two films *Inxeba the Wound (2017)* and *Umthunzi Wentaba (2007),* which focus on the forever changing concept of masculinity, where there can be more than one way of being a man. There are versions of manhood associated with war or being warriors, and others associated with farming or cattle-herding (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). There are indigenous definitions and versions of manhood, defined by tribal and ethnic group practices, as well as historically newer versions of manhood, shaped by religions such as Islam and Christianity, and by Western influences, including the global media. A young African man may learn gender norms from traditional rites of passage and elders in his cultural group, just as he may receive messages about manhood from rap songs from the USA. In summary, when analysing the discourses on young men, we must emphasise this plurality and fluidity in gender norms. However, masculinity is defined as a collective gender identity and not a natural quality that one is born with (Morrell, 1998). Connell (1995) argues that masculinity is not an inherent quality, but is simultaneously placed in gender relations. It is a space which men and women can move into through practice and the effects that practices have on bodily experiences, personality and culture.

Ulwaluko is a sacred religious custom of the Xhosa people, which has been practised for more than a thousand years (Mavundla, Netswera, Bottoman, & Toth, 2009). The ritual transforms

boys into men, and is popular among the Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape in South Africa (Mavundla et al., 2009). The main aim of this ritual is to instil good morals and social values. Amongst the Xhosa people, *Ulwaluko* regulates and endorses culturally accepted norms of heterosexual manhood (Ragnarsson, Townsend, Ekstrom, Chopra, & Thorson, 2010). The film *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) demonstrates how *Ulwaluko* regulates and endorses heterosexual manhood through the character Xolani, who becomes troubled when one of the initiates uncovers that he is gay and is in a relationship with one of the caregivers, Vija. In order to maintain the status quo of heterosexual manhood, he silences Kwanda.

Male circumcision is the oldest known form of surgery and it is commonly practised across the world (Gollaher, 2000). With the advent of modernisation and Western influence on many cultures across the world, the ritual of circumcision has been studied and investigated through the eyes of the outsider. The Western gaze has looked at *Ulwaluko* and female circumcision rituals across the world from a medical and human rights perspective, where it is dissected to look at its advantages and disadvantages. This is due to the fact that in the Western world, circumcision is commonly for medical and cosmetic reasons and is usually performed within eight days after birth. In the United States of America, 65% of male infants were circumcised in 1980 (Zoske, 1998). In recent years, male circumcision has been associated with the prevention of HIV/AIDS (Bailey, Muga, Poulussen, and Abicht, 2002). Other medical reasons for the procedure include the prevention of paraphimosis, phimosis, and balanitis (Gonik & Barrett, 1995). However, reports on female circumcision are very different. Instead of having a medical rationale, female circumcision is regarded as a dangerous practice with serious adverse medical implications.

The majority of recent studies pertaining to male circumcision ritual done in Africa are from East Africa, and the studies conducted on female circumcision are from the West. However, the studies are becoming prevalent in other parts of Africa. In South Africa, like the rest of the world, most studies conducted on male circumcision are epidemiological in nature, and focus on the prevalence of complications suffered following the procedure (Mavundla et al., 2009). There are also emerging studies that focus on the cultural aspect of circumcision. My study grew out of the realisation that ritual male circumcision is very popular in South Africa, yet its representation in the media has not been adequately explored (Mavundla et al., 2009). As a result, the public

judges the ritual and its custodians based on what they see in films, forgetting that film is fiction and can be manipulated based on the gaze of both the director and producer.

In South Africa, cultural information about the circumcision ritual is only known and shared by men and is passed from generation to generation covertly. The information cannot be shared with women, children, and outsiders, as it is believed that this upsets the ancestors, which can result in misfortune (Mavundla et al., 2009). Due to its secretive nature, there is little information in the public domain, or even shared amongst other tribes in the region, regarding the details of the male cultural circumcision ritual of the Xhosa. The secret nature of the ritual is the primary reason why films which document it receive criticism from the custodians of *Ulwaluko*. South Africa has seen reports on botched male circumcisions and hospital admissions because of poorly performed surgery resulting in infections and death (Mavundla et al., 2009). Between the period of 1996 and 1998 in the Eastern Cape Province, 15 deaths and 27 genital mutilations were registered (Mogotlane, Ntlangulela & Ogunbanjo, 2004). More recent statistics indicate that an average of 38 deaths and 24 mutilations occurred every year between 2001 and 2004 during the ritual seasons of June and December (Meissner & Buso, 2007). It is clear that government and society are failing to come up with solutions to botched circumcisions and deaths, because current statistics estimate that 250 traditional circumcisions lead to penile amputation every year in South Africa. In 2015, there were 57 deaths during the summer circumcision season and 44 deaths during the winter season, and 27 initiates died during the summer of 2016 (Moodley and Rennie, 2017). The film *Umthunzi Wentaba (2007)* has managed to raise awareness of the rise in death of initiates due to botched circumcisions and aimed to integrate Western medication as an alternate approach without receiving backlash from the public. This is what *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) fails to do.

Rationale

For centuries Africa has been the “other’ and through talking back to the West will it liberate itself. The media has acted as a tool in othering African through unfavourable representations of Africans and their culture. In 2017 the film *Inxeba: The Wound* caused a buzz, and dialogues were conducted on how it is disrespectful towards the Xhosa rite of passage *Ulwaluko*. Debates focused on whether it is a film about love between two gay men, or whether it intended to bash *Ulwaluko* and the Xhosa community. Cultural custodians argued that it ignores the secrecy rule

that is respected by those who practice it and has totally distorted the essence of this ritual. These debates sparked an interest in how even in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa, the African people and their cultures are misrepresented in film, regardless of the C freedom of Constitutional right to to practice their own culture. Even though the political state of the country has changed, the economy has not and those with economic power continue to recycle derogatory stereotypes about Africans. The economic influence is also seen in film production in Africa. Most of the films produced on this continent receive funding from the West (Tomaselli, 1993). Therefore, little has changed.

The film *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) perpetuates the stereotypical representation of African men as violent, barbaric, backward and uncivilised. The stereotype is portrayed through the ruthless, aggressive character of Vija, who is presented as an aggressive, hyper-masculine black man. In contrast, this study juxtaposes *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) and U*mthunzi Wentaba* (2007), to demonstrate the powerful impact of the gaze and how drastically the narrative can change, depending on who is behind the camera. In *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007), we see the dramatic difference when the narrative comes from insiders rather than outsiders. Even though *Umthunzi Wentaba (2007)* also problematizes the toxic masculinity within *ulwaluko,* it does so with sensitivity and understanding of the significance of the ritual to those who practice it.

No discussion of African cultural practices and circumcision is complete without looking at female circumcision. It would be an incomplete research to discuss the Western gaze on Africans without looking at how the world has viewed African women. In the same way as *Ulwaluko* (the male circumcision), female circumcision viewed by outsiders as an infringement of human rights, and is referred to as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), with the West taking it upon themselves to be the voice of African women. *The Cutting Tradition (2009) therefore* fits perfectly to the discussion of how African rituals are represented in media. It also explores female circumcision outside of Africa and in the diaspora. While the topic of circumcision has been extensively explored, this research offers a different dimension, as it looks into how it is represented in film and media, thereby providing a different lens into *Ulwaluko.*

Research Questions

The research questions seek to address the impact of the Western gaze and ‘othering’ in the representation of circumcision in Africa. The following key questions will be addressed:

1. In what way does the representation of African rituals in media outlets such as cinema and television reinforce the historical denigration of Black African people and their cultural practices?

2. Given the extensive studies on othering, how does post-colonial theory assist in highlighting issues of race, cultural and gender representation in *Inxeba: The Wound (2017), Umthunzi Wentaba (2007)* and *The Cutting Tradition (2009)*?

3. How does the narrative shift when the criticism of circumcision ritual practices in Africa come from an insider's gaze?

4. In conversations on toxic masculinities, how does the Xhosa cultural ritual of *Ulwaluko* reinforce a heteronormative masculinity that is not receptive to other forms of being a man?

5. Looking at the western production of *The Cutting Tradition* (2009), in what way do the echoes of Western feminism in the film dismiss the voices of African women discourses on circumcision.

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature section is divided into two categories. The first is cinema, which looks at the diaspora, Africa and South African cinema. The second section is black masculinity, which will use *Ulwaluko* as an example of a domain that asserts certain types of black masculinity. The section on cinema aims to provide the context of this study by examining the history of cinema in the diaspora, Africa and South Africa, by looking at the politics of representation, with specific reference to black people and their culture. The second section on black masculinity explores the portrayal of black masculinity in films across the globe. This chapter does not propose to summarise the history of cinema nor that of masculinity, but seeks to highlight how black masculinity has been treated and represented in film from the earliest productions to date. It will focus on studies by scholars such as Tomaselli (1989); Davis (1996); and Balseiro and Masilela (2003), who examine the social, cultural, economic and political history of different cinemas, rather than the artistic process.

Cinema: In the Diaspora, Africa and South Africa

Cinema was introduced to the world soon after its invention, through the 1896 travels of the Lumière Brothers (Sadoul, 1972). The earliest form of cinema was shown in 1891 by the Edison Company in the United States of America, which successfully demonstrated a prototype of the Kinetoscope, a device which enabled one person at a time to view moving pictures. Cinema is an industry, but is different from other industries, in that it has been created and organised in order to generate certain principles (Sadoul, 1972). At first, films were very short, sometimes only a few minutes or less, and did not have sound and were thus named 'silent films'. The silent film era lasted from 1895 to 1936, with D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) being the highest-grossing silent film in the United States. The film was highly controversial for its portrayal of black men, many of which were played by white actors in black-face. It characterised black men as unintelligent and sexually aggressive towards white women. These stereotypes continued throughout American cinema and others across the world.

Third World Cinema

Third World Cinema is a Latin American film movement from the 1960s–70s, which criticises neo-colonialism, the capitalist system, and the Hollywood model of cinema as mere entertainment to make money. Third World Cinema comes from countries that are underdeveloped or still developing in terms of politics, the economy and social structure (Solanas & Getino, 1969). They are the countries that have experienced colonisation by European powers such as Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and Germany. The Third World consists of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Solanas & Getino, 1969). The Third World Cinema seeks to create films that resonates with the experiences of people in the global South - images that mirror their everyday lives, unlike the neatly packaged Western cinema filled with unrelatable Western culture and ideology. Many of the Third World Cinema films were created in the post-colonial era, and often focused on independence, and the history of formerly oppressed people. Their focus is similar to that of African cinema, where the aim is to give the formerly oppressed people a voice to speak of their own experiences.

Until recently, mainstream cinema has been associated with a show or amusement, seen as mere entertainment and a means of capital accumulation – the major example being Hollywood

commercial cinema. The main focus of cinema in First World countries (Europe and America) was to serve and satisfy the dominant ideological and economic interests in those countries, rather than bringing about any kind of consciousness of societal issues (Tomaselli, 1978). For this reason, films were evaluated in terms of their Box Office success, and seen purely in commercial terms. Even though there was little interest in films that dealt with social injustices, there were some productions that resulted in the decline of bourgeois values (Solanas & Getino, 1969). However, these movies still conformed to the Hollywood status quo. Therefore, there was urgent need for revolutionary cinema – hence the emergence of Third World Cinema. The greatest concern or aim of Third World Cinema was to produce liberation films that spoke to, and about the social injustices that people in the third world countries suffer at the hands of first world countries' capitalist interests (Solanas & Getino, 1969).

Revolutionary film is impossible without revolution and it requires the support of revolutionary political power. In other words, for consciousness-raising, liberation films to be possible, there must be liberation movements as a source of inspiration, encouragement and support. Such movements are the Cuban Revolution, Vietnamese struggle and other worldwide movements (Solanas & Getino, 1969). *City of God* (2002) is an example of a revolutionary film, as it portrays life in the favelas and the challenges of individuals within a Third World Country. The film is set in the poverty-stricken favelas of Rio de Janeiro in the 1970s, where two young men choose different paths. It follows Rocket (Alexandre Rodrigues), a budding photographer who documents the increasing drug-related violence of his neighbourhood. José "Zé" Pequeno is an ambitious drug dealer who uses Rocket and his photos as a way to increase his fame as a turf war erupts with his rival. The film documents the social issues that most people in third world countries face on a daily basis due to poverty, unemployment and the lack of government intervention.

Many of these "revolutionary'' films received criticism for their poor quality and their focus on politics at the expense of the aesthetics of cinema. Critics of Third World Cinema argued that revolutionary film-makers failed to see art as beauty that is not necessarily bound to the needs of the revolutionary political process, but instead as a political commitment (Solanas & Getino, 1969). However, this criticism fails to acknowledge that Third World film-makers did not have

the resources to create aesthetically pleasing films precisely because of the impact of colonialism.

The lack of development within Third World countries in disciplines such as revolutionary theatre, architecture, medicine, psychology and cinema, meant that intellectuals used artistic and scientific expressions as they were universally conceived by the classes that rule the world (Solanas & Getino, 1969). Thus, Third World film-makers would be forced to think as capitalists, and would have to prioritize the overall aesthetics of films in order to attract viewers, in the same was as block buster movies. However, it is the duty of the intellectuals to find loopholes in the capitalist system so that they can rationally perform the most efficient work. To kill the enemy, one must first learn the ways of the enemy and find its weakness in order to conquer it. It is through this hard and dramatic action that a revolutionary culture will be born. Therefore, Third World Cinema recognises that decolonising culture is the first step towards a future where the construction of a liberated personality is possible (Solanas & Getino, 1969).

The people (the colonised) find themselves trapped within a culture that is a mere imitation of the coloniser's culture, one that seeks to convince them of their inferiority, and pressures them to aspire to the culture of the coloniser (Tomaselli, 1986). The fundamental rule of the colonial system is that it should make the colonial subject feel that his/her culture and ways of living are inferior, and that they should adopt the ways of the colonial master and forget his/her own (Tomaselli, 1986). Therefore, if the formerly colonised people continue to consume films created by the dominators of their people, and not those that speak of our own people and experience, we will be a doomed people who have lost their culture (Tomaselli, 1986).

Placing cinema within the US models, even in the formal aspect, in language, leads to the adoption of the ideological forms that gave rise to precisely that language and no other (Solanas & Getino, 1969). As a result, people are reduced to slaves, in that they are dependent on the master, in this case, by creating a conceptualisation dependency which is based on the film industry of the USA. As mass-produced films from America are consumed throughout the world, the rest of the world now has the same view, and the world has become increasingly one dimensional (Solanas & Getino, 1969). The underlying intentions of the models created by the first world countries lead to theoretical dependency, since they are created to generate certain principles. In these models, a person is viewed as passive and as an object, rather than having

the ability to make history; they are only permitted to read history, contemplate it, listen to it and undergo it. In other words, a person is not seen as an agent of social change, but rather as a passive social actor. They are accepted as a consumer of ideology and not as its creator (Solanas & Getino, 1969).

Solanas and Getino (1969) state that it is not enough to simply rebel against the system, and use Jean-Luc Godard and the French New Wave as an example of film-makers who failed to properly destabilise 'the System'. Their films are referred to as ‘second cinema’ or ‘author's cinema’. The problem begins with the genre's attempt to exist parallel to, while being distributed by and funded by 'the System' – which is the opposite of what revolutionary films are about. Godard referred to these film-makers’ situation as being “trapped inside the fortress.” (Solanas & Getino, 1969). Thus, Solanas and Getino (1969) argue that film-makers must function like a guerilla unit, one that cannot grow strong without military structures and command concepts.

If the film industry, the film-maker and the audience of the revolutionary film work together in creating conscious films, then the decolonisation of all of them will be simultaneous and contribute to collective decolonisation. Decolonisation is the revolution of consciousness because it fights against the colonisation of minds (Solanas & Getino, 1969). Decolonisation is in the hands of the masses. Solanas & Getino (1969) define Third World Cinema as cinema that recognises in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific and artistic manifestation of our time. It is cinema that looks at the world with open eyes, without limiting itself to the criticisms that are laid upon it by Western audiences. In summary, Third World Cinema is a set of political strategies using film to articulate the experiences and hopes of the colonially oppressed (Tomaselli et al., 2007).

African Cinema

This section focuses on the filmic content created by the previously colonised people of the African continent. It traces cinema from the 1960s, when some African countries gained independence from their European oppressors, to date.

African cinema began in the late 1950s to early 1960s, when African countries began to gain their independence. It is only then that an attempt at producing filmic content created by Africans for Africans became popular. African film is produced, directed, photographed, edited

by and featuring Africans who speak African languages (Edwardian, 1992). However, creating such movies was problematic, since political independence was not followed by economic independence. One of the major objectives of African film-makers is to create a more realistic image of Africa, as opposed to the distorted representation by the dominant films (Ukadike, 1994).

During the apartheid era in South Africa, a film category called ‘back to the homelands’ was popular, and it created an impression of Africans as unsophisticated, rural dwellers. An example of such films is Maloyi (1978), which follows a sophisticated city-born woman who is bewitched and won over by mythical tribal life after she discards her Western ways (Tomaselli, 1989). It was a white-made film made about Africans, and was problematic because it manifested the assumption that black people were not made for life in the city and that they can only survive and thrive in rural areas. The issue here is the The gaze is:

> …the position a film-maker employs when casting his lens on his characters. The ‘Gaze’ of the film-maker either refers to an ‘insider’ or ‘outsiders’ position. It is important to consider what position the film-maker assumes when filming as... this can influence the type of images constructed and the manner in which images are stereotyped (Ellapen, 2006:4).

In *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) the gaze becomes a problematic issue when discussing *Ulwaluko* because the director, John Trengove, is a white man and this means that he has no experience of being a black man, nor has he undergone the Xhosa circumcision ritual *ulwaluko*. The racial and cultural background of the director affirms the biases critique of *ulwaluko* in the film, as it shows disregard of the sacredness of the ritual to the Xhosa people. The issue is an important one, and will be further be explored in the analysis of the film.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak (1988) relates how the Western culture investigates other cultures across the world, and addresses the ethical problems that arise when investigating a culture based on universal concepts and frameworks. Spivak (1988) claims that the West is exploitative in every manner and that Western academia only serves Western economic interests. Spivak (1988) addresses the issue of the West studying the third world without its cooperation, and how research is always colonial in defining the ‘Other’ as the object of study and as a place from which knowledge should be extracted and brought back. In essence, Spivak (1988) speaks of how the colony speaks back to itself about the colonised.

In a similar way, *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) is a film about the South African Xhosa tribe, which was showcased across the world, and was only shown briefly in theatres in South Africa the following year. What then is the the primary aim of the film, and who is the target audience? It seems only natural that a film which seeks to raise African themes would be showcased first in South Africa and on the African continent. The question then becomes, was the aim of the film to highlight the toxic masculinities that exists with circumcision ritual where anyone displaying anything other than heteronormative masculinity is ostracised and in extreme cases killed in communities that practice circumcision, or was it to gain global recognition for the film-makers and make profit from the subject? When *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) is compare to the locally produced *Umthinzi Wentaba* (2007), which tackles similar issues of toxic masculinity within *ulwaluko,* we are able to see the difference in perspective, and in the intentions of the directors and producers, when the narrative comes from insiders, rather than outsiders.

Many African film-makers have adopted the views of theorists such as Fanon, Cabral, Nkrumah and others that “cinema should be regarded as a powerful instrument in developing cultural ethos of the people” (Ukadike, 1994:5). Amongst African film-makers, there is movement towards conceptualising cinema as revolution, and examining the psychological effects of oppression and underdevelopment on Africans through cinema. Apart from trying to decolonise the minds of the people, African films speak about the history of African people and the social inequalities that they face.

For example, *Xala (1975), a Senegalese* film directed by Ousmane Sembène, addresses these issues. The film satirises the corruption in African post-independence governments. El Hadji's impotence symbolises the failure of such governments to be useful at all. The film criticises the African leaders' attitude after independence, underlining their greed and their inability to step away from foreign influences. It criticises how they neglect the very people for whom they claim to have fought. As Harrow (2007) suggests, African film is important in the communication of history and in the correction of past misrepresentation of history, but he also suggests that African film represents African society, African people, and African culture and also that African film should be the site of truth.

African Cinema has attempted to create films that tackle ‘African issues’, films that are not Eurocentric in their making, and which do not romanticise Africa. However, African cinema has

been criticised for its the failure to understand the need to rewrite our own history (Ukadike, 1994). According to Ukadike (1994), African films are not as fast-paced as other films and are narrated in a way that speaks to the audience African films are based on the rich cultural themes that tell the history of indigenous people and how they were able to solve the issues of the past. They talk about the richness of African tradition and how this tradition is articulated. African films are art films that talk about the culture of people and how they view the space around them, and are narrated in an oral tradition or simply a storytelling style. It is these authentic African practices that make African films talk to people, especially Africans (Ukadike, 1994)

Even though African films have received criticism from film scholars for the way they are made and how they adopt aspects of Western culture and ideologies, the majority of them do indeed speak about the black diaspora and the effects of colonisation (Papaioannou, 2009). Like Third World Cinema, African Cinema has been criticised, for neglecting the aesthetic element of cinema, due to the poor quality of the films. However, the quality of African films has improved, and as Ukadike (1994) points out, if the African film industry is slacking compared to its counterparts due to limited resources, this is hardly surprising when looking at the political and economic state of Africa, where pressing issues such as famine, wars and disease take first preference. Despite these limitations and shortcomings, African film-makers have not succumbed to failure. Internationally applauded films such as *West Indies* (1979) and *Visages de femmes (Faces of women)* (1985) took seven and 12 years to complete.

Therefore, African governments need to assist African film-makers with funding in order to produce African films about the daily lives of Africans that align with international standards in terms of quality and aesthetics. There is also a need to shift from producing films that are based on colonialism or apartheid, as it restricts and constricts Africa's full potential. In other words, African cinema needs to move beyond the boundaries of being only known as victims of a colonialism and produce films that portray Africa in its current state and the issues we are currently facing due to the effects of colonialism.

South African cinema

The South African film industry dates back to 1896 and is considered one of the oldest film industries in the world, and apparently the largest in the African continent (Botha, 2012). Mainguard (1994) discusses the three kinds of South African identities that are constructed in the

cinema, and how these identities are based on the images selected from the three historic moments of South African history. These identity constructions are used to discuss how a national identity is framed in different ways in different movies, and against the backdrop of colonialism and apartheid. The film *De Voortrekkers* (1916) sets up the first images that reflect how the Afrikaner identity was considered the national identity. These first images represent the alliance between the British and the Afrikaners, while constructing the black identity as barbarous or servile. The second set of images is drawn from the films made by white people about black identities, after the National Party (NP) came to power in 1948 (Botha, 2012). These images were racist; *African Jim* (1949) is an example of a film of the period, where the city is the central context in which black and white identities are represented. In this movie, black servants are pitted against their white masters, and black people are able to form a new identity primarily through jazz (Botha, 2012).

The last images stem from recent films that are made by both black and white anti-apartheid film-makers The films made during this period extend and politically re-align elements of images seen in earlier films. An example is *Mapantsula (1988),* which was produced during South Africa's new state of emergency. The film is set in the urban space of the city and in Soweto, and this allows for a greater representation of both black and white people. The images look at individual stereotypes in the divided urban social environment of the apartheid era where the stakes are high for shifting identities (Mainguard, 1997).

South Africa, unlike Western countries, is considered a late bloomer when it comes to television. Television in South Africa was only established in 1976, with very little diversity and freedom. However, now there is a more diverse broadcasting environment, with players other than the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). The current SABC has undergone major and significant transformations in recent years. The transformation was initiated by demonstrations of a coalition of anti-apartheid film and media organisations and unions who marched to the SABC to proclaim that 'the people shall broadcast', and to claim publicly the right of access to the national broadcaster. These organisations were protesting against the state-controlled media outlet, which censored information. At the same time, the organisations were engaged in carefully strategized and orchestrated moves to present detailed proposals for the transformations

in television which needed to precede the first democratic election, precisely to make that election free and fair (Mainguard, 1997).

In May 1993, one year before the elections, the SABC board was in place, and the change of the board would ensure that there were no threats to the validity of the elections, since television was state-owned and controlled by the National Party. This had the effect of placing the significance of the media in representing the aspirations of the citizens of the nation on the political agenda of the multi-party negotiations of the early 1990s. In addition, through these various political campaigns to wrest the national broadcaster from the control of the state, intensive debates, discussions and consultations brought about agreement by broad-based film, media, political and labour bodies on legislative proposals which would redefine broadcasting during the new democratic dispensation (Mainguard, 1997).

This led to the writing and declaration of a new act of Parliament which defined the terms for the establishment of an Independent Broadcasting Authority to regulate broadcasting and served effectively to diminish state power and control over broadcasting. The Act defines broadcasting as functioning to entertain, inform and educate within three areas: public, private and community broadcasting. It emphasises both the public interest or public needs and the necessity of opening the airwaves through the provision of a diverse range of services, which should cater for all languages and cultural groups. This Act has enabled film-makers to have their work presented on television screens and commissioned by the SABC (Mainguard, 1997). Although it has been declared on paper that all South African languages will receive equal play on both television and radio, it has not been entirely so in practice. It is only under the leadership of Hlaudi Motsoeneng in 2016 that the SABC committed itself to giving African languages equal airplay vis-à-vis its counterparts English and Afrikaans.

The cinema has a crucial significance for a nation’s citizenship and nationhood, as it has the ability to both shape and reflect on our perceptions and visualise identities. Identity in South Africa has been deeply and singularly categorised under colonialism and apartheid, especially with regard to race, class and gender. Identity politics have historically been key to the lives of individuals and groups on every level (Mainguard, 2007). The history of South African cinema is therefore valuable for examining how identities have been interpreted. It also informs us where

and how identities have been made absent to match particular ideological claims (Mainguard, 1997).

Masculinity in Africa: *Ulwaluko*

Among studies of men, masculinity is the most prominent term used. Masculinity has been extensively explored throughout the world with different approaches (Connell, 2005). However, masculinity cannot exist as a single entity, but co-exists with culture, as cultural backgrounds ascribe certain roles and behaviours to a particular gender (Connell, 2005). Masculinity will be explored in this study in order to highlight that masculinity can be influenced by different aspects such as race, religion and environment. Masculinity becomes an umbrella term that is supposed to be 'inclusive' regardless of who or where an individual is from; however, there are limitations to this, which is why black masculinities and African masculinities are considered as variants of masculinity. The term masculinities is in a plural form, which already acknowledges that there is more than one way to be a man (Connell, 2005). Interest in masculinity studies emerged in the 1970s amidst the popularity of women's and gay liberation movements, and it falls under gender studies. Therefore, it is natural to discuss masculinity alongside feminism, as it will later appear in this study.

Masculinity studies have seen an increased interest in recent decades. However, gender studies have been a subject of interest for quite some time. Gender studies have previously had interest in women's studies and the feminist movement, which argued for equality and questioned the principles of patriarchy. Gender studies have opened a platform for masculinity to be studied in different disciplines, including humanities and the sciences (Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2005). Multiple scholarly journals such as Men and Masculinities, and the Journal of Men's Studies, amongst others, have been devoted to creating conversations around masculinity.

In *Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity,* Connell, Carrigan and Lee (1985) introduce the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" to gender theory as a form of masculinity which dominates other gender identities and forms of masculinity, and which is associated with heterosexuality. Hegemonic masculinity recognises one perspective of what it means to be a man and suppresses and contests other forms and visions of masculinity (Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005). Connell (2005) defines hegemonic masculinity as contemporary structures that legitimise men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of women, and other marginalised ways of

being a man. Conceptually, hegemonic masculinity proposes to explain how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women, and other gender identities that are perceived as 'feminine' in a given society. Therefore, *Ulwaluko,* as discussed in *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) and *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007), becomes a structure that enforces hegemonic masculinity and a one-dimensional view of what it means to be a man.

The term hegemonic masculinity is a sociologic concept that is derived from Marxist theorists and Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, which looks at the power relations in the social classes in societies. The term hegemonic in both theories refers to the cultural dynamics by means of which a social group claims, and sustains, a leading and dominant position in a social hierarchy. Nonetheless, hegemonic masculinity embodies a form of social organisation that has been sociologically challenged and changed (Howson, 2006). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is individualistic, which makes it mutually exclusive with social justice, because the latter argues for equal treatment irrespective of class, gender, etc. However, hegemonic masculinity represents the system of oppression and closure, which reflects the patriarchal system (Howson, 2006).

Different cultures across the world have their own ways of interpreting gender classification, where women and men in societies have different roles and responsibilities. In central Australian Aboriginal communities, manhood is based on legendary stories where heroes cross and create the land. It is through these narratives that both men and women are taught the rights and obligations of both genders (Sutton, 1988). In contrast the obligations of the Neo-Confucian clan rules in the late Qing dynasty in China were not were not in relation to landscape. Rather, they defined obligations by offering moral encouragement, advice about occupation, social hierarchy and personal character for men and an idealised image of family life (Liu, 1975).

Masculinity is not only restricted by where a person comes from, but by age, class situation, ethnicity and race. Morrell and Swart (2005) analyse this by studying men in the Third World and the effects of colonialism. To understand colonialism and post-colonialism is to recognise that race, gender and class are not independent from one another; rather, they come into existence in relation to one another, often in conflicting ways. The world is divided into two economic categories: The "more developed regions", that is, Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, and the "less developed regions" – the rest of the world – with the

poorest being Sub-Saharan Africa. This economic disproportion could be a direct or indirect result of colonialism. Colonialism

> "refers to the political ideologies that legitimated the modern occupation and exploitation of already settled lands by external powers. For the indigenous populations it meant the suppression of resistance, the imposition of alien laws, and the parasitic consumption of natural resources, including human labour" (Morrell & Swart, 2005:91).

Some of the exploitative and brutal practices of colonialism included the nearly three-century-long trans-Atlantic slave trade, which changed the course of race, in terms of which being black became associated with inferiority.

According to Morrell and Ouzgane (2005), masculinity is not fixed and seeks to correct the imbalance that men are a unified, homogenous category. However, with time and space it is evident that the shape of masculinity evolves and that the manner in which these masculinities are positioned in relation to other men (younger, older, of different ethnic or racial origin) and women varies. For example, Africa is known for its diversity, meaning that not all its residents are black, speak the same language or practice the same religion. However, with the diversity comes different communities where all men have access to patriarchal dividends. This can also be extended to the power that men have over other men. In addition to patriarchy within African societies were masculinity is constantly contested, black African men find themselves having to navigate within the legacy of colonialism, while competing with the current impact of globalisation. While some African men have been able to participate in globalisation, most have been left out and feel globalisation as a form of poverty. Other effects of colonialism on African men is the British schooling system that left them with subordinate masculinities that reflect the exclusion from hegemonic male power (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). Even though black African men enjoyed the patriarchal benefits of being considered men in the homesteads through the particular rituals and responsibilities assigned to them, the colonial government still viewed them as boys. An example is the job of "garden boy", where black men were referred to as boys regardless of their age (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005).

Another factor that African men have to struggle with is their complex positioning as the 'Other'. Racial issues have been apparent since the beginning of colonialism, where there is a "brutal dualistic opposition between black and white" (Gilroy, 2001: 28). Henry (2002) analyses the

film *Shaft* (2000) and argues that it symbolises a trend in representations of blackness that he terms the “tough guise of masculinity”. This trend sees a stereotypical representation of black men in American media linked to crime, violence and rap. Colonialism and apartheid have left black men powerless, and because of this they compensate by defining their identity in terms of “rampant, materialistic, fatalistic attitude, physical strength, and the acquisition of respect through violence” (Henry, 2002: 116).

In South Africa, works of film such as *Tsotsi* (2005), *Mapantsula* (1988), *State of Violence* (2010), *Yizo Yizo* (1999) and many more perpetuate this stereotype. They all speak of black men as as violent and as criminals. Most of these representations are denoted by their titles. This fixed stereotypical representation of black masculinity as tough and violent has inhibited other forms of masculinity from emerging, and any men who display ‘feminine’ characteristics are deemed homosexual and alienated from the society. The film *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) highlights this through the characters of Xolani and Vija, who only show affection to each other when they are at the initiation compounds away from the rest of society and other initiates.

Therefore, films such as *Shaft* (2000), *Tsotsi* (2005), *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) reveal how our understandings of identity are shaped by the representations, narratives and stereotypes of the past. They highlight how there is a need to reclaim and rewrite history, bringing to light images of black masculinity that were often absent, marginalised or distorted during the colonial and apartheid era (Stadler, 2008).

Theoretical framework

Post-colonial theory: understanding othering

In order to understand post-colonial theory, it is necessary to consider the work of pioneer Edward Said, with his book *Orientalism (1978)*, which criticises the false image of the East as the primitive Other in contrast to the civilised West, an image perpetuated by Western thinkers. It is a style of thought that is based on an ontological and epistemological difference between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" (Said, 1978:2). Said defines Orientalism as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, about what 'we'

do and what 'they' cannot do" (Said, 1978:12). In *Orientalism*, Said (1978) examines how the coloniser imposed their own language and culture, while they ignored and distorted cultures, histories, values, and languages of the Orient in their pursuit to dominate and exploit the latter's wealth in the name of enlightening, civilising, and even humanising them. Said's observation about the West and its practice of othering is evidenced in the manner in which the West approaches circumcision in Africa. For example, Nancy Durrell Mckenna's *The Cutting Tradition* (2010) looks at female circumcision in terms of a binary where the Western lifestyle and ideas of beauty are the norm and the 'Other's' idea of beauty is wrong.

Said's () *Orientalism (1978)* brings awareness to the problem of speaking for the Other and with what authority this can be done. The West, due to its power and abundant resources, tends to speak on behalf of the Other, with no understanding of or respect for their beliefs. Circumcision rituals is an example of a cultural practice that is sacred to those who practice it in Africa and beyond, and as such needs to be respected. However, the West regards it as something to be explored and documented in the media. This is not to say that the ritual should not be critiqued; however, it needs to be approached with respect and sensitivity. It is the imposition of Western culture, and the labelling of African culture and religion as barbaric because it is different, that becomes problematic in the politics of representation.

The post-colonial theory seeks to critique colonialism or imperialism, as well as neo-colonialism. However, it is not the first to speak back to the coloniser, and it builds up on the works of earlier thinkers, freedom fighters, and anti-colonial activists, including Fanon (1967), Ho Chi Minh (1962), Kenyatta (1938), Senghor (1964), Nyerere (1968), and many others. The critique of colonialism, begins with recognising that the world order is both unfair and unjust, with the belief that justice and human freedom are not mutually exclusive, and that it is only through global decolonisation at the political, economic and cultural level that this can be attained (Mondal, 2014).

Post-colonial theory challenges colonial ways of thinking and knowing. It does not speak of a new historical era, nor does it promise a new world where all the colonial past's social ills have been cured. However, it acknowledges that common colonial representations are still prevalent regardless of the change in the political map of the world through decolonisation (McLeod, 2000). Some of the popular post-colonial theorists such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and

Trinh Minh-ha have shifted from the easy binaries of coloniser-colonised, and focus on analysing the role of language and writing, specifically in the dissemination of, and resistance to, colonial ideologies (Mondal, 2014). Bhabha's "Location of Culture" is an example of this shift, in that it seeks to apply this heightened awareness of the ambiguities of Western thought and writing in general to interrogate the contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in colonial discourses (Mondal, 2014).

Bhabha has become one of the leading voices in post colonialism since the early 1980s. He argues that colonialism is informed by a series of assumptions which aim to legitimate its view of other lands and people, and its objective was to justify the colonial conquest through classifying the colonised as sub-human because of their race. As a result, we have seen the emergence of colonial stereotypes that represent colonised peoples in various derogatory ways. Some of the colonial discourses still exist; however, they are not as overt.

Bhabha (1994) argues that representations of the colonised or Other are fluid and forever changing, and because of this fluidity, stereotypes are deployed as a means to constrict the inconsistency of the colonised subject by describing him or her in static terms. However, the restriction of the Other fails, thereby requiring the repetition of these stereotypes. This is evident throughout the different cinema periods. The stereotypes in Griffiths' *Birth of a Nation* (1915) to *African Jim* (1949), where black people were portrayed as loyal and devoted servants to their white masters, or conversely as barbaric criminals, extend to current cinematic representations of the Other and their way of life, where the same racist stereotypical images of black people are used.

Bhabha's essay "Of Mimicry and Man" builds on these ideas and explores how the uncertainty of the colonised subject becomes a direct threat to the authorities of the colonisers through the effects of 'mimicry'. Bhabha describes mimicry as "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha, 1994:85). The focus was on British colonised nations such as India, where the British colonisers would require the natives to work on their behalf, and thus they had to be taught the English language. Similarly, in South Africa, the earliest missionaries began by converting natives to Christianity, teaching them English and having them dress like the white man. These figures are described as 'mimic men' who behave like Englishmen but do not look English, nor are they accepted as such. It can be argued then that

through the criticism of circumcision in Africa, the West seeks to create ‘mimic men’ who look like them. This is reflected the approach of universalism, where there is a global movement to practice culture the same way and use the concept of human rights to critique those who are not within the ‘norm’. It is also evident in feminism scholarship where Western feminism is critiqued for using Western ideals of gender equality as proceeding from similar etymological understandings throughout the societies of the world (Bobo, 2001).

Post-colonial theory stems from anti-history and anti-colonial political struggles, and it helps to provide the context for this research, as it looks at the representation of black people and their culture in the media. The post-colonial context also explains how, due to colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, black people have not had access to positive representations of themselves, because they were always represented through the eyes of white film-makers and were denied resources to produce black-centred films for their own communities. Post-colonial theory seeks to understand the effects of colonial rule and exploitation on the colonial subject and their culture, with the aim of combating the consequences that have been carried forward to the post-colonial era. Two of the films studied in this paper, *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009), demonstrate that the representation of Africa and its cultural practices by the west in the post-colonial era has not changed. While the film *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) demonstrates why there is a need for an insider’s perspective in the politics of representation. Africa is still seen and represented in the media as barbaric and as a continent that needs to be explored, exploited and civilised. Indigenous culture is seen to oppress its people, and it is always studied in parallel with Western culture, where the West is presented as something to which Africans should aspire.

In *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), the Xhosa sacred cultural ritual is used as a means of creating dialogue and awareness around the experience of black gay men in a heteronormative society. The film provides a politically correct dialogue on hegemonic masculinity and how the Ulwaluko ritual allows a monolithic view of masculinity. Both *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) and *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) highlight the negative side of Ulwaluko, where boys are taught to endure pain as a way to assert their manhood, and if one fails to do so, they are regarded as being lesser men. Furthermore, according to these works, if boys exude what are considered feminine traits or have a different sexual orientation, they are ostracised. However, the manner in which

Umthinzi Wentaba (2007) tackles the toxic masculinity that is prevalent at the mountain offers a nuanced understanding of the ritual. It speaks back to the politics of representation and the need for people to create their own narratives. *Umthinzi Wentaba* (2007) offers an intersectional analysis and solution in dealing with the mortality crisis during the initiation season in the Eastern Cape. It also offers inclusive ways to deal with some of the crises surrounding circumcision in South Africa, where there is advocacy for the involvement of women and Western medicine in ensuring that the lives of young boys going into initiation are preserved, while also respecting culture. The approach to circumcision in *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) highlights the importance of the politics of representation, revealing where the approach to the cultural practice of circumcision is problematic in both *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009), where it is dealt with from the Western gaze.

Methodology

Introduction

The following section sets out the research methodology adopted in this study. The study uses a qualitative design in order to illustrate how three films, *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) represent circumcision. By applying a close textual analysis of the three films; as well as considering their representation and semiotics, the study illustrates how representation plays a pivotal role in othering. The above-mentioned research approach will assist in demonstrating the problematic tactics approaches that are employed by film-makers when making films representing a particular group to which they do not belong.

Textual analysis

Textual analysis is an information-gathering method that is employed by researchers to study how human beings make sense of the world. "It is a methodology – a data-gathering process – for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and sub-cultures make sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world in which they live" (McKee, 2003:1). Textual analysis does not only include linguistic analysis, but also "interdiscursive analysis", that is, "seeing texts in terms of the different discourses, genres and

styles they draw upon and articulate together" (Fairclough, 2003:3). For this reason, textual analysis as a methodology cannot be used on its own to look at how human beings make sense of the world; it needs to be used in collaboration with other methodologies, 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 within the context of the causal and ideological effects of texts, which implies that the 'micro' analysis needs to be linked to the 'macro' analysis of how power relations work across networks of practices and structures (Fairclough, 2003).

Representation

Stuart Hall (1997) discusses representation in terms of the way we see things and the meaning we add to them. Therefore, representation serves as "…an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language of signs and images which stand for or represent things" (Hall, 1997:15). Hall (1997) further stresses that this is not a simple process, because the context of representation is important. There are factors to consider in establishing the premise on which the black image is represented and treated by the film-maker, as this is paramount in the way a particular film is seen or viewed. Insofar as the films in this study are concerned, some of the factors to consider include the period that the film is cast in, the film's background and setting, as well as the central themes. The background or context of each film plays a vital role in understanding the overt and sometimes covert message being conveyed. For example, the film *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) at face value appears to highlight one of the most "gruesome" cultural practices of female circumcision around the world. However, when one begins to closely look at the film, certain elements of propaganda and grotesque narratives seem to be behind the production.

Semiotics

The semiotic method is especially designed to analyse popular culture. In semiotics, everything can be taken as a sign: as a message to be decoded and analysed to discover its meaning. A sign is composed of a signifier (the form which the sign takes) and the signified (the concept it represents). The meaning of a sign is not to be found in the object to which it appears to refer, but in a concept that functions within a culturally constituted system (Saussure, 1974). Barthes (1967:9) declared that:

> Semiology aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all of these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification.

Therefore, this study will apply textual analysis, representation and semiotics in order to investigate how the films *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) explore representations of circumcision practices in Africa in relation to gender issues. A close critical analysis will be applied, where meaning is extrapolated from the colour, size, language, subtitles, and angles of the images.

Application of close textual analysis

This section provides an example of the close textual analysis that will be conducted on the films.



Analysis

The above establishing shot is taken from the film *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), showing the *abakhwetha* (initiates). The scene represents a journey from boyhood to manhood. Behind them is gloomy, dark weather and before them there is light or clearing skies. The gloomy skies behind them represent the past, and the light in front of them represents the future and hope. With the light hitting their still bodies they appear to take an angelic form that can be interpreted as rejuvenation, as if the the ritual has cleansed them. The blankets covering their head and bodies represent the secrecy of the ritual, in terms of which outsiders cannot know what happens during initiation, and insiders have to protect it. The four initiates appear to be uniform, and this can

symbolise the internal turmoil that individuals face when they have to decide between going back and going forward.

Chapter 2: Black stories, white voices: The imposition of the Western gaze on Ulwaluko in *Inxeba: The Wound (2017)*

The exclusion of black people has been at the core of South African cinema from its inception. For a very long-time black people were not allowed to be participants of cinema as film-makers, actors nor consumers (Botha, 2007). By 1936 there were only four cinemas in black communities where white missionaries and philanthropists screened programmes that were in line with state propaganda in the mining industry, and their purpose was that of "moralising the leisure time of Africans" (Murray, 1992; Peterson, 2003). The history of film culture in South Africa has been marked by propaganda from its inception and it is only recently that film is seen as an artistic, creative act rather than a propaganda tool used against one's enemies (Masilela, 1991). As a result, the South African film history is constructed on lies and misrepresentation, especially towards black people. Black people have only been able to participate in the South African film industry since the early 1990's (Botha, 2007).

The racially motivated propaganda against black people aimed to portray them as inferior to white people, and its focus was mainly on their cultural identity. Ssali (1996) argues that to this day, African societies are still experiencing the domination in politics, the economy and culture that began with the colonial invasion. Cultural dominance is more dangerous, as it imposes on people's behaviours and systems of values to favour those of the imperialist power (Ssali, 1996). Technology as a form of communication allows the integration of African contemporary societies into the global world; however, it is also a channel which enables colonial control through television, books, and specifically cinema (Ssali, 1996). In conversations about cinema, Western cinemas industries like Hollywood have become the centre of focus, and have it grown to become a an international powerhouse. Over many decades, Western cinema that has gradually imposed itself on the dominated people of the Global South. This is evidenced in the popularity of American films throughout the world. The stylistics used in Hollywood cinema are seen as the epitome of film-making, and the cinema industries of other nations seek to emulate this style. The primary aim of Western cinema is to make profit and its ideologies do not consider

representing the culture, personality, way of life, and cultural codes of the dominated people. The Western cinema informs Western ideologies which are beneficial to the Western cultural, financial and political hegemony (Tomaselli, 1989).

Braithwaite (1992:36) notes that “The Negro is interpreted in the terms of the white man. White-man psychology is applied, and it is no wonder that the result often shows the Negro in a ludicrous light". This observation by Braithwaite resonates with the argument of this paper where a black man’s culture is portrayed in “a ludicrous light” through the gaze of a white man. In *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Ulwaluko* is observed and interpreted from a white man’s psychology and perspective, where there is no cultural understanding of the ritual nor that of the daily lives of black gay men. Although there may be shared commonalities of being discriminated against due to one’s sexual orientation, the experiences of black gay men differ to those of white gay men, as they are also subject to racial prejudice.

Therefore, this chapter argues that *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), in its quest to highlight the discrimination and violence projected towards gay people in the rural communities of the Eastern Cape, echoes the voice of a privileged white gaze that speaks on the experiences of black gay men in ways that belittle their culture and the collective identities as Africans. The privileged voice emanates through the exploitation of black bodies, where black masculinity is portrayed as toxic, violent and hyper-sexual. In light of this, the chapter aims to discuss the politics of representation and the power of media in perpetuating propaganda. It highlights the complexities that arise when an outsider speaks on behalf of the ‘Other’ and the renegotiations of what it means to be a man in the Xhosa culture.

Synopsis of Inxeba: The Wound (2017)

The film opens with Xolani finishing up his work as a forklift driver at a factory in Johannesburg. After clocking out he puts what seem to be his belongings in a backpack and leaves. Xolani is at the back of a van with other men who are going to the mountain as he is, as there is a goat and alcohol in the back of the van. Immediately on arrival at the mountain, he is called into the car by Kwanda’s father. He is instructed to be firm when it comes to his son Kwanda as he seems to be soft. He blames this on Kwanda’s mother, and says that she wants him to be circumcised in hospital and not go to the mountain. He raises his suspicions about the company that Kwanda keeps, the rich and wealthy kids of Johannesburg who are always locked

up in his room. Kwanda's father offers Xolani some cash and in return Xolani tells him not to worry.

The official day for the initiation journey begins, where the boys are cleansed with buckets of water and the surgical part of cutting the foreskin begins. The cutting by *incibi* (traditional surgeon) is very aggressive and violent, and after the cutting the boys are instructed to proclaim '*Ndiyindoda!*' ('I am a man'). Each initiate goes to their i*bhoma* (hut) with an *ikhankatha* (helper), and we see Xolani teaching Kwanda how to dress his wound. He tells him that he will stay in the hut for eight days and that the initiate does not drink water or sleep for that period. He further instructs him that when he goes back to the community things that happened on the mountain are not to be discussed. He gives him what seems to be a marihuana and says that it is a herb that will help him heal quicker.

Xolani with the other *khankatha* from his camp go out to collect firewood and we are introduced to Vija and his initiates on their way to the waterfall. When done collecting wood, Xolani follows them and indicates to Vija to follow him, and they go to an abandoned dilapidated building and they have sex and catch up on life over a cigarette. Vija talks about his family life and that he is expecting a third child with his wife. He says that he has to work hard now since the family is expanding, and Xolani offers to assist him, but he refuses.

While *amakhankatha* are sitting conversing, Kwanda's father comes asking for an update on his son. They go to see how the wound is healing, together with other men of the community and they are pleased with the healing process. Later on there is a celebration, and the men participate in drinking, singing, and playing the stick fighting game. Vija recalls a time when he found Xolani killing a dog one night and he calls him a man and says they've come a long way. Still by the bonfire the initiates and messengers (*amanqalatha*) interrogate Kwanda about his lifestyle in the city and he decides to leave when they started mocking him. Approaching the elders, he questions how long they will stay here looking at their penises heal. All the men by the fire gasped at this question by an initiate and Vija charges at him and tries to take his stick away from him. Kwanda fights him and eventually Vija is called to order by the elders. The initiates and messengers join the elders by the bonfire and an older man tells the story of Somagwaza. While the story of Somagwaza is narrated, Kwanda goes to his father's car and blasts an EDM beat to mute the conversations around the fire. Somagwaza was a young boy who visited the village of

Ngeneno where he knew no one. He terrorised the people of Ngeneno, who were angry at his terrorism but could not do anything. He circumcised himself as a way to rid himself of his mischievous behaviour. While listening to music in the car, Kwanda sees Vija following Xolani into the forest. While out gathering wood, Kwanda notices the tension between Xolani and Vija which leads to him speculating that they are lovers. While Xolani is out the other initiates terrorise Kwanda and he decides to take a walk in the forest. On his way back Xolani finds Kwanda visiting Vija's initiates in his camp. Xolani furiously orders his initiates to go back to his hut and they have a confrontation. Kwanda tells Xolani that he sees what he is and asks him how he can accept himself, he also tells Xolani not to worry and that he will not tell anyone.

Following the confrontation Xolani goes back to Vija to apologise for his initiate's behaviour. They proceed to go on a walk in an open field, drinking and reminiscing about their childhood. After a long silence, Vija questions Xolani about the sexuality of his initiate Kwanda and tells him not to get attached. They proceed, walking and taking a seat by the electricity wires. Vija thanks Xolani for being who he is and they share an intimate kiss. Xolani responds by telling him he is the reason he has not changed and if it wasn't for their relationship he would have left that place a long time ago. He only works and comes back to help out Vija with his family. An argument ensues again as Vija gives Xolani his money back and refuses to leave his current life behind and go with him.

Back at the mountain, a gathering is held by the men involved in the initiation process and the initiates talk about their journey to manhood. When it is Kwanda's turn he refuses to speak, shocking everyone at the bonfire. Xolani comes to his rescue and says that he is not ready yet. The elders blame his father for his behaviour and say that they are not surprised, since his father left for the city like he was chased and has abandoned his culture. On the way back from collecting wood, Kwanda is side-lined by the other initiates, who are showing each other how their genitalia have been healing since the circumcision. They refuse to include him because of his sexuality. Walking away from the other initiates, Kwanda is called by Vija, who tells him not to let the other boys get to him. He immediately changes his tone and says Kwanda is here to soil the culture because he is gay. He responds by telling him that Xolani told him not to speak to him and that maybe it's because Xolani wants him all to himself, insinuating that they are having sex. Xolani comes back from the village with other carers to find the initiates gone with

Vija. They follow their trail to find them walking towards the waterfall. They come to a halt where they see two farmers by the fence. While Xolani is asking for permission to cross to the other side, Vija decides to steal a goat and they all run away towards the forest. When they are out of sight Vija instructs Kwanda to kill the goat as a way of proving that he is a man. Rushing back, Xolani and Babalo confront Vija for stealing the goat and he demonstrates his macho masculinity in a fight with Xolani, who seems like he cannot fight. The initiates drink and dance the night away.

On the second last day at the mountain, in the morning, while collecting wood Xolani and Kwanda have a conversation. Xolani tells Kwanda that he must be happy that he is returning to his old life as a man. Kwanda confronts him again about not accepting his sexuality and who he is. He asks him if he doesn't get tired of his repetitive life or doing the same thing and seeing the same people every year. Doesn't he aspire to see other places and do different things? He calls him a "stupid moffie". Xolani expresses his inner turmoil, saying that he has nowhere to go, that the mountain is his only place and even with that he is still not content. As he leaves Kwanda to go back to the camp, he meets other initiates who accuse him of having sexual relations with Kwanda, telling him what he is doing is disgusting and not accepted on the mountain. Vija comes across them and violently punches the initiate.

Xolani meets Vija at the waterfall and they embrace each other for a while and the camera cuts to them passionately having sex in the forest. On his wanderings, Kwanda finds them passed out in the forest. He confronts them and Vija chases him, but he manages to lose him. It is the last day on the mountain, when the older men came to observe the healing of the wound from the circumcision of the initiates. In his hiding spot, Kwanda wakes up to Xolani starring at him and he hands him rags to wear. He takes off all the all the clothing associated with the initiation and they set out towards the road where Kwanda will hitchhike cars going to the city. The other initiates have bathed and dressed in new blankets, preparing to go back to society, the huts are burnt and the new men are guided into manhood. The old man instructs them to behave as men would. As they turn their backs on the burning huts leading to the village they sing the *uSomagwaza* song.

On their way to the main road Kwanda expresses his grievances on the attitude towards homosexuality in South Africa. He further states that this is South Africa, not Uganda or

Zimbabwe, and asks why people are pretending that homosexuality is a new phenomenon. He insinuates that Shaka and his solders were gay and questions the dress of Jesus and his disciples. Listening to his rants, Xolani realises that Kwanda will not keep quiet about what he saw in the forest, and decides to change routes and leads him to a cliff. At the top of the cliff Xolani pleads Vija's case, stating that he is a good man and has a family to look after. Kwanda seems determined that to expose Vija, and Xolani hits him with a rock and he falls off a cliff. Xolani continues to head to the main road. The film closes as the community celebrates the return of young boys, and we see Xolani at the back of a truck approaching the inner-city of Johannesburg.

The politics of producing *Inxeba: The Wound (2017):* Western hegemony versus African Cultural custodians

Inxeba: The Wound (2017) made its world début at the Sundance Festival on 22 January 2017; it is the second South African narrative film to be screened at the festival in 39 years. I*nxeba: The Wound* (2017) offers a dynamic examination of sexuality, masculinity and the clash between traditional and contemporary African values. The film tells a story of the Xhosa initiation ritual and the relationships that develop between three men while undergoing the ceremony. It follows a secret romantic relationship between Xolani and Vija that occurs during the initiation season where they are the caregivers. One of the initiates, Kwanda, who is gay, finds out about the relationship and threatens to expose them to the community. *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) is inspired by the novel *A Man Who is Not A Man* by Thando Mgqolozana and its screenplay was co-written by Mgqolozana, Malusi Bengu and John Trengrove. It has received 19 international accolades, including an Academy Award nomination., and it was leading the South African Film and Television Awards (SAFTAs) nominations with nine nominations in 2018.

The final trailer was released on the 19th of January 2017, two days before the world premiere, and the public responded on social media platforms like Twitter with different and conflicting views. The film did not grace South African screens until September 2018, for a week-long screening. However, this seemed suspicious and strategic, as Inxeba: The Wound (2017) had only been showcased internationally and was shown in South Africa at a later time and for a limited number of days. It appears that this was to ensure that the film was eligible for submission for the 2018 Oscar nominations for Best Foreign Language Film. The Academy

stipulates that a film must play theatrically for seven consecutive days in order to qualify. However, on the 23rd of January 2018, ENCA reported that the film missed the final cut of the Oscar nominations for Best Foreign Language Film.

Before long, the Eastern Cape traditional leaders announced that they were boycotting the film. Both the monarchs and Congress of the Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) On 29 January 2018, the traditional leaders and traditional activists started gathering support and urging people to join them in protesting the premier of the movie on the 2nd of February. CONTRALESA provincial secretary Nkosi Mkhanyiseli Dudumyo said “On Friday we will march and picket in front of the entire movie houses including Hemingway’s Movies in East London.” He also urged that “All people who are proud of their culture and are patriots must join us in protecting our custom against intentional exploitation and commercialisation [of the rite]” (Daily Dispatch, 29 January 2018). On the day of the premier of the movie the at least two Eastern Cape cinemas have cancelled the scheduled screening of the controversial film, following threats of shut-down from traditional chiefs and some social media users. The Nu Metro Walmer Park in Port Elizabeth said it would not proceed with the screening of the movie due to protest action. The cinema issued out a statement on Twitter saying:

> Please be advised that, due to protest action, screenings of *Inxeba (‘The Wound’)* will not proceed as planned. If you’ve booked, we will gladly refund you or exchange your tickets for another film - contact helpdesk@numetro.co.za. We will update you as the situation warrants. (City Press, 2018)

East London's Hemingways Mall also issued a statement:

> Dear Shopper. We have just received word from Tsogo Sun that the movie "*Inxeba - The Wound*" showing has been suspended and will not be running today as previously advertised. Kind regards, Centre Management," the mall said on Facebook. (City Press, 2018)

After an uproar that resulted in the suspension of screenings at two cinemas in the Eastern Cape, the film was again in the media. On the 14th of February, The Citizen (2018) newspaper reported that the film had been reclassified with an age restriction of

18 SLNVP. The classification refers to films that it contains sexual and pornographic content that is not suitable for viewers under the age of 18, and therefore needs to only be shown at limited cinemas. As a result, very few people would be able to see the film. The reclassification of the movie as pornography was based on applications lodged by CONTRALESA Gauteng and

The Man and Boy Foundation. The complaints were largely based on the perceived cultural insensitivity and distortion of the Xhosa circumcision tradition (*Ulwaluko*), as well as the strong language in the film. National executive committee member of CONTRALESA Mwelo Nokonyane told the Cape Times (2018):

> The film is a misrepresentation of our culture and tradition (by breaking taboo). It depicts what is being done at the traditional school. This shows how the producers of the family are money-hungry and would do anything to have their pockets full of money at the expense of our tradition, it is totally wrong.
>
> He said Xhosa men who had undergone the tradition knew "what happened in the mountain stays there, no matter what. All that is being taught in the movie is totally different from what Xhosa men know."

The reclassification raised heated debates over whether the decision to reclassify the film was an infringement of the Constitutional right to freedom of speech. The film-makers have lodged a complaint to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC). They stated that the protests were homophobic, as the sacred rituals of *Ulwaluko* are not shown in the film. Democratic Alliance (DA) member of Parliament and shadow minister of communications Phumzile van Damme issued a statement that the Film and Publication Board (FPB) appeal tribunal's decision to reclassify the film amounted to censorship. She said that the DA strongly condemned tribunal's decision to re-classify the film Inxeba*: The Wound* (2017) with a rating of X18. In the statement, she said "X18 is one of the most severe ratings a film or publication can receive, one step away from an outright ban. We encourage the producers of *Inxeba* to fight, fight, fight, all the way to the highest court in the land by urgently taking this decision on review."

The chair of the South African Screen Federation (SASFED), Rehad Desai, said the federation "is utterly dismayed about this decision to essentially ban this important and beautifully told story ... We are intent on presenting a legal challenge to the FPB, which we are confident we will win." Desai said SASFED intended lodging a formal appeal on the basis that "due procedure was ignored in the reclassification of the film".

Inxeba: The Wound's (2017) producers acquired legal representation after the film was reclassified X18, and their lawyer, Sekoetlane Phamodi, pointed out that the Films and Publications Act of 1996 states that in the case of a classification appeal the film-makers must be given the right to make representation. The film's legal representative contacted the FPB to

exercise the right to contest the reclassification of the film and be given seven days to prepare arguments. However, he was told the tribunal had no intention of inviting them to state their case. On the 1st of March 2018 a consortium of activists and members of civil society, including independent film-makers and the LGBTQI community, expressed their concern that the FPB and the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Rights Commission had disregarded the principles enshrined in South Africa's Constitution in its decision to rate the film as explicit pornography (Khoza, 2018).

They believe that the rating was a violation of freedom of expression, that this was homophobic censorship, and has no place in a progressive and free society. This is because this film was put in the same category as pornographic films. They also highlighted that the board has double standards when it comes to its ratings. The statement says that:

The FPB has previously assigned an age rating of 16 to films that portray the sexualisation and objectification of women, sexual violence against women, female nudity and stories in which women are strictly portrayed as sexual objects for the mere pleasure of male desires (Khoza, 2018).

Many of these films are un-affirming to women and are degrading and essentially encourage violence and rape towards women. The involved parties in the statement viewed this as a sexist practice that should not be allowed to continue, especially with the ever-increasing gender-based violence in the country. The statement went on to say that the FPB has patriarchal overtones in its approach and is essentially led by the opinions and values of its leadership instead of pre-existing policy. The statement continues:

> We urge the film-makers to not ignore their responsibility of mitigating this continuing risk to the best of their ability, through contributing proceeds to initiatives focused on the most vulnerable communities. We thus call on the producers at Urucu Media and distributors at Indigenous Film to do the right thing and make copies of the film freely available to the public and to put some of the film's proceeds toward the advancement of our freedoms as lesbian, gay and transgender persons.

The News24 newspaper consulted three current and former classifiers at the FPB regarding the high and irregular rating of the film, and all believed the explicit sex rating was highly irregular and in contravention of the state censor's own guidelines. "What the FPB has done is unlawful, as the board must look at the explicitness when it comes to the sexual content of the film. The X

rating is for ‘extreme’, and there must be explicit sex and a close-up of genitals and the actual sex act” (Khoza, 2018). On the 9th of March the film was back in cinemas under temporary age restrictions. However, the film producers took the matter to court on the 28th of March to fight for an age restriction of 16, which they believed was the correct classification.

On the 28th of June 2018 the court ruled in favour of the *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) producers. The North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria ruled that the appeal tribunal process for *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) was legally flawed, and should be reviewed and set aside. This means that the reclassification of the film as explicit pornography was overturned. However, although the film-makers had managed to overturn the explicit rating, the film had lost momentum (Khoza, 2019).

Rationale

There is a paucity of studies focusing on the circumcision rituals on screen in relation to racial representation, masculinity and the African culture and rituals. Although legislation is generally progressive regarding discrimination against people based on their race, religion or culture, measures have not been taken for this legislation to be implemented in film. To this day there are still grotesque images of black people in film, with Africans portrayed as savages and as backward, childlike and needing saving by the Western culture. For example, the South African soap operas like *Generations: The Legacy (2014)* still portray black men as criminals through the characters of Jack Mabaso and Kumnkani Phakade. The purpose of this chapter is to fill a gap in the scholarship, focusing on demonstrating that even though times have evolved in the world of cinema, we still see distasteful images of African people and culture under the guise of political correctness. An example is the film *Inxeba: The Wound (2017)*, which creates a necessary debate over the discrimination against the queer community in South African societies, especially in traditional rural communities.

The main concern is the overt ridiculing of and utter disrespect towards the ritual of *Ulwaluko*. Even though statistics have proven that the rural areas of the Eastern Cape where *Ulwaluko* is mainly practised have high rates of violence against members of the LGBTQI community, there is no correlation between this and the ritual (Mavundla et al. 2009). This study is conducted to contribute to the scholarship on *Ulwaluko* and fill a gap, with the focus of this study not being on the form of masculinity promoted by *Ulwaluko*, nor on how it can assist in the pandemic of HIV/ AIDS. Rather, this study considers how *Ulwaluko* is represented in our media and how the

media shapes people's perception of the ritual. It demonstrates how the media and the world of cinema has not changed its narrative on African rituals being unnecessary in modern society.

Africa on screen: Crippling images of black bodies

Representation is the re-introduction of 'reality'. This means that it has gone through various channels of manipulation before the final product and therefore cannot be an accurate reflection of reality, but is instead the result of processes of construction and "fabrication" (Manning, 2001:50; Bernstein 2002; Croteau & Hoynes 2003; Schudson 2003; Williams, 2003). All media platforms re-present the world to us – it is the illustration of a version of reality, not a reality itself. Representation occurs through signs and symbols that are created with the aim of conveying a particular meaning (Bernstein, 2002:260). Signs and symbols are an important aspect of social life, as it is through these signs and symbols that people are able to communicate and make sense of their surroundings (Hall, 1997; Bernstein, 2002). Hall (1997) argues that representation is essential in producing and exchanging meaning between members of a culture. It involves the use of language, and the use of signs and images which stand for or represent things. For example, *Ulwaluko* is symbolic to the Xhosa people. It is one of the rituals they perform to exchange the meaning of what it means to be a Xhosa man, and this is performed through a series of symbolic events. These events connect them to their ancestors, history and culture. Through these they form their identities.

Representation can also be problematic, as the images can be mistaken for representing what is real (the referent). This is the case with *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), where the manner in which the ritual is carried out in the film can be mistaken for what actually happens during *Ulwaluko*. These were some of the concerns raised by cultural custodians about the film. They object that it has failed to portray the depth of the practice and tradition, and instead focused on the physical process of initiation and healing of the physical wound (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018). Therefore, by failing to tell an authentic and dignified story about *Ulwaluko* and the Xhosa people, the film has failed in its promise to tell an authentically South African story (Kiguwa & SiSwana, 2018).

In the debate on the politics of representation, stereotyping remains central (Pickering, 2001). This is especially true where media content needs to appeal to a larger audience and the narrative needs to include familiar codes that the audience can easily identify and interpret (Hyde-Clarke, 2008). As a result, narrative models tend to have strong ideological, political and cultural

inclinations (Hyde-Clarke, 2008:152). They allow the public to understand events in terms of their (the audience's) expectations and existing points of (Hyde-Clarke, 2008) – whether those are "true to life" or not. The dominant understanding or 'preferred' reading of the message is most likely to apply. This is where the use of cultural stereotypes is most effective. For example, *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) uses the cultural stereotype that Xhosa people are not inclusive of other forms of masculinity, and that the only masculinity that is acceptable is heteronormative masculinity. Therefore, it becomes a stimulus in an existing and constantly repeated narrative on other media platforms.

In media studies, stereotypes refer to "the continuous repetition of ideas about groups of people in the media. It involves taking an easily grasped feature or characteristic assumed to belong to a group and making it representative of the whole group." (McQueen 1998:141; cited in Bernstein, 2002:265). The *Ulwaluko* ritual is commonly known or associated with the Xhosa people, and *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) uses this to highlight that within the Xhosa tribe there are people who are homophobic and discriminatory towards gay people. This is evident in the statistical report where Eastern-Cape has the highest rate of homophobic motivated abuse and murder towards the LGBTQI community. However, by default, the film attributes this characteristic to the whole of the Xhosa group. These stereotypes are "exaggerated set of expectations and beliefs about the attributes of a group membership category, they over-generalisation about an identity group without any attempt to perceive individual variations within the identity category." Ting-Toomey (1999:161). Stereotypes are more entrenched in individuals who have not had first-hand experience of a subject or the issues that are being covered in the media (Selekane, 2014) and the film shows that the research that was conducted on *Ulwaluko* and the experiences of Xhosa gay men was not sufficient, because it only aimed to understand them from the point of view of their sexual orientation and did not include the racial and cultural context in which black men exist. The film focuses on the experience of gay Xhosa men in the traditional setting of *Ulwaluko*. However, the director and producers do not share the same experience with the characters they are portraying. As a result, their narrative could only be based on hearsay or stereotypes, which then limits or provides a one-dimensional picture of gay Xhosa men. Although others may argue that it is an adaptation of Thando Mqolozana's book titled *A Man Who is Not A Man*, the book is categorised under fiction and not an autobiography.

While stereotypes are viewed as a form of negative reinforcement that eventually leads to discrimination and even racism (Hyde-Clarke, 2008:153) because they are beliefs based on simplistic and often false assumptions, it is important to note that they may be accurate for a portion of a group (Frederick,1993:190). However, it is likely to be problematic when the media uses stereotypes that are only applicable to a portion of the group to represent an entire culture. T therefore, *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) should have demonstrated that within the Xhosa tribe, like any other tribe, race or community, there are people who are homophobic, but there is also a large number of people who are not homophobic. As a result, they have demonstrated a rather biased representation of *Ulwaluko*, the Xhosa people and black gay men. In contrast, the argument exists that, due to the nature of media and its limitations, it is impossible to present characters or events with any great depth and deal with its complexities thoroughly (Hyde-Clarke, 2008:153). However, Ting-Toomey (1999: 163) refers to "mindful stereotyping", which is "the use of stereotypes with a willingness to change loosely held images based on diversified, first-hand contact experiences". The primary goal of mindful stereotypes is to change perspectives about certain groups, and in the process, stereotypes will also change as more knowledge is acquired (Hyde-Clarke, 2008). Stadler (2008:357) argues that, although stereotypes are based on generalisation, they are useful as tools for cultural analysis. The representation theory is important and useful because the manner in which certain groups are represented can have a social impact. This is because, to the audience, these representations are accepted as truth and normalised Stadler (2008:357). The representation theory and the use of stereotypes is critical to this chapter because different kinds of representations are motivated by stereotypes, which tend to be negative. Stereotypes are also used to provide understanding of the 'Other', meaning that they are created and perpetuated by outsiders.

The narrative of the 'Other', 'otherness' and 'outsiders' in many texts is sustained through the use of stereotypes. Othering entails objectifying another person or group so that the complexity and subjectivity of that person or group is ignored (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2003), resulting in monolithic representation. Gaztambide-Fernández (2002) makes this observation in a Jamaican children's adaptation of Virginia Woolf's gender-shifting hero/heroine, Orlando, called Orly. The adaptation exhibits Orly as having the stereotypical attributes of a Jamaican: dreadlocks, wearing yellow dress with red, black and green stripes, and the melodious Jamaican English accent. The adaptation shows the heavenly Jamaican beaches untouched by tourism development.

Layers of woundedness in *Inxeba: The Wound (2017)* – Race and black masculinity



The end of *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), where Xolani apparently kills Kwanda, is a powerful commentary on the toxicity of heteronormativity (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018). Xolani goes to the extreme measure of killing Kwanda in order to protect Vija, who is a closeted gay man in a community that praises heteronormativity. It demonstrates how through practices of heteronormativity masculinity silences other forms of sexuality. The choice of the film to use the ritual of *Ulwaluko* as a backdrop in telling a gay love story was a daring and critical move in unravelling both the hegemony of heteronormative spaces and the intersection between desires, race and culture (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018). Kiguwa & Siswana (2018) argue that the film, in exploring black male desire, highlights the social expectations of black male sexuality and this comes out through the daily struggles of Vija's character, who presents an exaggerated violent masculinity to overcompensate for his sexuality.

The 'wound' in the title of the film can be interpreted in various ways that offer an understanding into the ritual of *Ulwaluko* and the experiences of black gay men. The first interpretation of 'the wound' refers to the physical cutting during the surgical part of Ulwaluko. However, 'the wound' also refers to psychological wounds that the initiates acquire during the strenuous and complex process of *Ulwaluko* (DeBarros, 2018). 'The wound' is also symbolic of the psychological trauma that gay men face in society due to their sexual orientation. However, it can also be symbolic of the experiences of black people where they are constantly misrepresented by the white gaze.

Kiguwa et al (2018) argue that the film frames the lives of men like Xolani, Vija and Kwanda as operating in a society where non-normative sexual desire is not only taboo, but also

governed as part of disciplinary and regulatory practices of sexuality and masculinity. However, this is not the concern raised by the people who are against the film. The society that practices *Ulwaluko* is not against the non-normative sexual explorations of gay men, but rather against the use of *Ulwaluko* as a backdrop to explore these topics. This is because the mountain or initiation grounds are regarded as sacred spiritual places where any form of sexual act is prohibited. Therefore, for the film to choose to depict sexual activity in this context demonstrates not only the lack of research on the part of the film-makers, but the disregard and disrespect of the ritual and the Xhosa people.

Kiguwa et al (2018), referencing Biko (1978) in *I Write What I Like,* concur that for there to be black consciousness there needs to be a psychological liberation of black men, and this includes reclaiming non-violent masculinities. This means that hegemonic spaces like *Ulwaluko* need to embrace other forms of being a man. However, using Biko's argument it can be argued that *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), in its quest to demonstrate alternative masculinities found in the Xhosa society, still relied on reusing a monolithic, stereotypical representation of the violent black man. Even though the film fails in representing *Ulwaluko* as a complex, nuanced and rich cultural practice, it succeeds in exploring "the deeply entrenched heteronormative socio-material and psychical space of this practice" (Kiguwa et al, 2018: 1). In the journey of becoming a man at the mountain, heteronormativity is maintained through surveillance and punishment, and this is demonstrated through Xolani's character, who compared to fellow caregivers is seen as 'soft'. In a scene towards the end of the film Xolani is confronted by the initiates:

> Umkhwetha: Khanki hayi ukuba asihloniphi kodwa kukho izinto ezisivayo … (Caregiver we do not mean disrespect you, but we've been hearing stories …)
>
> Xolani: Ezitheni (What about them?)
>
> Umkhwetha: Lentwana yasedolophini (This city boy).
>
> Xolani: Phuma egusheni, thetha lento ufuna ukuyithetha (Come out straight and say what you want to say …)
>
> Linkwetha: Wenza izinto ezimanyukunyezi ezingafunekiyo apha entabeni (You are doing nasty, unacceptable things here in the bush).
>
> Linkwetha: Heeeh khanki indoda iyayenza lento uyenzayo? (What kind of man does what you do?)

During the confrontation, Xolani's authority is questioned and undermined by the initiates based on the rumours that he might be gay. The implication is that respect is only based on and confirmed by the extent to which one is able to conform to hegemonic masculinity, and

that Xolani is disrespected on the basis of his sexuality. The disrespect directed at Xolani is contrasted with the respect and admiration conferred on Vija, who demonstrates an 'alpha male' violent masculinity.

Later on in the film the difference in the display of power dynamics present between Vija and Xolani is shown when, in Xolani's absence, Vija takes the initiates on an escapade in the mountains. In frustration and in a quest to prove his power, Xolani decides to lead the group to the waterfall, but the power dynamics shift as he is required to humble himself and ask for permission from the white farmer constructing a fence on the path to the waterfall. The interaction between Xolani and the white farmer shows the socio-political history of the country relating to land access and land possession (Kiguwa et al, 2019). Concerning this interaction, where Xolani is belittled in the presence of his initiates, Kiguwa et al (2018:10) argue that: "It is in these moments of intersecting layers of vulnerability that *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) succeeds in revealing the impossibilities of manhood in contemporary South Africa." This degrading interaction shows the historical scars borne by black men, who were stripped of their dignity in their homes in front of their wives and children by the white man. In a place they call home, Xolani and his fellow caregivers and initiates are expected to ask for permission. In this regard, Kometsi (2004:85) observes that '[t]he active and conscious pursuit of real manhood or prescriptions of masculinity create anxiety precisely because of the shifting nature of the boundaries of masculinity'.



While Xolani is asking for permission from the farmer, Vija steals a goat, causing further tension between him and Xolani. When they are finally out of sight, Vija dares Kwanda to kill the goat, therefore making it the site of a different re-assertion of masculinity – "the goat becomes a metaphor for a culture clash within which the battleground of masculinity is fought" (Kiguwa et al, 2018:11).

Finally, given the history of the re(mis)representation of black people in film and elsewhere, it is important for film-makers to avoid the recycling of colonial stereotypes where black people's culture is seen as backward and unnecessary in the modern day. Therefore, *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) has failed to demonstrate the depth and significance of *Ulwaluko,* but rather reduced it to the physical process of initiation. It has failed to tell an "authentic" story of *Ulwaluko* and the Xhosa people and by default it has failed to tell an authentic South African story.

However, although it has failed in this respect, it succeeds in exploring the heteronormative culture of *Ulwaluko*. Lastly, it successfully brings to light how masculinity is not fixed, but rather fluid.

Chapter 3: The Case of *Ulwaluko*: Reclaiming past traditions in a post-modernist society in *Umthunzi Wentaba (2007)*

Introduction

The image of black people continues to be a spectacle and subject of ridicule, as it has been through the history of media, and African rituals are portrayed as barbaric and stagnant. Given the history of South Africa, one would assume that the democratic era would give black people a sense of dignity and celebration of their identity; however, it has not been so. Instead, post 1994 we have seen a rise in public scrutiny and criticism of African cultural practices such as *Ulwaluko and ilobola*. Each year the South African front pages show reports of initiation fatalities and botched circumcisions during the winter season in the Eastern Cape province. It is reported that the death toll rose from 11 in 2017 to 19 in 2018 (Ngcukana, 2018). Oblivious to the deaths reported, there is a flood of new initiates every year. To address these deaths during *Ulwaluko,* documentaries, discussions and reports, among others, are produced to create a dialogue and pressure the government into taking action. However,

the representations of African people and their rituals in these texts carry problematic colonial stereotypes (Tomaselli, 1978).

Due to the problematic images of black people and their traditions, cinema and popular culture theories from the developing world propose that the Global South needs to produce content that is entirely African and made by Africans for themselves, where they speak about their experiences. *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) is an example of such a work. The mini-series provides an insider's gaze into the Xhosa male circumcision ritual. I t is created by Xhosa people and speaks to the experiences of Xhosa men during initiation. The production cast includes the creator Mthunzima Nkwinti, director Mandla Dube, producer Seipati Bulane-Hopa, Bafo Bam, Thobeka Manjati and Luvo Mngweba. It is to be noted that even though Bulane-Hopa is regarded as an outsider because of her gender, through the years she has demonstrated immense dedication and played a major role in contributing to an African film industry that is dedicated to tastefully telling African stories. This film provides positive criticism of Xhosa ritual circumcision – it offers solutions as to how the ritual can be improved to ensure the health of young boys whilst preserving the Xhosa culture.

The problems that arise when speaking for others have been a topic of discussion for years. Speaking for others has been labelled arrogant, vain, unethical, and politically illegitimate (Alcoff, 1991-1992). The reason for this is that the social location or social identity one speaks from affects the meaning and truth of what they say. In other words, a speaker's upbringing and social orientation has a significant impact on how they view the world and that can authorise or unauthorise ones claim. As a result, truth is not universal.

The insider's narrative is bound to differ to that of the outsider, due to them having had first-hand experience of the environment and circumstances. Through the analysis of post-colonial theory, the chapter will highlight the significant difference that arises when stories come from within. It will look at the differences that arise when the Xhosa ritual *Ulwaluko* is engaged with by both outsiders and insiders to the culture. It will dissect the manner in which the Xhosa ritual *Ulwaluko* is used as a backdrop to the discussions surrounding Xhosa boys in *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), a film which is directed by a white man who has not undergone the Xhosa initiation, and *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007), directed by a Xhosa man. This chapter argues it is principal that a study of and advocacy of the oppressed must come from the oppressed themselves, and that we must finally acknowledge that systematic divergences in social location between the speakers and those spoken for will have a

significant effect on the content of what is said. This argument is developed through exploring the core value system of *Ulwaluko* by the Xhosa people without bringing in external discourse. It further elaborates on how the film explores the human toll the practice has on the psychologies of initiates embarking on this new journey to manhood.

This paper also argues that Xhosa people are caught in between the precarious relationship between reclamation of past tradition and the post-modernist project. This internal conflict is also reflective in the Xhosa literature. For example, *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* by AC Jordan, follows the story of a young Xhosa King Zwelinzima, who has received western teaching and religion. He is conflicted when he must return home from school to rule his father's people who are very traditional. He must choose between marrying a Bhaca girl in terms of his father's wishes or following teachings of the Christian religion. The question becomes: how do people preserve the teachings of their forefathers while tackling issues that emanate from changing times? The argument is explored through the prominent theme of tradition versus modernity in *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007). This chapter demonstrates the necessity for people, especially the oppressed, to write their own stories. The film seeks to locate tradition in a modern society, where traditional methods have evolved, and gives insight into how the Xhosa people are addressing their own issues and limitations regarding *Ulwaluko*. *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) explores the element of duality between the theme of tradition versus modernity, where there is a celebration of the Xhosa heritage and culture and also a resentment towards it because of the death of young boys during initiation.

Post-colonial theory as a theoretical framework will aid in further exploring the argument, as it examines the ways in which texts from colonised countries attempt to articulate and celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonial powers. The film does not limit itself to only embracing African cultural practices, but it also acknowledges the need to evolve and adapt to the changing society. This is evidenced through the advocacy for the intervention of Western medicine into the ritual. Therefore, giving a voice to the Xhosa people allowed then to come up with their own solutions as to how the mortality rate during initiation can be decreased and ultimately stopped.

Finally, this chapter argues that post-modern families face difficulties where there are gender imbalances due to changing family dynamics. The changes affect how tradition renegotiates and remediates itself in the spaces of urban, rural or suburban life in contemporary Africa. The film highlights the challenges that some women who are single parents face when they

take their children to be initiated – they are left in the dark because traditionally, women are not allowed knowledge of the proceedings of the ritual. The theme of the need to involve women in the ritual is illustrated through the character of Ndoda's mother, Nomthetho, who disregards the long-standing tradition that women should never set foot on the mountain, and Sipho's mother, who is a single parent. Her refusal to bow to tradition saves Ndoda's land raises the question of how many lives could have been saved had women been allowed in the practice. With Sipho's mother we get to see the limitations that women have when they do not have what is considered to be a normal family structure, with a husband and wife both raising the children together. She relies only on her brother for information about her son, yet there are restrictions as to how much she can know about him. His death becomes symbolic advocacy for the restructuring of the rules of initiation.

The defining cut: Circumcision rituals around the world and their media coverage

Initiation rituals, also known as 'rites of passage', are defined as a series of events that are performed to mark the entrance and acceptance into a group or society – this becomes a new stage in a person's life and the ritual is marked by symbolic acts (Raising, 1995). These events have a social meaning and are normally accompanied by an elevation from one social status to another (Davies, 1994). These initiation rituals include, among others, acceptance into fraternities, Hindu diksha, Umemulo (Zulu coming of age ceremony for women), Christian baptism or confirmation, Jewish bat mitzvah, and male and female circumcision rituals. Along with the above-mentioned initiation rituals, this chapter will focus on male circumcision and specifically the Xhosa male circumcision ritual *Ulwaluko*.

To further understand the stages of initiation rituals, it is necessary to understand that they form part of tradition. From an anthropological view, tradition often refers to a custom or respected belief that has been practised over time and most often viewed as an opposition to modernism. It is commonly associated with a pre-conquest or pre-colonial past (Shanking, 1981). Historically rituals have been divided into three phases: separation, transition and reintegration (Van Gennep 1960, Turner 1969, Hammond-Tooke 1974, Pinnock 1997, Cox 1998, Birx 2006). During the first stage a symbolical separation occurs where the individual is removed from their current identity (Van Gennep 1960). The transition stage occurs between the old identity that has been shed and the new one assumed, which can only occur after the initiation has been completed and the individual has undergone the reintegration stage (Birx 2006). The last stage is re-integration when the initiate has completed all the

necessary tasks and is now brought back into the society, but with a new identity (Cox 1998). The three stages mentioned will be clearly demonstrated in the section under Xhosa male circumcision.

Circumcision is commonly known in reference to male circumcision; however, there are female circumcisions practised in other parts of the world. This female circumcision has raised outrage across the globe (Africa, Asia and the Middle East, etc.) and is commonly known as female genital mutilation (FGM) due to its nature. Male circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin from a man's penis (Allen, 1990). There are two levels of circumcisions and they serve different purposes, namely sacred or secular. The sacred circumcision is compulsory and people who practice it believe its primary purpose is religious more than its health benefit. On the contrary, the secular practitioners deny its religious connotations and instead claim its health benefits (Lightfoot-Klein, 1989). This form of circumcision will be discussed thoroughly in the following chapter.

Circumcision has been a common practice around the world, whether it is for religious or health purposes, for centuries. However, in recent years, there has been increasing criticism of circumcision, and calls for it to be discontinued, on the basis of claims that it serves no purpose in modern society. One of the major arguments is that the practice of circumcision, both male and female, is critical in the creation and maintenance of social hierarchies and personal relationships between men and women and also within the genders; and as a result, those who have not undergone circumcision are ostracised in the society and are considered less than their counterparts (Birx 2006). For example, in South Africa amongst the Xhosa, men who are uncircumcised are called *inkwenkwe* (boy) despite any advancement in age. They are seen as weak, timid and cowardly and this is translated to other men outside their tribe. The other argument is that this ritual is toxic because it is not receptive towards other forms of masculinity, t. The following sections will mainly focus on the Xhosa circumcision ritual and will briefly touch on Jewish male circumcision as both religiously and culturally motivated.

Jewish circumcision (Brit Milah)

When a son is born into a Jewish family, he is required by religious law to undergo a circumcision ritual. The ritual takes place on the eighth day after the baby is born. For the Jewish community the circumcision ritual (*Brit Milah*) is a sign of adherence to the Jewish tradition and is symbolic of the agreement between God and the Jewish people. (Goodman

1999, Mhlahlo 2009). This ritual is a long-held practice, dating back to CE 135 during the Roman Empire's rule. It carries with it a meaning of resistance outside influence as well as religion, because during the Roman Empire thousands were killed for adhering to the Jewish laws such as the Sabbath and male circumcision (Goodman, 1999). This torture was repeated during the Spanish inquisition, under the Soviet Government and under the Nazis (Goodman, 1999). As a result, circumcision became symbolic of 'not just faith, but loyalty, courage and the defiant fight for freedom against terrible oppression.' (Goodman, 1999:4). The resistance demonstrates an affirmation of identity and it becomes natural to defend it from any criticism. This is common with other ritualistic circumcision like *Ulwaluko*.

Xhosa Circumcision (*Ulwaluko*)

The male initiation ceremony is seen as the most important epoch in the life of a Xhosa boy, as it marks his transition from childhood to manhood. The ceremony is generally takes place during the vacation breaks in June and December and occurs over a period of a month. Males between the age of 18 and 26 are considered eligible for the ritual. This cultural ceremony occurs through a period of three stages that were mentioned earlier: separation, transition and reintegration. With the separation stage the initiate is relocated to a temporary hut (*ibhoma*) built from grass and must be isolated from the community (Mavundla, 2009). The separation from the community is believed to eliminate the chance of him being exposed to witches. The initiation ceremony starts on a Thursday and the actual surgery is performed on a Saturday by the *incibi* (traditional surgeon). The transition stage then follows, where the boy now is known as *Mkhwetha* and not his birth name. During this transition stage he is taught about manhood according to the Xhosa tradition (Mavundla, 2009). The final stage is that of his integration into the society with his newly acquired identity and manhood, and he is now referred to as *ubhuti* (elder brother).

In the past few decades, there has been increasing criticism of circumcision, especially the cultural and religious forms of circumcision. It has triggered a passionate debate around the world, with a close focus on female circumcision. This form of circumcision is commonly practised in Africa (Sudan, Somalia, Egypt and South Africa), and a few other Arab and Muslim countries. Female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation (FGM), refers to the cutting off the tip of or the whole clitoris from the female genitalia. There are, however, other extreme cases of this form of circumcision where the whole female genitalia are sewn together only allowing an opening for bodily fluids like urine and menstruation

(Hellsten, 2004). One of the major debates on female circumcision is whether it is a violent and socially suppressive practice. It is argued that the practice causes serious physical and psychological damage and trauma in the victim (Bobby, 2007). Some of these physical and psychological damage caused include are anxiety, terror, humiliation and betrayal, haemorrhage, loss of sexual sensation, and damage to the organs surrounding the clitoris and labia (Bobby, 2007). However, the custodians of this practice, such as the Al-Azhar (Egypt), the most important Islamic centre in the world, argue for circumcision, stating that it conforms to the tradition of Prophet Mohammed (Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, 1994).

The debate on FGM drew a closer focus on the male circumcision practices. The narrative remains the same: that there is a need to ban religious and cultural circumcision (Bates et al, 2013). The criticism is not as intense, since male circumcision has scientific backup: it has been linked to the reduction of HIV/Aids transmission by 60 percent (Bailey et al. 2002). This means that while its benefits as a cultural practice are not scientifically understood, it is encouraged from a medical perspective. However, the argument is that it should be done under medical supervision in hospitals with hygienic tools (Bailey et al. 2002).

Currently, South Africa is in the spotlight due to the death of initiates in initiation schools in the Eastern Cape. Jenna Etheridge from *News24* (22 June 2018) reports that 'Three initiates, two of whom were just 15 years old, have died in the Eastern Cape, barely 10 days after authorities launched the winter initiation season.' These young boys were at illegal initiation lodges in Nyandeni. Reports such as these are common throughout the initiation seasons, and we have seen many instances of public outrage, demanding that this ritual should be discontinued *News24* (22 June 2018). However, the major issue is not dealt with: the criminal activities of illegal circumcision schools and initiation of under-age boys. There is no doubt that cultural initiation requires intervention. The government needs to invest in curbing illegal initiation schools, ensuring that initiation schools are registered and equipped with professionally trained *iincibi* (traditional surgeons) and that boys undergo the required medical examination to determine their state of health.

Tackling the increasing mortality rate during initiation season in South Africa through *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007)

Synopsis

Episode 1

The story opens with the pre-ceremonial activity of the knobkerrie fight between boys who will be going into initiation. The scene begins with a fight between Ndoda and Xolani, who will both be going to the mountain. After the fight Ndoda goes on a stroll with his girlfriend, and they are talk about the initiation. In the course of the conversation, we learn that the events of the initiation are a secret and women should never know about what happens on the mountain. The community is buzzing with preparations for the season's boys' initiations and a conversation between Nove and Ndoda's mother lays the foundation for the theme to follow: the fatalities that occur during initiation. They talk about how uneasy some parents have become regarding sending their boys to the mountain, due to the accidents that have been happening. On returning home, Ndoda learns of the unfortunate death of his cousin,

Bulelani, on the mountain. This plants doubt in his mind and he begins to question the ritual. The following day the initiates-to-be gathered together, discussing the preparations for the ritual and Ndoda raises the issue of agency, and why it is dependent on their fathers to decide when they should go to the mountain. He demonstrates his anxiety and his friends tell him the only way to be a man is to go through the initiation. In a conversation with his mother, Ndoda discusses the pressure to preserve tradition and culture in the midst of the initiates dying. They speak about the importance of culture and the valuable lessons he should learn from the mountain. When Ndoda and his father come back from buying a goat for his ceremony, he drops his clinic card and his father finds out that his mother has sent him to have a medical check-up before he leaves. This infuriates his father, as it is seen as synonymous with being weak. He says that this is the reason why initiation is not discussed with women, because it is people like them who spoil tradition.

At the community hall, a ceremony is held, where the boys leave their boyhood clothes to their younger siblings and Ndoda's hesitation surfaces, as he is the last one to give his little brother his boyhood clothes. The following day, the initial stage of the initiation begins, and a where a goat is slaughtered to invite the ancestors to protect the initiate and he is fed a piece of meat called *intsonyama* which is believed to heal him. The next day, the initiates are taken to have a ritual bath, and one of Ndoda's fellow initiates, Duma, is driven in a wheelbarrow because he was too drunk and high to walk himself. When they get to the river, Ndoda's face is covered with fear and the elderly men express their disbelief in his hesitance to get into the river. After the bath the boys are covered with blankets and prepared for the surgical part of the initiation but Ndoda stays behind and sinks into the river, leaving everyone shocked.

Episode 2

As the boys are being initiated, Sipho's test results arrive and they are positive for HIV. The nurse sends a message in an attempt to stop the initiation, so that the other boys will be protected. Even though there are healthy young women at the clinic, they have to send a frail old man as a messenger, because women are not allowed on the mountain. During the proceedings on the mountain, Ndoda's friend Ndwebile, who was not given permission to be circumcised by his father, pleads with the elderly man to allow him to be circumcised along with his friends. A debate ensues, with many of the others sympathizing with Ndwebile, but the final agreement is to obey his father's wish that he will only be circumcised when he is 21. On his way back, he meets one of the men from the mountain, who agrees to 'circumcise' him so that he will be an equal to his friends. On the mountain there is a debate about whether Ndoda or Sipho should be circumcised first. Sipho's mother receives the news of her son's HIV status, but is relieved when her brother tells her that Sipho was circumcised last.

After the surgical part of the initiation, while the boys are gathering grass and wood to make their new home comfortable, the elderly men have a conversation and show concern about the age of the boys going into initiation and that the period they stay grows shorter each year. On their way back to the village Ndoda's father, Tsibaphi, meets with his youngest son taking food to the initiates and tastes it to see if proper procedure has been followed. He tells the boys that initiates are not allowed to drink water or eat food with salt for eight days. He further emphasises that they should never tell any women about how the initiates are doing, including his mother. When Tsibaphi gets home, a conflict ensues between him and his wife, who had given *iNqalatha* (messengers) pills to give to Ndoda to boost his immune system.

The following morning, a meeting is held by the old men involved in the initiation, to discuss how the Xhosa custom is disrespected and has become under threat. They talk about the media coverage surrounding initiation, and the involvement of women and white people in their sacred custom. They vow to protect the tradition with any means necessary. Later that day the *incibi* (traditional surgeon) checks on Sipho and says he is getting better and that he will check on him again tomorrow even though he is getting weaker. He tells him to endure and that manhood is about being strong and persevering. Later that night Ndoda is visited by his cousin Bulelani accompanied by Sipho in a dream, and the following day Sipho is discovered dead in his *ibhoma* (hut). The news travels to the village and mothers are worried about their own children and the community is left shocked. The closing scene of this

episode is Ndoda begging his little brother to please call his mother because he is in pain and about to die. His brother refuses because of the rule that his father imposed about not telling any women including his mother about what happens on the mountain.

Episode 3

Episode 3 opens with a dramatic scene, in which Ndoda is in agonizing pain while his brother runs home to seek help. He gets home and tells his mother that Ndoda needs to go to the hospital. In the midst of that conversation, Tsibaphi comes in and has an argument with his wife, who calls for the ambulance. Tsibaphi uses an analogy of the pain and endurance that body builders need to go through in order to get the desired body to explain that a Xhosa man has to go through the pain of initiation tin order to function in a community as a man. Therefore, if Ndoda does not complete his time on the mountain he can never be a man.

Nomthetho proceeds with her decision to save her sons life by asking for an ambulance to take her to the mountain so that they can save Ndoda. The paramedics seem to be hesitant because they know the rules of initiation about letting in the outside world onto the sacred ground of the mountain. Nearing the mountain one of the paramedics instructs the ambulance to stop, and tells his colleague and Ndoda's mother to stay behind, because they know nothing about initiation. The paramedic is confronted by Xolani and other initiates upon reaching the mountain, and they refuse to let him take Ndoda to the hospital. He is helped by one of the initiates, Duma, who assists in carrying Ndoda to the ambulance. Ndoda is taken to the theatre and is resuscitated. Back on the mountain, Xolani informs the other initiates that they have been cursed and dragged into sin by Ndoda and his mother, and the only way to clean this sin is to ask for forgiveness from the ancestors. He tells them that the only way to cleanse this sin is to burn Ndoda's initiation hut (*ibhoma*), thereby declaring him dead.

Upon receiving the news of Ndoda being taken to the hospital, a meeting is held by the men with the aim of resolving this issue. Some argue that the boy should be fetched from the hospital, while others argue that he should go home to his mother as soon as he is released from the hospital. A s news travel fast, Ndoda's hospitalization becomes the talk of the town and a rebellious group called Mayitshe is formed to hunt down all those who are viewed as being against the culture. The paramedic who assisted Ndoda is chased from the shebeen. On the day of *umojiso*, Ndoda's uncle and father go to the Sangoma to make atonement. This is the only way Ndoda's family can appease the ancestors after what has transpired during

Ndoda's journey to manhood. Upon waking up and discovering he is in the hospital and realising the implications, Ndoda runs away and heads to the mountain in an effort to complete his journey to manhood. He makes this decision after his long-time girlfriend tells him she will not marry him because he is a 'half man' and did not complete his time on the mountain.

Episode 4

Upon running away from the hospital, Ndoda heads to the mountain with the hope of completing his initiation. His family goes on a search for him, worried that Mayitshe might have kidnapped him because they believe that he has brought a curse to their children. Whilst Ndoda's mother and uncle go on a search for him, his father is left behind performing the atonement ceremony. While he is performing the ceremony, Ndoda collapses on his way to the mountain and has what seems to be a vision in which he completes his manhood journey and is led to a group of men from his clan. With this ceremony he is accepted as a man in the spiritual realm together with his ancestors. As he is sent off by the group of men, his body emerges from the river and morphs into his limp body on the ground. During their search for Ndoda, his family instead finds Ndwebile, who is badly injured. They rush him to the hospital, but due to a botched circumcision, his manhood is cut.

Ndoda is finally discovered by his fellow initiates and the elders are called to decide what to do. During the meeting a Mayitshe member calls Ndoda a disgrace and says that this will stay with him forever, but his father comes to his defence and says he is proud of him for leaving hospital and coming to the mountain to complete his initiation. Ndoda faces the elderly men and his initiates and pleads his case. He talks about how times have changed and asks that it be possible to combine the old culture with the new one. He further addresses how detrimental it is if culture does not accommodate change and that the Xhosa people and their culture will perish if change is not accommodated. He poses the question of what it means to be a man and asks to be allowed to complete his time. His fellow initiates vote that he should stay and complete his initiation. Before they leave for home, the boys are reminded of the values of initiation and what it means to be a man in a Xhosa society.

The man who illegally circumcised Ndwebile is arrested and brought to justice. Xolani performs a poem about being proud of the Xhosa culture before the new men go for their last bath in the river. They are given manhood names and the *amabhoma* are set alight, and they head to the village where the final stage of initiation, *umphumo*, is held. When Ndoda gets

home he is welcomed by his father who is proud of the lessons that Ndoda has taught him about valuing both human life and culture. Celebrations and feasts are held by the community and the initiates are introduced as men. At the community hall, they meet with Ndwebile, and encourage him to persevere. Ndoda says he has decided to change careers and study herbs in order to fix the way things are done and educate more people about the Xhosa tradition, so they can practice it safely. Even though Ndwebile did not get initiated with them they treated him as their friend. On his way home from the celebration he meets Xolani and Ntosh who have now become a couple. It becomes clear that even though he completed his journey to manhood, some people will never consider him a man.

Umthunzi Wentaba (2007), like *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) is a work of film about the coming of age of young men in the rural Eastern Cape. It follows the story of Ndoda, a young man on the brink of manhood who is burdened with the decision of whether or not to go to the mountain for circumcision. The series brings to life the fears, anxieties and controversy surrounding the ritual ceremony *Ulwaluko* when news is received of the death of eight initiates in the Transkei, including Ndoda's cousin Bulelani. This news splits the village and Ndoda's household into two groups: those who support the old ways and those who reject them.

The mini-series addresses the media coverage of the increasing number of annual deaths during the initiation period. Every year *abakhwetha* (initiates) are hospitalised or die from circumcision wounds undergone during traditional initiation rites. It highlights how ritual circumcision can put young men at risk of contracting STDs, HIV and other blood-borne infections as well. It also demonstrates how young men are pressurised by their parents, family, friends and community to undergo the ritual, even when they are not personally ready, in the name of preserving tradition. It addresses the limitations and dangers of relying on old methods of circumcision in the modern day when there are multiple contractible diseases. However, in the same dialogue, it emphasises how we need to protect and preserve African cultural practices as they are symbolic of our identity.

The mini-series premièred on the biggest television station in South Africa on the 15th March 2007 at 21:00. However, it soon attracted controversy. After only two episodes the series was suspended, following an outcry from the public, including traditional leaders and cultural activists. The uproar was due to its depiction of traditional Xhosa rituals. The cultural

activists felt that it disrespected the culture by revealing too much of the sacred rituals that occurred during *Ulwaluko* (TVSA, 30 March 2007).

Following its suspension, on the 29th of March 2007, a panel discussion was hosted by Xolani Gwala (of the *Asikhulume* talk show) to address the issues raised by cultural activists and to possibly find a way forward. The show included three studio guests who discussed the furore: Mvuzo Mbebe (SABC Group Executive: Content Enterprises), Seipati Bulane-Hopa (Executive Producer: *Umthunzi Wentaba*) and Dr. Mathole Motshekga (Director: Kara Heritage Institute). Dr Motshekga argued that the main cause of deaths during initiation was untrained surgeons, and that the film painted an incorrect image of the truth (TVSA Team from the blog News on 30 Mar 2007). It tainted the entire ritual instead of demonstrating that there is illegal criminal activity involved in unlawful traditional circumcision schools. Both Mbebe and Bulane-Hopa, in favour of the film, said extensive research was conducted where traditional leaders, including consultation with one man who had performed over a thousand circumcisions. Therefore, they felt the show was an adequate representation of what many feel is a dangerous tradition. The panel discussion was carried over to the next week, where the public was included in the discussion. Various arguments were raised in favour of and against the mini-series. A viewer using the name Brown Shuga said:

> There is just something about it not being right for whoever wrote/produced this drama to expose and reveal things that are supposed to be kept 'private' in Xhosa tradition. Women are not supposed to know what exactly happens during initiation. I know that a lot of kids die there, and it is a problem but is it because initiation is a bad thing or is it because of the lack of experience on those performing this. - Tashi from the blog Tashi's TV on 16 Mar 2007
>
> This has been in our culture for years, so I don't really think the problem is with the initiation itself but perhaps the way some people are doing it. Maybe my opinion is twisted because I didn't see where this show started, and I don't know where it's going, but I think the message being thrown to everybody through it all is that 'initiation is bad'- Tashi from the blog Tashi's TV on 16 Mar 2007.

On the other hand, the TVSA blog shares the opinion that *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) should be winning awards based on the quality of the production. It says:

> The writing and acting is first-class, and the subject matter is more than compelling, it's spellbinding. We understand that particularly those of the Xhosa tradition may not want their traditions being made public, or more specifically being painted in a negative light. But isn't art (which Umthunzi is) supposed to enlighten, inform and ultimately leave us to make up our own minds? It certainly has a duty to stir up controversy and debate, as that is what forces us to confront our own perceptions of various issues. The uproar surrounding Umthunzi is indicative of the fact that this mini-series has hit a

> raw nerve after only two episodes, which brings the issue forward for South Africans to discuss, argue and ultimately learn from.

Following the panel discussion, the mini-series was suspended. It later resumed in April 2011 after a three-year absence. The series continued with the last two episodes of the four-part miniseries. This time, producer Bulani-Hopa, a female film-maker, said "there will be variations and the story line will be different but will still have the old features". She further stated that the focus would not be on circumcision but on taking the story forward. She revealed that the discussion on circumcision death was for a specific period and insisted that the controversies three years ago were important and helpful

The return of the series for the airing of the last two episodes presented a dramatic change in the narrative of the film. The first two episodes are critical of the initiation and demonstrated the shortfalls of the ritual, but the last two episodes are sympathetic and offer solutions as to what measures can be implemented in order to preserve the ritual while ensuring that young boys survive. The Mediaonline (April 24, 2008) claims that during the interruption of the broadcast, the SABC ordered the producers to make "minimal changes" that would not change the overall storyline. However, SABC Spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago later claimed that *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) was not edited before it was eventually rebroadcast: "It was enhanced." The Mediaonline website (April 24, 2008). This raises questions regarding the intervention of powerful influences behind the scenes and whether or not there was intimidation of and infringement on the creative freedom of the film-makers

This chapter then argues that it is vital that the study of and advocacy for the oppressed must come from the oppressed themselves. This is because the systematic divergences in social location between speakers and those spoken for will have a significant effect on the content of what is said. This argument emanates from the exploration of the core value system of *Ulwaluko* by the Xhosa people without bringing in external discourse. It is therefore important to consider how *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) explores this intimate theme and the human toll it has on the psychologies of initiates embarking on this new journey.

"The empire writes back": The insider's gaze on *Ulwaluko*

The West has maintained the colonial-era cinema, which showed Africa as a wild and savage place, existing outside of history, through the reinforcement of degrading images of the uncivilised 'Dark Continent'. Due to these kinds of representations of Africa, emerging African film-makers from the post-colonial era starting from the 1960s/70s set out to rewrite

these demeaning representations of Africa. The term 'post-colonial' as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002:2) describe it, is used to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day. However, the concept is not limited to this use. It is also used to differentiate the periods before and after the independence of colonised states (Ashcroft et al., 2002:1). The term will be used to refer to both in this chapter. *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) can be classified as a post-colonial film.

The act of representing or talking for others bears crucially on the possibility of political effectiveness. Therefore, it is critical that we ask ourselves whether it is a legitimate authority to speak for the 'other' as an outsider, and to what the extent one can speak. Is the discursive practice of speaking for others ever a valid practice, and, if so, what are the criteria for validity? In particular, is it ever valid to speak for others who are unlike me or who are less privileged than me? (see Alcoff, 1991-1992). These are the many questions that arise when representing the Other, and the film *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) eliminates some of the questions on legitimacy because it offers an insider's gaze on the practice (Alcoff, 1991-1992). However, as Alcoff (1991-1992) points out, it may be legitimate to say people should speak for the groups of which they are members. She poses a question: can a white woman speak on behalf of all women just by the virtue of being a woman? But this brings up yet another question: how do we then delimit the groups themselves and how narrowly can the categories be drawn? The same questions apply to *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007). If it is only Xhosa people who have the authority to speak on *Ulwaluko*, does this include women and *amakhwenkwe* (uncircumcised boys), or is it only the territory of circumcised Xhosa men? The biggest concern with only insiders having the authority to represent and criticise themselves is that their views can sometimes be biased in the same way they are with outsiders. However, *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) offers a neutral ground where the creators are not afraid to bring to the surface some of the pressing issues regarding *Ulwaluko*.

Umthunzi Wentaba (2007), like many texts to emerge from former colonial states, is formed out of colonial experiences and seeks to assert African ways of living by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasising their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre (Ashcroft et al., 2002). In "rewriting" their experiences and ways of living, post-colonial texts can be understood as counter-discourse (Ashcroft et al., 2002). Counter-discourse "suggests that no discourse is ever a monologue… it always presupposes a horizon of competing, contrary utterances against which is asserts its own energies" (Ashcroft et al., 2002:167). Therefore, *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) offers a counter-discourse by giving a

perspective of what *Ulwaluko* is, its limitations and future recommendations from the people who have had first-hand experience with the ritual and the culture. This counter-discourse is an alternative perspective and is contrary to how the West has portrayed African rituals. In renegotiating African images, *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) highlights the significance of *Ulwaluko* to the identity of a Xhosa man, while also not neglecting the necessary reparations and introspection that should be made in order to ensure that the ritual remains relevant in modern society.

Umthunzi Wentaba (2007) rewrites the imperial narrative that Africans are backward and savage through the characters of Ndoda, Sipho and Ndwebile. It acknowledges some of the pitfalls of the tradition through Sipho, who dies on the mountain because there are no medical screenings to ensure that the initiates are physically fit, as well as depicting the negligence from the elders that results in the death on the mountain. Through Ndwebile's character, the film highlights the menace of illegal initiation, which results in a botched circumcision. Ndoda becomes a symbol of hope and offers redemption of the failed acts with the two other boys (Sipho and Ndwebile), as his life is saved when he is taken to the hospital. He later changes the view of the male elders in his community about what it means to be a man and how incorporating the new culture into long-held tradition could propel the ritual forward into the future. However, most importantly it questions the making of Xhosa men – the kind of masculinity promoted during the process of *Ulwaluko*.



Ndoda: Kutheni ukuze uye entabeni kufuneka kutsho utatakho? (Why should we go to the mountain because our fathers say so?) Xolani: uyakhatywa na ndoda?

(Are you crazy?)

Sipho: Akubuzwa siyahamba sonke kuyahanjwa qha.

(We don't argue; we just go – that's it.)

Ndoda: Siyaya ukuba kutsho bona nje, okanye ke singabanye asiyi ukuba kutsho bona. Kodwa ke into endiyithethayo kukuba simanyelwe ukuba sifuna ukuthini. Bubomi bethu obu madoda.

(Yes, whether we go or not it is their decision. But why shouldn't we decide? It's our lives.)

Having criticism of Ulwaluko coming from Xhosa people offers self-introspection into the culture from people who have lived and experienced the difficulties of abiding by certain rules. In *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) we are introduced to one of the biggest issues pertaining to *Ulwaluko*, where some of the boys are not consulted on whether or not they want to be circumcised. This topic is brought up after Ndoda's cousin dies on the mountain. The previous extract is a conversation between Ndoda and his friends about the preparations for initiation. Ndoda raises a concern that as initiates, they do not have any agency and decision-making power when it comes to going to the mountain. In Episode 2, Duma becomes a victim of this as he is dragged to the initiation school while he is intoxicated by his father and other men of the community. He is circumcised without his consent and his father believes that initiation will change his mischievous behaviour. This is a common notion around initiation, where is it used as a corrective measure for behaviour that is perceived as anti-social.

In 2008, IOL reported claims that former ANCYL (African National Congress Youth League) president Fikile Mbalula was taken against his will to initiation in the Western Cape. The ANC denied the allegations, but "Maduma Ngabeni of Gugulethu, the man who circumcised Mbalula, claimed that Mbalula put up a fight when he was taken to the Philippi bush, and had to be overpowered" (IOL, 4 October 2008). At the time he was 36 years old and had been married for three years, which is a taboo in the Xhosa culture because of the traditional law stating that no man can marry without being circumcised. The two cases both demonstrate how persistent the tradition is and how difficult it is to escape it. They also demonstrate the belief that mischievous behaviour changes after a man has been to the mountain. For example, when Fikile Mbalula came back from initiation he was given a ministerial position, which has more value and responsibility.

In the series, the position that the decision to become an initiate is made by the father is further emphasised through Ndwebile, who is denied going to initiation with his friends by his father, who states that he is still too young and says he will only go there when he is in his twenties. An altercation between Ndoda and his father gives an insight into the rules of initiation and who makes the decision to initiate. When Ndoda offers his grievances about not

being listened to or asked if he wants to go to the mountain or not, his father immediately reprimands him and tells that he is a boy and knows nothing and that it is not his decision whether or not he will be going to the mountain.

The making of Men: The role of *Ulwaluko* in constructing masculinity in a modern society



The above scene opens up with Ndwebile singing a popular song that refers to uncircumcised men and boys. It sets a tone to the complexities of masculinity in Xhosa societies. It does not refer to just any circumcision: it refers to the traditional circumcision of going to the mountain where a true test of strength lies. Anyone who has gone to the hospital to be circumcised is not seen as a man. This becomes evident when Ndoda comes back after having been rushed to hospital and is referred to as a 'half man'. For the past couple of years being a man has come at a cost to many young boys, as each year there are reports of fatalities during initiation season.

Numerous solutions have been offered for this predicament, but the cultural custodians refuse to allow the inclusion of Western medicine. This leaves the Xhosa people entangled in a precarious relationship between reclamation of past tradition and the post-modernist project. The rejection of Western involvement could lead to the death of this tradition. The scene below between Ndoda and older men from his community clearly demonstrates how there needs to be a change in how things are done during initiation.



> "… utata uthe isiko lisiko, akukho malungelo. Siphila kumanye amaxesha kungalunga kudityaniswe amasiko la amatsha nlawa amadala obawo alungileyo. Isiko ukuba aliyivumeli lenguqu, lona naMaxhosa lizakufa."
>
> "My father said tradition is tradition, there are no rights. Times have changed, we should mix the newer culture with the good old ones. if culture does not accommodate change the Xhosa people and the culture will perish."

The men's welcome and acceptance of Ndoda's plea their allowing him to proceed with his journey towards becoming a man on the mountain indicates a change in the way the circumcision ritual is performed, and the incorporation of alternatives such as Western medicine. However, the incorporation of Western ideas does not go unquestioned and without blame. While the older men are talking during their usual visits to the mountain, they address the issue that as years go by the age of boys going through initiation decreases and so are the number of days spent on the mountain. They reminisce about the olden days, where they would spend months at the initiation and most boys would go to the initiation in their early twenties. However, this cultural practice was disrupted by the introduction of colonial and apartheid land and labour migration policies (Werner, 1993). Many African communities prior to the colonial conquest has the luxury of utalising all the land they had and this would include cultural rituals such as *ulwaluko*. The inclusion of the family and community provided support in the initiation processes to guarantee successful social transition for the boys. Land dispossession meant that the primary resource that the ritual relied on was lost, as communities lost access to their sacred spaces, which were appropriated for farming and other commercial purposes under the colonial and apartheid regimes. As a contributing factor, land dispossession was followed by the labour migration policies during the industrial

period, which dismantled the initiation structure further by disintegrating families and communities, because parents had to look for opportunities as mine workers and domestic workers in the cities (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). Consequently, the tradition suffered the loss of its supporting systems, resulting in it being practised twice a year, for only a month, and with the limitations on the use of the land imposed by colonial and apartheid legislation.

Although in the film the issue of land disposition is not explored, the conversation among the older men on how initiation used to take longer highlights the detrimental impact that colonialism had on African traditions. In comparison, *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) slightly alludes to the impact that colonial and apartheid land policies have on the ritual, when the initiates come across a fence and have to ask the white farmers for permission to cross what should in fact be their own land. However, the issue is not problematised. Rather, the focus is on the criminal activities that supposedly occur during initiation.

Umthunzi Wentaba (2007) neither sides with tradition nor modernity, but it instead offers a middle ground, where modern aspects like Western medicine can be incorporated where necessary. Both tradition and modernity can be combined to ensure the safety of young men who go to the mountain. Ndoda becomes a site for negotiation – his journey to manhood becomes the middle ground. The incorporation of modern/Western medicine occurs when Ndoda goes to the hospital and later comes back to the mountain. This act is regarded as taboo, however his father performs a ritual to ask for forgiveness from the ancestors and allow his son to continue with the initiation ritual.

The narrative and criticism of Africa and its cultural practices becomes different when it comes from the 'people'. The representation and criticism of *Ulwaluko* in both *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) highlights the difference. *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) is created and directed by members of the Xhosa community, who share a lived experience of this tradition, be it as participants or spectators, while *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) is produced and created by outsiders to the culture. The difference between the two is that the latter presents a one-sided and biased view of what *Ulwaluko* is about. It promotes *Ulwaluko* as a driving force for mischievous behaviour and toxic masculinity and does not acknowledge the significance of the ritual to the Xhosa identity. On the other hand, *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) takes a neutral tone towards the ritual by acknowledging both the negative aspects of the ritual and its importance to the Xhosa society. This could largely be because the production team themselves exist within Xhosa societies and they understand the

sensitivity of the topic. Their aim is not to say the ritual should be diminished but they offer alternatives to solving the rate of mortality during the initiation period.

In Xhosa societies the ritual carries social and cultural significance and is understood primarily as an agent of socialisation (Gwata, 2009). It is through this ritual that males are formally incorporated into Xhosa religious and tribal life, where they can marry, start a family and inherit possessions, and this can only occur after circumcision (Gwata, 2009). The connection between *Ulwaluko* and masculinity is secured by power relations (Magonyo, Andipatin & Jackson, 2016) and thus circumcised men are granted power "with greater rights, responsibilities, a higher standing in society, and the power to appease ancestral spirits. Ordinarily, women have no place in these matters. However, there is a growing power shift, which sees women in female-headed households perceiving themselves as being as much custodians of culture as their male counterparts (Zondi & Ntshangase, 2013). Through an ethnographic study using interviews they prove that women not being allowed to perform ancestral rituals is more a social construction than a taboo. Sipho's mother is an example of such women. Because she did not have a husband, she made the decision to take Sipho to the mountain, which is usually done by fathers. However, she has to liaise with Sipho's uncle.

The series constantly reaffirms that according to the Xhosa culture, there is only one way to become a man, and it is to go to the mountain. In Episode 1 of Umthunzi Wentaba (2007) audiences are introduced to a conversation between Ndoda and Ntosh about the recent death of his cousin Bulelani on the mountain. Ndoda is hesitant about going to initiation, while Ntosh asserts that no matter how hard things are he has to go to the mountain to be a man.



Ndoda: Ntosh, ubulelani ebezofundela ukuqhubela ingqwelomoya. And yonke into uyenze ngendlela.

(Ntosh, Bulelani was going to join the air force and learn to fly planes. He did everything right.)

Ntosh: Xola sthandwasam.

(I am sorry my love.)

Ndoda: Ndizothini ngoku?

(What am I going to do now?)

Ntosh: uyayazi nje noba kunzima kangakanani, umtu unyanzelekile eyile entabeni ukuze abeyindoda.

(*You know that no matter how hard things are you have to go to the mountain to be a man*)

This scene corresponds to the last scene of the film where we see Ndoda being rejected by Ntosh, who marries Xolani, as he has proven his manhood by finishing initiation. As a result, Ndoda has limited power in his society.



The film opens with a stick fight (*iintonga*), which is common during the initiation season. Boys chanting "u*Ndoda bafazi… uNdoda bafazi*" (Ndoda is a sissy) because they think Ndoda is scared to fight. The stick fight is a game of strength, skill and resilience. Winning the games gives one a status among boys and it is indicative that one can withstand the rigours of being an initiate. This notion is very common in various South African ethnic groups. In Venda there is a boxing game called *Musangwe*, a tradition that dates back to the 19th century, where both young and old men would often gather to fight as part of testing each other's strengths and displaying artistic fighting skills and knowledge (Ndwakhulu, 2013). Like *iintonga*, *Musangwe* is a tool used to assert masculinity among the Venda-

speaking people of Limpopo (Ndwakhulu, 2013). *Musangwe* is Venda for ‘bare-knuckle combat’, with the combatants being mainly young and mature men. Unlike professional boxing, in both the game of *Musangwe* and *iintonga* there are no prizes. The only thing that one gets out of it is pride and bragging rights

The above scene opens up with Ndwebile singing a popular song that refers to uncircumcised men and boys. It sets a tone to the complexities of masculinity in Xhosa societies. It does not refer to just any circumcision: it refers to the traditional circumcision of going to the mountain where a true test of strength lies. Anyone who has gone to the hospital to be circumcised is not seen as a man. This becomes evident when Ndoda comes back after having been rushed to hospital and is referred to as a ‘half man’. For the past couple of years being a man has come at a cost to many young boys, as each year there are reports of fatalities during initiation season. Numerous solutions have been offered for this predicament, but the cultural custodians refuse to allow the inclusion of Western medicine. This leaves the Xhosa people entangled in a precarious relationship between reclamation of past tradition and the post-modernist project. The rejection of Western involvement could lead to the death of this tradition. The scene below among fellows and the community (Zondi & Ntshangase , 2013). Manhood differs in each society. For example, in Zimbabwe manhood is associated less with physical prowess and rather asserted through intellectual debate, and anyone who cannot hold an intellectual debate is relegated to a position of a boy (Zondi & Ntshangase , 2013).

Ulwaluko has previously received a great deal criticism for promoting toxic masculinities that are only reception of a monolithic way of being a man (Shefer et al, 2007). Fear and weakness are attributed to women, and any man who displays these attributes does not have a place in the society. An altercation between Ndoda and his father shows that vulnerability is associated with women and young boys. After finding a clinic card Tsibaphi asks Ndoda what he is doing with clinic card, and if he is he a pregnant woman. Showing any concern about health becomes a symbol of weakness. The drastic example that the film used to draw attention to and emphasise how *Ulwaluko* can be toxic is through Sipho’s death and Ndoda being hospitalised. One died a man and one lives as a half man. Sipho endures pain until his very last breath, and in that moment, he calls for Ndoda. This becomes a pivotal moment in the film as it can either be him proclaiming that he is ndoda (a man) until the very end because he did not tell anyone about his pain, or that he was calling Ndoda for help, which

could have saved him yet rendered him a half man. It poses a question as to what exactly makes a man and whether or not being called a man is worth more than living.

As Sipho dies there is a cross-cutting shot between him and other imitates who are singing outside. While he calls “Ndoda, ndoda” in the face of his death, other initiates are singing a popular initiation song about endurance:

> “Ubudoda ndiyabazi. Abuyelwa esibhedlela. Ubudoda bunzima. Thula mntanam.”
>
> (I know manhood. You don’t have to go to the hospital to be a man. Being a man is hard. Hush my baby.)

This song becomes symbolic of the toxic kind of manhood that is accepted within the *Ulwaluko* setting. The fellow initiates together with the old men supervising the proceeding of the initiation chose to maintain the secrecy of the tradition at the price of Sipho’s life. They chose to be ignorant of his pain and need for medical attention. Sipho’s death is in vain, because even though he thought not seeking help would mean he is man enough, when elders are called the next day regarding his death, instead of assessing where the ritual might have gone wrong they call him weak.

In Episode 4 Ndoda contests the notion of being a man that is inherent within Xhosa initiation. In the monologue below, he questions what makes a man a man. He demonstrates that it is more than just being circumcised and enduring physical pain. He asserts that being a man comes in different forms and they should all be accepted:

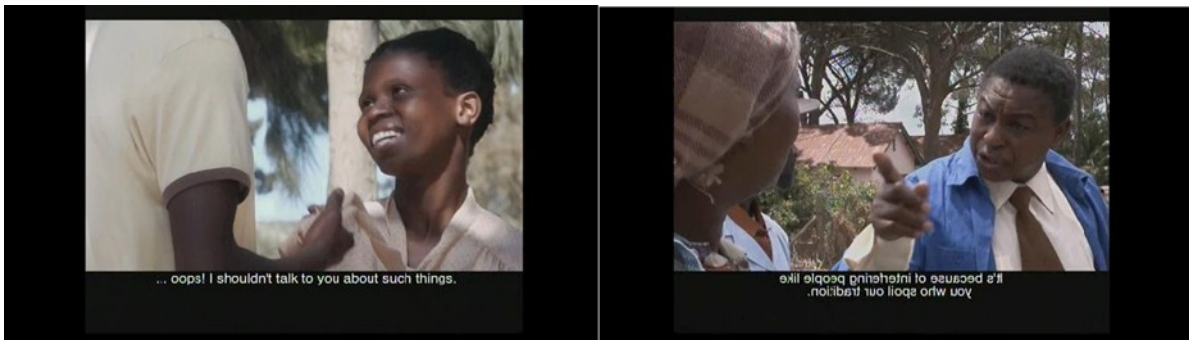
> Ndingathanda ubuza umbuzo nje. Ukuba yintoni na eyenza umntu abeyindoda? Ngamava nentlungu zomphefumlo? Nobulolo obakha Amandla omphefumlo? Kukwenza isigqibo ezinzima? Ingaba kukwamkeleka njengendoda kwizinyanya zakhe? Kodwa ukuba ubudoda bungezizigaba ndizibalulileyo, nditsho ngelingagobiyo ukuba ndiyindoda.
>
> I would like to ask this. What makes a man a man? Is it the pain and suffering in the spirit that strengthens the spirit? Is it making tough decisions? Is it being accepted by the ancestors as a man? If that’s what qualifies a man, I can say without hesitation that I am a man.

In the above monologue Ndoda shares the sentiments and anxieties of thousands of South Africans, who still cherish the ritual but feel that it is not safe. It advocates for urgency from the government and traditional houses to come forward with solutions. Ndoda’s survival becomes a symbol for hope for the many young boys who are to follow the same path of going to the mountain.

Tackling Taboos: Women as custodians of culture and their role in *Ulwaluko*

Ulwaluko prides itself on being a gentlemen's club and maintaining the ritual of secrecy. The circumcision ritual excludes women and children, to the extent where even mothers of the initiates are not involved in any decision-making pertaining to their children. The film urges for the inclusion of women into initiation through instances like at the hospital when the nurse received Sipho's blood results and had to send a messenger to the mountain to stop the initiation. She had to ask an old ill man, whereas there were young girls who could have done the task much more quickly. Another example is Nomthetho, whose disregard for the culture saves the life of her son. Had she not taken the initiative to call an ambulance to take Ndoda to the hospital and left the decision to his father, Ndoda would be another tragedy. Last but most importantly is Joyce, Sipho's mother, who is a single parent who struggles with the proceedings of her son's initiation because she is a woman. She is never told what happened to her son because of the secrecy involved in *Ulwaluko*.

The participation of women in *Ulwaluko* is considered taboo among amaXhosa and they are also forbidden to speak about it. Therefore, any woman who is seen in close proximity to the mountain is accused of witchcraft and in some cases killed. This taboo and superstition constantly resurface in *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007), where women are constantly reminded by their husbands, brothers and sons that this is not a matter for women and they should stay out of it. The images below show numerous times where women were told this.



If women are not allowed to participate in the ritual, what happens to families headed by single mothers where there is no father to make decisions on behalf of their sons? Zondi and Ntshangase (2013) speak on how culture does not allow women to perform rituals for appeasing ancestors. It becomes a challenge when women-headed families have to burn

impepho emsamo and they end up relying on relatives and sometimes strangers who share the family surname. These are some of the challenges that women face in traditional societies. The film creates a dialogue suggesting that tradition as conceptualised within the pre-colonial times needs to move with the times and engage the kinds of societies we have now. Societies are not traditionally conforming at all times and family units have changed, and that should be embraced by the tradition. This theme is depicted through Joyce's character for whom the absence of a male head in the household means she has to make decisions on behalf of her son. Being a cultural custodian, she decides to take her son to the mountain; however, she has limited participation because she is a woman. This means that she must rely on a family member, Sipho's uncle, to oversee the proceedings of the initiation. This echoes a long-held patriarchal ideology where a woman is seen as a non-entity, as someone who depends on a male figure as a representative. *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) poses a question as to what happens when the times have evolved, and co-parenting no longer thrives in modern societies due to issues like absent fathers and displaced families. Therefore, the culture needs to evolve and adapt to the changing times if it is to survive.

Post 1994, the South African Constitution recognises and protects the rights of all to participate in culture Section 31) and human dignity (section 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender and sex. Therefore, excluding women from participating in the initiation process renders the ritual unlawful. How do mothers then get to exercise their legal responsibilities as guardians? Can they assist or support their sons, or should they resign themselves to helplessness as condemned by custom? These are some of the questions posed by the series to the government and cultural custodians. In 2016 the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs attempted to legislate for women's involvement during the initiation period. However, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) rejected the idea and called it a mistake and the department then retracted the controversial clause (ENCA, 2018). The retraction of the legislature becomes evidence of the power dynamics of patriarchy, where men make decisions on behalf of everyone. The core issues in the attempts made to involve women runs deep within the government and Contralesa, which is mainly composed of men.

In the series, Sipho's mother Joyce is an example of such mothers. Her family structure is not conventional, as she is a single mother with no husband. She has lived with the community's insults, which said that a woman cannot raise a boy child alone, but she has

proven them wrong as Sipho is about to venture on a very significant journey to manhood. However, during the surgical part of the circumcision Sipho is side-lined in favour of Ndoda who is raised by both parents. As a boy raised by a woman, he has no father to defend him at the mountain. During the surgical part of the initiation there is a disagreement as to who will start between Ndoda and Sipho. This is very important because whoever starts becomes of higher status among theinitiates.



When Sipho's uncle argues that Sipho should be the first as he has promised his mother and made arrangements, the men argue that Ndoda should be first and that a boy raised by a woman cannot be first in line – that is the law. Sipho's uncle did not argue further as he knows that is how things are done. This law poses assumptions that only a man can raise a boy child to be a man. Given the norm of what it means to be a man in a Xhosa society it is ironic that Ndoda, who has a father to look after his affairs when at the initiation school, is the one who ends up in hospital and is known as half a man because he could not bear the pain that comes with being a man.

Sipho's death, Ndwebile's amputation and Ndoda's hospitalisation symbolise how the culture is failing at the hands of men. Even though traditionalists may argue that the incidents occurred because of the interference of women in the ritual, medical evidence corroborates the shortfalls raised by the film. Rijken and Dakwa (2013) found that the key problems leading to mortality and morbidity during initiation are the lack of competence (knowledge, skills, attitudes) from the caregivers (*amakhankatha*). They argue that most *amakhankatha* have not had formal training and their experience is limited because they only get to be active during a few seasons. Some of them are fairly young and themselves recent graduates, who

do not fully understand the magnitude of the responsibility that comes with the job. The second key problem also highlighted in the film is lack of medical supervision, and Rijken and Dakwa (2013) say that with supervision as a safety net, many complications could be identified early and managed accordingly. They highlight how the secrecy surrounding the ritual, where non-initiated males are refused access, further complicates these problems.

In conclusion, *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) offers a visual look into the proceedings of initiation where these shortfalls become realised and urges intervention. The series carries an in-depth criticism of the ritual without offence or disrespect as it understands the significance of the ritual to the identity of a Xhosa men. It demonstrates the negligence from the elders and caregivers and advocates for the involvement of nurses and doctors where hospitals could offer pre-circumcision medical examination to ensure that the boys are both physically and mentally ready to embark on the journey to manhood. If the Xhosa community could work together, including women in the proceedings of Ulwaluko, so many mortalities and morbidities could be avoided. This chapter also demonstrated the significance of Africans telling their own stories to their own people with greater understanding of the culture and people.

Chapter 4: Confronting the Gaze: Western Feminism, Race and Female Circumcision in Africa

The 20th and 21st century have seen a lot of attention focused on the cultural practice of female circumcision in Africa, fuelled by feminist discourses around the world (Korieh, 2005). This feminist discourse has received a lot of scrutiny and criticism because in the discussions pertaining to female circumcision it positioned the West as mediators of cultural values and meanings (Korieh, 2005). This renders such discourse problematic, as it echoes the colonial ethos where the West projected itself as the epitome of what is right and the 'Other' as what is wrong. This will further be demonstrated in this chapter through the analysis of the Nancy Durrell McKenna film *The Cutting Tradition* (2009), where there is a usage of evocative terms that carry racial undertones.

The Western media gaze always projects Africa as the Other and the voiceless Briere (2005) and *The Cutting Tradition* film (2009) is no different. McKenna's film *The Cutting* Tradition (2009) like the long-standing colonial narrative, presents Africa as a 'Dark Continent' that needs saving from itself, and that can only be achieved through assistance and guidance from

the West. The film employs a Western feminism approach where the liberation of African women is dependent on the West. Like their missionary predecessors, they portray themselves as a "salvation" vehicle for African women. Korieh (2005: 119) argues that

Western insurgencies and the Western media propaganda that informs recent circumcision discourse are direct offshoots of colonial ideologies and imperialistic propaganda, which feminist and other commentators have neither abandoned nor reformed. An example is the usage of derogatory words referring to Africans and their way of living, where they are referred to as savage, primitive, backward and uncivilised. In their quest to fight for women's rights, Western feminists and female circumcision activists have served as servants and handmaids of colonialism (Korieh, 2005). The film *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) analysed in this chapter is in the documentary style and focuses on the controversial issue of female circumcision in Africa. Female circumcision is a cultural ritual practised in many African and Islamic countries where the female clitoris and other parts of female genitalia are removed (Hellsten, 2004). The film presents African women as voiceless and half women with mutilated bodies. The film also uses the provocative term female genital mutilation (FGM) instead of female circumcision, which presents the ritual as a horrific act of violence. This chapter then argues that some arguments central to female circumcision discourse contribute to promoting racist culture grounded in unequal power relations. This will be explored through the themes of whiteness being normal and natural in comparison to the 'Other' and the theme of primitivism and modernity. To fully demonstrate the argument and themes in this chapter, debates around Western feminism in relation to African women's experiences will be discussed. This will highlight why there is little and slow progress in eradicating what the West terms 'female genital mutilation' in Africa.

Female circumcision: A rite of passage or human rights violation?

Coming-of-age ceremonies and gender-identity ceremonies involving genital alterations are an integral part of many African societies. It is through these stages that one can transition to the next level of their life. Female circumcision rituals differ according to country or ethnic group, where they can be performed on infants until the age of 15. However, some African women from the diaspora return later in life to participate (Cheserem, 2011). It is a tradition that dates to ancient times and it has said to have existed for over 4000 to 5000 years. The first record of both male and female circumcision was in Egypt. It was based on the idea that the foreskin was the feminine part of the male and the clitoris the masculine part of a woman

(Tanui, 2006: 20). Female circumcision comprises partial to total removal of the external female genitalia (WHO,1997). The World Health Organization (WHO, 1997) has categorised female circumcision into three categories depending on its severity:

Type I – Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce (clitoridectomy). When it is important to distinguish between the major variations of Type I mutilation, the following subdivisions are proposed:

Type Ia-removal of the clitoral hood or prepuce only

Type Ib-removal of the clitoris with the prepuce.

Type II Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (excision). When it is important to distinguish between the major variations that have been documented, the following subdivisions are proposed:

Type IIa-removal of the labia minora only

Type IIb-partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora

Type IIc-partial or total removal of the clitoris, the labia minora and the labia majora.

Type III – Narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and positioning the labia minora and/or the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation). When it is important to distinguish between variations in infibulations, the following subdivisions are proposed:

Type IIIa-removal and apposition of the labia minora Type IIIb-removal and apposition of the labia majora.

There have been international efforts for centuries to abolish this practice. There are legal bans and restrictions in most countries in which it is carried out. In recent years there has been strong momentum by organisations such as the WHO, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations (UN) in the discourse of ending this 'barbaric' practice. However, this is not without criticism from anthropologists, who have raised questions about cultural relativism and the universality of human rights. The film discussed in this chapter shadows female circumcision in parts of Africa with the aim of demonstrating to the international community the process of female circumcision. However, it renders this problematic, as it has undertones of judgment, and feeds into the discourse of abolishing this custom. Korieh (2005), following the advocacy around the abolishment of female circumcision, notes that as early the 1970s the ritual was condemned by Western scholarly circles and popular culture, labelling it as "a crime of gender", "torture", "barbarism", and "ritualised torturous abuse". The advocacy received momentum and much greater attention in the 1990s due to the concern demonstrated by physicians, ethicists, governments and development agencies (Korieh, 2005). This meant that it has become not

only a gender-related threat but also a health concern and human rights violation. It is then that legislation was put in place prohibiting female circumcision among immigrant communities. However, the 21st century has seen a rise in counter discourse to the Western feminism from African women. African critics have observed that Western feminist discourses are denigrating and reflect “Eurocentric preoccupation with sex, individualism and other concerns valued in Western societies” (Lane & Rubinstine, 1996: 35).

The Cutting Tradition: Female circumcision in Africa today (2009)

The Cutting Tradition (2009) is a documentary film by a British film-makers Nancy Durrell McKenna and John Howarth. The film, narrated by Meryl Streep, reports on the practice of female circumcision, otherwise known as Female genital mutilation, from four countries: Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt and Ethiopia. The film gives an insight into the female circumcision practices and it highlights the complex social, religious, cultural and economic issues which underpin the ongoing practice of FGM. The film raises questions that are critical in understanding why FGM is still very common in both rich and poor communities despite it being illegal in most countries.

It is estimated that about 200 million girls and women have undergone FGM, the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, (UNICEF, 2013). It is further estimated that every year there are about 30 million girls and women who are at risk of being circumcised. Many of the girls are circumcised between infancy and the age of 15. The practice is most widespread in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, but it also happens in other parts of the world like Europe, the United States and Latin America. Female circumcision is more a cultural practice than religious and can be found among Muslims, Christians and animist groups. One of the major issues brought forth by the film against female circumcision is safety concerns. Many of the circumcisions are carried out in rural areas that do not have proper facilities to perform the surgery. They use knives or razors with no anaesthesia and unsanitary conditions. In other parts the surgery is performed by trained physicians in sterile environments (Hall & Ismail, 1981). Ironically, however, even if this safe alternative of medicalised circumcision could gain legitimacy, the WHO discourages any procedure unless it is remedial.

The film takes the narrative and argument that most of the women who had undergone female circumcision are exposed to medical and psychological issues from which they can never recover. This is in line with its commissioner, the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) together with Nancy Durrell McKenna of a non-governmental

organisation (NGO) SafeHands for Mothers, which is dedicated to improving maternal and newborn health worldwide. Through the organisation she creates documentaries that educate, raise awareness and inspire people to act on health issues faced by both mothers and babies. Together with the aim of the organisations, the film aims to address and 'expose' the sexual and reproductive health risks caused by female circumcision (FC). The WHO, Althaus (1997) and Toubia (1994) report that women who have undergone circumcision experience long- and short-term symptoms such as severe pain, excessive bleeding/haemorrhage, infections, urination problems, death, urinary tract infections, keloids, anorgasmia, obstetric complications, obstetric fistula, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders and depression. However, many scholars such as Shweder (2000) and Obermeyer (1999) argue that the anti-female circumcision literature does not provide intensive research reports, and therefore could not be used as substantial evidence. Obermeyer (1999) discovered in her medical review that most of the published literature is "data-free" or relies on sensational testimonies, second-hand reports, or inadequate samples, which leads her to conclude that severe complications are relatively infrequent.

In the film we see natives of Burkina Faso, Egypt, Djibouti and Ethiopia express their opinions both in support of and against FGM. Their authentic, undiluted statements highlight the difficulty of resolving an issue that is deeply rooted in their cultures. However, this is overshadowed by the narrative voice of Meryl Streep. The use of a narrator, which is common in documentaries, renders the film problematic because it creates the illusion that the story would unfold in the same way even in the absence of cameras, thus making the film believable regardless of the manipulation of camera angles, lighting etc. The use of a narrative voice is also problematic because it provides a biased voice, that of the film-maker, who can express their personal vision. There are many other external factors such as tone or pitch that could result in a biased narrative.

In an ethnographic study in Barabaig, Kenya, Talle (2007) noted that circumcision is considered an act of bravery and if one ever flinches during the surgery they become an object of public ridicule and the shame is transmitted to their family for generations to come. In the Maasai communities, pain is something to be proud of. During her interviews in Somalia, Talla (2007) notes that even though precaution is taken with every circumcision, 'bad luck' is unavoidable. During a visit to one of the houses that recently had girls circumcised, she learnt that the elder sister who had shown bravery by not crying died yesterday. She reveals that earlier that day they had been promised that whoever does not cry

will receive a gold necklace from their aunt. These stories are the reason why Nancy Durrell McKenna created the film *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) to expose the manipulation and coercion that goes behind some of the circumcisions.

The narrative voice of Meryl Streep is accompanied by footage of traditional wedding celebrations and a shocking scene which follows a young girl experiencing female circumcision, or female genital mutilation, as they refer to the practice throughout the film. The inclusion of the graphic scenes of the custom are commonly used as manipulation in the discourse against female circumcision and to evoke emotions from the audience. These media representations of 'mutilated' African women, though serving the purpose of advocacy, dehumanise and objectify the 'Other' women, making it seem like they are dealing with a plague instead of people, cultures and values (Korieh, 2005: 121).

Korieh (2005) recalls a report in the News Photographer about a university graduate, Stephanie Welsh, who won a Pulitzer prize in 1996 for Feature Photography where she captured a "brutal genital rite on film". The publication indicated that the image was taken without the approval of the women and that Welsh forced her way in. This is an example of non-Western women's genitalia being displayed in multiple outlets with no thought of their dignity or privacy (Korieh, 2005). In the process of exposing human rights violation during female circumcision the organisations also violated the dignity of these women. Considering the case of Welsh, who received a prize for her photo and was thus able to pay off her student loan, the bigger question arises as to what the motivation is behind some of the discourse against female circumcision. There is no doubt that for Welsh and many others, profit and career advancement are the motivation (Korieh, 2005). *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) film went on to receive awards for Best Documentary at the Victoria Independent Film Festival and Best Director at the Philadelphia Documentary & Fiction Festival in the year following its release. Unlike Welsh, the intentions of the film *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) appeared self-serving as the creators were previously involved in a charity organisation called SafeHands For Mothers that aims at reducing maternal mortality and morbidity from pregnancy-related causes and to protect the health of the new born in developing countries. The initiative for the film emerges from the efforts of the charity organisation where they mostly encounter child brides and women who have undergone circumcision having complications during childbirth.

The debate of human rights versus culture

The debate on the morality of female circumcision is not a new phenomenon. The contestation of female circumcision emerged from the West in the wake of contemporary feminism (Boddy, 2007). From as early as the 1920s metropolitan women appointed themselves as the voice of their fellow "voiceless, oppressed, and unhelped" colonial sisters (Boddy, 2007:52; Korieh, 2005). As early as the early 90s missionaries in Kenya and Sudan, parliamentarians in England, and British nurses, midwives, and teachers publicly condemned it and classified it as "barbaric" and "backward" and made efforts to abolish the practice (Boddy, 2007). However, their efforts failed, as the practice continues today. The bigger question then lies in the fruitless efforts to eradicate female circumcision. Why do African and Arab women still continue circumcising their daughters? Regardless of their failure to eradicate this ritual of female circumcision back then, the movement continues and has gathered momentum throughout the world where we now have discourse initiatives, and human rights and World Health Organisation resolutions. Most of the people who are at the forefront of the eradication of female circumcision are from the West, and have no experience of circumcision and fail to understand its significance to those who choose to practice it (Boddy, 2007). Female circumcision advocates claim that parents choosing to circumcise their daughters is an infringement of human rights. However, in the process they also infringe on the rights of many African and Arabic women who choose to continue their tradition and culture of circumcision.

Some of the earliest attempts to break down the custom were by the Church of Scotland Mission in Gikuyuland in 1929. The missionaries made it a condition for the converts and those who wished to take their children to missionary schools to not practice nor support FC (Kenyatta, 2015). As far as the earliest 19th century there is documentation of cultural custodians fighting the colonial dominance over their cultural practices. Former Kenyan president Jomo Kenyatta (in his thesis) writes on how both the educated and uneducated people of Gikuyu protested these conditions, leading to an agreement with the missionaries that the ban on children attending school would be lifted and that only the teachers must denounce the custom. Also, in 1931 a conference of African children was held in Geneva under the auspices of the Save the Children Fund where several European delegates urged for the abolishment by law of this "barbarous custom" together with the other "heathen"

customs. Kenyatta (2015:90) further states that this urge to abolish people's customs by law was not supported by many of the delegates and that the consensus was "for education which will enable the people to choose what custom to keep and which ones they would like to get rid of". This notion is similar to that of today's age where there is no effort in seeking to understand the practice from the perspective of the people who practise it, and like it never succeeded in the early 20th century it will not succeed today.

Initially the global movement against female circumcision was based on human rights; however, this has shifted towards medical grounds (Hernlund & Shell-Duncan, 2007). The first wave of debate was that the cultural ritual is infringing on women's rights because young girls are coerced into getting circumcised against their free will. They argue that the ritual is patriarchal, as it only aims to serve the interests of men and is biased against women. However, Korieh (2005:120) highlights the importance of examining gender dimensions of circumcision discourse where Western feminisms generate perceptions in the context of male control and domination, thus making gender central in understanding women's position in society. Therefore, the debate of female circumcision in Western feminist discourses focuses on gender arguments while excluding other important factors in relation to African women such as culture, politics, and economics (Korieh, 2005). Therefore, this paper agrees with Jhamatani (1991) and Korieh's (2005) rejection of the most popular view in Western feminism, that men are the source of women's oppression. In the obsession with men alone they overlook and negate the roles, interests and investments of women in female circumcision.

Shweder (2000:221) argues that in most cultures that practice female circumcision they also have male circumcision that can involve major genital modification, such as sub-incision, in which the penis is cut along the line of the urethra. He further argues that the practice becomes a poor example of patriarchal domination as there are other cultures in Europe and Asia that are patriarchal but do not engage in any form of circumcision. There are also many other African countries that exclude women from this valued practice and only practice male circumcision. Shweder (2000) also makes reference to the Kono matrilineal society that participates in female circumcision and highlights that the female circumcision is almost always controlled, performed and most strongly upheld by women. Contrary to what the anti-female circumcision camp claims, it is through this practice that women get to have power in their societies. They get to be exclusively involved in a ritual that is not controlled by men, and some of the older women get to participate in the greater decision-making of the society

due to their participation in circumcision. Ironically, the feminist movement saying that the practice of female circumcision silences the voice of women is doing the same, because instead of consulting women who practice FC they appoint themselves to speak on behalf of these women (Korieh, 2005), therefore rendering them voiceless non-entities.

The majority of the criticism towards female circumcision comes from the West and is thus rendered problematic due to the history that the West has with Africa. Hence, the classification of female circumcision as a violation of human rights has been the subject of ongoing debate (Hernlund & Shell-Duncan, 2007). These Western approaches show what Mutua (2001) calls the three-dimensional compound metaphor of savages-victims-saviours (SVS), which is created by the UN, Western states, international NGOs and senior Western academics. The metaphor is problematic because the West employs the saviour narrative, where they save Africa from itself, and place their culture as the norm and a moral compass. This is in parallel with the colonial history where the West becomes the saviour and redeemer who protects, vindicates, civilises, restrains, and safeguards the “lower," "unfortunate," and "inferior" peoples (Mutua, 2001). It promises freedom: freedom from the tyrannies of the state, tradition, and culture. Mutua (2001) then poses a question to the human rights advocates to be self-critical given the troubling rhetoric and history that shape, in part, the human rights movement.

The debate around human rights and female circumcision is intersectional with that of universalism versus ethical relativism because they are both the focus of ethics and culture. The human rights discourse takes the universalist position, as it assumes there is a monolithic set of values and standards of action applicable to all cultures and that there are universally correct and incorrect ways for these values to be applied (Kim, 2005). In the case of FC, it is the Western standards that are regarded as the norm and a point of reference. In contrast, ethical relativism posits that different societies have different ethical beliefs and that there is no rational way of determining whether an action is morally right or wrong other than by asking whether the people of this or that society believe it is morally right or wrong. (Velasquez, 1998: 22). Most of the arguments against the anti-female circumcision discourse adopt ethical relativism, which argues that an activity/practice might be wrong for one group/ culture but right for the other (Kim, 2005). Ethical relativism renders it wrong to try to convince other people to change their beliefs, since there is no basis to argue that they are wrong.

It is proposed by scholars in favour of relativism that moral standards are grounded only in social custom (Kim, 2005). For example, Jaksa and Pritchard (1994:19) argue that:

> History strongly suggests that someday we will view some of our present practices as ethically flawed … [one] should not automatically assume that he or she understands another society's practices well enough to criticise them, let alone attempt to change them.

This is similar to what scholars critiquing the anti-female circumcision movement argue: that we should acknowledge and accept that different societies have different values and what we consider wrong in our societies may not be applicable to other societies, and that we should not have different values and what we consider wrong in our societies may not be applicable to other societies, and that we should not What does female circumcision mean to those who practice it?

To many African and Arab women this practice is referred to as female circumcision and not genital mutilation. The circumcision of both girls and boys is a crucial part of many African societies and it is mostly through this rite of passage that people can be active and valuable members of the society (Cheserem, 2011). Boddy (2007) argues that circumcision as a rite of passage is inseparable from becoming marriageable and a full adult, and that "no proper Gikuyu would dream of marrying a girl who is not circumcised, and vice versa" (Kenyatta, 2015: 90). Like the Xhosa society and other groups that practice circumcision (male and female) throughout Africa and the diaspora, it is a taboo to have sexual relations with a person that has not undergone circumcision. It is considered abnormal and frowned upon to be uncircumcised in those societies. As a result, women who are not circumcised in societies that predominantly encourage female circumcision are discriminated against and ridiculed. In the Sudanese culture, being circumcised symbolises cleanliness and purity, as uncircumcised women are normally prostitutes and outsiders, and the decision by mothers to circumcise their daughters is done out of the need to protect them and not harm them (Boddy, 2007).



In *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) similar sentiments regarding female circumcision are shared by one woman during a group discussion. She explains that this is their culture and it is an embarrassment when one's daughter is not circumcised. She speaks of the insults that one might receive due to not being circumcised. However, what seems to be a major concern is that a girl who is not circumcised cannot be trusted. This means that if one chooses not to undergo circumcision they become outsiders to the women around them and consequently to the entire community.

It is widely believed that circumcision increases a girl's chances of marriage, prepares her for reproductive maturity and prevents promiscuity (Boddy, 2007; Cheserem, 2011). Mothers who did not circumcise their daughters are seen as irresponsible, immoral and imitators of Western culture (Cheserem, 2011). Without circumcision individuals are seen as innocent children, regardless of their age, who are not supposed to know the secrets of the society. They are not allowed to venture into business with any party, as elders of the society could declare it invalid. In *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) we get to see how in some communities the main motivation behind female circumcision is to suppress the female urge, to make sure that they do not wander off looking for men. However, one young man from the Muslim community raises a compelling counterargument against female circumcision. He says:

> This is going back to the old tradition; we have to stick to how Allah created us. If there was a problem with it Allah would have cut it. So, it is a perfect and part of creation of the female body.

His argument then questions female circumcision as a religious practice. However, the Imam (priest) from Harar in Ethiopia gives an insight into female circumcision having existed before Arabs and Islam. When Prophet Mohammed began his teachings of Islam the tradition of circumcising girls already existed, and he did not denounce it, instead teaching the circumciser the right way to circumcise, which was to cut off the top part of the clitoris. This statement by the Imam also explains why circumcision is also practised in places outside Africa like the Middle East by people who practice Islam. The question then is, if female circumcision is practised in other parts of the world why is the focus only in Africa? Female circumcision in other regions, such as the Arab states, is very prevalent, yet there is a limited study in those regions. This then raises a question of whether female circumcision is a global crisis or just an African crisis? Is the target the actual female circumcision or is it on Africans and their cultural practices? These questions then prove it poignant that the representation of Africa and its cultural practices in film and media post-colonial era should be given much attention as it seems the othering of Africa has not changed.

Talle (2007) conducted a study on the Somali version of circumcision called infibulation. This is the severest form of circumcision where both the clitoris and labia are removed, and the vulva is stitched with only a small opening for urinating and to allow menstrual blood through. According to the Somalians an attractive female body should have genitalia that resemble a smooth surface. The parts that are removed are culturally labelled childish and unclean and resembling a camel's hump or cockscomb due to their protruding nature (Talle, 2007). The removal of these parts humanises and feminises a woman and secures her moral uprightness and bodily beauty (Talle, 2007). Shweder (2000) argues that the discourse against female circumcision aims to dictate what beauty is and advocates for a monolithic, universal idea of beauty that follows European standards.

Kenyatta (2015) speaks on the culture around circumcision, explaining that when a Gikuyu man/woman engages in sexual behaviour with an uncircumcised person, they must undergo a cleansing ceremony called *kuruto thawu* or *gutahikio migiro* (ritual vomiting of evil deeds). He further states how some of the men who had denounced the custom and married women from the coastal tribes that do not practice female circumcision were rejected by their communities because they had not fulfilled the ritual qualifications of matrimony (Kenyatta, 2015:91). They were given an ultimatum that if they wished to settle down and be given blessings by family and clan they should divorce and marry a girl who has fulfilled the ritual qualifications for matrimony. If they fail to do as told they are cast out from the clan.

To most people this practice is tied to identity, which is an integral part of one's life and development. Circumcision affords the initiates the ability to officially belong to a community. The circumcision is not only surgical; along with it comes teachings that are to be passed on to the coming generations as a way to preserve and ensure the survival of a community as a distinct entity on the face of the earth (Cheserem, 2011). The practising communities in Kenya view circumcision as a commandment passed down from ancestors and gods to be carried out without question (UNICEF, 2004). Traditional Somali female circumcision called pharaonic circumcision (infibulation) is said to enhance the possibility of "good girls" and it is done to ensure that no child is born out of wedlock. This is based on the patrilineal belief that every child inherits their father's clan affiliation, and this can only be achieved through marriage. Therefore, a child born out of wedlock has no blood ties (Johnsdotter, 2007).



During a discussion on what men in Islamic communities think about female circumcision, one gentleman raises a point regarding challenges faced by the Global South:

> If we are to look at our priorities, the issue of FGM comes at the bottom. We are a third-world country, and we have issues far more important than FGM. Issues like poverty, disease, ignorance, illiteracy, and so on. What I personally cannot accept, is to say that it's a crime or forbidden, because when they say this, it's like saying for the last fourteen centuries the nation of Islam, with its scholars and scientists have been criminals. For the last 14 centuries, during which circumcision has been a common practice, the scholars, their followers, and all those in our past were committing crime and keeping quiet about it.

The gentleman's observations are similar to that of many scholars, like Korieh (2005), who have expressed the same concern: that Western feminists and other anti-female circumcision advocates have portrayed the ritual as a pandemic in Africa, whereas there are much greater challenges, like poverty, disease etc. However, this does not disregard the health and dignity of women and young girls who have suffered at the hands of this ritual. One should not take priority over the other as they are all very urgent. Another issue with Western Feminism is that it also negatively labels things that they it does not understand or things that are not 'normal' according to them. An example is the changing of the label 'female circumcision' to 'female genital mutilation' over the decades. This is problematic because the changing of the label fits into the western propaganda of Africans as barbaric and savage. It creates a grotesque picturesque of the ritual where it seems like the circumcision ritual does not need to be an integral part of the societies who practice it.

The Experience of Female Circumcision in Exile

Historically, men were the ones to first move into new places due to the privilege awarded by their gender, and they would later send for their wives and in rare cases their children. However, women are increasingly moving, and this includes those from circumcising societies (Hernlund & Shell-Duncan, 2007). There has been an increasing change in gender relations across African communities in the diaspora, where it seems that women gain access more easily to work and opportunities than men (Hernlund & Shell-Duncan, 2007). With immigration comes the adoption of cultural practices from native lands. This has increasingly become a concern for most countries where there is an influx of people who come from countries that practice female circumcision (Johnsdotter, 2007). Female circumcision is illegal in most parts of the world, but the WHO reports that immigrants still practice female circumcision in their new environment. Johnsdotter (2007) notes that regardless of the reports, in Sweden there has not been a legal case brought to court.

Among the Somali immigrants in Sweden it is apparent that some of the traditional values associated with female circumcision are upheld (Johnsdotter, 2007). These traditional values include the preservation of one's virginity before marriage and an unmarried pregnant girl being rendered useless in Somali communities. In one of the interviews Somali women express the consequences of being an unmarried pregnant girl in a Somali community in Sweden (Johnsdotter, 2007:109):

> [Johnsdotter:] "What happens if a Somali girl here in Sweden has a child while she is unmarried?"

> [Somali woman:] “A child? While she is unmarried? She may as well die.”
>
> [Another Somali woman:] [shocked by the other women’s statement] “Oooh”
>
> [First Somali Women:] “Should the girl have a child without a father? It’s so horrible, it cannot exist. She has to go, move away, she can’t stay with her family. Without a father…it’s impossible. […] I know many Somali who got this… These women never returned to their families ever. They disappeared.”

The repercussions of having a child out of wedlock render the young women socially dead (Johnsdotter, 2007), undesirable and a shame to her family, and as a result some never return back to their families. The Somali families in Sweden have created measures where if the couple do not get married they arrange a secret abortion to cover the ‘shame’.

It is only when they move to foreign countries that circumcised women from Africa face the issue of not being normal or being unnatural. It is in these countries where they are made to feel incomplete (Korieh, 2005; Johnsdotter, 2007). Many women who are refugees have reassessed the practice based on their encounters with the health care system in foreign countries. Most refugee women detail a traumatic encounter in hospital where they were made to feel like female circumcision was a horrible thing, when where they were come from it was normal. As a culture shock to the medical practitioners there, women were made objects of spectacle (Johnsdotter, 2007).

Another great challenge that most women who practice female circumcision face in their new homes is deciding on whether to circumcise their daughters or not. Some choose to sustain the tradition and take their daughters to Somalia and get them circumcised. Others, due to the fear of social criticism for their daughters, choose to not circumcise, thereby giving their daughters an opportunity to be integrated into the new society. Other mothers choose not to circumcise their daughters due to the fear that the authorities will take their children away. Others feel that there is no need to circumcise their daughter because they do not know if they will ever have to go back to their countries where it is a shame and embarrassment not to be circumcised.

In this chapter I have mentioned how female circumcision has been scrutinised on one side and how it has been defended on the other. In view of the arguments from both sides the important problem, as stated by Kenyatta (2015:91) in a survey he conducted in the early 20th century, is an anthropological one. He states that “it is unintelligent to discuss the emotional attitudes of either side, or to take violent sides in the question, without

understanding the reason why the educated, intelligent Gikuyu still cling to this custom". These are the same people who have been exposed to other cultures and perhaps received similar experiences as those who advocated against FC, yet they still support the 'barbaric' custom. The real argument lies not in defending female circumcision, but in understanding the psychology of those who strongly believe in it. We need to understand that this long-held custom was, and still is, regarded as the core of the community and that it has massive educational, social, moral, and religious implications apart from the physical aspect of cutting. It should also be approached with immense understanding of the historical context, where there have been numerous unsuccessful attempts to demolish this custom for centuries. Investigations need to be carried out as to why the earlier attempts failed, and new approaches should be encouraged where the aim is not to abolish the cultural identities of people who practice FC. The abolishment of the surgical aspect of FC becomes the abolishment of the institution and its people. If anti-FC advocates such as the WHO argue on the bases of human and children's rights in relation to circumcision, it is necessary within this context that there is also focus on Jewish circumcision of voiceless infants.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Using three films; *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) the thesis argues that the manner in which circumcision is represented is problematic and there is a need to follow in the recommendation of Third World cinema and African cinema theorists that the Global South needs to write their own stories.

In arguing that both Inxeba: *The Wound* (2017) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) have investigated and analysed circumcision from the Western gaze, this paper through thematic analysis, has identified that through representation, both films have relied of colonial racial imaging of African and African cultural practices. In *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) *Ulwaluko* is portrayed as uncivilised and backwards because it encourages a monolithic view of being a man. This representation then argues for the abolition of the ritual. This dates back from the missionaries' arrival in Africa where the aim was to shift Africans from their cultural ways of living because they considered them heathen. The manner in which *Ulwaluko* is represented in this film signals that it is through the outsider's gaze as it has ignored the complex and nuances aspect of the ritual. It failed to offer an understanding of the significance of this ritual to the Xhosa identity.

However, *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) focuses on the hegemonic masculinity that exists within the cultural spaces such as *Ulwaluko*. These spaces are not receptive to any form of masculinity other than the heteronormative therefore, anyone displaying non normative masculinity is ostracised and mocked. An example of the toxic masculinity at the mountain is through the intersectional characters of Kwanda, Vija and Xolani. Kwanda faces ridicule due to his sexual orientation and in the end he dies because he chooses to be vocal. His death then becomes symbolic of silencing other forms of masculinity. Even though *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017) opens up a necessary dialogue on toxic masculinity within *ulwaluko* where gay men are marginalised, if fails to put into recognition that the experience of black gay men will differ to those of the other because as a racial group black people have been oppressed for centuries.

Trengove also offers a problematic representation where he speaks on behalf of black gay men through the camera without having shared experiences.

Like *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *The Cutting Tradition* (2009) is problematic in the manner in which it represents female circumcision. Its arguments for the eradication of the practice undermines the complexity and significance of the practice to the identity of the women. It argues for the eradication of female circumcision on the bases that it has health implications in the long run, however this claims do not have a concrete medical and scientific backing. Instead the film and the organisations advocating for the eradication of female circumcision renders circumcised women as voiceless entities that cannot speak for themselves, thus othering occurs. The women who have undergone circumcision are made to feel incomplete and disabled as they are classifies as mutilated. This classification is mostly evident with circumcised women in exile where the western views of beauty are the normative and as such the circumcised women are seen as not desirable.

Umthunzi Wentaba (2007) offers a different narrative into the representation of circumcision. Because the gaze comes with insiders it offers an understanding into the ritual of ulwaluko. It understands how intricate and valuable the ritual is for the Xhosa identity. It also does not fail to criticise the toxic masculinity within *ulwaluko,* where men are expected to demonstrate aggressive and violent behaviour in order to be seen as men. It also addresses the need to include women and western medicine during the process of ulwaluko as a collaborative effort to end the crisis of mortality rate during circumcision season in Eastern-Cape.

Circumcision is a sensitive topic to those who practice it and in order to discuss some of its limitations there needs to be a collaborative effort where the custodians are consulted to avoid misrepresentation. However, there needs to be criticism of circumcision and other forms of cultural rituals from outsider's perspective to avoid biases.

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