

# Redemption in the South African West: Violence, Colonialism and Oppression in *Five Fingers for Marseilles* (2018)

Chris Broodryk <sup>a,\*</sup> and Shaun Joynt <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of the Arts: Drama, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa;

<sup>b</sup> Department of Practical and Missional Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of the Free State

CONTACT: Chris Broodryk. Email: chris.broodryk@up.ac.za

## Abstract

In the South African Sesotho-language Western *Five Fingers for Marseilles* (2018), Tau flees his hometown of Marseilles in the aftermath of a violent incident. Returning after apartheid ended, Tau finds his hometown in ruins at the hands of some of the very individuals—his childhood friends—who were supposed to protect it. Tau seeks to save Marseilles from those who corrupt it and seeks redemption for himself and the town in the process. In this article, we demonstrate that the film borrows genre conventions and iconography from the Western to tell its story of redemption, and in telling this story the film invokes a general disillusionment with contemporary South African politics. Tau's quest for redemption is as much political as his self-forgiveness is personal, and this redemption is made possible through an atonement for the past to halt the intergenerational violence that characterises South Africa and Marseilles in the post-apartheid era. Marseilles can only be a life-sustaining, generative community in the absence of the violence of colonialism and corruption.

**Keywords:** *Five Fingers for Marseilles*; redemption; South African cinema; violence; Western

## 1. Introduction

The South African Western *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, directed by Michael Matthews, was released in South Africa on 6 April 2018.<sup>1</sup> The plot follows Tau (Vuyo Dabula) as he returns to his home in Railway, situated on the outskirts of the town of Marseilles. Having served prison time for past crimes, Tau is distressed to discover that the friends he had left behind as a young man have failed to protect the town. Furthermore, an enigmatic new villain recently arrived to stir up trouble. As critic Teo Bugbee (2018) describes the film, “[f]or fans of Sergio Leone, this setup may seem familiar, but the standoff takes place in compellingly undiscovered country, where the rule of genre is as malleable as the rule of the law”.<sup>2</sup> The authors' interest is in how *Five Fingers for Marseilles* aligns with established Western tropes and conventions to inform the idea of redemption associated with the characters Tau, Unathi (Aubrey Poolo) and Sepoko (or Ghost, played by Hamilton Dlamini). For the purposes of this article, self-forgiveness is understood as a process of actions towards individual atonement, while redemption is understood as the status at which self-forgiveness arrives if the atonement is successful on individual and collective levels. Redemption narratives are particularly resonant in times of profound social change (Hughey 2012, 751) and can have, as in *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, secular and theological dimensions.

The authors also comment on corruption and the failure of governance in the film, and follow Weisband (2009, 361), below:

the personal anguish and cultural despair that arises as a consequence of human violation for political purposes within the boundaries of modern sovereign nation states does not derive from atrocity and personal violation alone. It stems from the pervasive sense of betrayal, the utter existential loss experienced once governments have done massive harm to members of their own citizenry; that is to say, when governments have committed acts of political evil.

In *Five Fingers for Marseilles* Tau's martyrish pursuit of self-forgiveness and redemption are tied into the film's elegiac tone. This tone is visualised by its iconography of expansive landscapes, run-down infrastructure and various markers of collective memory and histories. The film is elegiac in the sense that it commemorates "a passing" that is not past and is yet to be resolved within the film itself: the passing of colonialism and its violence. Tau's pursuit of self-forgiveness and redemption and the town Marseilles's trajectory towards collective redemption are illuminated by the film's (post)colonial hauntings and its Western genre alignment. As evidenced in *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, the Western remains visually and even ideologically "[tied] to the expansionist project of coloniality" (2015, 268). The idea of haunting in postcolonial contexts where "haunting traces of colonial expropriation and reification" remain (O'Riley 2004, 69), and speaks to "a past that never disappears but is always revenant ... so as to stretch the present into the past and future" (Gaylard 2008, 3). Marseilles and Railway are haunted by apartheid and corruption, places and landscapes "stained by time" (see Fisher 2012, 19, 21).

Marseilles itself is a colonial site where the Western's "tendency to reaffirm the dominance of white masculinity at the expense of Indigenous people" (Pearson 2013, 161) is rejected to instead cast black characters in direct conflict with the subjective and objective violence of colonialism. Tau's wrestling with self-forgiveness cannot be disassociated from the ghosts of apartheid and corruption. Here, the malevolent pseudo-supernatural yet mortal presence of the villainous Sepoko, or Ghost, appears. Ghost's presence materialises in the apartheid and corruption-decimated town as hauntings "[occur] where absences are felt most acutely: in the fissures where people once lived, and in the crevices where they were made to disappear" (Hoelscher 2008, 196). Tau's life of violence seems devoid of a Pauline conversion experience but is driven by a sense of guilt and accountability. In contrast, his friend Unathi's ostensibly pacifist position oscillates between a commitment to socio-political renewal and a resignation to the inevitable outcomes of the conflict in Marseilles. This conflict is personified in the figure of Ghost, whose Mephistophelean presence challenges God and government to lay claim to Marseilles and its surroundings.

Following Fehrle's (2015) approach to Quentin Tarantino's Western *Django Unchained* (2012), our position is at least a partially Jamesonian one, in which no film is apolitical and in which one must "always historicise": what to make of *Five Fingers for Marseilles*' morally nomadic protagonist Tau—one who had disappointed his entire town, bringing risk and new threats to its existence—in the era of government corruption and the state in disarray? If the American Western "in the post-9/11 period ... [shows] the epic struggle between savagery and civilization [as] a useful shorthand and explanation for American forays into the Middle East" (Kollin 2010, 10), then we read the politics of *Five Fingers for Marseilles* as explicitly addressing the failures of governance in contemporary South Africa. During a film panel at the 2019 South African Communications Association annual conference at the University of

Cape Town, Ian Rijdsdijk commented that some film scholarship in South Africa has (re)turned towards classical film criticism rather than explicit examinations of the political economy of film, and this article demonstrates precisely this turn (2019).

## 2. The American Western and the Western beyond America

With its emphasis on frontiers, borders, justice and sacrifice, the Western has always been political (see Scott Simmon's *The Invention of the Western Film* (2003)). For Robert Warshaw, the Western is characterised by an increased physical and psychological realism (2002, 113). As Janet Walker (2001b, 13) proposes, one can read the Western through history and one can read the Western *as* history since "Westerns incorporate, elide, embellish, mythologize, allegorize, erase, duplicate and rethink past events that are themselves—as history—fragmented, fuzzy, and striated with fantasy constructions". Tim Dirks (n.d.) describes the Western as portraying "the conquest of the wilderness and the subordination of nature, in the name of civilization, or the confiscation of the territorial rights of the original inhabitants of the frontier". While Walker evokes the presence of histories in and of the Western, the theme of displacement is clear in Dirks' description, and lends itself to an iconography of homesteads, prisons and saloons (and brothels) that are part of, or close to, a small town that is itself far removed from the already more developed infrastructure of the rest of its country. As Campbell (2015, 268) explains, the Western genre "has, in its rupturing potential, the ability to stretch and shift the genre into innovative and politically challenging new areas". Entering into such new areas heeds Warshaw's (2002, 119) caution against "[yielding] entirely to [the Western's] static quality as legend and to the 'cinematic' temptations of its landscape, the horses, the quiet men". Such innovative and politically engaged Westerns were sometimes referred to as revisionist.

The revisionist Western, which "questioned the themes and elements of traditional/classic westerns", proved central in this process of demystification and re-storying of the American West (Dirks n.d.). While films such as *Geronimo* (Hill 1993) depicted the American First Nations as complicit in white American expansion, later neo-Westerns such as *Smoke Signals* (Eyre 1998) mocked the dominance of American Westerns in the lives of present day First Nations descendants by way of, for instance, a song titled "John Wayne's Teeth". Revisionism entails a near cynical realism that "rejects grand thematic gestures in favour of moral ambiguity" (McClain 2010, 60). The Western resurgence of the 1990s introduced the postmodern approach of "generic destabilization and the questioning of traditional myths and master narratives" (Keller 2001, 28). If the Western of the 1990s was explicitly concerned with history in an equally affirmative and critical way (Keller 2001, 29) then *Five Fingers for Marseilles* is concerned with redemption as imminently tied to a violent and traumatic past that continues to inform the present.

Between mythologising the West and demystifying it in a revisionist manner, many Western characters and plots remain constant and recognisable. In the traditional Western, the hero is recognisable as an individual who has a favourite, reliable horse and who finds in the antagonist a mirror image or double of himself (Dirks n.d.), as Tau finds in Ghost. In *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, and as Tau recognises, both these figures effectively impede the process of freeing Marseilles from violence. Tau understands that due to his own violent past, present, he must die if Marseilles is to survive and even flourish. Similar to the protagonist in *My Darling Clementine* (Ford 1946), and as in other Westerns, the violent qualities Tau uses to "overcome lawlessness are the qualities unwanted by the new society his actions make possible" (Lusted 2003, 158).

Dirks (n.d.) describes the central conflict of the Western as contained in a series of overlapping binaries, including:

good vs. bad, virtue vs. evil, white hat vs. black hat, man vs. man, new arrivals vs. Native Americans ... humanity vs. nature, civilization vs. wilderness or lawlessness, villains vs. heroes, lawman or sheriff vs. gunslinger, social law and order vs. anarchy, the rugged individualist vs. the community, settler vs. nomad, and farmer vs. industrialist.

These binaries may lay the foundation for a layered and thematically complex narrative not suggested by the simplicity of the binaries themselves. Similar to the action genre and crime films, the Western focuses on the social order (Trento 2015, 47). When this social order is threatened, the protagonist (representing a particular community) attempts to restore order. In *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, the key binaries are those of social law and order (Tau, Lerato and then Bongani) vs. anarchy (or corruption; the mayor features here again, as does Ghost); and that of individualism (Ghost; Tau at the start of the film) vs community (Tau at the end of the film; Unathi; Lerato and Sizwe). *Five Fingers for Marseilles* demonstrates that once the binaries of social law and order and community vs. anarchy and individual interest are resolved, self-forgiveness and redemption eclipse any materialism, and the binary between land and religious transcendence is revealed as false. In this process, Tau bears the image of the man in the Western who often expresses himself in acts of violence (see Warshaw 2002, 123).

*Five Fingers for Marseilles* features no ranches, cattle or sardonic prostitutes, but it does feature signs of small-scale farming, an undertaker and liquor sales. It is unclear what industries sustain Railway's economy beyond systemic corruption and extortion, though there is evidently some development where the mayor, Bongani, is involved in some construction work. In addition, while many Westerns suggest some sort of new infrastructure through an iconography of telegram lines, trains pulling into stations and a mail service, *Marseilles* and *Railway* seem devoid of any news delivery system—there is no newspaper punted from street corners and no posters informing viewers that there are WANTED! outlaws in the vicinity.

*Five Fingers for Marseilles*, the first Sesotho (language) Western, was filmed on location in Lady Grey, a South African town in the Eastern Cape close to the border of Lesotho. Lady Grey is located at the foot of the Witteberg mountains, which gives the film its mountainous, often harsh landscape.<sup>3</sup> In American Westerns, landscape often signifies the ways in which “geography determines the notion of manifest destiny that the genre represents” (Teo 2017, 9). Outside of these American Westerns, Eastern Westerns became “defined by the padi fields of Thailand, the vastness of the Chinese desert, the rolling planes of the Manchurian steppes” in visually distinct Westerns that draw on traditional Western conventions (2017, 9, 1). These landscapes participate in the global iconography of the Western while visually asserting a recognisable and distinct geography unique to each location, accompanied by different narratives of conquest, expansion and territory. In Mauritanian-born Malian director Abderrahmane Sissako's work, landscape is as important as in American or Italian Westerns; here, the desert is not the antithesis to civilisation, but a home (Jaji 2014, 161). Similarly, *Five Fingers of Marseilles* is visually distinct from yet aligned with American Westerns in its mountains and surrounding landscapes, which mark sites and borders of conflict. *Five Fingers for Marseilles* further borrows from the redemption Western, which also shares thematic concerns with other African iterations of the Western. One such Western is what Jaji (2014) calls Sissako's “Cassava Westerns”, which, like *Five Fingers of Marseilles*, borrow

from American Westerns in its depiction of quest narratives and the seriality associated with earlier Westerns. Sissako specifically uses established Western tropes to address what Jaji (2014, 164) refers to as “the slow violence of globalisation” associated with the “catastrophically lopsided concentrations of wealth and resources” suggested in *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, and visible in the brutal inequalities of contemporary South Africa. As such, this globalisation includes (the history of) corrosive coloniality and corruption visible in Marseilles and Railway, where imperialism and territorial expansion are part and parcel of globalisation’s encroachment on land and human rights.

Since the Western genre long ago transcended an iconographic “Americanness”, the figure of the cowboy is indeed a global presence: “[in] the early 1900s, Wild West shows took the cowboy persona and a newly canonized depiction of frontier history on grand tours, to South America, India, South Africa ... and Canada” (Gibson 2016, 738). Colonial authorities had identified the Western as the ideal film to screen for African audiences because in the colonial mindset the act of watching a Western required audiences with limited literacies, and by the end of World War II “for many African moviegoers the “cowboy” and the cinema had become synonymous” (Burns 2002, 103) even as fears about the ill social influence of these allegedly pro-violence films started to rise (2002, 104–105).<sup>4</sup> The Western was historically a very popular film genre in central and southern Africa (Burns 2002, 103, 114). African audiences drew on Western iconography and the genre’s visual paradigms to specifically construct new urban identities (Reynolds 2005, 407).

The popularity of the Western extended to South Africa as well. The cinema was central to Cape Town popular culture in especially the 1940s and 1950s, with Westerns and comedies as popular genres amongst younger urban working-class audiences (Gainer 2000, 70–71). Indeed, “cheap cowboy features and serials [proliferated] in the 1930s and 1940s, and the economics of cinema distribution in Southern Africa, guaranteed that cowboy films were virtually the only type of films available to African audiences” in areas such as Rhodesia (Burns 2002, 116; see also Pearson 2013, 357). Reynolds (2005, 401) recounts how audiences in late nineteenth century Johannesburg were breathless at the appearance of American Western legend Buffalo Bill, while the introduction of Westerns into Natal “was a seminal moment in the rise of mass black spectatorship in southern Africa” (also see Parsons 2004, 13). Indeed, the cowboy “constitutes a complex site around which political critique, corporeal desire and modern spectacle coalesce” (Pearson 2013, 153). The cowboy was a familiar figure of the South African cinescape long before “black” South African Westerns such as *Umbango* (Van der Merwe 1986) were released. *Umbango* was “a product of a government film subsidy that saw many movies ostensibly made by white filmmakers for black audiences, between 1973 and 1990” (Obenson 2018). The Western functions allegorically in colonial sites (Pearson 2013, 161) that serve to shape and inform the film’s commentary on contemporary South African politics and power.

Lesley Marx (2006a, 9) ends her autobiographical reflection on her father, American cinema (specifically the Western), and her own formative cinematic education as follows: “seeing the veld through the lens of the prairie ... living in the spaces of metaphor and analogy has the value of connecting areas across the divide, but cannot quite close the gap opened by that history”. Marx provides a provocative and mournful coda which compels the authors to consider how *Five Fingers for Marseilles* attempts to “fill in” contemporary South Africa in negotiating colonial trauma by way of interconnected tensions and motifs: self-forgiveness; redemption and the individual’s accountability to the community; the corruption and failure

of government; and the religious significance of land and God in Unathi and Tau's relationship.

### **3. *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, violence and redemption**

In an interview with Culture Trip's Andrew Thompson, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* producer and co-writer Sean Drummond explains that "[all] good Westerns had social and political undertones. They were always about complex issues such as land and race relations. The Western is about taking land that doesn't belong to people, and the legacy of that" (Thompson 2017). From the outset, the filmmakers had known and considered the Western's socio-political legacy as well as its tropes and conventions. As Drummond continues:

Revisionist Westerns are those that went back and thought: "Ok, well what does that mean?" Your classic Westerns are all a celebration of man's triumph over the "natives" or the land, but this film is told from the other perspective. *The damage has been done, and the legacy of that damage lives on in the lives of the people who are trying to rebuild ...* Ultimately, the Western is a beautiful lens through which to look at politics and social issues that South Africa is currently dealing with. (emphasis added)

Finally, Drummond comments that the Western traditionally stands on four pillars, echoing Dirks' binary sets above:

man on man, men against men, man against himself, men against the land, and civilization against the passage of time resonated with the stories in the area ... this film is exactly about that. *The shifting country through the microcosm of a tiny town, with complex men, battling with themselves, battling with each other, their relationship to the land, and the town's relationship with history.* (emphasis added)

Drummond provides a succinct thematic summary of his film, the details of which, and of specific characters, are discussed below. The authors discuss key events and images from the film in a linear, chronological manner similar to how these events and images occur for the viewer.

#### **3.1. *Land, ruins and colonial remnants***

*Five Fingers for Marseilles* opens with establishing shots of the stark, snow-covered landscape surrounding the town of Marseilles and Railway. One sees mountain ranges and the film cuts to a lone cattle beast standing next to a fence. As the camera pulls back, one notices a railway track in the foreground. In this sequence of shots, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* evokes the opening images of the Coen brothers' acclaimed elegiac neo-Western, *No Country for Old Men* (2007). Much like the latter film's broad and unspecified post-apartheid setting, the Coen brothers' film is set somewhere in the 1980s and explores age and moral accountability against the backdrop of an American West that has changed to irrevocably challenge the established "old ways" of the American West.

The opening voice over narration sets the political scene in *Five Fingers for Marseilles* as follows: "First came the trains, and with them came the settlers, bringing their towns with them. Paris, Roma, Barcelona and Marseilles. And they called it their land. And for us who'd been there before, they put us on a hill out of sight."<sup>5</sup> There are a number of important points

to make about this opening narration. Firstly, trains have been part of the Western's genre iconography since the genre's American film inception in Edwin S Porter's 1903 silent classic *The Great Train Robbery*. Trains signify modernity, progress, change and also a flattening of time and space. Geographically, areas became much easier and quicker to travel.

Secondly, the narration identifies settlers who brought their towns with them; they come from France, Italy and Spain. South Africa became the site of European cultural and economic replication outside of European borders. (Writer Troy Blacklaws (2014) provides a detailed discussion of the significance of the Western for South African writers, audiences and readers; such a discussion falls outside of the parameters of this current article.) Thirdly, the film evokes notions of land, and land ownership. "They called it their land" means that land was claimed from its original inhabitants; those inhabitants who had been on the land before the Europeans arrived, were dispossessed and forcibly relocated to other living spaces. As John Laband (2020, 7) writes, for those indigenous inhabitants of South Africa "who from 1659 fought for two centuries against the colonial intruders to retain their land and independence", the amaXhosa saying "the land has died" was both literal and metaphorical. In the film, those individuals performing labour in Marseilles were designated to live on that town's outskirts in Railway, mirroring the way in which black workers in South Africa were moved to the outskirts of cities in clearly demarcated areas. Claims to land and being dispossessed from land fuel socio-economic malaise, and has a clear racial directive: "[s]ignificantly, land once appropriated, 'given', bought or conquered was considered permanently alienated and could not revert to its original [black] occupants or rulers even if left unoccupied or abandoned, and could be sold or transferred to other colonists but not to blacks" (Coplan 2003, 979).

In the mainly post-apartheid setting of *Five Fingers for Marseilles* the remnants of European colonisation are visible in the literal ruins left behind from a previous era, and embodied by two white male characters' ruined bodies: an alcoholic salesman named John, who serves mostly as the film's comic relief and to deliver exposition, and a weary bodyguard ("enforcer") named Sweetface. Similar to the "non cerebral comic relief" provided by the white Stephen Baldwin character in Mario van Peebles' so-called "black Western" *Posse* (1993), a role traditionally tied to black characters (Keller 2001) the salesman "Honest" John, who scavenges to make a living in Marseilles, is at worst a passive witness to injustice and at best a wry observer of the current state of affairs in Marseilles.<sup>6</sup>

A voice-over narration accompanies shots of snow-capped mountains: "This land is all the scripture we need. It was here before us and it will be [here] when we're gone". This statement foreshadows the deaths of those involved in Marseilles and Railway's culture of violence. As Mboti (2014, 40) reminds us, "the question of violence is relevant to the discourse of the African postcolony. The African postcolony is the site of the relation of violence", and Marseilles is such an African postcolony. The statement also reiterates the centrality of land to the film's characters by complementing the shots of the mountains in positioning the land as the film's primary character which will outlast all its human inhabitants. The land is the primary element in Western iconography, and it "both threatened the pioneer society and promised future greatness" (Lenihan 1985, 12). In a Western with a limited number of religious references (Lerato singing a gospel song; the image of the crucifix seen on bodies and in infrastructure), and in which Unathi is the only main character to evoke God's role in (or absence from) Marseilles, this equivocation of land and scripture is crucial. As a primary icon of the Western genre, the land is an immovable "deity" whose geography plays a determining part in who lives and who dies.

### 3.2. *Tau, Unathi, and Ghost in Five Fingers for Marseille*

The film introduces its five main characters as energetic youths, with Zulu as their leader. We see the friends take shots at one another in a kind of staged showdown, using slingshots and pebbles instead of guns and bullets. At their camp, they listen to the radio: “the constitution changes to maintain the status quo”. It is the time of apartheid, and public protest action will remain illegal. They are likely listening to a Lesotho-based broadcast of the African National Congress’ anti-apartheid counter-propaganda Radio Freedom (Tyali 2020, 61–62), “an exile radio service broadcasting from afar to a captive population” (Davis 2009, 365). One of the Five, Pastor (Unathi), positions himself as the storyteller and introduces the other main characters to the viewer as if speaking a prophecy about these individuals over the land: Zulu, their fearless leader, who before his death has a son with Lerato, a son who will come to embody the post-violence possible in Marseilles in the wake of the film’s climactic bloodshed; Lerato, the lone girl and the “heart and soul” of the group, whose father Jonah runs the local bar, the Grey Lady, and who eventually kills the film’s major villain, Ghost; Cockroach (Luyanda), “the broken one”, a violent individual who ends up working for the police; Pockets (Bongani), the rich one, whose personal ambition eclipses the risk of doing business with Ghost; and finally the “ruthless and fast” Tau, whose name means Lion (it is the Lion of Judah who is worthy of opening the seals to bring on the end of days in Revelation 5:5; see John 5:22).

Unathi later becomes a pastor at the local church. The pastor and the church both have the capacity of social transformation, but they too are weighed down—haunted—by colonialism. The image of the church can represent sanctuary, social elitism and hypocrisy, and supernatural power; it can nurture or smother its community (Lindvall 1993, 137). Walter D Mignolo (2007, 479–480) describes Christianity as having produced “a genealogy of beings, a caste ... that became slowly translated into race”; it follows that “racism and the coloniality of being are one and the same cognitive operation” within material power relations. For this reason, in South Africa scholars such as Thinandavha D Mashau (2018, 7) argue for a decolonised Christian faith that can “appreciate the richness of the Reformed faith in promoting the *imago Dei* in all humanity and ... embrace the process of Africanisation”. Christianity in South Africa is yet to rid itself of its colonial weight. In *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, the church is a site of latent potency where weapons are stored. In South Africa, as elsewhere, “religion often inhibits change and in many cases, it instinctively protects the status quo” (Erasmus 2005, 139). In the film, neither the pastor nor the church can fulfil their peace-keeping functions because violence is the currency of communication in Marseilles and Railway. Unathi and his church signify a melancholic status, and stasis, that have for years inhibited social action against injustice. In South Africa, the “gradual imbrication of religion and the state colonial project, a strategy used to legitimize white domination over others” and the later salience of the Dutch Reformed Church as “moral centre of the state project” allowed religion to “[tie] itself to an overtly non-revolutionary project” (Landau 2014, 292–293). As Christianity spread across the southern tip of the African continent as part of the colonial project, missionaries and churches played a key role in mediating “colonial politics and culture” while also stimulating “local resistance and opposition to colonial rule—as on the Cape Frontier” (Laband 2020, 112). As in other mainstream Westerns, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* presents Christian motifs; furthermore, there are no references to any African traditional religions. Unathi survives the climactic showdown not because of the explicit intervention of Tau or God, but because the land needs him to survive to be the storyteller with heightened but human moral values (a man *of* God, if not a man in communication *with* God) to direct a way forward.



Jonah, owner of the local bar, the Grey Lady, and Lerato's father, asks Tau for help to change a lightbulb, and Tau agrees. This scene contrasts with a later scene in which Sepoko has Jonah killed; looking at the old man's charred and burned body, Tau asks for someone to intervene, negating his own capacity for intervention. When Tau is still not recognised and named in his hometown, he calls himself "Nobody" as if that is his name. "Nobody" evokes the Western archetype of the Man with No Name, most popularly performed by Clint Eastwood in a series of spaghetti Westerns for Italian director Sergio Leone, such as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), where he is, like Tau, an ambivalent moral centre in a world where violence often prevails. This theme also occupies the classical Westerns *Unforgiven* (Eastwood 1992) and *Open Range* (Costner 2004), adding the figure of the aging, disillusioned hero to its tapestry. A key difference between "Nobody" and Eastwood's Man with No Name is that the viewer knows Nobody's real name is Tau, and part of the film's tension is to wait for the character's real name to be made public—accountability cannot be anonymous. Considering his direct and sustained experience of police oppression and exploitation discussed in the next paragraph, the overtly political history that Tau occupies (apartheid and post-apartheid, both inflected with colonialism) differs from Eastwood's characters who often lacked such histories or had them only in brief, broad plot points.

During a church service, the apartheid-era police arrive in town wearing their brown uniforms; it does not escape the authors that one policeman is called Vorster. In South African history, the Afrikaans Nationalist and National Party member Balthazar Johannes (BJ) Vorster was first Minister of Justice and then succeeded Hendrik Verwoerd in effecting apartheid segregationist policies ("Balthazar Johannes Vorster").<sup>7</sup> When their strong-arming somewhat unexpectedly does not have the desired outcome of intimidating the Marseilles locals—the locals pelting them with eggs and later stones—the police throw Lerato into their van and drive off. Tau, on a bicycle, is first to pursue the police, the others in tow; he even succeeds in cutting off the vehicle, which turns sharply and rolls. Thinking that Lerato is dead, Tau picks up one of the policemen's firearms and shoots Vorster and his colleague. They die, but not before one of the policemen says: "Forgive me". This statement is clearly directed at Tau and his friends, as the policeman says "ntšoarele", which is Sesotho for "forgive me". This scene evokes similar pleas for forgiveness at the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995). As Audrey Chapman (2007, 63) reports, "the unwillingness of many of the deponents in the human rights violations hearings to forgive apparently was related to their negative assessments of the police and the role they played under apartheid".

Lerato is, however, still alive. Realising that he had killed white policemen and anticipating the consequences of his actions, Tau flees town. As Walker (2001c, 220) explains, the Western genre presents a conventionalist history, which is formally identifiable by an essential "catastrophic past event", part of the internal history of the Western film and its narrative. This event fuels the plot and at least partly explains the disequilibrium experienced by the hero. Tau goes into self-exile, abandoning his bicycle on the railway tracks. (These same tracks later lead to Tau's beaten and bloodied body before he is metaphorically resurrected.) From a train cargo carriage, Tau watches the land passing him by. The film cuts to Zulu whose eyeline matches Tau's. In this edit, the film solidifies the tension between Tau and Zulu, with Tau as the instigator of this latest violence in Marseilles and with Zulu and their other friends, as well as the town, as the de facto recipients of the violence that will follow.

Adult Tau is in prison, where he reflects on his life of violence and how has been affected by it; a flashback shows how, following a bus holdup (where the bus is a stand-in for the stagecoach of earlier Westerns), Tau retches after shooting a bus passenger. After he is released from prison (off-screen), Tau undertakes to abandon violence. Apartheid has seemingly ended, as evidenced in the demographic of the police force in Marseilles. Back in Railway and Marseilles, Tau visits the Grey Lady tavern. He helps a travelling salesman who calls himself Honest John and who commits to helping Tau to prevent violence. Upon returning to their former camp, Tau encounters the space as a memorial that chronicles the five fingers' friendship by way of photos and rock art. Nearby, he finds his old friend Zulu's tombstone, and discovers that Zulu and Lerato had a son, Sizwe, who frequents the camp site. By now, Unathi is the pastor at the local church (although he says later that "God doesn't listen to me anymore") and Bongani is mayor of New Marseilles.<sup>8</sup> This idea of a "New" Marseilles is revealed to be as much of a conceptual paradox as the idea of the "New" South Africa. The idea of the "New" South Africa evoked "non-racialism, cultural pluralism, peace and nation-building" (Naidu 2001, 18) aligned with the same discourse that gave rise to the notion of an African renaissance (Vale and Maseko 1998, 272–273, 286) and reinvention, and also rainbowism, which "became an authorising narrative which assisted in the denial of difference" and "racial variety even as it does not constructively deal with the meanings thereof" (Gqola 2001, 98–99). The pervasive state corruption in South Africa has exposed the false dawn of rainbowism and this "newness" in the same way that very little has changed on socio-economic and political level for Marseilles.

Cockroach, who later emulates the socially alienated Travis Bickle's mirror challenge from *Taxi Driver*, works for the local police and is responsible for the same racketeering as their apartheid precursors. Tau witnesses the Chinese shopkeeper Wei suffer the consequences of not having enough protection money to pay off Cockroach. At this juncture Ghost (or Sepoko) arrives as if in response to Pastor's warning from years ago that "things [were] going to get much worse". As Janina Wozniak (2019) pointed out, Ghost is a Mephistophelian character. Mephistopheles does not come to earth to turn souls towards damnation but to claim and collect those who are already damned, hence his interest in the souls inhabiting Marseilles; in any event, he prefers live (exploitable) victims to dead ones (Washington 1986, 665). At one point, Ghost tells Tau that he was born from a lightning strike that had killed his mother. This supernatural origin story emphasises Ghost's Mephistophelean character as this story suggests the theological event of the prince of light being cast from heaven (as described, for instance, in the title of René Girard's *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*). Ghost is the Mephistopheles to Bongani's Faust, having made a pact in which the latter sells his integrity and his home town for material wealth until such time as Ghost comes to claim his soul, rather, the soul of Marseilles. Typical of the early Westerns, "[the] villainous city slicker comes from outside the community and is, as such, an alien intruder" (Stanfield 1987, 108); Bongani brings the cunning intruder into the town. Irene Gerber-Münch (2009, 146) writes of Mephisto in Goethe's *Faust*: "Human concerns on earth are important to him, and he is second to no one in his knowledge of them". Ghost, like Mephistopheles, has the overall appearance of a gentleman, a figure of some sophistication, even if the supernatural powers associated with him are not as pronounced (Washington 1986, 664) as in other Faust-versions (Mann, Marlowe) in which he appears. The film best defines Ghost within these theological-mythological strands: as a genre villain, he rather pursues power only for the sake of power and territorial expansion. Theologically and mythologically, Ghost threatens, seduces, and exploits. When Ghost meets Tau at the Grey Lady, he says: "There is only one law out here: the big dog eats the little dog". Ghost claims that he can be the Devil or Messiah as he puts

his two guns on the table facing Tau, suggesting that he can facilitate damnation or salvation—likely, through violence.

Sizwe, cautious of Tau, prods, “Were you a fighter, like my father?” and says, “This is my father’s land”. Sizwe resembles his father Zulu. In addition, Tau refers to Sizwe as “kid”, thereby not only evoking the Western presence of The Kid as apprentice to the protagonist, but also indicating Tau’s guilt and resultant protectiveness of the young man. Tau tries to protect Sizwe not only from the corrupt police and from Ghost, but also from the life of violence and loss that his father Zulu and his friends have experienced.

Outside the Grey Lady, Ghost forces Tau to fight Sweetface; Tau wins, but Unathi publicly identifies him as Tau. Even Ghost knows the name, “the Lion of Marseilles”. This phrase echoes the Biblical “Lion of Judah” and its association with the Second Coming of Jesus (as in the Book of Revelations 5:5). Unathi is a truth teller who summons Tau into being. The tension between Tau and Unathi becomes the tension between a man seeking redemption for his community, and a religious representative who knows the Lion’s calling better than the Lion himself. This calling is based on community and collective interest, not religions revelation. The film repeatedly shows Unathi in the church, even when the film is rather ambiguous about his level of devotion; the exact dimensions of his Christian faith are never clearly articulated by the film or the character within a particular theology. Still, Unathi recognises that Tau can bring healing to the community of Marseilles and acts as a conscience for the protagonist in this regard. Unathi’s prominence in the film positions him as an intertextual and theological counterpart to another prominent religious figure in another film that deals with the legacy of violent pasts, Ian Gabriel’s *Forgiveness* (2004). Gabriel’s film provides “a palpable Christian ethos that comes profoundly to inform, and condone, the film’s central argument for ‘forgiveness’” (McNamara 2011, 83). Similar to the priest in *Forgiveness*, Unathi is also, through much of the film, “an enigma of stability, of stillness in a film marked by transformation” (McNamara 2011, 82).<sup>9</sup>

### ***3.3. The political optimism of redemption***

Towards the end of the film, Tau is beaten up so severely that his friends think he is dead. Wei and his children, and Sizwe, nurse him back to health. Tau asks Unathi: “What does God have to say?” Unathi responds with a question of his own: “Why did you come back? Once, you turned the world upside down and ran”. Here, Unathi is not only explicit about how Tau had fled Marseilles years before, but also evokes the Biblical image of the disciples turning the world upside down for the better. Unathi continues: “Now you are here, and it starts again. You were never a freedom fighter. Just a fighter. We are what we are because of you. That day changed all of us”. Tau responds to Unathi’s challenge as follows: “What about you, Pastor? What have you done to save Marseilles?” Unathi replies, “I made a promise to God to leave that life behind”. Unathi’s words affirm what Tau knows, that violence breeds violence and must be abandoned. When Tau asks Unathi why he had come to see him, Unathi replies that it is “for memory” as he throws their Five Fingers childhood badge at Tau. Unathi seeks the promise of the future in the past, later telling Tau that “God doesn’t hear me anymore” and that it is for this reason that at that point in the film, the Pastor cannot receive Tau’s confessions of his sins. This negation of confession prefigures the film’s ending which emphasises action—specifically, leaving behind “that life” of violence—over words in achieving redemption. Tau and Unathi both want the town to prosper. Unathi shoots Tau because, like Judas’ betrayal of Jesus, in the film’s theology the sacrifice is a necessary act in the interest of the greater socio-economic good. Tau avails himself to be sacrificed because

he comes to understand that he embodies the violence that continues to threaten his home. Jeff Gunn (2018, 22) describes the Western frontier as containing “places where men could go in hopes of *becoming*” (emphasis in original); in *Five Fingers from Marseilles*, it is the familiar Marseilles, with its own history and mythology, as well as the addition of Ghost, which makes becoming possible for Tau insofar as becoming here evokes redemption. Tau and Unathi are bound by a shared concern for a better future for Marseilles and their final acts of sacrifice and violence are acts towards a Marseilles freed from bloodshed.

In the film’s climactic showdown, Cockroach accidentally wounds and then deliberately chokes to death one of his own men while Pastor saves Wei’s life by killing two policemen. Ghost faces off against Tau in the abandoned streets of the town. Both men are wounded by each other, but it is Tau who falls to the ground. Both Pockets and Sizwe have their firearms pointed at Ghost, and Tau fears that the boy will fire his gun and insert himself into the violence that had claimed his town and family. If Sizwe kills Ghost, blood will continue to stain Marseilles. Tau understands that his pursuit of self-forgiveness and redemption compels him to prevent the loss of innocence of others. In the end, Lerato plunges a knife into Ghost’s skull, killing him. Unlike Sizwe, Lerato was already embedded in Marseilles’ culture of violence.<sup>10</sup>

Cockroach is still alive and threatens to shoot Tau. Tau says, “Not here”, suggesting that they should face each other at their former hide out atop the mountains overlooking the town. In a visual bookending of the film’s opening, the film cuts to Tau, Cockroach, Pockets and Pastor facing each other, guns in their hands. Tau and Cockroach kill each other, while Pastor kills Bongani. Of the Fingers, only Pastor survives. The blood of the dead seeps into the ground. Walking away from the dead bodies, Pastor meets Sizwe, who asks: “What do we do?” Pastor replies: “We go back. We start again.” Unathi and Sizwe are witnesses to the effects of violence and death, and Lerato will continue to bear its scars. Unathi, the storyteller and observer, is the eyewitness to Tau’s redemption and in the theology of the film, he would fulfil the disciple-like function of informing residents of Tau’s sacrifice. The political optimism here is that while the past cannot be completely negated, it is possible to sustain a community without violence. The demise of figures of violence and death (Ghost, Tau, Cockroach, Bongani) promises a new beginning for Unathi, Sizwe and Lerato free from the violence of their shared personal past.

In the aftermath of the violence, Pastor regains his professional and social functions while Tau achieves redemption in the aftermath of the Lion’s death. His commitment to redemption suggests that, for him, self-forgiveness signals an embrace of his inevitable death. Since Unathi knows Scripture, his words are also explicitly about Tau: whatever follows death, Tau’s sins of violence have been negated and he has been absolved in death. Only Unathi, their storyteller, survives as witness to Tau’s redemption through his sacrifice. Sizwe has been spared the violence that had claimed his male role models (Zulu and Tau). In *Five Fingers for Marseilles*, the land cannot provide sanctuary to violent men, even if their violence is directed against the ruthlessness of others. Unathi cannot, however, erase the colonialist system that amplified systemic oppression in the first place. The land will remain haunted by colonialism even in the absence of overt, subjective violence. Unathi’s words at the end of the film (“We go back. We start again”) are ambiguous: despite the political optimism of the film’s ending, there is no guarantee the cycle of violence could not reignite under the right conditions of exploitation, corruption and greed. Tau’s redemption is not a final act; it is one key part of remaking New Marseilles into a revitalising and generative home for its inhabitants. Tau finds redemption not only in the absence of a faith in God but in

the absence of a coherent secular-humanist regional government which supports its communities. The political optimism of *Five Fingers for Marseilles* is a cautious optimism wary of past histories of violence, one which emphasises individual and collective accountability. As such, it is the converse of a rainbowism (see section 3.2) which remains myopically future-oriented in its nation-building.

#### 4. Conclusion

With its colonial hauntings of violent race-based oppression and imperialism, and its thematic resonance with contemporary South African politics, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* contains aspects of the post-Western which not only follows the classic Western, but also engages its own being, its own “structures, tropes and settings” (Campbell 2015, 270). As Campbell (2015, 270) describes it, the post-Western inevitably references the classic Western. If the classic Western is about the range—travelling and traversing the expanse not yet fully explored or developed by colonial expansion and power—then the post-Western concerns a de-ranging, which retains a “[connection] to the fabric of the West as region and idea and yet, simultaneously disconnected ... folding itself into new shapes and forms for different ideological purposes” (Campbell 2015, 271) at the intersection of the local and the global.

In this light, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* demonstrates the global interdependency of the Western across borders and styles, as well as its formative assimilation of the American Western (its archetypes and iconographies) (Trento 2015, 42) without compromising its own national identity. For Alexie Tcheuyap (2011, 22), it is evident that the popularity of “genre in African films signals a shift in artistic practice on the continent” where filmmakers often felt compelled, even burdened, to offer a response to culture and politics in the West. Reflecting on the Lost Classics programme of 2006, Mark Cousins however writes that “[filmmakers] often seem to need to work the pastiche mode out of their system, to move through its enticing opportunities for ventriloquizing the local through ... the cowboy movie” (2007, 508). *Five Fingers for Marseilles* visually and thematically emphasises not only a de-ranging but a *re-ranging*. This re-ranging brings the protagonist home to where he was shaped by history and space: for most of the film’s running time, his entire world is the area of Marseilles and its immediate surroundings encamped by the mountains. The sameness of the place, despite the inevitable intrusions of political force and violence from within and outside the community, needs to be retained.

This re-ranging is a return to repair and rehabilitate Marseilles and Railway through characters’ ethical attempts to atone for past mistakes by returning a sense of social justice to Marseilles removed from colonial oppression, systemic injustice and corruption. The re-ranging is also a way to think about the film’s use of genre conventions to clearly identify it as a Western while simultaneously differentiating itself from other Westerns. *Five Fingers for Marseilles* shares a religious and social vision with *Unforgiven* (Eastwood 1992), which Vaux (1998, 445) positions as a “religious text that offers both a religious and a social vision, not by the tidiness of its plot structure ... but by the accumulation of images that foreground the fragility of the human condition” (Vaux 1998, 445). Like *Unforgiven*, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* values the Western’s sense of order and equilibrium with a final note of political optimism: Unathi is relieved that the cycle of violence that erupted with colonialism and was further amplified during apartheid, has come to a cautious end, at least in Marseilles. The equilibrium between land and inhabitant has been (temporarily) restored. It is worth highlighting three images in the film’s final act that emphasise the presence of land in the lives of Marseilles and its inhabitants. The first image occurs during the showdown when

Ghost wounds Tau. Cutting away from Ghost, the film shows a stretch of land seen between two buildings. The second image is a long shot of the remaining Fingers at their final confrontation. This image shows the characters as hardly distinguishable from their surroundings, and in size and shape they nearly resemble the sheep at the bottom-right corner of the frame. The third image (and the film's final image) shows Unathi and Sizwe walking away from the site of the shooting. The sun seems to be setting, and while much of the film presented a cold, even harrowing landscape, this long shot in warmer hues looks down on the landscape from above, as the camera rises to take in as much of the land as it can. As Unathi and Sizwe move to the right of the frame, they seem integrated into this subtly kinetic image, and are welcome on—or welcomed by—the land. Sizwe is the future of Marseilles, a future hopefully devoid of the corruption and violence. Sizwe, who is the physical spectre of his father, has come into being in the aftermath of a history of violence, and after Tau's redemption, with Unathi as narrator who observes and comments on (rather than explicitly guide) the group's morality and ethics.

The fall of Marseilles is linked not only to its apartheid and colonial past and its histories of violence, but is also analogous to the African National Congress's (ANC) failure to secure a materially stable and prosperous national space. The film suggests that the way forward for South African politics requires a conscious accountability on the behalf of those who had played a part in exhausting the country's resources order for any political redemption to occur. *Five Fingers for Marseilles* is adamant in its sustained disillusionment with South African governance. As Sean Drummond commented in an interview with Indiewire's Tambay Obenson (2018), *Five Fingers for Marseilles* featured "political allegory in the treatment of South Africa and the legacy of Apartheid (sic) ... Questionable governance leads to people being left to sort of rot in the interests of those in power". In this sense, *Five Fingers for Marseilles* demonstrates a certain judgement on those responsible for sustaining corruption and capture: regardless of which side of the law one is on, complicity in violence means it is not always possible to leave town and ride off into the sunset.

### **Acknowledgements**

Chris Broodryk thanks Prof Kasongo Kapanga and Mr Bryan Price, both from the University of Richmond, as well as Janina Wozniak (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University), for informing some of the thinking that has shaped this article. Shaun Joynt thanks Chris Broodryk for the opportunity to co-author this article with him. The authors would like to thank the peer reviewers for their detailed and generous feedback on earlier versions of this article.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### **Notes**

1 While the film's international premiere was at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017, the authors opt to use the commercial 2018 release date in the film's country of origin. The film's title is announced twice as *Menoana e Mahlano ea Marseilles* first, with *Five Fingers for Marseilles* written underneath it.

2 Lamentably, the use of the phrase “undiscovered country” suggests a colonial view which positions as “undiscovered” (and by implication, “exotic”) those places not encountered in mainstream American filmmaking but that are nonetheless visible outside of American cultural machinery.

3 “The Marseilles of the title is a real South African town (although the film was shot in Lady Grey, a rural village about 160 miles away). The region is home to several so-called ‘postcolonial towns’ named after European cities, like Paris, Barcelona, and Rome” (Obenson 2018).

4 White critics, in particular, feared that African audiences would imitate on-screen violence in real-life crimes (Burns 2002, 106). “Wild West films,” writes Reynolds (2005, 399), allowed for a new social consciousness around labour and identity that reflected “the growing tensions materializing within African communities during a period of rapid industrialization and precipitous social change”. While the social influence of the Western on various African audiences falls outside of the scope of the current article, white anxieties around social delinquency and social change are part of the colonial project. Indeed, Jacqueline Maingard (2020, 10) confirms that “missionaries and mine officials were concerned as to the effects of the cinema on African audiences particularly with regard to scenes of violence, romance and the representation of white women on screen”. Maingard’s article provides a substantive framework on scholarship about the Western in African contexts.

5 The subtitles use the English place names and spelling, but in the voice-over Unathi uses Basotho inflections e.g. Parisie, Roma. Unathi’s description creates a singular settler identity within colonial social dynamics in which settlers were constituted into a privileged population even if they had initially arrived as a labour force. The film does not explain why these names specifically were given to South African towns. Most early European settlers came from the Netherlands, Germany and France (see Giliomee and Mbenga (2007, 40–52, 60–63)). Chinese immigrants came to South Africa during distinguishable phases; these immigrants ranged from indentured labourers and convicts to “free immigrants” pursuing personal wealth (Park 2006, 203).

6 The Tau, Wei and Honest John characters are reminders of a world beyond Marseilles and Railways that influences the social dynamics in the town.

7 In their 11 September 1983 obituary of Vorster, the *New York Times* describes Vorster as “a granite symbol of apartheid, the South African political system that provides for separation of the races and places virtually all political power in the hands of the white minority” (Treaster 1983, 45).

8 “New Marseille” suggests that the “Marseille” of the past has been left behind; Railway remains adjacent to both these spaces as the designated space for labourers.

9 Beyond *Forgiveness*, there is considerable scholarship on redemption in South African cinema, with redemption being a common theme in South African film. For example, redemption has been situated within narratives of trauma (Marx 2006b), linked with musical genres and scores in Gavin Hood’s *Tsotsi* (2005) (Rijsdijk and Haupt 2007), and aligned with the political productivity in melodrama (Van der Hoven and Arnott 2009). In *Marginal Lives and Painful Pasts* (2007) compiled by Martin Botha, Luc Renders (2007, 221–253) explores redemption in selected South African films from the 1990s and early 2000s.

10 From the start Lerato is part of the group of friends, even if she is not a named member of the Five. The film often uses Lerato to introduce aspects of male characters and as part of these characters' trajectories: she challenges Tau's conception of himself compared to Zulu early in the film, while she later confronts Bongani about his weakness, telling him that he "hides like a snake". Lerato, who is a broadly romantic interest to Zulu, Tau and Bongani, is further positioned primarily as Sizwe's mother. She does not have an arc as clearly delineated as that of these male characters, and the film could have invigorated the role of mothers in the Western genre by involving Lerato as a more active participant in accomplishing the film's vision of a future without violence.

## References

- "Balthazar Johannes Vorster". South African History Online, September 3, 2019. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/balthazar-johannes-vorster>.
- Blacklaws, Troy. 2014. "John Wayne in Sophiatown: The Wild West Motif in Apartheid Prose". *English in Africa* 41 (1): 127–142.
- Bugbee, Teo. 2018. "Review: 'Five Fingers for Marseilles' Takes the Western to South Africa". <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/06/movies/five-fingers-for-marseilles-review.html>.
- Burns, James. 2002. "John Wayne on the Zambezi: Cinema, Empire, and the American Western in British Central Africa". *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35 (1): 103–117.
- Campbell, Neil. 2015. "'Dollar in the Teeth': Upsetting the Post-Western After Leone or Worlding the Western". *Safundi* 16 (3): 267–279. doi:<https://doi.org/10.101080/17533171.2015.1057021>.
- Chapman, Audrey R. 2007. "Truth Commissions and Intergroup Forgiveness: The Case of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission". *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 13 (1): 51–69. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/10781910709336768>.
- Coplan, David B. 2003. "Land from the Ancestors: Popular Religious Pilgrimage Along the South Africa–Lesotho Border". *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29 (4): 977–993. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305707032000135923>.
- Cousins, Mark. 2007. "Discovering Africa's Orson Welles". *Screen* 48 (4): 507–510.
- Davis, Stephen R. 2009. "The African National Congress, Its Radio, Its Allies and Exile". *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35 (2): 349–373. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070902919892>.
- Dirks, Tim [Sa]. n.d. *Westerns Films*. Accessed December 15, 2019. <https://www.filmsite.org/westernfilms.html>.
- Erasmus, Johannes C. 2005. "Religion and Social Transformation: A Case Study from South Africa". *Transformation* 22 (3): 139–148.



- Fehrle, Johannes. 2015. “‘And I Would Call it ‘A Southern’’: Renewing/Obscuring the Blaxploitation Western”. *Safundi* 16 (3): 291–306. doi:<https://doi.org/10.101080/17533171.2015.1063328>.
- Fisher, Mark. 2012. “What is Hauntology?” *Film Quarterly* 66 (1): 16–24.
- Gainer, David. 2000. “Hollywood, African Consolidated Film, and ‘bioskoopbeskawing’, or Bioscope Culture: Aspects of American Culture in Cape Town, 1945–1960”. Thesis, University of Cape Town, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Historical Studies. <http://hdl.handle.net/11427/12743>.
- Gaylard, Gerald. 2008. “The Postcolonial Gothic: Time and Death in Southern African Literature”. *JLS/TLW* 24 (4): 1–18. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02564710802220861>.
- Gerber-Munch, Irene. 2009. “Goethe's Faust and the Myth of Modern Man”. *Psychological Perspectives* 52 (2): 143–166. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00332920902880655>.
- Gibson, Chris. 2016. “How Clothing Design and Cultural Industries Refashioned Frontier Masculinities: A Historical Geography of Western Wear”. *Gender, Place & Culture* 23 (5): 733–752. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2015.1058758>.
- Giliomee, Hermann, and Bernard Mbenga. 2007. *New History of South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Gqola, Pumla. 2001. “Defining People: Analysing Power, Language and Representation in Metaphors of the New South Africa”. *Transformation* 47: 94–106.
- Gunn, Jeff. 2018. *The Last Gunfight: The Real Story of the Shootout at the OK Corral—and How It Changed the American West*. London: Biteback Publishing.
- Higgins, MaryEllen, Rita Keresztesi, and Dayna Oscherwitz, eds. 2015. *The Western in the Global South*. New York: Routledge.
- Hoelscher, Stephen. 2008. “Angels of Memory: Photography and Haunting in Guatemala City”. *GeoJournal* 73: 195–217.
- Hughey, Matthew H. 2012. “Racializing Redemption, Reproducing Racism: The Odyssey of Magical Negroes and White Saviours”. *Sociology Compass* 6 (9): 751–767.
- Jaji, Tsitsi. 2014. “Cassava Westerns: Ways of Watching Abderrahmane Sissako”. *Black Camera* 6 (1): 154–177.
- Keller, Alexandra. 2001. “Generic Subversion as Counterhistory: Mario van Peeble’s Posse”. In *Westerns: Films Through History*, edited by Janet Walker, 27–46. New York: Routledge.
- Kollin, Susan. 2010. “Remember, You’re The Good Guy: *Hidalgo*, American Identity, and Histories of the Western”. *American Studies* 51 (1/2): 5–25.
- Laband, John. 2020. *The Land Wars. The Dispossession of the Khoisan and AmaXhosa in the Cape Colony*. Cape Town: Penguin Books.

- Landau, Loren B. 2014. "Religion and the Foundation of Urban Difference: Belief, Transcendence and Transgression in South Africa and Johannesburg". *Global Networks* 14 (3): 291–305.
- Lenihan, John H. 1985. *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Lindvall, Terry. 1993. "Holy Architecture: Cinema Images of the Church". In *Beyond the Stars. Studies in American Popular Film. Vol 4. Locales in American Popular Film*, edited by Paul Loukides and Linda K. Fuller, 136–171. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press.
- Loukides, P., and Linda K. Fuller, eds. 1993. *Beyond the Stars. Studies in American Popular Film. Vol. 4. Locales in American Popular Film*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press.
- Lusted, David. 2003. *The Western*. London: Routledge.
- Maingard, Jacqueline. 2020. "The Cinematic Cowboy in Africa: Identities and the Western Genre". *TMG Journal for Media History* 23 (1–2): 1–16.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.18146/tmg.796>.
- Marx, Lesley. 2006a. "Home on the Range: The Americanization of My Father". *Safundi* 7 (3): 1–10. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/17533170600407304>.
- Marx, Lesley. 2006b. "'Cinema, Glamour, Atrocity': Narratives of Trauma". *Social Dynamics* 32 (2): 22–49.
- Mashau, Thinandavha D. 2018. "Unshackling the Chains of Coloniality: Reimagining Decoloniality, Africanisation and Reformation for a Non-Racial South Africa". *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74 (3): 4920.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.4920>.
- Mboti, Nyasha. 2014. "Violence in Postcolonial African Film". *Journal of Literary Studies* 30 (2): 38–48. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02564718.2014.919101>.
- McClain, William. 2010. "Western, Go Home! Sergio Leone and the 'Death of the Western' in American Film Criticism". *Journal of Film and Video* 62 (1–2): 52–66.
- McNamara, Joshua. 2011. "Against a Third Cinema: The Non-Revolutionary Revolution of Ian Gabriel's 'Forgiveness'". *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47 (1): 78–88.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2011.533962>.
- Mignolo, Walter D. 2007. "DELINKING. The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality". *Cultural Studies* 21 (2–3): 449–514.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162647>.
- Naidu, Samantha. 2001. "The Myth of Authenticity". *Scrutiny* 26 (2): 17–26.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/18125441.2001.10877358>.

- Obenson, Tambay. 2018. “‘Five Fingers for Marseilles’: How a Couple of South African Filmmakers Recreated the Western”. Accessed February 8, 2020. <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/five-fingers-for-marseilles-western-south-africa-film-industry-1201999004/>.
- O’Riley, Michael F. 2004. “Place, Position, and Postcolonial Haunting in Assia Djebar's ‘La Femme Sans Sépulture’”. *Research in African Literatures* 35 (1): 66–86.
- Park, Yoon Jung. 2006. “Sojourners to Settlers: Early Constructions of Chinese Identity in South Africa, 1879–1949”. *African Studies* 65 (2): 201–231. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00020180601035641>.
- Parsons, Neil. 2004. “The Kanye Cinema Experiment, 1944–1946”. <http://www.thuto.org/ubh/cinema/kanye-cinema.htm>.
- Pearson, Sarina. 2013. “Cowboy Contradictions: Westerns in the Postcolonial Pacific”. *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 7 (2 & 3): 156–164.
- Renders, Luc. 2007. “Redemption Movies”. In *Marginal Lives & Painful Pasts: South African Cinema After Apartheid*, compiled by Martin Botha, 221–253. Parklands: Genugtig!.
- Reynolds, Glenn. 2005. “Playing Cowboys and Africans: Hollywood and the Cultural Politics of African Identity”. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 25 (3): 399–426.
- Rijsdijk, Ian-Malcolm. 2019. Personal Comment, 2019 South African Communications Association Annual Conference at the University of Cape Town, 28–30 August 2019.
- Rijsdijk, Ian-Malcom, and Adam Haupt. 2007. “Redemption to a Kwaito Beat: Gavin Hood’s ‘Tsotsi’”. *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa* 4: 29–46. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2989/JMAA.2007.4.1.2.399>.
- Simmon, Scott. 2003. *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre’s First Half Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stanfield, Peter. 1987. “The Western 1909–14: A Vast of Villains”. *Film History* 1 (2): 97–112.
- Tcheuyap, Alexie. 2011. “African Cinema(s): Definitions, Identity and Theoretical Considerations”. *Critical Interventions Journal of Arts History and Visual Culture* 5 (1): 10–26. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/19301944.2011.10781397>.
- Teo, Stephen. 2017. *Eastern Westerns: Film and Genre Outside and Inside Hollywood*. New York: Routledge.
- Thompson, Andrew. 2017. “Meet the Producer of a South African Western That's Wowing Toronto International Film Festival”. <https://theculturetrip.com/africa/south-africa/articles/meet-the-producer-of-a-south-african-western-thats-wowing-the-toronto-film-festival/>.

- Treaster, Joseph B. 1983. "John Vorster, former South African Prime Minister, dies". *New York Times* Obituary, September 11. Section 1, 45.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1983/09/11/obituaries/john-vorster-former-south-african-prime-minister-diest-at-67.html>.
- Trento, Giovanna. 2015. "The Italian (Southern) Western: From Colonial Cinema to Spaghetti Western". In *The Western in the Global South*, edited by MaryEllen Higgins, Rita Keresztesi, and Dayna Oscherwitz, 42–59. New York: Routledge.
- Tyali, Siyasanga M. 2020. "Re-Reading the Propaganda and Counter-Propaganda History of South Africa: On the African National Congress' (ANC) Anti-Apartheid Radio Freedom". *Critical Arts* 34 (4): 61–75. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2020.1725585>.
- Vale, Peter, and Siphos Maseko. 1998. "South Africa and the African Renaissance". *International Affairs* 74 (2): 271–287.
- Van der Hoven, Anton, and Jill Arnott. 2009. "The Anxiety of Affect: Melodrama and South African Film Studies". *Social Dynamics* 35 (1): 162–176.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950802667756>.
- Vaux, Sara. 1998. "'Unforgiven': The Sentence of Death and Radical Forgiveness". *Christianity and Literature* 47 (4): 443–458.
- Walker, Janet, ed. 2001a. *Westerns: Films Through History*. New York: Routledge.
- Walker, Janet. 2001b. "Introduction: Westerns Through History". In *Westerns: Films Through History*, edited by J. Walker, 1–26. New York: Routledge.
- Walker, Janet. 2001c. "Captive Images in the Traumatic Western: *The Searchers*, *Pursued*, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, and *Lone Star*". In *Westerns: Films Through History*, edited by J. Walker, 219–251. New York: Routledge.
- Warshaw, Robert. 2002. *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre, and Other Aspects of Popular Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Washington, Ida H. 1986. "Mephistopheles as an Aristophanic Devil". *MLN* 101 (3): 659–669.
- Weisband, Edward. 2009. "On the Aporetic Borderlines of Forgiveness: Bereavement as a Political Form". *Alternatives* 34 (4): 359–381.
- Wozniak, Janina. 2019. "Set Design and Plot Structure for Suspense in Remote Small Towns: A Small Town Called Descent and 'Five Fingers for Marseilles'". Conference Paper. South African Communications Association Annual Conference at the University of Cape Town, Cape Town August 28–30.

## **Filmography**

*Django Unchained*. Dir. Quentin Tarantino, USA, 2012.

*Five Fingers for Marseilles*. Dir. Michael Matthews, South Africa, 2017.

*Forgiveness*. Dir. Ian Gabriel, South Africa, 2004.

*Geronimo: An American Legend*. Dir. Walter Hill, USA, 1993.

*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. Dir. Sergio Leone. US/Italy, 1966.

*The Great Train Robbery*. Dir. Edwin S. Porter. USA, 1903

*My Darling Clementine*. Dir. John Ford, USA, 1946.

*Open Range*. Dir. Kevin Costner. USA, 2003.

*Posse*. Dir. Mario van Peebles. USA, 1993.

*Smoke Signals*. Dir. Chris Eyre, USA, 1998.

*Taxi Driver*. Dir. Martin Scorsese, USA. 1976.

*Tsotsi*. Dir. Gavin Hood, South Africa, 2005.

*Umbango*. Dir. Tonie van der Merwe, South Africa, 1986.

*Unforgiven*. Dir. Clint Eastwood, USA, 1992.