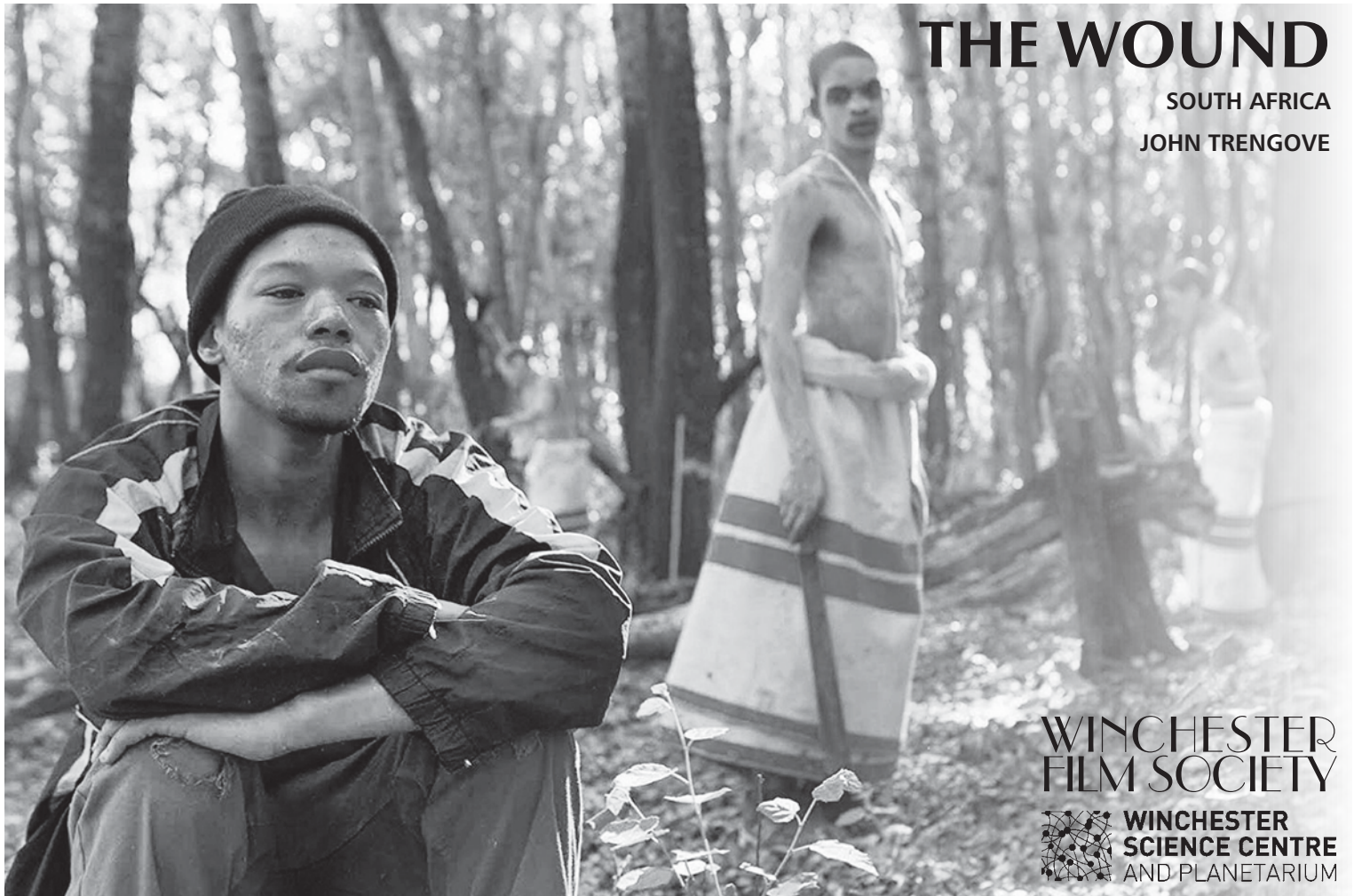


THE WOUND

SOUTH AFRICA
JOHN TRENGOVE



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The Wound of the title has a number of metaphorical applications, mostly to do with the agony involved in suppressing the truth about your sexuality, and also in revealing it. It could be a symbol for the secret emotional pain that exists alongside the male aggression and male adventure that is effectively using it as fuel, maybe calling to mind Philoctetes, the warrior in the Iliad, abandoned by his comrades on the remote island of Lemnos before the Trojan war because of a noxious suppurating wound and yet rescued because his magical bow is needed.

It is an intimate and boldly transgressive drama from the white South African director John Trengove, about circumcision and initiation rituals. Kwanda (Niza Jay Ncoyini) is a Xhosa city kid from Johannesburg whose father, Khwalo (Gabriel Mini), thinks he is getting a little too pampered. So he arranges for his son to have the traditional circumcision – not in a hospital, but on a remote mountain, a retreat with other young “initiates” who will be cut and then live in huts for the week or so that it will take their wounds to heal, bonding, and promising never to speak again about what they have experienced. They will be under the disciplinarian control of elders or mentors who are effectively volunteers,

eagerly taking time away from their own dull jobs to administer this traditional rite of passage – and maybe relive something they have come to think of as the most intensely real experience of their lives.

Xolani (Nakhane Touré) is Kwanda’s mentor – but it becomes clear that, far from being calmly at ease with his own supposed mature masculinity, as someone who has himself gone through this ritual, Xolani is deeply conflicted. This mountain is the only place where he can have sex with another mentor, the more macho Vija (Bongile Mantsai), who is married with children. These men have known each other since boyhood, and coming out here for this ritual is almost a kind of “*Brokeback*” holiday for their otherwise unexpressed sexualities. The film even suggests obliquely that there is a natural way of soothing the young initiates’ raw wounds which has become a key undiscussed initiation in itself. Moreover, Kwanda himself is gay, wishes to be open about it and is impatient with this ritualised denial. He tells Xolani that he himself is the real man, not these supposed elders whose rituals are regressive and avoidant – a way of retreating from actual manhood.

Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*

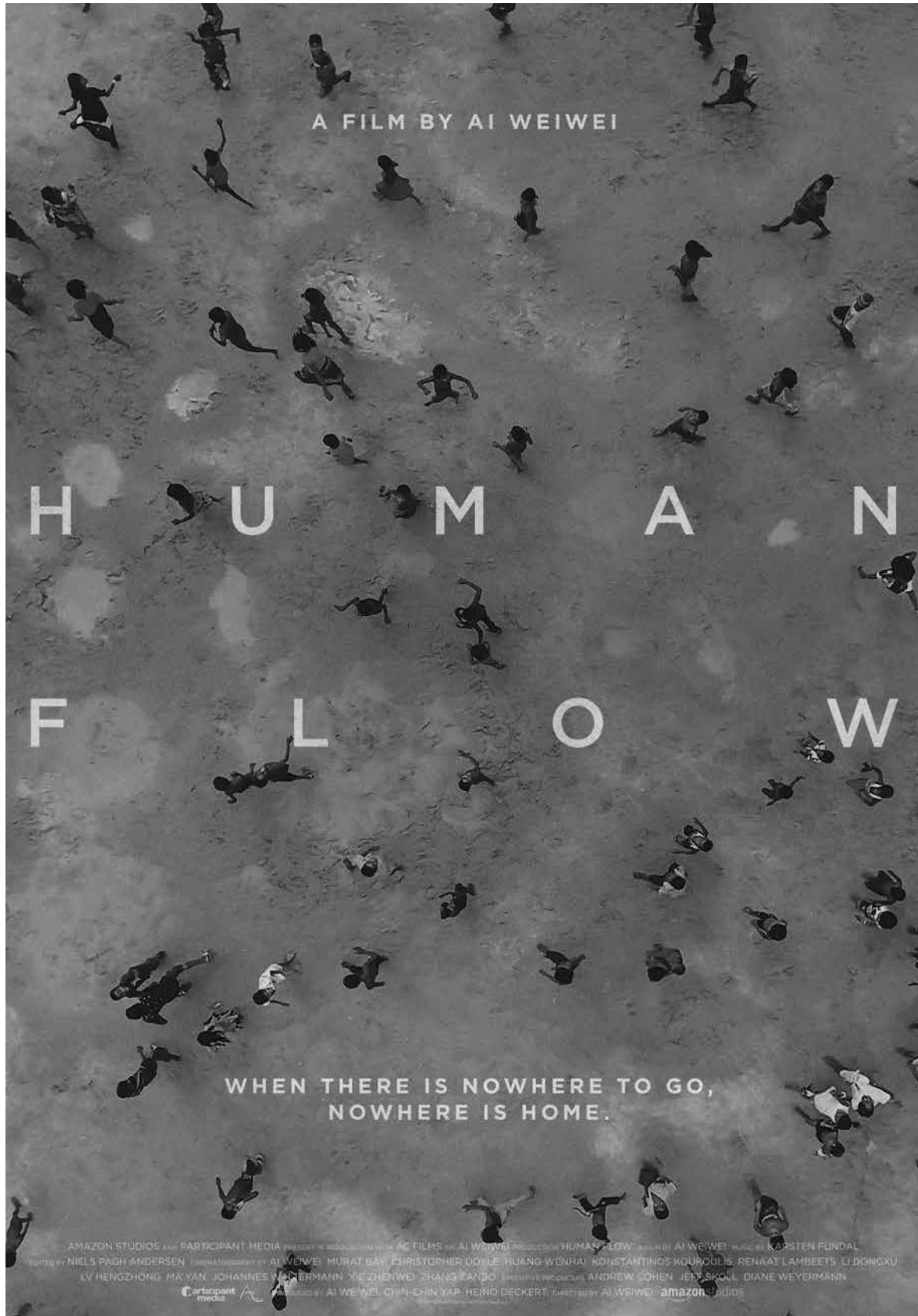
WRITERS: John Trengove, Thando Mgqolozana & Malusi Bengu **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** João Orecchia **MUSIC:** Paul Ozgur
CAST: Xolani Nakhane Toure | Vija Bongile Mantasi | Kwanda Niza Jay | Babalo Thobani Mseleni

VOTING FOR *GLORY* A39 | B47 | C8 | D4 | E2 | Rating 79% | Attendance 100

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