Reading Representations of the African Child in Select Contemporary Films

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Abstract

Framed by theories of childhood, psychoanalysis, postcolonial theory, trauma theory, film theory, and literary theory, this thesis investigates representations of the African child in three contemporary films about Africa. This thesis puts forward the argument that in E. Zwick's *Blood Diamond* Dia, the film's primary child character, is split into Dia Vandy (his subjectivity) and See-me-no-more (his performed identity within the Revolutionary United Front). Furthermore it will be shown that this split is paralleled by the boy's transition from filiation to re-filiation. With regard to K. MacDonald's *The Last King of Scotland*, this thesis will demonstrate how, via the effects of cinematic doubling, the narrative antagonist Ugandan dictator Idi Amin Dada is represented as a child. It will also be illustrated that the narrative, consequently, perpetuates not only the myths surrounding Amin but the colonial myth that the savage is a child. Finally, this thesis will show that, of the tree texts, N. Blomkamp's *District 9* boasts the most authentic representation of the African child and childhood in postcolonial Africa, albeit via a child figure that is literally alien.

In each case study the child will be shown to be a *liminal personae* (Turner 1969), who is an ambiguous and often paradoxical figure who allows us to see more clearly the ethical tensions within the narrative. This thesis will also show that these texts may be considered socially aware *trauma narratives*, which are relatively critical of western involvement in the traumatic histories of African locales and peoples. Ironically though, these texts, and others similar to them, have been criticised for being Afropessimistic (Evans & Glenn 2010). The tension created by this paradox will be investigated during this thesis, which will attempt to establish to which extent these texts may be considered postcolonial, and whether or not they should be labelled Afropessimistic.

Key Words

- ❋ *Blood Diamond*

- ❋ *The Last King of Scotland*

- ❋ *District 9*

- ❋ **Childhood**

- ❋ **Psychoanalysis**

- ❋ **Trauma**

- ❋ **Postcolonial Theory**

- ❋ **Film**

- ❋ **Afropessimism**

- ❋ **Representation**

Declaration

I hereby declare that *Reading Representations of the African Child in Select Contemporary Films* is my own work, that it has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Lauren van der Rede   Date: _____

Signature: _____

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Man's tragedy, Nietzsche said, is that he was once a child.[1]

1.1. Overview

This thesis will examine the representations of the postcolonial African child and African childhood in three of arguably the most significant popular films representing Africa in the last decade: Edward Zwick's *Blood Diamond* (2006), Kevin McDonald's *The Last King of Scotland* (2007), and finally Neil Blomkamp's *District 9* (2009). These films are part of a growing body of texts, including *The Constant Gardener*, *The Interpreter*, and *Hotel Rwanda*, which exhibit social consciousness, but which may be unable to transcend the restrictions placed on them by traditional Hollywood cinema and the intrinsic intertextuality of film itself. The postcolonial African child is an ambiguous and often paradoxical figure that may, through its liminality, allow us to see the representational logic of the respective film more clearly. Although each of these films represents the child differently, in each case the child and childhood has the potential to highlight the tension between western fantasies of Africa, which are often informed by Afropessimism, and the postcoloniality of these films. Through a close analysis of the respective texts, and their primary child characters, I want to investigate whether or not the films re-entrench colonial stereotypes, and are intrinsically Afropessimistic.

This thesis may be considered an interdisciplinary study as it is framed by psychoanalysis, film theory, postcolonial theory and criticism, childhood studies, literary theory, and to some extent trauma theory. There are also a number of film and literary critics whose arguments are referred to in this thesis, as well as a number of other authors whose work, although not necessarily directly related to this project, was used either as a theoretical

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[1] Frantz Fanon (1952; 2008: 4)

model, or to provide context to either the films or the analysis. In this thesis the three cinematic narratives are "studied as *representation[s]*" and it considers "how it [each film] refers to or signifies a world or body of ideas" (Bordwell 1985:17). What this research aims to do is to analyse the ambivalence of the postcolonial African child, and consider the ways in which these representations inform or undermine the critical postcoloniality of these films. This thesis will analyse the ways in which western psychoanalytic models, fantasies of Africa and childhood, and colonial stereotypes inform the representations of the African child in these films. This thesis will also analyse the representational logic of the African child in the films and text; examining them first individually and then comparatively. I use this term, "representational logic", to refer to the way in which what is presented, although fictionalized, informs an understanding of the real (Lacan, Kristeva).

Each film is a distinct case study in this thesis. The first case study examines the representation of Dia Vandy in Zwick's *Blood Diamond*. Set during the Sierra Leone civil war (1999), the narrative follows the lives of Danny Archer and Solomon Vandy whose fates become intertwined because of the discovery of a rare pink diamond. In *Blood Diamond,* the experience of African childhood most focused on is that of the child soldier. The film juxtaposes the horrific experience of childhood during civil war with Romantic ideals of childhood as a time of innocence. The resulting tension is highlighted by the splitting of Dia into both perpetrator and victim. As a soldier he is a perpetrator of violent acts, however, as a child he is a victim of the circumstances of war, having been forcibly removed from his family and home, and indoctrinated into the violent world of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). This chapter will explore the disjuncture and tension between these two positions, critically engaging how the film splits Dia into his subjectivity and his identity as an RUF soldier. I will discuss how both the identity Dia represents and his subjectivity is achieved cinematically, as well as how colonial models of understanding African childhood inform the representational

logic of his character. This chapter will be framed by the thinking of Sigmund Freud, Derek Hook, Ashis Nandy, and Edward Said. The primary point of enquiry of this chapter will be to investigate, through comparative analysis, the two distinct models of childhood presented by the film, and the dislocation between identity and subjectivity as represented through Dia.

In the second case study, the film and novel *The Last King of Scotland* allows for a reading into what may be the re-emergence of the myth of the African man as underdeveloped, primitive, and childlike. *The Last King of Scotland* is a fictitious account of the relationship between the Ugandan dictator General Idi Amin Dada and the character Dr. Nicholas Garrigan. Both the film and novel show, through the eyes of Garrigan, the imagined nature of Amin, and illustrate the violence he became infamous for. Giles Foden, the writer of the novel *The Last King of Scotland* (1998), called Idi Amin a "'frozen child'" (2003:n.p.), a perception of the narrative antagonist which has been transferred to the film. The representation of Amin as a child is achieved cinematically through the process of "doubling" (Bhabha 1994:146). Doubling, as will be discussed later, is a cinematic technique that is rooted in psychoanalysis, and so this chapter will be framed by the work of Jean Louis Baudry, Jacque Lacan, Otto Rank, Homi K. Bhabha, and Ashis Nandy. This chapter will focus on the film's infantilization of Amin, critically examining the representation of the dictator as a child, the implication of which may be that the narrative is perpetuating a myth and stereotype, thus undermining its own postcoloniality.

It is important to note that both *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland* attempt to represent a historically accurate image of Africa, and use realist aesthetics to do so. However, *District 9*, which is third and final case study chapter of this thesis, uses allegory and the tropes of the science-fiction genre to produce a representation of Africa that is categorically different. The film is a hybrid of both narrative and form: it is both science fiction and, as Julian Schürholz describes it, "mockumentary" (2010:11). Science fiction films,

claims Hayward, are "politically motivated" (2001:317), and prompt the viewer to question technology and attitudes towards outsiders. According to Schürholz "Mockumentaries are fictional movies that consciously adopt the form of documentary" so as to question "whether there is one undistorted truth that could be presented" (2010:6). *District 9*, as I will show, parodies documentary techniques and uses the aesthetics of science fiction to produce an allegory of what has been popularly read as the trauma of Apartheid. However, this thesis accepts Joshua Clover's claim that *District 9* is "surely the most Nietzschean film of the decade" (2009:8), and so accepts that there can be no singular reading of the text. These readings of the texts will be discussed during the chapter, which will consider how each reading frames the representation of the only alien child character in the film.

This nameless character, which will be referred to as "the Johnson child", is the focus of this chapter. Paradoxically, despite being a member of an extra-terrestrial alien race he may be the most authentic of the three representations of the postcolonial African child, as his characterisation is not limited by Western models of childhood. The child, like many aspects of the film, is a paradoxical figure: representing both potentiality and the burden of African urban postcoloniality. The film, through the representation of this figure, gives rise to questions surrounding what may be a novel representation of the African child, and may in fact be moving away from traditions of representation that represent Africa through an intertextuality that is still strongly permeated by colonial discourse.

1.2. Renegotiating childhoods

The concepts of child and childhood have developed and changed over the centuries, and so it is necessary to point out that childhood is a historical and social construct, not a naturalized phenomenon. Perhaps most importantly one must note, as Ashis Nandy does, that

"[t]here is nothing natural or inevitable about childhood. Childhood is culturally defined and created; it, too, is a matter of human choice" (1987: 56). There have been various views of childhood and children's literature, including the enlightened and romantic views, and more recently a postcolonial view. The latter perspective is of particular relevance to this thesis, as it is the representations of the postcolonial African child and postcolonial African childhoods that are its central point of inquiry. To understand the modern conceptualization of childhood, some discussion on the development of the idea is needed.

Philippe Aries' work *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1960) is widely considered to be one of the most influential studies on childhood. In it, Aries delineates the historical development of childhood, claiming that it is a fairly new idea. He claims that "in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist" (125) as children were considered and depicted as miniature adults (32-33). However, this perception changed in the seventeenth century, as children became recognised as members of the household. This, Aries speculates, was the result of a decrease in child mortality during their infancy, which in turn resulted in parents investing more attention and affection in their children (40).

The notion of childhood, claims Aries, was only established after the seventeenth century, and is particularly important to understanding what makes *The Last King of Scotland*'s Amin disturbing. It was also at this time that the schooling of children, particularly the grouping of children according to age cohorts, became prominent; and finally it was in the eighteenth century when the education of children became normative.

According to Vanessa Joosen and Katrien Vloeberghs it was during the Enlightenment period that the ideology of childhood extended itself into literature, because of the "belief that literature exerts a direct influence on the child" (2006:xi). They argue further that

> the enlightened view of children's literature values its potential to educate, to provide Bildung and guidance to the young. It thus invests literature with the transformative

force to improve society and raise humankind to a supposedly more advanced level (2006: xi)

It was during this period that John Locke's notion of children as "a blank slate" (H. Cunningham 2011:1)[2] onto which knowledge can and should be imprinted became popular. This sparked a trend that saw literature being used as a medium of instruction: a means through which to educate and imprint on blank minds. At this time particular emphasis was placed on the purification of the child, showing that the legacies of medieval perceptions of the child still remained. During the enlightenment period children were still viewed as being "scarred at birth by original sin", and were considered as yet imperfect "little adults" (Cunningham 2011:1).

However, this was soon challenged by the Romantics, for whom the child became strongly associated with nature and a symbol of natural goodness, happiness and innocence (Cunningham, Plotz, Davis); a fantasy of childhood which permeates *Blood Diamond* and a sentiment which still informs contemporary thinking of childhood. It was, according to Cunningham, the Romantic Movement which gave rise to the notion of a right to childhood, an idea still invoked in contemporary times. Cunningham argues that what ideologically distinguished the Romantic period from those preceding it, is that during that time society became "child-centred" (2011:1), viewing childhood as a time in one's existence that should be protected and sanctified. However, Cunningham warns that such restraints on childhood (that is to sanctify it), could result in prolonged childhoods, which in turn hinder what he argues is "a right to grow up" (2011:2). Essentially he makes the claim that the "Romantic view of childhood has outlived its purpose" (2011:2). This is a point that Robert A. Davis in "Brilliance of a Fire: Innocence, Experience and the Theory of Childhood" (2011) expands on.

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[2] See Cunningham's two seminal texts on childhood, as cited in the bibliography.

He explains that of all the Romantic assumptions of childhood the most problematic is that of innocence, and states that:

> Advances in the social sciences, deeper engagements with the (often frightful) lives of historically – and – culturally – situated children and, above all, the expanding ethnographic record of varied, multiple childhoods across many societies and epochs all seem to point irresistibly to the fictitious character of the concept of childhood innocence and its questionable basis in a contingent and historically specific set of circumstances with little or no salience for the experience of children in the modern globalised world. (380)

Although the Romantic view of childhood is arguably still a universal ontology, as both Cunningham and Davis have argued, it is somewhat misplaced in contemporary society, particularly the postcolonial third-world. For example, fundamental traits of the Romantic view of childhood include the presumption that the society is child-centred (or should be); that the child is "born innocent" (Cunningham 2011:1), and that the childhood should be spent in nature "fenced off from adulthood" (Cunningham 2001:1). However, the childhood(s) of postcolonial subjects in the global South are necessarily in contradiction with Romantic notions of childhood, as despite the universalism afforded to those notions of childhood, the Romantics were Europeans, whose understanding of childhood considered only what they fantasized it to be. In postcolonial Africa there are undoubtedly a multitude of various childhoods including those of child-soldiers, child-brides, child-run-households, and so on. Often children must bear responsibilities, such as to work, that the Romantics deemed incompatible with the notion of childhood. Also, there is immense emphasis placed on educating the young. Since the colonial period education has been both a technology of Western indoctrination and a vehicle via which a subaltern might transcend oppression.

In contemporary scholarship there has been an attempt engage postcolonial childhoods. According to Olga Nieuwenhuys "postcolonialism is concerned with challenging the

unquestioned Eurocentric ways of looking at the world and seeks to open up intellectual spaces for those who are termed 'subalterns' " (2013:4). Nieuwenhuys argues that by

> rejecting the idea of modern childhood as a western discovery/invention, the postcolonial perspective can, in sum, inspire a more positive approach in which the routine 'Us vs. Them' binary makes way for a conceptualization of childhood(s) as the unstable and contingent result of a situated encounter. (2013:5)

According to Nieuwenhuys, the postcolonial view of childhood calls for the recognition of children as "social 'being'[s], rather than a 'becoming'" (2013:7), an idea explored in *District 9*. Thus, the postcolonial view of childhood accepts that "the consciousness of childhood is as much a cultural datum as patterns of child-rearing and the social role of the child" (Nandy 1987:56). Furthermore, the postcolonial perspective acknowledges that "[t]here are as many childhoods as there are families and cultures" (1987:56). What this means for the study of childhood (or childhoods) is a new recognition of the role of the child. Unlike the medieval and Enlightenment view, children are not considered miniature adults or blank slates, nor are they considered semi-divine pastoral beings as was the view of the Romantics. *Blood Diamond*'s representation of Dia seems to depict him simultaneously as a miniature adult, a blank slate, who is made to commit acts of war, whilst locating him in a pastoral setting. *The Last King of Scotland*'s representation of Amin generates questions around whether or not it is possible to invert the notion of the child as a miniature adult, into the adult as a giant child. Finally, both the Enlightenment and Romantic view is quite displaced in *District 9*. Thus one must consider the implications of a child character who is not Romantic and has not been situated in the pastoral locales of rural Africa.

1.3. Reading film through Psychoanalysis

As part of the close analysis of Dia, whose trauma *Blood Diamond* fails to fully articulate, the thesis offers one reading of the internal psychical processes which linger in the

gaps of the narrative and cinematography. The film splits the boy into Dia Vandy of the Mende tribe and See-me-no-more of the RUF. This thesis assumes that this split, which is presented superficially, is paralleled by a series of neuroses. This argument will be discussed during the chapter, however, for now some background is needed.

Freud explains in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* that the personality can be divided into three parts which function on three levels of consciousness. These three parts are known as the id, ego, and superego, and the three levels of consciousness are the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious (Freud 1933:4666-4687).These three parts of the personality, or psyche "function together in order to obtain three primary goals: to ensure the survival of the individual/ to allow the individual to experience as much pleasure as possible/ to minimize the individual's experience of guilt" (Meyer, Viljoen, & Moore 2008:52-53). The id is that most primitive part of the psyche which is directly connected to the body, as it obtains energy from the body for its primary goal: drive satisfaction. The id, according to Freud, "is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle" (Freud 1933, Smith 2011:4682). This, as Meyer and Viljoen put it, "means that it seeks immediate and complete satisfaction of its drives without considering anything but its own immediate pleasure" (2008:54). However, with the exception of "wish fulfilment", the id is incapable of accomplishing drive satisfaction independently, as it has no contact with the external world. So some drives such as hunger or thirst will go unsatisfied, ultimately resulting in the death of the individual. However, the first goal of any living organism is self-preservation. Hence the establishment of the psychic structure known as the ego (Freud 1923:3944-3992).

The ego is derived from the id as a means to achieving drive satisfaction, and is "formed through the individual's contact with the outside world" (2008:54). The ego attempts

to please the id by finding appropriate objects for drive satisfaction in the outside world. However, its functioning is governed by the secondary process and the reality principle. The term secondary process refers to the ego being capable of assessment of and reflection on a situation. It can establish when is the appropriate time, and in which manner to appease the drives of the id. The reality principle refers to "the idea that the ego takes physical and social reality into account … which means that the ego tries to establish on rational grounds whether or not an object is serviceable" (Meyer et.al. 2008:54). However, the ego is not only restricted by the physical reality of the individual but also by the moral codes of the society that the individual forms a part of. Particular objects, behaviours, or times may be considered socially and morally acceptable for the satisfaction of drives, and others not. According to psychoanalytic theory that part of the ego which holds one's morality will eventually become autonomous, and it is this third part of the psyche which Freud named the superego (Freud 1933, Smith 2011:4668). The superego functions like the id within the individual, but is "representative of society's moral codes" (Meyer et al. 2008:55). It will pressure the individual into conceding to society's expectations and threaten the individual with feelings of guilt; this is known as the moral principle.

It is important to note that the ego and superego function on all three levels of consciousness, whilst the id is restricted to the unconscious level. Each level of consciousness has its own purpose and it is his ideas regarding levels of consciousness which form the foundation of Freud's theory. In fact it was by trying to explain human behaviour by differentiating and delineating the three levels of consciousness in the psyche that psychoanalysis was born.[3]

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[3] The general idea of this is evident in various works:
- Badcock, C. *Essential Freud: A Modern Introduction into Classical Psychoanalysis*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1988
- Freud, S. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*. Stacey, J. (ed. &transl.). London: Hogarth Press. (1953-1974).

The conscious level houses the thoughts, feelings, sensations, and experiences that the individual is aware of at a particular time. Its contents are continuously changing. Some of the information that the individual is aware of will pass into the preconscious. This level of consciousness contains information which can be recalled to the conscious level, such as memories which are not anxiety-provoking and any instances that the individual is not currently concentrating on. The unconscious level "consists of instinctual representatives which seek to discharge their cathexis; that is to say it consists of wishful impulses" (Freud 1915; Smith 2011:3009). Memories of traumatic experiences which cause individuals "pain, anxiety, and guilt" (Meyer et.al. 2008:53) are stored in the unconscious and cannot be recalled to the conscious level, but may leak out and manifest in dreams.

There is, however, another manifestation of the psychical material of the unconscious, known as the double. An important aspect of the analysis of the films is the idea of the dichotomous techniques of doubling, mimicry, and mirroring, concepts which are used by film theory but are derived from psychoanalysis. The double is a phenomenon framed by the theories of Freud and Lacan, but is delineated by Otto Rank in *The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study* (1914), whose work will be discussed in chapter three when it is applied during close analysis of the representation of Amin.

 Rank's work will be used in combination with the theorizations of Homi K. Bhabha, who describes the double as: "the figure most frequently associated with this uncanny process of 'the doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self '" (1994:143). Bhabha makes reference to various thinkers drawing on the conceptual doubles in their work. From Derrida he derives "the ghostly", from Freud "the uncanny", and from Bakhtin the idea of "surmounting". Together the sequence formed is such: the double is a distorted replica of the self which has become split from the self, like a reflection in a mirror. The double becomes uncanny through its ghostliness: its horror, it being grotesque, and it being like a shadow of "the self". By this I

mean that the double will haunt the narrative, resurfacing and repeating its behaviour throughout the narrative, which will result in discomfort for the subject unless the self is able to surmount the double. Thus doubling may be considered a manifestation of representational ambiguity of the child figure. In some cases it may be that the character's subjectivity becomes doubled pathologically by the creation of a new identity. In others, doubling may be achieved via the liminal and unarticulated spaces of the texts, such as reflections in props of the mise-en-scene, and, as I will show in my analysis of *The Last King of Scotland*, the double can even be an element of the mise-en-scene, such as a prop itself – a phenomenon known as mise-en-byme.

Doubling works in correspondence with the process of identification. Identification is a psychic phenomenon which is perhaps most interestingly engaged by Jacques Lacan. Identification or rather *mis-identification* is one of the fundamental features of Lacan's Mirror Phase Theory. Lacan, in "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the Id as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" (1949), describes the mirror phase as

> a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for all the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the infant's entire mental development. (1977 [1949]:4)

Sean Homer explains that this means "that the image comes to take the place of the self" (2005:25). The image thus becomes the imaginary self. According to Homer, the child is able to identify with the mirror image, due to a "fascination" with a uniform portrait of his/her body, but confuses this image with the self, a process that Homer refers to as "alienation" (Lacan 1977 [1949]; Homer 2005:25). It is at this moment of fascination and alienation that, according to Lacan, the ego emerges; as a consequence of which the ego's function is "mis-recognition" (1977 [1949]). This means that the child has a false sense of mastery of his/her

body, which is juxtaposed with the child's understanding of self, prior to encountering his/her reflection: the fragmented self. This ultimately results in, as Homer puts it, "the subject is established as a rival to itself" (2005:26). Homer explains that this rivalry between the subject and him or herself will be duplicated in future relations with others. However, recognition by the other is necessary for the existence of the individual; and according to Lacan, this means that one's image (the imaginary self) is facilitated by the projected idealized self onto the other. In other words, the other is both patron and rival to the self. Lacan's ideas on mirroring, misidentification and so on have become a fundamental part of film theory, and will form an especially important part of the close analysis of *The Last King of Scotland*.

1.4. Trauma Theory

Blood Diamond explores the traumas of civil war, *The Last King of Scotland* suggests that Amin himself, in conjunction with his regime, was a trauma experienced by Ugandans, and *District 9* weaves together a tapestry of multiple traumas experienced at various points in history and by various peoples. Therefore this thesis accepts that trauma theory must be one of its frameworks as each of the texts studied within may be read as a trauma narrative.

The idea of trauma is a long standing one that stems from psychoanalysis as discussed in a number of Freud's works including "Studies on Hysteria" (1895), "Introductory Lectures of Psychoanalysis" (1915), "Introduction to Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses" (1919), and "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920). In more recent years a developing body of scholars, including Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Kali Tal, and James Berger have critically studied the way in which trauma is represented in literature, or rather they have studied literature's inability to represent *trauma* or *the real*.

David Macey explains that the real, in the Lacanian sense, as "that which resists symbolization and signification, and is usually encountered in the context of trauma and psychosis" (2001:324). The real is neither simply the external world nor "the antonym of the imaginary" (Macey 2001:324), but is the experience of a trauma which cannot be fully surmounted and so cannot be properly articulated so as to be symbolised verbally. Trauma as a theory "emerged from an originally fragmented (psychiatric, psychoanalytical, and sociological) discourse on reactions to catastrophes in the wake of the Vietnam War, and received its more solid status as topic of inquiry at the moment of its codification, in 1980, as PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)" (Toremans 2003:333). The consequence of the recognition of PTSD, argues Tom Toremans, has led to "a veritable epistemological crisis" (2003:334). This is because the variety of symptoms manifest in so many different ways that there can be no clear-cut diagnoses or understanding thereof. Thus trauma theory has become a bridge between disciplines ranging from the psychiatric to the literary. Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) explains as follows:

> The more we satisfactorily locate and classify the symptoms of PTSD, the more we seem to have dislocated the boundaries of our modes of understanding - so that psychoanalysis and medically oriented psychiatry, sociology, history and even literature all seem to be called upon to explain, to cure, or to show why it is that we can no longer simple explain or simply cure. The phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience. (1995:3-4)

Thus trauma theory is interdisciplinary, requiring communication and collaboration between disciplines. Trauma, like many postcolonial novels or films, deals with crisis, something which Paul de Man in "Criticism and Crisis" (1983) deemed a necessary catalyst for the production of criticism. De Man's thinking in both "Criticism and Crisis", and "The Resistance to Theory" (1983) has laid the foundation for trauma theorist such as Caruth,

Felman, Geoffrey Hartman, and Linda Belau. The latter of De Man's texts , according to Toremans, demonstrated the "possibility of transmitting trauma" (2003:338), and it was Caruth's reading of De Man's critical texts as narratives of trauma which has given rise to the argument of "the literality of trauma" (Toremans 2003:338).[4]

Felman, in "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching" explains that we live in a "post-traumatic age". It is necessary to note that trauma narratives, as argued by Felman, view trauma as a "history which is essentially *not over*, a history which is not simply omnipresent…in all our cultural activities, but whose traumatic consequences are still evolving…in today's political, historical, cultural and artistic scene" (1992:xiv). Thus the texts *Blood Diamond*, *The Last King of Scotland* and *District 9* may be considered trauma narratives because they deal retrospectively with histories that are not yet over.

Extending Felman's argument, Berger in "Trauma and Literary Theory" (1997) explains that "the late twentieth century is a time marked, indeed defined, by historical catastrophe" (572), offering various examples as evidence of this, including "World wars, local wars, civil wars, ideological wars, ethnic wars … the cold war, genocides, famines, epidemics, and lesser turmoils of all kinds" (572). These historical events may all be considered catastrophes, and as Berger argues:

> The idea of catastrophe as trauma provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event. Moreover, this dispersal occurs across time, so that an event experienced as shattering may actually produce its full impact only years later. This representational and temporal hermeneutics of the symptom has powerful implications for contemporary theory. In its emphasis on the retrospective reconstruction of the traumatic event … a traumatic analysis is both constructivist and empirical. It pays the

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[4] Toremans contends that "De Man's narrative of (the reality of) trauma is to be read, precisely to the extent that it is not available as simple knowledge to be derived from his statements about language, but is told as a story centering around the figure of 'falling', so that ultimately de Man's text 'no longer simply knows what it says, but indeed does more than it knows'" (2003:338). The "'falling'" to which is referred is the trauma. As traumatic phenomena lay beyond the realm of quantitative discourse, there is the inclination to attempt to articulate trauma, which is perhaps more capable of capturing the reality of the falling figure (Caruth 1995:90).

closest attention to the representational means through which an event is remembered and yet retains the importance of the event itself ... Thus a concept of trauma can be of great value in the study of history and historical narrative, and also of narrative in general, as the verbal representation of temporality. (1997:572)

The term "catastrophe" implies that the event, whether it is a civil war, a military dictatorship or Apartheid, has negatively affected a mass of people, and that the traumatic effects of an event vary in form and manifest in a number of ways. As Berger argues, the actual trauma is at the time of its occurrence is incomprehensible, and so its "full impact" will only reveal itself years later. Trauma is, according to Freud, insurmountable at the time, and will therefore be repressed. However, the repressed has the "compulsion to return" in the form of "the symptom", which in literature is read as the representation. Thus the trauma narrative may be considered an example of what Berger explained as "the retrospective reconstruction of the traumatic event". Furthermore, the trauma narrative as Berger suggests is a historical narrative, and uses metaphor as a way through which to articulate the event.

According to Berger "these events, and the visual representations of these events, have in large part shaped contemporary American modes of viewing the world. (1997:572). Firstly, it is interesting that Berger points out American modes of viewing the world as two of the three directors of these films are American, and, as Tal suggests, the representation of trauma in literature " is defined by the identity of the author" (1996:17). We see the influence of American culture most strongly in *Blood Diamond*, in which the RUF assimilates American gangster culture so as to seduce new recruits. However, this is an inauthentic representation of the trauma of what it meant to be a child soldier in the RUF, and is an example of a tendency of trauma to "resist linguistic representation" (Robinett 2008:290).

Secondly, Berger suggested that visual representations play a large role in the way in which audiences, which cannot be reduced to American ones, view the world. This is an important point as this thesis assumes that each film studied here informs the global imagining

of the historical event or phenomenon it attempts to represent. Yet, "Trauma theory", as Berger argues, "is another such discourse of the unrepresentable, of the event or object that destabilizes language and demands a vocabulary and syntax in some sense incommensurable with what went before" (1997:573). He explains further that " a theory of trauma will intersect with other critical vocabularies which problematize representation and attempt to define its limits - discourses of the sublime, the sacred, the apocalyptic, and the Other in all its guises" (1997:573). Thus, because this thesis engages three films which may be read as trauma narratives it needed to draw on multiple theoretical frameworks so as to attempt to analyse that which the films themselves cannot fully represent - the phenomenon of the child soldier in Sierra Leone, Idi Amin as a "Frozen child" (Foden 2003:n.p.), and the effect of Apartheid on a child of the post-Apartheid era. Furthermore, "trauma…allows for an interpretation of cultural symptoms - of the growths, wounds, scars on a social body, and its compulsive, repeated actions" (Berger 1997:572-573). The fact that these narratives were written is an example of the traumas' ghostly resurgence - or post-traumatic manifestation - in the state after the traumatic period has ended. However, with the rebirth of these traumas through representation, narrative also becomes susceptible to the perpetuation of stereotype.

1.5. Film Theory:

This thesis will engage primarily with the medium of film, and thus it is necessary to discuss a few key film elements and critical concepts. Throughout this thesis the work of critics such as John Van Zyl (1897), David Bordwell and Kirsten Thompson (1993), Susan Hayward (2001), and John Ellis (2008) will be used to provide context, and applied during close analysis. With regards to each film, cinematic techniques such as the use of mise-en-scene, the camera as narrator, and elliptical editorial techniques will be analysed in order to gain insight into the films' visual meaning-making.

The term mise-en-scene refers to all the elements necessary to "stage the event for camera" (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:145). The mise-en-scene is used to "signify the director's control over what appears in the film frame" and "includes those aspects of film which overlap with the art of theatre: setting, lighting, costume, and the behaviour of the figures" (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:145). According to Hayward the mise-en-scene is "that expressive tool at the film-maker's disposal which a critic can read to determine the specificity of the cinematographic work. That is, the critic can identify the particular style of a specific film-maker and thereby point to it as an authorial sign" (2001:231). The mise-en-scene of a particular shot or scene adds dimensions of meaning and functions in much the same was as narration does in the novel. That is, elements such as costume, lighting, and props can inform the viewer about period, and location, and can provide insight into class and gendered power relationships, thereby articulating what the dialogue does not. It is important to note that because this thesis reads the texts as representations, that the mise-en-scene used in the three films is a vital part of the analysis of these films. Child figures are often marginalized and secondary, therefore the mise-en-scene can provide insights into the complexity of the representations of these child characters.

The mise-en-scene of these films thus informs the way in which one reads the character, and thus may be read as the aesthetics of the film. In other words how it chooses to represent what it does. As argued by a number of critics including Martha Evans and Ian Glenn (2010:32), and Mafe (2010:84-85), there is a tradition in Hollywood cinema to represent Africa in as realist a manner as possible, and therefore some time must be spent discussing the role of realism in films which attempt to represent Africa.

The term *realism*, according to Susan Hayward, refers to a nineteenth century literary and art movement, which sought to depict "'life as it really was'", and transcend the tradition of classical idealism (2001:311). Hayward explains that

Realism functions in film on both the narrative level and the figurative (that is, pictorial/photographic). In this regard, physical realism marries into psychological realism via the narrative structures. Generally speaking, realist films address social issues. However, because the narrative closure of the films tends to provide easy solutions, this form of realism on the whole serves only to naturalize social problems and divisions and not provide any deep insight into causes. (2001:311)

Blood Diamond and *The Last King of Scotland* have chosen the aesthetics of realism as the style through which they narrate historical events, even though their neat closures undermine the implicit claims to historical accuracy. However, as David Bordwell and Kirsten Thompson point out, the mise-en-scene of a film "has the power to transcend normal conceptions of reality" (1993:146). *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland* do this by indulging in the tropes of the action and thriller genre. *District 9* destabilizes the tradition of representations of Africa and instead uses the aesthetics of science-fiction and parodies the aesthetics of documentary type films to produce a set of disturbing new meanings. Ironically, of all three films, *District 9* is arguably closest to representing the African 'real' authentically.

Various critics, such as Robert A. Rosenstone and Lesley Marx, have noted that the directors of films about Africa have "frequently expressed desire...for authenticity" (Marx 2011:56). However, films are incapable of depicting the real, and so tend to rather represent it through realism. This desire for realist authenticity is evident in both *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland* which are, like *District 9*, trauma narratives. These films represent trauma as "realistically" as possible, by paying attention to details such as accent (DiCaprio's Afrikaner accent in *Blood Diamond*, and Whitaker's 'Swahili' accent in *The Last King of Scotland*), location (*Blood Diamond* is shot in South Africa, and *The Last King of Scotland* was shot in Uganda), and including 'factual' information at the end of the film. Contrastingly, *District 9* does not attempt to depict a historical real, and yet is arguably the most successful representation thereof. Thus, in all three these films, various elements of the mise-en-scene

suggest a certain dedication to authentically representing the real, although, as is made evident by *District 9,* such representation does not necessarily have to be realist.

The uniqueness of *District 9* shows how realist representations of Africa dominate filmmaking tradition, which one may presume is largely because many of the contemporary representations of the continent engage with a particular historical event. Robert A. Rosenstone explains that when films attempt to narrate history, the representation must strive to be what he calls a "True Invention" (1995:54, 76). It is also important to note that these films are not explicitly historical,[5] but are more obviously fictional narrative films. T. and V. Sobchack define narrative film as "films that tell a story, a fiction about created characters interacting in situations that are plausible once the premise of the tale is established" (1987:204). With regards to realism Robert Stam, a noted film scholar, explains that the

> The point was not to invent stories which resembled reality, but rather turn reality into a story. The goal was a cinema without apparent mediation, where facts dictated form, and events seemed to recount themselves. (2000:73)

Thus narrative, as Stam suggests, individualizes historical events so as to simplify and reduce them so that they may fit into the parameters of a feature film. Often this means that history is narrated as subjective trauma, rather than an event. This has two effects. The first is that this kind of narration results in a fairly limited representation of the historical event and its traumatic effect on entire societies, something which for many critics such as Martha Evans and Ian Glenn, Diana Adesola Mafe, and Lesley Marx is unsatisfactory. Contrastingly, the second effect is that this way of narrating history allows a film to highlight a specific social issue –something these three films have done. *Blood Diamond* tackles the socio-economic issues and human impact of the illegal diamond trade in Sierra Leone which is used to fund guerrilla warfare, *The Last King of Scotland* attempts to expose global complacency during the

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[5] Note that I am wary of using the term "period" because *The Last King of Scotland* does attempt to depict a period in Ugandan history, although it does so as an adaptation of Giles Foden's novel.

dictatorship of Idi Amin Dada in Uganda, and *District 9* critically questions what it means to be human.

The two films which use realist aesthetics also claim to be inspired by "real events". Therefore, they are to some extent, historical films, which Robert Rosenstone argues should not distort or contradict what we accept as historical truth (1995:76).[6] Thus the use of realist aesthetics in *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland* is motivated by a desire to be historically accurate. Realist aesthetics are thus used to convince the viewer that what they are seeing on screen is a truthful and authentic depiction of the actual history and traumatic event.

According to John Van Zyl there are "two main generators of film meaning – the camera and the editor….the *camera dynamises space,* and…the editor *spatialises time*" (1987:43).[7] Van Zyl explains that "[u]nder the dynamisation of space we understand all the effects that the camera can produce that have the effect of making the viewer feel that he or she is moving through space" (1987:43). This effect of making the viewer feel as though he or she is moving is achieved by a combination of any number of camera set-ups (shots which vary in distance between the camera and the action), camera angles (the point of view of the camera), and camera movements such as panning, titling, or zooming. In other words, the camera animates the viewer's experience of space within the world of the film.

The term *editing* refers to the transition from one shot to the next (Van Zyl 1987:51), via the putting together of various shots. Van Zyl explains that "the editor can shorten or extend time through the way in which he or she joins the pieces of film together" (1987:43). Through editing the film-maker can control the order of events, their duration, and frequency (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:259). Events may be stitched together in such a way as to

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[6] Rosenstone's argument and model is discussed in greater detail in chapter 3 of this thesis, when it is applied to *The Last King of Scotland.*

[7] Emphases that of the author, hereafter all emphases within quotation marks are to be taken as the emphases of the author unless otherwise indicated.

present the story in chronological order. Alternatively, the order may be reversed. It is essentially possible to put shots in any order (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:259). Editing can also manipulate the plot of a film, using techniques such as flashbacks or flashforwards which present action or shots out of the presumed story order. Other techniques which interrupt the progression of the plot include the cutaway, which reveals to the viewer what is happening elsewhere to another character or set of figures. The cut away is one of the three principle ways in which a film-maker can create temporal ellipse (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:259-260). Perhaps the most common genre of editing found in First cinema films is elliptical editing, which "presents an action in such a way that it consumes less time on the screen than it does in the story" (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:260), as will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

It is important to note that editing, especially elliptical editing, constantly produces empty spaces in the narrative of a film, and once the viewer is sutured into the film, he or she is able to fill those "gaps in discourse" (Butte 2008:279) with meaning. These gaps refer to the way in which the mise-en-scene and dialogue work in combination with the camera set-up to contribute to the overall meaning of a scene, character, or action. In this regard, *suture theory* is a vital part of film studies.

The term *suture* is a term borrowed from the language of surgeons, meaning "to stitch into" (Hayward 2001:378). In film, the term suture refers, firstly, to the process by which a viewer is "stitched into the filmic text" (Hayward 2001:378), via what Butte defines as a "process of editing and stitching together pieces of film" (2008:278). Secondly, it is a form or method of cinema which manipulates the viewer into a place of association with the focalizer, whereby the point of view is filtered by a particular character – which, as is illustrated in the film selection of this thesis, is often a white male. These processes of suture are achieved visually, through the use of various apparatus or cinematic techniques – that is, the camera set-

up and editing of a particular scene. Furthermore, suture theory has, as George Butte puts it, come to "presume and frame an ontology of the human subject" (2008:278). Butte argues that suture and its devices are the means through which film attempts to narrate levels of human consciousness. According to Hayward, the term suture was used by Jacques Lacan, a psychoanalytic theorist, to "signify the relationship between the conscious and unconscious which, in turn, he perceived as an uneasy conjunction between what he terms the Imaginary and the Symbolic orders" (2001:378). Thus, this thesis must make use of suture theory and analyse the effects of suture as often it is in the quiet spaces of film, such as the camera set-up, editing, or mise-en-scene that meaning making and identification can occur.

Identification is an important part of film theory, derived from the work of Jacques Lacan, specifically his Mirror Phase Theory as discussed earlier, which was adapted for film by Jean Louis Baudry. Baudry, in his essay "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" (1970), argued that a film's meaning does not lie in the events of the narrative but rather in the experience of cinematic spectatorship. According to Sean Homer, "Baudry's article was concerned with the way in which cinematographic apparatus – that is to say, the instruments and technical base of film production, projection and consumption – is constitutive of meaning in its own right" (2005:27). This is evident in the extract from Baudry which follows:

> Projection and reflection take place in a closed space and those who remain there, whether they know it or not (but they do not), find themselves chained, captured, or captivated …. And the mirror, as a reflecting surface, is framed, limited, circumscribed. An infinite mirror would no longer be a mirror. The paradoxical nature of the cinematic mirror-screen is without doubt that it reflects images but not "reality". (1975:44-45)

While experiencing cinematic spectatorship the viewer is positioned in such a way that the screen, what Baudry refers to as the mirror screen, is in front of him/her, whilst the projector from which the image on the screen emanates is behind him/her. The camera is the

key apparatus in the mechanism of projection. The camera occupies two positions during projection. The first of these is the position of the image displayed on the screen. For example, the image may be shown or shot at a low angle, using a close up. The second position the camera occupies is position from which the viewer sees the images (literally the projector). This means that the viewer is manipulated into a false sense of authenticity (because the camera is replaced by the eye, hence tricking the viewer into imagining what they are witnessing is real); despite his/her viewing (what is shown on the screen and how it is shown) being predetermined. This understanding of apparatus theory is necessary to be aware of and distance oneself from, for example the metacinematic moment in *The Last King of Scotland* when the camera lens and mirror merge to create what I refer to as the virtual mirror effect, as will be discussed in far more detail in the relevant chapter. Thus, despite knowing that, "the cinematic mirror-screen reflects back images but not reality" (Homer 2005: 28), the viewer through the apparatus of cinema becomes effectively sutured into the world of the film. However, Baudry claims that despite this, the viewer experiences two distinct forms of identification, which he explains as follows:

> The first [level of identification is], attached to the image itself, derives from the character portrayed as a center of secondary identifications, carrying an identity which constantly must be seized and reestablished. The second level [of identification] permits the appearance of the first and places it "in action"-this is the transcendental subject whose place is taken by the camera which constitutes and rules the objects in this "world."(1945:45)

The first identification occurs with what is being displayed on screen, images of characters, places, and interior. These images are reflections onto which the viewer, like the child does during the mirror phase, imprints narcissistic projections of self. Secondly, the viewer is able to identify with the narrative fantasies of a text. John Ellis in his book *Visible Fiction* (1992) explains the first of the identifications Baudry delineated, as "narcissistic identification" (41), which is the "result of cinema's similarities with a series of psychic

processes" (Ellis 1992:42). The first of these, claims Ellis, is "the experience of perception of self as an image" (1992:42). This is phenomenon has been theorized in psychoanalysis by both Lacan, as discussed earlier, and Freud who paralleled it with the myth of Narcissus (Ellis 1992:42). Narcissus is the subject of "a Greek legend of a youth…who was in love with his own reflection" (Freud 1917; Smith 2010:3610). Ellis explains that narcissistic identification emphasises two things: firstly that "the image of self is perceived as though it were the image of another" (42), or as Lacan had explained it, the individual misrecognises the mirror-image for the self. Secondly, it emphasises that "it is an image that is desired" (Ellis 1992:42), a projection of the ideal self.[8]

The second identification to which Baudry refers occurs with the cinematic apparatus. Ellis explained that identification with the apparatus represents the viewer's "desire to concentrate him or herself into visual and oral perception" (41). That is to say that just as the image on screen is both present and absent in the cinema, what Ellis refers to as the "'photo-effect'" (38), the viewer wants to be both within and outside of the film. He explains that cinema accommodates this desire through projection, which is constructed in such a way that the images on screen are projected by a beam of light coming from behind the head of the viewer, which "parallels the beam of light from the eyes" (41). This coupled with the conditions of cinema (darkness and stillness) simulate the sensation of falling asleep and dreaming, although this "dreaming from the outside" (Ellis 1992:40), aids the misrecognition of the cinematic image as authentic.

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[8] Ellis explains further that narcissistic identification need not only be restricted to image, but that it may also function in relation to any of the various positions (heroine, villain, and so on) that form a part of fictional narration (1992: 43). He describes this as the "identification of the public, external phantasies with personal phantasies" (1992:43). For example, a child who imagines herself as able to breathe under water may be able to identify with a mermaid figure. This identification occurs because of the circumstances of cinema - sitting relatively still in the dark (Ellis 1992: 40) - which simulate the conditions of sleep. It is at this time, says Ellis, that "images and sounds are received in a state where the normal judging functions of the ego are suspended to some degree (near to sleep), so that what is seen is not subject to the usual expectations of plausibility that we apply to everyday life" (1992: 40). He goes further on to say that in cinema "it is perfectly possible to believe that a man can fly" (1992: 40). Thus one can contend that the same conditions which gave rise to identification with the apparatus gives rise to "identifications across filmic narratives with the various phantasy positions that these narratives invoke" (Ellis 1992: 44).

It is important to note that the child figures that this film analyses are secondary characters in relation to the protagonist, who acts as the focalizer of the film and may determine or limit what is presented by the film. Celestino Deleyto in his article "Focalisation in Film Narrative" draws a clear distinction between a "narrator (who speaks) and focalizer (who sees)" (1991:159). In the films being investigated in this thesis the focalizer is invariably a white male, a feature of filmic representations of Africa which several scholars have found problematic (Evans & Glenn, Mafe, Marx, Quayson). This focalization firstly limits the narration of the film to the point of view of the white male protagonist, and secondly creates an association between the viewer and the protagonist, resulting in the viewer surrendering their empathy to this protagonist rather than the victim(s). This impacts on both the way in which overall meaning is constructed, and on the representation of child figures in particular. In the respective films, it is often as a result of focalization that the African child is othered, and perceived as a threat. For example, in *Blood Diamond*, despite knowing that Dia is a school boy not naturally disposed towards violence, the viewer is persuaded to perceive him as a threat because that is how Danny, the film's protagonist focalizer, does. What is evident in the three case studies is that the focalization of these films is racialized, and in order to critique this aspect a postcolonial critical lens will be employed.

1.6. Tracing the postcoloniality of these films:

It is necessary to use a postcolonial perspective because firstly, these films all situate themselves in a postcolonial locale and historical period. Secondly, because there is a tendency in films which attempt to represent Africa, to employ older models of representation, at the risk of them re-entrenching colonial stereotypes and myths about Africa. Therefore, it is necessary to apply a postcolonial approach to the analysis of these films and their representation of the African child and African childhoods.

The term "postcolonial" is one which several scholars have attempted to define, the most notable of which are Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, who in their seminal study *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) explain that they

> use the term … to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. (1989:2)

Thus in one, although very limiting, sense, the term postcolonial refers to a period - although its inception will vary from nation to nation, because as Peter Childs and R. J. Patrick Williams indicate, "there has been not just one period of colonialism in the history of the world" (2000:1). Therefore, although each of these films is set during a different historical (post)war period, they may all be considered narratives which locate themselves in the period after colonialism, and, in the narrow historical sense, therefore be considered postcolonial. The reference to the postcolonial as any "culture affected by the imperial process" (Ascroft et. al. 1989:2), signals the significance of the effects of colonialism - often referred to as the legacy of colonialism - which may remain and affect a society even after independence. Although there are a variety of manifestations of colonial legacy in each locale, the most rudimentary is the Manichaeism of the colonial world (Fanon 1963:41) – that is to say, a juxtaposition of black and white in which the former represents all evil whilst the latter represents salvation. The consideration of this legacy of colonialism is evident in Stephen Slemon's argument that the postcolonial be considered a

> specifically anti-[colonial] … discursive purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment colonial power inscribes itself into the body and space of its Others and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neo-colonialist international relations (1991:3).

In other words, postcolonialism is more usefully understood as a form of resistance to colonialism and its cultural impositions. Thus, the definitions offered by both Ashcroft (et al.) and Slemon destabilize the prefix "post-", shifting it from *after* to *against*. Using this understanding of the term as a point of reference, this thesis will show that its three case studies may be considered postcolonial texts, not only because of their period, but because they are texts which attempt to respond critically to the on-going legacy of colonialism.

Slemon's argument draws on the work of Frantz Fanon, whose work, according to Ziauddin Sardar in the "Foreword of the 2008 Edition" of *Black Skins, White Masks*, was waiting to be "rediscovered by a new generation burning with a desire for change" (2008:x). Sardar explains that Fanon is "anti a particular kind of universalism, one based on the notion of superiority which projects that superiority as a universal discourse" (2008:xvii). Fanon's writing forms a part of "the literature of decolonization" (Sharpe 2000:114), and was written from within the geo-historical parameters of the Third World during the 1950's and 60's. Fanon brings together psychoanalysis and postcolonial discourse, and diagnoses the pathological universalism of colonialism. His contributions include perhaps most significantly a delineation of what other psychoanalytical theorists call "double consciousness". Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skins, White Masks* went some way towards expressing the trauma of colonialism which remained after independence and indeed still remains.

Another theorist who has combined both psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory is Homi K. Bhabha. In *The Location of Culture* (1994) Bhabha explains that "[p]ostcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent 'neo-colonial' relations within the 'new' world order and the multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance" (6).In this sense the films must be considered postcolonial because they do provide, through their individual narratives, reminders of the often detrimental relationship between the western

world and postcolonial Africa. Furthermore, they do demonstrate that the dynamics of power in these relationships are still determined by neo-colonial politics. *Blood Diamond* questions the idea of value by suggesting that in a capitalist Western society, commodities such as diamonds are more precious than human life; *The Last King of Scotland* clearly articulates the then British privileging of the arms trade over human suffering in Uganda during the 1970's; and *District 9* draws upon a long history of western othering and domination. The films thus all rearticulate the relationship of the Westerner 'who must have' and the African 'who cannot have'.

The three films, along with a number of other contemporary cinematic representations of Africa, have come under postcolonial scrutiny. In their paper ""TIA - This is Africa": Afropessimism in Twenty-First-Century Narrative Film" (2010), Martha Evans and Ian Glenn consider what they call "new representations of postcolonial Africa" (14). They engage with five recent films, namely: *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *The Constant Gardener* (2005), *The Interpreter* (2005), *Blood Diamond* (2006), and *The Last King of Scotland* (2006); and claim that the "Africa in these films is much more brutal than in earlier representations" (2010:14). However, they do acknowledge that this is not due to the "filmmaker's ignorance or racism", but explain that it is a result of the "attention paid to realist detail, resulting in a bleak Afropessimistic outlook" (2010:14).

According to Evans and Glenn these films are underscored by Afropessimism which they define as "the consistently negative view that Africa is incapable of progressing economically, socially, or politically" (2010:14-15). They contend that Afropessimism is a discourse, one inspired by the photojournalism and television reporting of the Ethiopian famine of 1984 (2010: 15); arguing that Afropessimistic discourse has come to "dominate representations of postcolonial Africa" (2010:15). According to Evans and Glenn there are a

number of Afropessimistic themes which are present in filmic representations of Africa. These include:

> The warped economic arrangements of the criminal state; the "resource curse" hypothesis; the phenomenon of the child soldier (with the monstrous child as the perfect embodiment of a doomed future); genocide; a new sympathy for white colonizers after independence; and kleptocracy and the "big man" syndrome. (2010:15)

The resource curse hypothesis is evident in *Blood Diamond*: "whenever natural resources of value are found in Africa, the natives suffer" (Zwick 2006). *Blood Diamond* also has the theme of the phenomenon of the child soldier, and it has received much of its critical acclaim for its depiction of the RUF indoctrination process (Evans & Glenn 2010:27). I argue that *The Last King of Scotland*'s Idi Amin Dada of Uganda is represented as a child, and so this film too carries the theme of the child soldier, though in a far more complex and nuanced way, as well as that of kleptocracy and the big man syndrome. Evans and Glenn point out that films whose representation of Africa is Afropessimistic are perhaps victims of the intertextual nature of film, where particular tropes are derived from "earlier stereotypes and familiar genres and narratives" (2010:15). This results in a number of limitations, such as:

> The dependence on white protagonists that continues to situate African characters on the periphery; the tendency to approach Africa with a totalizing gaze in order to generalize about regional or national problems; a propensity to dehistoricize (and thus eternalize) events; the recourse to western psychological and familial models and plots (particularly with upbeat endings involving escape from Africa); a fascination with the details of violence coupled with an inability to explain its causes; and an avoidance of socioeconomic realities and political complexity, which makes it difficult to realistically project positive images of the continent's future. (2010:15)

In all three the cinematic texts the focus on the white protagonist focalizer does situate the vast majority of African characters on the periphery of text. However, the films do also attempt to attempt to move away from tendency to approach Africa with a totalizing gaze, naming and making specific their location. Both *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of*

Scotland situate the locales on a map relatively early in the film, and both textually indicate the year in which the events took place, or at least began. *District 9* articulates is location via voiceover. Where these films do exhibit limitations is in their inability to explain or at least offer some causes of the violence they so spectacularly deploy on screen. For example, *Blood Diamond* is filled with images of child soldiers carrying weapons and ammunition, but does not indicate that this was in part a consequence of the excess ammunition in Africa after the Cold War. *The Last King of Scotland,* although focusing on Amin and his regime, steers away from the political complexity which resulted in the Amin regime lasting as long as it did, namely the support Amin had from Britain and many of the chiefs throughout Uganda. Of course one may argue that it is not the duty of film to explain politics, or the socioeconomic state of a nation, but because they attempt to represent trauma some context is needed.

As these three texts are First cinema films produced for western audiences, much of their form is dictated by the pressure to be commercially successful. For *Blood Diamond* this takes the form of explosions, while *The Last King of Scotland*'s Idi Amin is in himself larger than life, and in the *District 9* it is the use of Computer Generated Imagery (CGI). For Said postcolonialism may be considered a culture of ambiguity (1993:293), and as I will show in the case studies each of these films are ambiguous. This ambiguity arises when one considers the paradoxical tension between the films' postcoloniality, as discussed earlier, and the postcolonial criticism of Evans and Glenn. *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland* often undermine their own postcoloniality by regressing into old colonial stereotypes: Amin represents the colonial figure of the savage child, and Dia lives in a world torn apart by irresistible violence, and *District 9*'s representation of Nigerians as superstitious cannibals depicts the racial and cultural tensions still festering in South Africa. However, this thesis assumes that despite this, the child figure, by virtue of its ambiguity, is often able to transcend the Afropessimism of its narrative and in so doing allow for the texts to be read ambiguously.

Chapter 2:

Repressing Subjectivity and Performing Identity:
Blood Diamond's Paradoxical Representation of Dia

Blood Diamond (2006), directed by Edward Zwick,[9] is a Hollywood blockbuster about the 1999 civil war in Sierra Leone. Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Djimon Hounsou, and Jennifer Connelly, the film focuses on the local social impact and global entanglements of what have become known as "blood" or "conflict" diamonds. The focus of this chapter is, however, the character played by Kagiso Kuypers – Dia Vandy. Dia, the son of Solomon Vandy (Hounsou), a local fisherman, is abducted by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and subsequently becomes a RUF soldier. This "'socially conscious' effort" (Gberie 2007:n.p) from Zwick is "strongest in its portrayal of the brutalization of child soldiers" (Evans & Glenn 2010:47), creating even in the year before its release a "buzz about the film [which] was already helping to drive a news agenda regarding conflict diamonds" (Sharma 2012:246).[10] However, the film, as argued in the postcolonial criticism of Martha Evans and Ian Glenn, only "appear[s] to have transcended old colonial stereotypes" and demonstrates "a new set of features and themes, all Afropessimist in nature … suggesting the West's negative influence on perceptions of the continent" (2010:14). The film offers ambiguous and paradoxical representations of Dia, one as the good son Dia Vandy, and one as the criminal prodigy called See-me-no-more.

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[9] Zwick is an American director, producer and writer. He has in some capacity or the other been involved in the making of films such as *Glory* (1989), *Legends of the Fall* (1994), *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), *Traffic* (2000), and *The Last Samurai* (2003).

[10] Sharma notes that in the year preceding the film's release on LexisNexis academic database there were 218 US newspaper "items" which reported on the topic of "blood diamonds", many of which mentioned the film, and similarly there were 180 television and radio news broadcast transcripts which also addressed the subject of blood diamonds (2012:246)

I argue the following: that the film, rather ironically, through its representation of Dia as a child soldier has split the character into an interlinked double: the child and the soldier. Through close analysis I will demonstrate that the film, in its representation of Dia before his indoctrination into the RUF, imposes Romantic ideals of childhood set in a pastoral space. I will also show that the representation of Dia as a soldier is marked by Afropessimism and a kind of childhood that is characterised by violence, drug abuse, and indifference. Furthermore, the film's depiction of the transition from child to child soldier signals a shift not from filiation to affiliation, as theorised by Edward W. Said in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1984), but from filiation to what I refer to as *re-filiation*. I argue that this shift is paralleled by what Sigmund Freud describes as the "splitting of the ego". Consequently, it appears that Dia chooses to repress his former self, childhood and the moral codes which informed it, and perform the identity of an RUF soldier. I will also show that the moment in which Dia transitions to re-filiative recognitions of culture and history is also the moment in which his ego becomes split and his subjectivity is repressed.

The eponymous diamonds which inspired the film's name are defined by the United Nations (UN) as "diamonds that originate from areas controlled by forces or factions opposed to legitimate and internationally recognized governments, and are used to fund military action in opposition to those governments or in contravention of the Security Council" (2001).[11] This rather clinical definition of the term "blood diamond", although accurate, does not demonstrate any of the social consequences of the phenomenon. Paul Oragun offers a definition of the term that is perhaps more suited to the situation in Sierra Leone as the films depicts it:

> The term "blood diamonds" specifically refers to diamonds that are extracted and exported from particular regions in sub-Saharan Africa that are still ravaged by vicious

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[11] There is a growing number of definitions and explanations for this term, and so where necessary alternative definitions will be incorporated.

armed conflicts. These civil wars and brutal armed conflicts usually are instigated by intransigent warlords, renegade militias, and rebel groups that depend on the illegal sale of blood diamonds in exchange for military weapons, guns, fuel, and assorted war materials such as landmines (2004:151).

The diamonds collected from the diamond fields of Sierra Leone were used for exactly this purpose – that is to finance the military of both the RUF and the Sierra Leone Army. However, the Sierra Leone civil war did not begin as a local conflict. According to Nicholas Heeren, (the director of Handicap International) in his article "Sierra Leone and Civil War: Neglected Trauma and Forgotten Children", Sierra Leone, at the time of its independence (1960) was "one of the richest countries in West Africa" (n.p.). However, thirty years later Sierra Leone found itself in socio-economic crisis. Mary Kaldor and James B. M. Vincent, in their report on Human Security in Sierra Leone post-2002, explain that there were a number of factors that led to the civil war, including "a repressive predatory state, dependence on mineral rents, the impact of structural adjustment, a large excluded youth population, the availability of small arms after the end of the Cold War, and interference from regional neighbours" (2006:4). All of these factors which gave rise to the civil war, although volatile and reactive to each other, were not naturally combustible, but what truly ignited the civil war in Sierra Leone was the conflict in Liberia (Vincent 2012:10).

What Heeren described as the "spilling over" (2013:n.p.) of the Liberian conflict into Sierra Leone, Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein explain as the "cross-border invasion by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) from Liberia into the border districts of Kailahun and Pujehun" (2008:437). This began on the 23rd of March 1991 (Humphreys & Weinstein 2008:437). According to Vincent, this invasion was largely motivated by the availability of tradable natural resources, not the least of which was diamonds (2012:10).

Of course the effects of war and the trading of these blood diamonds did not only affect those directly involved in the war. Kaldor warns that there are "no accurate statistics of

the casualties, but conservative estimates suggest that 70,000 people were killed and roughly 2.6 million people, more than half the population, were displaced from their homes" (2006:6).[12] Victor explained in his 2012 report that the war and the various crimes committed throughout its duration, including rape, abduction, mutilation, and amputation, resulted in what he called "human insecurity" (2012:11).[13] Heeren claims that there were over 350 000 refugees in camps surrounding Sierra Leone, the vast majority of which were based in Guinea (2013:n.p). He further claims that between three and four thousand Sierra Leonean children were forced to become part of the military. However, figures obtained after the war suggest a far larger scale of murder, displacement, and abduction.[14]

Blood Diamond illustrates a number of the atrocities experienced during the civil war, including the mutilation of civilians, slavery, and the stealing of children to increase militia. The violence of the war which becomes intertwined with the aesthetics of the action genre is so extensive that the space devoted to socio-political, economic and historical context is disproportionately inadequate. Thus, as Evans and Glenn argue, the film features one of the trademark limitations of Afropessimism: "a fascination with violence [in Africa] coupled with an inability to explain its causes" (2010:15).

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[12] Various authors cite various statistics:
- According to Nahrain Al-Mousawi "75,000 [people] are estimated to have been killed and 4.5 million displaced" (2012:4)
- According to Eric Johnson "The war between 1991 and 1999 claimed over 70,000 lives, caused 500,000 Sierra Leoneans to become refugees, and displaced half of the country's 4.5 million people" (2006: n.p.).
- Heeren cites UNICEF as stating that between "3 to 4, 000 children were forced to take up arms in the Sierra Leone conflict".

[13] From the statement "Human insecurity involves not just stopping attacks on life and limb, however, but also assaults on resources and livelihoods on which communities are dependent" (2012: 11) one may derive that human insecurity refers to "attacks on life and limb…but also assaults on resources and livelihoods on which communities are dependent" (Victor 2012:11).

[14] According to Kaldor:
The war was declared over on 18 January 2002, and disarmament and demobilization was completed. A total of 72,490 combatants had been disarmed and 71,043 demobilized, including 6,845 child soldiers (506 girls) and 4,651 women (Alan Doss 2004). … [An] estimated … only between 2 and 10 per cent of the total weapons in the country were collected. Some 34,419 small arms and light weapons were collected (UNDP/ Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone 2003) …. A 'reinsertion benefit' was paid to each entitled ex-combatant and over 50,000 registered for the Reintegration Support Programme. (2006: 17)

What further entrenches the film's Afropessimism is its use of the conventions of cinematic melodrama. Rekha Sharma, in her article "News on the Rocks: Exploring the agenda-setting effects of *Blood Diamond* in print and broadcast news" (2012), argues that the "makers of *Blood Diamond* presented their story as melodrama, which allowed them to proselytize about responsible consumption to a nation of capitalists" (243). She discusses how the film exhibits the five characteristics of melodrama. According to Sharma the narrative of *Blood Diamond* centres on morality, which it signifies through Vandy's suffering. This morality is also demonstrated through heroic action (243) – presumably the "Rhodesian" mercenary Danny Archer's (DiCaprio). Secondly, says Sharma, "melodramas require a ruthless villain, a suffering victim, and a heroic saviour" (244). Sharma is confident in her claim that "[i]n *Blood Diamond*, RUF soldiers are villains" (244), but her reading of Vandy as both victim and hero and Archer and Maddy Bowen (Connelly) as having "heroic moments" is less assertive and suggests some hesitation. Sharma is in this regard not incorrect, but perhaps because of a focus on the three "stars" of the film, the child Dia, who certainly is the more obvious victim (in the classical sense) of the conflict, was overlooked. Furthermore, it seems evident from his redemption through martyrdom that Archer be read as the narrative's primary hero. The third characteristic is that "people and acts are portrayed in terms of absolute good and evil" (244). Certainly the soldiers of the RUF are represented unambiguously as villains, however, as mentioned, the "good" characters are not absolutely good at all. Fourthly, says Sharma, "melodrama as juxtapose emotion and action to create suspense and resolution of conflict" (244). Sharma then offers the example of how *Blood Diamond* juxtaposes the scene in which Dia and the other "new recruits" are forced to fire AK 47's at a living person (which I argue is the moment when Dia's ego becomes split), with the scene in which Captain Poison comforts a traumatized Dia. Finally, she argues that the film uses "images, sounds, and gestures…to highlight the dichotomy between good and evil, coaxing viewers to identify with

the protagonist and spurn the villain" (244). As Sharma has pointed out, *Blood Diamond* follows the discourse and codes of melodrama, and in some places her argument is convincing. Yet what she provides as evidence seems to contradict her reading of the film as one that "conveys a hopeful view of the power of media to expose evils and influence audiences to act on the messages they receive" (245).

Ironically, the tension the film creates between the ambiguities and paradoxes within individual characters undermines Sharma's claim that the film is mere melodrama in that it also prompts the viewer to "search for a new plenitude, an ethical recentering" (Kakoudaki 2002:113). This ethical recentering is further emphasised by the film's critique of the displacement of value in modern society. Zwick explains that:

> To me this movie is about what is valuable. To one person it may be a stone; to someone else a story in a magazine; to another, it is a child. The juxtaposing of one man obsessed with finding a valuable diamond with another man risking his life to find his son is the beating heart of this film. (quoted in: F. & M. Brussat, Accessed on 04/04/2013).

This emphasis that Zwick, and indeed the film, places on value is a critique of global materialism that posits value in things rather than people. For Archer, the stone is far more precious than the child, as we see from his constant wanting to convince Vandy to relinquish his quest to find his son. For Bowen, an American journalist, writing a "real story" is more important than helping Archer, and for Vandy his son is more important than his life. This critique of Western capitalism and its negative impact on the social fabric of Africa is the nucleus of the film's postcolonial critique.

As Zwick points out, these individualised judgements of value are demonstrated through the various narratives which, when combined, comprise the master narrative of *Blood Diamond.* These narratives are not only interwoven, but are interdependent. The most obvious of these is the narrative that unfolds between Archer and Vandy. Archer is a mercenary turned

diamond smuggler, who finds himself desperate to escape Africa and all that it represents for him. Archer's mantra, "T.I.A.: This I s Africa", refers to his belief that in Africa killing and violence is a way of life. He discusses his Afropessimistic opinion in the bar, whilst talking to Bowen and the bartender, explaining that for Bowen "it's Bling-Bling, but out here [Africa], it's Bling-Bang" (Zwick 2006). Vandy is forced to work in one of the diamond mines that help to fund the civil war, during which time he finds the pink diamond that ultimately attracts Archer to him, and so becomes his salvation. However, Vandy will not leave without his family, in its entirety, including Dia. Thus Dia is a catalyst for the narrative as without Dia and his tragedy, Vandy would have no real need for Archer.

By juxtaposing these characters and their contrasting estimations of value, the film problematically presents postcolonial African society as still suffering from the Manichean split that Frantz Fanon discussed in both his works. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963, 1965) he wrote that "[t]he colonial world is a Manichean world" (41) in reference to his discussion on the phenomenon *Black Skins, White Masks (*1967).[15] Fanon, wrote that "white and black represent the two poles of a world, two poles in perpetual conflict: a genuinely Manichean concept of the world" (31). The film does demonstrate that both sides of the Manichean world are responsible for and participate in the civil war. The "white" world is responsible for creating a market environment in which it is profitable to keep the war going. Consider for example Van de Kaap buying the rough stones and storing them so as to control the supply and demand of the diamond trade. However, this participation in the war is indirect. In juxtaposition to this, *Blood Diamond* highlights the perpetration of mass violence which took place during the civil war by the RUF, which is an all-black rebel army. Furthermore, in the film, the "black" world is assigned most of responsible for the gross human rights violations

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[15] I refer here to his discussion on the presumption of colonialism which put in equilibrium the so stereotype of the good settler and the bad African as delineated in *The Wretched of the Earth - see pages 41- 43, 84*; and in *Black Skins White Masks* page 31 as well as Homi Bhabha's forward to the 1986 edition of the text.

which took place during the civil war. When Colonel Coetzee, Archer's former commander, and his men become involved in the violence it is because they have been contracted to do so. For the white villains of the film war is business. Contrastingly, the RUF militia are shown to enjoy the violence they are a part of, as there is constant laughter and music. The film may thus be read as suggesting that for the African violence is something recreational, and a manifestation of what Fanon described as "our Machiavellianism" (1963:12), which refers to the colonial assumption that Africans have an inherent inclination towards violence. However, Dia is for the larger part of the narrative an RUF infantryman, and yet we know from the film's initial representation of this character (as a rural boy who hoped through education to one day become president) that he is not inherently villainous. It is in its use of a complex child figure that the film exceeds the parameters of melodrama, and is an example of how the child figure allows us to see ambivalences and ethical complexities, which may not be made apparent by adult characters.

As a feature of the child figure, ambiguity allows us to consider them "liminal personae ("threshold" people)" (Turner 1969:95). Victor K. Turner, in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969), explained that liminal personae "are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (95). As demonstrated by the preceding discussion on melodrama, Dia's ambiguity makes him resistant to categorization, and so may be considered a liminal persona.

As Manohla Dargis wrote in *The New York Times*: "if films were judged solely by their good intentions, this one would be best in show" (2006:E1). Zwick explains these good intentions in an interview with Martin Rapaport, and when asked if he felt the making of *Blood Diamond* was an exploitation of the people of Sierra Leone, he responded as follows:

Any time that you tell a story about the suffering of someone else, you risk exploitation … I think that at the end of the day, all that one has is one's intentions. As I began to talk to people in Sierra Leone, it became clear that they had a great desire and need for this story to be told. Sorious Samura, who made the film "Cry Freetown," told me that he believed the people of Sierra Leone have never forgiven the children for their role as RUF … terrorists. He felt that by telling the story of this boy and the terrible things that happened to him, those seeing the movie might come to understand — and perhaps reach forgiveness. That goes for an entire country. The whole principle of truth and reconciliation in South Africa suggests that only by being desperately honest about even the most painful things is there any hope of reconciliation. (2007:n.p.)

This response is one of the reasons why this film should be considered, as cited before, "a socially conscious effort" (Gberie 2007:n.p.). It is clear from his response that Zwick considered the needs of the people of Sierra Leone, perhaps none more so than the need for reconciliation. What is most significant about this comment is that Zwick, as someone outside of the trauma of the civil war, was able to see that these children were not the demons they were believed to be, and he understood that their victimhood needed to be recognised. However, the film's representation of the suffering that its director is so conscious of is burdened by its own intertextuality. For example, many of the action scenes depicting large explosions, and particularly the airstrike towards the end of the film, recall the imagery of films such as *Apocalypse Now*. This is also an example of how adhering to traditions and tropes of genre (in this case action) can undermine the authenticity of a text which uses realist aesthetics.

After the civil war "ended"[16] in 1999, Sierra Leone established its own Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (www.sierraleonetrc.org), which operated from 2002 until 2004. The TRC of Sierra Leone dealt specifically with the trauma experienced by the children who were indoctrinated into the RUF.[17] This is an example of an African government, in

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[16] I use the term ended with scepticism, as violence erupted again in 1999, despite the war having ended politically.

[17] A particularly insightful report on the way in which the TRC of Sierra Leone dealt with the crisis of child soldier is that of UNICEF: "Children and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Sierra Leone", complied by Natalie Mann and Bert Theuermann. 2001, based on a "technical meeting on children and the TRC".

collaboration with its people, attempting to resolve its own conflict. Yet, *Blood Diamond* makes no mention of the TRC or that there was an attempt to reconcile perpetrators and victims. The film ends with Vandy testifying before the UN, rather than at the TRC. This ending suggests that Africa is incapable of solving its own problems and that salvation and help can only be found in the west, illustrating the underlying Afropessimism of the film. However, the film does highlight the human rights violations suffered in Sierra Leone during the civil war. When asked by Rapaport why he wanted to make the film, Zwick replied:

> The more I learned about what happened in Sierra Leone during the war, the more I was appalled by what I and other people did not know. I realized that in this tiny country …there existed very big issues that needed to be addressed. (2007)

From this response one may deduce that Zwick wanted, at least to some extent, to raise global awareness about the "big issues" in Sierra Leone. Some of these big issues may include the human rights violations which took place during the civil war, the need to put a ban on conflict diamonds, and perhaps most significantly of all, the plight of child soldiers. It is important to note here that the civil war in Sierra Leone is considered a "new war". Kaldor and Vincent explain that

> The brutal violence against civilians was typical of a new war. There is a debate among scholars about whether the motivations were economic (loot and pillage) or psychological (anger, shame and humiliation). But there is also a military logic to this seemingly irrational mode of fighting. In an era where all weapons are increasingly accurate and destructive, battles are costly and difficult to win. The best way to control territory is through control over or displacement of the population who live there. Terror is a technique for achieving territorial control. (2006:10)

Blood Diamond, in its depiction of the RUF raid of Vandy's village, demonstrates the violence that displaced thousands of refugees. When Vandy is initially captured by the RUF he witnesses the result of, and is himself asked, the notorious "long sleeve, short sleeve?" question. As one rebel stretches a terrified man's hands over a tree stump and asks "long

sleeve or short sleeve?" the choir of soldiers surrounding them bursts with laughter. Through the cackling comes the voice of Captain Poison, who explains: "Young man, young man, you must understand. The government wants you to vote, O.K.? They will tell you that the future is in your hands…We now de future, so we take your hands. No more hands, no more voting" (Zwick 2006). There are also scenes in which the film depicts the thousands of displaced Sierra Leoneans streaming towards, one presumes, a refugee camp. Furthermore, during a cutaway to Vandy, the film depicts the conditions of the RUF mining (or slave) camps. By highlighting the violence which has traumatised the people of Sierra Leone the film does bring awareness to the human rights violations which took place during this period, a concession made by Evans and Glenn who note that "after the opening of *Blood Diamond*, Sierra Leone was mentioned eleven times on news inserts of major news networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC)" (2010:25).

However, at the same time as the film creates awareness about the violence and human rights violations which took place during the civil war it also creates an impression of black savagery. One example of this would be the scene in which Vandy beats Captain Poison to death with a spade. This regression into colonial tropes of Africa is further illustrated by the film's reduction of characters such as Archer, Vandy, Bowen, and Captain Poison into what Diana Adesola Mafe discusses as the "trenchant archetypes in fiction and non-fiction films – the White Queen, the White Hunter, the Good African, the Dangerous African and so on" (2011: 69). Mafe's critique of *The Constant Gardener*[18] and *Blood Diamond* is framed by Kenneth Cameron's model of archetypes, which was cited earlier, as delineated in his study *Africa on Film: Beyond Black and White* (1994). Using Cameron's model, Mafe argues that

> both films evoke modes of racism and sexism that they initially promise to transcend: the white woman remains sacred and yet secondary; the black man remains the sole

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[18] Directed by Fernando Meirelles in 2005, *The Constant Gardener* is a novel to film adaptation of John Le Carré's novel of the same name. Set in Kenya, the film explores an altogether different social issue than that of *Blood Diamond* - class divisions.

representative of Other subjectivity, although his subjectivity is noticeably eroded. The black woman is erased all together and completely collapsed into the background – a screaming victim during a village attack, a dying girl in a hospital ward, or a prostitute outside a hotel. Only the positionally superior white male figure holds any real agency. (2011:70)

Mafe's critique of the film is persuasive, and so is her reading of the film as employing archetypal modes of characterization.[19] Vandy is the Good African and the moral centre of the film. However, he too is capable of violence, as is shown when he beats Captain Poison to death. Yet, his actions, unlike the violence of the RUF, approach reasonableness. Even in the moment when Vandy loses all control, the viewer still empathizes with him as the Good African who was driven to violence by circumstance. Archer is the quintessential White Hunter, describing himself as a "soldier of fortune", despite Bowen's accuracy in calling him a mercenary. Archer dominates the narrative just as much as DiCaprio dominates the screen, and an important part of him being cast as the White Hunter is his confession just before death that "I am exactly where I belong" (Zwick 2006). What redeems Archer and ultimately wins him the empathy of the viewer is his martyrdom, and the peace he makes with the land he did not know he loved. Captain Poison is quite obviously the Bad African, and this does not need explaining. As Mafe points out, these "Manichean oppositions in the film are not subtle", and by juxtaposing these archetypes, the film inadvertently affirms the Manichean split in the society it depicts.

However, Dia cannot be cast quite so simply into any of these archetypes. At the beginning of the film he is just as optimistic about Africa as Bowen is, explaining to his father that "One day, this place will be a Utopia". He is also a good African, who does what he is told, and "walks five miles every morning to the sister school to learn English" (Zwick 2006). However, Dia does become a RUF soldier, which means, if we are to accept Sharma's claim,

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[19] It is clear that Bowen is the White Queen who is made sacred through her goodness and desperation to help and instigate change, but ultimately must be sent away for her own good. A decision made for her by Archer.

that he is a villain, and a bad African, and we see from the film's illustration of his training that he is also capable of becoming a mercenary. Thus Dia inhabits both sides of the Manichean split constructed in *Blood Diamond*, a split which is mirrored by a splitting of Dia into his subjectivity and a performed identity known as See-me-no-more.

The first scene of the film opens with the lighting of a match, which in turn lights a paraffin lamp. The light reveals Vandy and the camera follows him across the space to a sleeping boy. As he caresses the boy's head he utters the first dialogue of the film: "Dia.". The name Dia in West African means champion.[20] Dia is also a Greek work, used in English as a prefix, which means "through". Dia, as the only fully developed child character in the film, is a lens *through* which to view the ambiguities, complexities, and paradoxes of the film. Dia's name is also encoded in the film's title – in the word "diamond". Ultimately, as will be shown in the textual analysis that follows, Dia is to Vandy what the pink diamond is to Archer – the most valuable thing in his world. Dia is thus a living blood diamond - precious, but marred by the misuse of his value. He is also still a rough diamond which needs to be polished, the buffer in this film being education.

The first scene expands two very important themes, that of education and that of family. When Vandy wakes Dia the two have what is not an unfamiliar debate between a father who wants his child to go to school, and a son who wants to sleep a little longer (Figure 1). Note that Vandy's dialogue is in Mende, and Dia's is in English:

Vandy:	*Dia. Dia, don't want to be late.*
Dia:	*English boys don't go to school every day.*
Vandy:	*Every day. Just like you. So you can become a doctor, not mend the nets like your father. Now get out of bed before I tan your behind with my fishing rod.* (Zwick 2006)

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[20] See: www.allbabynames.com
       www.babycenter.com
       www.babynamespe**dia**.com

By juxtaposing Mende with English, the latter language functions as a signifier for western influence on the African understanding of what education means, and Vandy's desire for Dia to be equal to the white boys could, in the Fanonian sense, be read as a symptom of Vandy's incomplete decolonization. Both the Vandy and Dia character aspire to an identification with whiteness, and in the imagination of the film education is a means towards lactification – "whiten[-ing] the race" (Fanon 1963:33). For Vandy education is directly associated with the ability to read, write, and speak English. For Fanon "[t]o speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (1963: 8) Figures 1, 2 and are taken from this opening scene of the film.

The mise-en-scene of Figure 1 articulates the pressure to become educated, particularly through the placement of the books – which look as though they are hovering over Dia's head. In this sense one may assume that the emphasis Vandy places on Dia learning English stems from his own desire to be civilized. Vandy encourages Dia to learn the English language, suggesting a desire for him to become English,[21] and to embody white and western values. Thus we see already in the first scene of the film that Dia embodies complex ideas about postcolonial African childhood.

In Figure 2 Vandy dresses Dia, positing Vandy as a caring, although perhaps overbearing, parent. It also entertains the parental fantasy that Dia, although fourteen, still needs him. However, this act also undermines Dia's autonomy. The shirt being placed onto Dia may also be read as Vandy transferring his ideological beliefs onto Dia.

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[21] By which I mean that Dia will assume the culture through language, without actually becoming an Englishman.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

The whiteness of the shirt may be read in two ways: firstly, it suggests innocence, purity, naivety, and vulnerability – all of which are of features of Romantic childhood (Plotz 2001, Jones 2002). Secondly, it may be read as affirming my earlier assertion that education is a means through which to achieve lactification. The privileging of this association is echoed by the lighting of this shot. In the relatively dark hut, the light that is supposedly cast by the paraffin lamp is enough to highlight Vandy, Dia, and brightest of all Dia's white school shirt which is between them.

Seconds after the moment captured in Figure 2, the camera turns in the direction of a baby's cry. Lying on the ground is Dia's mother, his infant sibling, and his sister (Figure 3). The Vandys, in a fishing village somewhere in the middle of rural Sierra Leone, congruously represent one of the most familiar western psycho-social models: the nuclear family. Evans and Glenn comment that in *Blood Diamond* "the nuclear monogamous family replaces the extended African family", which contributes to "an Americanized version of Africa" (2010:28), as does the gangster lifestyle depicted by the film's RUF.

Figures 4, 5, and 6 are taken from the next scene, and show Dia and Vandy returning home from school and work, oblivious of the anarchy that will erupt moments later when the RUF invade their village. To begin with, the configuration or camera set-ups of the shots need some discussion. Figure 4 may be considered a medium long shot. According to Hayward this shot is "[h]alfway between a long and a medium shot. If this shot frames a character then the whole body will be in view towards the middle ground of the shot. A quite open shot for readability, showing considerably more of the surroundings in relation to the character(s)." 2001: 329). However, the shot may also be considered a mid-shot, which is a shot used to "show greater detail and so introduces the emotional elements in the shot (Van Zyl, 1987:46). Thereafter the distance between the camera, and thus the viewer, and its subjects begins to close.

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 5 is a medium shot, which "generally speaking frames the character from the waist, hips, or knees up (or down). The camera is sufficiently distanced from the body for the characters to be seen in relation to his or her surrounding" (Hayward 2001: 328-329). The medium shot, says Hayward, is frequently used to signify relationships, and this particular kind of medium shot, which is known as a two-shot medium shot, "suggests intimacy" (Hayward 2001 329). Hayward explains further that this shot is more complex and "open in readability" than those from a greater distance (such as the preceding medium long shot), as this shot allows us to observe characters in relation to different "planes, backgrounds, middle ground, or foreground", and thus allows for meaning to be produced from this "interrelatedness" (Hayward 2001, 329).

Figure 6 is an altogether different shot: a medium close-up. This refers to a shot which "frames the shoulders or chest and head" of one or two characters (Hayward 2001: 328). According to Hayward a shot like this between two characters indicates intimacy, solidarity, and a coming together. However, Vandy's back is turned to the camera allowing Dia to be the focus of the gaze of the viewer. Thus, the shot may be read as a medium close up of Dia, and any close up is used to indicate the "importance of a particular character at a particular moment in a film or place her or him as central to the narrative by singling out the character…at the beginning of the film" (Hayward 2001: 328). Furthermore, the close-up has "[c]onnotations…of access to the mind or thought processes (including the subconscious) of a character" (Hayward 2001: 328).[22] Thus one may consider all of the information derived from the shots and scenes which precede Figure 6 as the psychic content of Dia's unconscious, which articulates his subjectivity.

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[22] The "subconscious" is a word people often use when they mean "unconscious": "SUBCONSCIOUS- synonym for UNCONSCIOUS never used in psychoanalytic writings", in C. Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*. U.S.A: Penguin Books. 1977:158.

There is a clear procession from shot to shot making less and less the distance between the viewer and the Vandys. Figure 4, as discussed previously, generates meaning regarding the landscape of Dia's childhood, suggesting an imposition of Romantic ideals of childhood. Figure 5 allows for particular focus on the filiative relationship between Dia and his father, and Figure 6 indicates that Dia is central to the narrative and because it is a close-up, it may be read as reflecting Dia's internal processes and psyche.

One's psyche is a complex network of psychic content determined by the different structures of the psyche and housed in one of its levels of consciousness – as discussed in the previous chapter. It is important to note that the long period of childhood is saturated with social stimuli and information imposed by parents and other care-givers such as teachers. It is for this reason that Vandy's opinions are such strong filial influences, which not only delineate to Dia what is wrong and right, but create an idea of childhood and the child according to which Dia will mould himself.
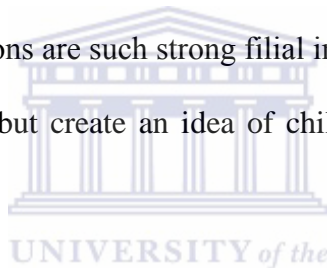
In this scene this ideal childhood is framed by what for the Romantics is its ideal setting: "the pastoral spaces of the rural" (Jones 2002: 21). In these moments before chaos erupts, the film presents a world in which man and nature live in harmony – one notices the dirt road, the sound of the whistling brush through which patches of sky peak, and that even the house behind Dia (Figure 6) is made of thatch. The world the film creates in this scene is a world that, like the childhood associated with it, will inevitably be corrupted. Owain Jones, in "Naturally Not! Childhood, the Urban and Romanticism" (2002), explains that

> Childhood, like nature, under the gaze of the romantic became a state of innocence, naturalness, purity, spontaneity, goodness, naïve creativeness and wisdom, and closeness to the sublime and godhead. It carried the heavy freight of representing the best of, the hopes for, the human condition. (2002: 21)

This ideal childhood is presented in the first two scenes of the film, in which Dia represents the hope associated not only with childhood but with education in Africa. The pastoral as the setting for Romantic education, as Jones points out, was "an alternative to then established models of raising and educating children through discipline and confinement" (2002: 21). One notices in Figure 4 that slung behind Dia's back are the books he is carrying with his right hand ("Dia returns home carrying his school books", Zwick & Herskovitz 2005: 2). The books are almost at Dia's shoulder, whilst the fish Vandy carries in his left hand are almost on the ground. This staging works symbolically to indicate once again the significance placed on education in Africa. It also demonstrates the irony of education in the context of a filiative relationship (which will be discussed later) between two Africans of two different generations. By filial right Vandy is superior to Dia – as indicated when juxtaposing the tall Hounsou with the still growing Kuypers. However, Dia's education and potential far exceed that of Vandy as suggested by the elevation of Dia's school books over Vandy's fish. Dia is a representation of the postcolonial African child, whose experience of childhood may be quite different to the configuration of the Romantics. It is for this reason that Olga Nieuwenhuys, in an editorial for *Childhood*, explains that:

> Postcolonialism's invitation to look at the other side of the picture…cannot be followed up without challenging current disciplinary boundaries that privilege normative representations of Northern, white, bourgeois childhood…and produces by the same token 'other' childhoods. (2013: 5-6)

Nieuwenhuys' argument is thus that as a consequence of privileging "Northern, white, bourgeois" fantasies of childhood which stem from Romantic tradition, other childhoods are too often devalued and dismissed as an antithesis of childhood. Dia's narrative highlights precisely how non-traditional childhoods, such as those experienced by child soldiers, are othered because they are not normative, as in the case of this text, the alternative childhood is characterized by violence, trauma, and what I refer to as refiliation.

The tension between the imposed normative childhood and the context in which Dia is placed is highlighted further by the juxtaposition of the naturalness of the rural landscape and Dia's costume – clothing commonly associated with schooling: a white shirt, grey pants, and again one cannot ignore the books peeking from behind his back. These tropes function symbolically to signal the hopes Dia has claimed as a result of his education, which is expressed more directly during the walk home with his father:

Dia:	*My teacher says the country was founded as a utopia. Do you know what that word means, Papa?*
Vandy:	*Uh-uh.*
Dia:	*Well she says someday when the war is over our world will be a paradise.*
Vandy:	*And all this you learn in one day?*
Dia:	*Mm-hm. And math and science.*
Vandy:	*Oh. This is too much learning. Tomorrow you will stay home and mend the nets, yes?*
Dia:	*No, Papa.*
Vandy:	*What? So now you want to go to school every day? Huh? Huh?*

(Zwick: 2006)

The idea of Utopia is a complex one with a rich heritage in western thought since Thomas More coined it in 1915-1916, and so it is beyond the scope of this thesis to delineate the history of this term. This thesis' use of the concept is guided by the ideas of Ashis Nandy, as delineated in *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (1987). For Nandy "Utopias … [are] ideas about the end-products of salvation … [and] can only promise a sharper awareness and critique of existing cultures and institutionalized suffering" (20). In the context of the film, what Dia discusses may refer to what Bhabha calls "the Utopia of progress" (1994: 255). Like all utopias, as Nandy argues, this kind of third world utopia is not "without an implicit or explicit theory of suffering" (21) – however, the film, as discussed

earlier, does not indulge the viewer with this context. According to Nandy, this kind of suffering, "which has given the Third world its name and uniqueness" (21), must be recognised as a man-made abomination born of the same "poverty, exploitation, indignity, and self-contempt" which gave rise to the political and economic category 'the third world' (21). However, Nandy explains that just as "[t]heories of salvation do not save" (20), neither can utopias. He warns that "an overly determined attempt to actualize a utopia can turn into a dystopia for many or destroy its 'pull' by exposing it to the harsh light of human experience" (3). This is what the film depicts when it distorts Dia's fantasy Utopia into the gangster's paradise of the RUF.

There is in this scene an interesting overlap between the idea of utopia and the idea of childhood, because, as Nandy argues, for the adult childhood is a utopia (65). Nandy discusses "the idea of childhood as a lost utopia – found not in autobiographies but mainly in literature, myths and fantasies" (65). Thus, childhood, like the utopia, is an idea or fantasy which exists only in the human imagination, in direct opposition to the human experience. This tension is something which the film highlights, particularly through its use of education as a central theme in Dia's narrative.

Thus far the film clearly presents education as a means by which Dia can elevate himself out of the backwardness of the rural Africa it presents. Education and its significance is a theme carried throughout the film, but because education is filtered through child figures, especially Dia, its symbolism becomes ambiguous. In these first two scenes education is associated with potential held by children, as well as hope and progress in Africa. Thus part of Dia's tragedy when is taken by the RUF is that he has been robbed not only of his putative innocence, but also of the hope and opportunities that stems from receiving an education. However, this ideal childhood is soon interrupted. Dia and Vandy have not yet reached their home when the natural tranquillity surrounding them is interrupted by the RUF soldiers, who

are preceded by the rap music which accompanies them throughout the film. At this point the RUF raid the village and separate Vandy from his family. Hereafter the film depicts the horrific "long sleeve or short sleeve?" scenario discussed earlier. At first it seems as though Dia, his mother and siblings will be able to elude the RUF but soon Dia, along with one or two other boys, are taken by the rebels - as shown in Figures 7 and 8 which follow. This is the beginning of Dia's indoctrination into the RUF. With regards to this, Heeren explains that

> The training of child soldiers [in Sierra Leone] is almost "classical" in the sense of forging a group-spirit by undoing existing family-ties, and creating a new feeling of bonding with the group and a total respect for the commanding officers. But this training goes way beyond any classical notion when one realizes that children were actually commanding grown-up men…It also goes over the edge as during the initiation process children are forced to kill a companion to enter "the group". (accessed 2013: n.p.)

What Heeren describes above is easily traceable in the film. It depicts the training of the new recruits as having four phases. Firstly children are abducted as a recruitment strategy, as is illustrated by Figures 7 and 8 which follow. Secondly the child's filiative bonds are severed. Thirdly, the recruit will commit murder as an initiation ritual. Fourthly, the child must accept the RUF as his new family and take his place in a new pseudo-filiative order.

Figures 7 and 8 are taken from the scene depicting the first phase of indoctrination. After having escaped the raid of their village, the Vandy's are confronted by the RUF for a second time and once again lose a family member. Figure 7 shows an RUF soldier struggling to pull Dia away from his mother. Despite his resistance, Dia is eventually torn away from her and loaded onto the back of an RUF vehicle, as we see in Figure 8. One notices in Figure 8 that behind Dia is an RUF soldier, holding a large gun against the boys head. This scene thus shows in no uncertain terms that Dia was *taken* by the RUF.

Figure 7

Figure 8

Thus, in this narrative the boy is not only taken from his family but his autonomy and childlikeness is taken from him. In this regard, it is important to note, as Evans and Glenn do, that many of these children were not stolen or kidnapped, but rather that in reality many of them chose to fight for the RUF (2010:16). The tradition of young people enlisting to go to war is a long-standing one and as Heeren argues:

> Very young people as soldiers are not a "typically African" phenomenon. Louis XV started a French elitist officer school in 1764 for 250 children between 8 and 11. The Prussians did the same. Napoleon incorporated many children in his armies. Freedom and other civil wars in for instance South America in the 70s and 80s saw very young people included in the military, revolutionary or contra-rebel ranks. Iran sent its young kids fighting the American and European backed superior forces of Saddam Hussein. Even the first Gulf War had 16-old American youth fighting. (2013: n.p.)

What separates the Dia narrative from this long standing history of child combatants is that Dia was taken by the RUF and forced into combat. This is one of a multitude of child soldier narratives, but as stated earlier, the film overlooks the historical fact that many of these child soldiers volunteered for combat.[23] In the UNICEF State of the World's Children address it was noted that as a result of believing that their families had been killed "[m]any children…want to become soldiers and offer themselves for service. Others are deliberately recruited" (1996:n.p.). Thus, the story of the child soldiers of Sierra Leone is far more complex than the film depicts. Although employing the narrative strategies of melodrama, the film is widely regarded as an action-thriller-horror film and so telling a story filled with action and trauma makes Dia's narrative perhaps the most obvious choice. The choice to overlook the many children who volunteered to serve in the RUF allows the film to present a neater, less complicated 'child soldier' narrative. However, had the more complicated narrative been used

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[23] See C. Martins argument regarding the danger of the single narrative of the child soldier in literary representations. Martins, C. "The dangers of the single story: Child-soldiers in literary fiction and film" in *Childhood,* Vol. 18, No. 4, 2011.

it may have resulted in a more pluralistic representation of the civil war, the RUF, and the child soldiers on both sides of the war.

The child soldiers of the film largely represent loss: the loss of innocence, the loss of a generation, and the loss of hope for the future, which is illustrated through the stripping away of their birth names, and renaming them with such names as "Dead Boy" (Zwick & Herskovitz 2005:37). The significance of this name is that it represents the loss of childhood, and boyhood. Renaming represents the loss of heritage, personal history, and of course subjectivity. The soldier Dead Boy is the boy who shoots Benjamin. He introduces himself as "my name is Dead Boy" (Zwick & Herskovitz 2005:37); not "I am Dead Boy". This suggests, significantly, that the child dissociates his self from his identity in the RUF – a neurosis that, as I will show, Dia also exhibits.

When the viewer sees Dia next he is in a dark room, and is part of a cluster of completely naked children. This nakedness, one presumes, represents the stripping away of these children's former identity and subjectivity. Thus they are the "blank slates" to which Locke had referred.[24] In order for these children to be blank slates former inscriptions, such as family and education, must be erased, only then are the children primed to be indoctrinated into the RUF. Thus begins the second phase of indoctrination.

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[24] As was discussed in the earlier section "Renegotiating childhood".

Figure 9: Here Dia and his fellow captives stand, after being beaten out of their cell

Figure 9 is taken from a scene which depicts one RUF commander attempting to sever the children's filiative bonds. Expressing disdain for the occupations held by the children's parents (as farmers, fisherman, and so on), the commander accuses the parents of "sucking the country dry" (Zwick 2006), like parasites. He then comforts the children with the notion that the RUF has come to reclaim Sierra Leone for its people. The recruits are told that they will be part of the revolution, and the family of the RUF. To ensure that the recruits fulfil their role as children of the revolution they are told:

> *Your mothers and fathers are dead.*
> *Your brothers and sisters are dead.*
> *You are dead too. But you will be reborn with us.*
> *We are your family now.*   (Zwick & Herskovitz 2005: 34)

To tell these children that their families are dead is to render them dislocated from the filiative hierarchy and relationships that protected them. What *Blood Diamond*'s RUF is

creating is a situation in which the idea or possibility of filiation no longer seems plausible. Edward Said in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983, 1984) referred to the filiative order, in its simplest form, as "the closed and tightly knit family structure that secures generational hierarchical relationships to one another" (21), which he says is hierarchically ordered according to the "chain of biological procreation" (22). For Said the filiative order is instinctual (24). Furthermore the filiative order is demarcated by features such as "birth, nationality, and profession" (25), all of which signify networks of relationships, which Said referred to as *filial relationships*. He explained that filial relationships belong "to the realms of nature and life" (20), and are "held together by natural bonds and natural forms of authority - involving obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict" (20). Said is critical of filiation, explaining that filiation stands "between culture and system" (26), and therefore is "closed to...a concrete reality about which political, moral, and social judgements have to be made and, if not only made, then exposed and demystified" (1983:26).

Therefore there is a need for "a kind of compensatory order that, whether it is a party, an institution, a culture, a set of beliefs, or even a world-vision, provides men and women with a new form of relationship" (Said 1983:19). This compensatory order is what Said refers to as the *affiliative order*. Said explains that "the affiliative order … surreptitiously duplicates the closed, tight knit family structure that secures general hierarchical relationships to one another" (1983:21). Thus, according to Said's theory, because these soldiers believe that the filiative order no longer exists, they will accept the RUF as a compensatory order, because "affiliation becomes a form of representing the filiative processes to be found in nature, although affiliation takes validated nonbiological social and cultural forms" (Said 1983:23). However, for Said affiliation is based on "voluntary effort and willed deliberation" (1983:25), but in *Blood Diamond,* Dia's assimilation into the RUF is not voluntary, nor has he had the opportunity to deliberate the consequences of becoming a member of the RUF. Furthermore,

the RUF does not attempt to stand as an institute of affiliation. Instead the RUF attempts to replace and stand in place of the family and filiative order, in this sense the film shows how "affiliation sometimes reproduces filiation" (Said 1983:24), although in a most distorted form. Thus as Dia becomes indoctrinated into the RUF, he experiences not a transition to affiliation, but what I refer to as *re-filiation*.

Re-filiation refers to Dia's absorption into the RUF and his acceptance that it is the new system[25] to which he belongs. This re-filiative order is a substitute order which is used to compensate for the loss of the filiative order. Both systems are hierarchical and ordered according to rank. Dia and the new recruits are currently at the bottom of the order – infantryman. Captain Rambo, an RUF commander, explains that the new recruits will be "reborn" into the RUF as new members of the RUF family. Like the filiative and affiliative order this re-filiative order appeases a primal need to belong, despite the RUF being the antithesis of the Vandy filiative order.

The third and most important part of the RUF indoctrination process is marked by ritual initiation.[26] In the scene illustrating the RUF initiation ritual the boys are taught that because they are children "they [the government] do not respect you, but with this in your hand [lifting a gun] they will fear you" (Zwick 2006). Hereafter the boys are instructed by their commanders to chant the phrase "shed their blood". This is an example of how something privileged by the filiative order to which Dia belonged - respect - is replaced by something privileged by the re-filiative order to which he now belongs, namely fear.

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[25] The term "system" refers to the order.
[26] The initiation ritual of the RUF is similar to the initiation rituals or traditions of many gangs - including American gangs such as the Bloods and the Crips. Thus, the RUF is presented as wanting to emulate American gangs, which represent power, wealth, and most importantly of all a revolution.

In Figure 10 above Dia and the other children on the ground are the newest "recruits". These recruits surrounded by other children who are already RUF, each with either a gun or machete in hand. At this point the recruits are blindfolded, which actively removes their ability to choose to participate in the killings or not; they are completely dependent on the guidance of their commanders.

The use of shadow in this scene is particularly significant. The frame is divided in two through the use of light. This suggests that there is a division between those *becoming* RUF and those who *are* RUF. On the left dark side of the screen are the boys who have not yet completed their initiation. Their being placed in the darkness suggests that they have not yet been accepted into the brotherhood of the RUF, and that they are not yet considered men by the RUF either. All those who are standing, and in possesion of a weapon are RUF, as are those in the light. Through the contrast of physical behavior between the recruits and the RUF soldiers, the mise-en-scene suggests a tension. Those standing impose superiority over those

seated and blindfolded. The towering figures have been initiated. They are RUF. They are men. They are the future. Light symolises knowledge, power, and the known. Contrastingly, the dark symbolises the unknown, vulnerability, and a sense of unbelonging - the boys no longer experience filiation but are not yet re-filiated. It is interesting that in this scene the RUF is associated with light, and the young boys yet to be inaugurated are associated with the darkness. Again here the symbolic meaning of the mise-en-scene affirms the Manichean split illustrated by *Blood Diamond*; however, in this scene the split is between those who are RUF and those who are not.

In moments Dia and the other new recruits will have undergone the inaugural ritual of the RUF, which illustrated by a sequence of shots depicting this third phase. Figure 11.A. shows Dia being taken out of line. This frame presents a paradox, which is that Dia is both isolated and a member of a group. Dia being isolated from the other new recruits is representative of the idea of being chosen; chosen to do the work of the RUF, and bring freedom to Sierra Leone. In harmony with this is the idea of being part of an army, a brotherhood, the RUF family. What the film presents as an important technique used by *Blood Diamond*'s RUF is making the child believe that the RUF is the child's new family, thus manipulating the child's need to belong. In Figure 11.B. Dia is given a large gun, which he is told to aim in front of him. Prior to this, the film depicts children, very young, firing large guns at mannequins hanging from a wall, so currently this is what the viewer expects will be the next event. However, the viewer then sees what Dia cannot: an older soldier is leading a gagged man to the target area. Dia cannot hear the muffled whimpers of the man being placed in front of him over the thunderous, almost frantic chanting of the other RUF soldiers, most of whom are children themselves (Figurers 11.B and 11.C). Dia pulls the trigger, killing the man, and the choir burst into cheers (Figure 11. D).

Figure 11.A: Dia being taken out of line by one of the commanders

Figure 11.B: Another commander places a gun in Dia's hand and tells him to take aim, whilst the other commander places the live human target in front of him.

Figure 11.D: Dia has just shot the man, whose blood can be seen sprayed on the wall, and the soldiers cheer for this violence

Figure 11.C: Dia takes aim and prepares to shoot the shaking man

Figure 11.E: Dia removes the blindfold and realizes what he has done. Note the shadow of a boy holding a gun on the wall.

Figure 11.F: Note that the shadow is now pointing its gun at Dia's head. See also the horror and disbelief on Dia's face.

This scene is structurally quite similar to the scene in *District 9* in which Van de Merwe is also forced to execute a live target (an alien). However, what motivates this event in both narratives differs. In *Blood Diamond* the RUF want Dia to be completely detached from his former filiative order so as to create a situation in which Dia's only means of survival is to allow re-filiation with the RUF. Contrastingly in *District 9* Van de Merwe is forced to kill for the sake of science. And yet, disturbingly, both the RUF and Multi-National United (MNU) implicitly claim that the violence they endorse is in the name of progress. It is also interesting to note that when Van de Merwe commits this act he discovers his morality, whilst Dia represses his.

Figures 11.E and 11.F. depict the instance in which Dia lifts his blindfold revealing to himself what has occurred, and then realizing what he has done. In both figures, Dia is accompanied by a shadow. In Figure 11.E this shadow appears to be a boy holding a gun, standing to attention. This shadow may be symbolic of the boy's conscience - that is his superego - which Freud says is always ready to punish the ego with guilt (symbolised here by the gun). Once Dia realises that he has committed a taboo act - murder - the shadow turns its weapon at Dia's head - Figure 11.F. Thus, even if the filiative order to which Dia belonged did in fact still exist, the guilt he feels as a result of committing an act condemned by the superego may lead him to believe that he could never return to his former life and family. One must remember that Vandy is an honest man who represents a certain high morality within the narrative, he is uncomfortable pretending to be "the cameraman", and it is also very important to note that according to Freud "the superego retains the character of the father" (1923:3968). Thus, up until this point Dia's superego, and so the figure of his father and its influence, has remained intact throughout Dia's abduction and indoctrination. However, if one looks closes at Figure 11.F. one notes that Dia's eyes are wide, and during this moment he is completely

silent. This silence can be read as an inability to articulate trauma and a gap in the narrative which the viewer, and this analysis, must fill with meaning.

In "On Psycho-analysis" (1913) Freud explains that when internal conflict, like the conflict between the impulses of the id and the moral principles of the superego which are mediated by the ego, occurs, it will always lead to "'repression' and the 'splitting of the mind'" (2546).[27] One neurosis for which repression is a catalyst is what is known as double consciousness, schizophrenia, or the splitting of the ego. According to Freudian theory, as discussed in "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence" (1940), when Dia experiences the "psychical trauma" (5062) of killing a man for the first time (the threshold at which he leaves behind childhood and enters adulthood), the event is so traumatic that the ego becomes split, essentially forming a "double ego" (1895:211).[28] This double ego is performed in the figure of the RUF infantryman See-me-no-more.[29] If one is to accept that the trauma of committing murder and the conditions of war will cause a splitting of the ego, which will in turn result in the production of a double ego, then one might speculate that the same conditions which induced this split may create a need for a double superego.

This double ego will then be dictated to by the double ego, which represents the moral codes of war, and specifically in this case, the codes of the RUF. Freud, in "Why War" (1933), explains that during a time of war there is a push and pull between "Right and Might" (4739). The reference here is to the law (right) and violence (might). He explains that during times of war domination is achieved by whoever has "the greater might – domination by brute violence or by violence supported by intellect" (4794). War, according to Freud, creates an

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[27] In this work, along with a number of others, Freud discusses the splitting of consciousness, which he explains in "A note on the Unconscious in Psycho-analysis" (1919) "might be better denoted as shifting of consciousness" (2580), by this he means that there are psychical complexes which oscillate between conscious and unconscious (2580).

[28] Breuer. "Studies on Hysteria: III - Theory".

[29] Freud in "Why War" (1933) explains that during a time of war there is a push and pull between "Right and Might" (4739). The reference here is to the law (right) and violence (might). He explains that during times of war domination is achieved by whoever has "the greater might – domination by brute violence or by violence supported by intellect" (4794).

atmosphere in which the "satisfaction of…destructive impulses is…facilitated by their admixture with others of an erotic and idealistic kind" (1933:4799).[30] If one accepts Freud's argument and applies it to the film then the civil war and the RUF, as depicted by the film, create an environment which facilitates and fosters violence which, as will be shown later, is motivated by a need for preservation and utopian idealism. Therefore within the culture of war acts which were previously deemed taboo are now the new "right" or law of the group.

Thus Dia and See-me-no-more are two distinct persons and their individual superegos represent two distinct worlds. Dia's superego, according to Freudian theory, is influenced by "parents, but also the family, racial and national traditions handed on through them, as well as the social *milieu* which they represent" (Freud 1940:4958). Contrastingly, See-me-no-more's superego is influenced by Captain Poison, his other commanding officers, and the ideology and traditions of the RUF and the utopia (or rather dystopia) it represents. However, it would be impossible for both Dia (the boy's subjectivity) and See-me-no-more (his performed identity) to be conscious at the same time, and because it is necessary for his survival to perform the identity of See-me-no-more, his subjectivity may have been *repressed*.

Repression is the most primitive of all the ego defence mechanisms.[31] According to Freud it "lies at the basis of every neurosis, as a reaction to trauma - as an elementary, traumatic neurosis" (1919:3668), and occurs when the ego is unable to surmount trauma. He explains that "the vicissitude of repression consists in its not being allowed by the watchman to pass from the system of the unconscious into that of the preconscious" (1916-1917:3369). This indicates that the repressed was at first part of the system of consciousness - as the memory of Dia's family once was. However, because the repressed, those psychic constructs which are not "ego syntonic" (1923:3923), causes conflict between the instinctual impulses of

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[30] Here Freud uses the term erotic impulses to refer to the drives of Eros - the life drive (4798).

[31] The ego deploys these mechanisms in an attempt to protect itself from the anxiety caused by the internal conflict between the id and superego (Freud 1923: 3923).

the id and the ethics and morals of the superego, it has been condemned to the unconscious by the "watchman" - the ego itself. Under circumstances of war (a time when violence is accepted and facilitated), it is plausible to suggest that it is not only the content of the superego which becomes repressed, but that the superego, as it "represents the [familial] influences of the past" (Freud 1940:4958), may itself become repressed. Furthermore, because of the parental influence of the child's selfhood, his subjectivity becomes repressed[32] and is replaced with a new, re-filiative psychic structure – his performed identity as an RUF soldier; and so Dia becomes replaced with See-me-no-more. This had to be done to ensure his survival, and socialization into the RUF.[33]

It must be pointed out here that what I have theorized as the unconscious processes and neuroses of trauma experienced by Dia at this point in the narrative are *not* articulated in the film. His stunned silence highlights the inability of film and other forms of narrative to authentically represent trauma. However, this is precisely the kind of "gap" which George Butt suggested must be filled with meaning created by the viewer. Thus, a scene such as this represents the potential of all trauma narratives to create a space for pluralistic interpretation, of which this reading is one.

As discussed elsewhere, the traumatic event has resulted in the splitting and doubling of Dia's ego, thus producing the performed identity See-me-no-more. Derek Hook uses a postcolonial approach to the question of identity, defining identity as "that set of social and cultural understandings through which we come to know and experience ourselves" (2009:107). He further establishes that there are four essential aspects of the postcolonial approach which need discussion. The first is that identity is "necessarily social" (2009:107). Thus identity is dependent on numerous different social factors whether "they [be] material,

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[32] Freud, in "Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis" (1910), explains that one of the "psychical process present in hysteria" involved the splitting of the mind and dissociation of the personality" (2210).
[33] See Nandy's discussion on the repression of childhood 1987 p. 71

political, economic or ideological" (2009:107). The second is that the postcolonial approach "views identity as potentially shifting, *as open to negotiation and change*" (2009:107). Thus identity as a cognitive construct is in a constant state of flux. The third aspect Hook flags is that "identity is not simply *free-floating or arbitrary*, but is significantly *delimited and conditioned by social (and material) relations of power*, by ideology and by historical patterns of privilege" (2009:108). The final aspect is that "individual or group identity has a given amount of cultural resources available to it….a collection of narratives, values, ideals, types of knowledge, discourses, social practices and beliefs, which are shared…maintain[ing] a sense of sameness, or continuity across different contexts within that culture" (2009:108). Thus, one's individual identity is framed by one's identity within, or rather as part of a group.

Essentially, Hook's argument is that one's identity is not only framed by one's social conditions, but that it is determined by them. If one was to follow this argument, that identity is contingent on external stimuli and variables, then one may suggest that an individual's identity itself is external from the self; a selection of attributes or "subjective manifestation" (Shalom:256) that one performs. For example, after Dia has been indoctrinated into the RUF he leaves behind his boyish innocence and consciously embraces his identity as an RUF soldier, as See-me-no-more. He thus chooses certain characteristics or behaviours to exhibit which are more appropriate to his environment, such as ruthlessness, coldness, and indifference. Thus his identity as See-me-no-more is a constellation of attributes and behaviours which he chooses to display. It is this metamorphosis that demonstrates Hook's argument that postcolonial identity is performed in response to one's social environment.

The fourth and final stage of the RUF indoctrination process will finally assimilate Dia into the new re-filiative order. This scene opens as a cutaway which John Van Zyl defines as "the instantaneous transition from one scene to another, and is obtained by splicing the scenes together" (1987:51). A cutaway is a method employed to achieve elliptical editing. Elliptical

editing "presents an action in such a way that it consumes less time on the screen than it does in the story" (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:260). However as the camera acts as the narrator in this film cutaways create gaps in the narrative which the viewer must again fill with meaning. This is an example of how the viewer becomes sutured into the world of the film. While the other children sleep on the concrete floor of one of the RUF compounds, Dia lays awake, and stirs at the sound of the footsteps of Captain Poison approaching. Dia is completely silent and the dialogue of the scene belongs to Captain Poison, who comforts Dia and offers himself as a father figure. The monologue reads as follows:

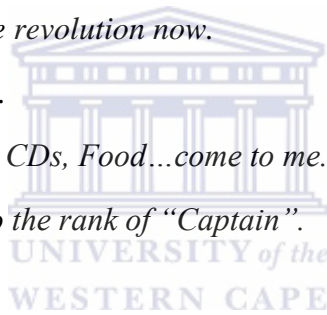*I know, I know. It's hard to be a man.*
Sit up, come.
But you are a soldier of the revolution now.
And I am your commander.
Whatever you need…guns, CDs, Food…come to me. I will take care of you
Today you are promoted to the rank of "Captain".
Dia Vandy…Boss man.   (Zwick 2006)

The dialogue serves as a representation of what Heeren discussed as the RUF's tactic to convince the new members that the RUF is a family, as cited earlier. However, the dialogue also makes clear that Captain Poison understands and exploits Dia's idealistic impulse to progress. This is further emphasised by the composition of the scene, as shown by Figures 12, 13, and 14, which demonstrate that in this scene, the set is illuminated with yellow light, supposedly emanating from the paraffin lamps which burn around the two characters. This creates a warming effect, and is the same light that was used in the first scene of the film to illuminate the Vandy home. This is, however, the only commonality between the Vandy home and the RUF fortress. Unlike the open space and natural aesthetics of the Vandy's village, the fortress is an enclosed space made of concrete, which can be considered symbolic of the restrictions placed on Dia.

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

In figure 12 the lighting used is artificial backlighting, which means that "the lighting comes from behind the subject being filmed" (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993:154). More specifically, this scene uses a specific kind of backlighting which Bordwell and Thompson refer to "edge lighting or rim lighting" (1993:154). According to Bordwell and Thompson, edge lighting is when "a narrow line of light makes each actor's body stand out from the background" (1993:154). However, one must note that Captain Poison's shadow is partially cast onto Dia, which is symbolic of him imprinting his ideology onto the young boy. It also further illustrates the darkness and danger associated with Captain Poison and highlights his dominance over Dia. According to Bordwell and Thompson there are "two basic types of shadows…attached shadows, or shading, and cast shadows" (1993:152). They define an attached shadow as a shadow that "occurs when light fails to illuminate part of an object because of the object's shape or surface features" (1993: 152). A cast shadow is defined as a shadow created as a result of a "body block[ing] out the light" (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:152). In Figure 13 one notes that the camera set-up is that of a close-up, which as discussed earlier, indicates the significance of Dia. Note also that here Dia is compliant, seemingly accepting Poison as a representation of his father, and his place in the hierarchy of the RUF. The only thing which detracts is Poison's gold watch, which glistens warmth of the edge-lighting. The placement of the gold watch acts as a reminder, at least for the viewer, that despite Captain Poison's comforting promises, he is driven by greed. In Figure 14 Dia is literally being capped by Captain Poison. This capping represents Dia's graduation from infantryman to captain, and is symbolic of achievement, success, progression, and higher education. This is the first instance in which Captain Poison uses education to seduce Dia. It is through Captain Poison that *Blood Diamond* presents a corruption of the African fantasy of education.

As a part of their indoctrination process the film's senior RUF soldiers educate the children about the ideology of the RUF. As shown in the scene during which Captain Poison spends time teaching Dia individually. At first Captain Poison is reading to See-me-no-more from a book, telling him that what the government is doing is wrong. Then Poison points to the book as if to provide evidence for this claim; and finally See-me-no-more is reading for himself. In this scene the film depicts a corruption of the idea of education and knowledge, which is, like childhood and the idea of the child, predominantly associated with good. The scene demonstrates the destructive power of the manipulation of information by the RUF which is strongly contrasted against the positive power given to education by Vandy and Benjamin.

Benjamin Kapanay, played by Basil Wallace, runs a school for children who have been abandoned as a result of the war. Some of these children are limbless, and others appear completely engulfed by the trauma of the acts they were made to commit by the RUF. Benjamin uses education to "bring them back to life" (Zwick & Herskovitz 2005:66). It is through Benjamin's championing of education, that the representation of victimhood becomes multidimensional. Benjamin challenges the idea of condemning or demonising the child, because of what he has been taught to do: "My heart always told me that people are inherently good. My experience suggests otherwise. Which to believe? " (Zwick & Herskovitz 2005: 67).

Later, Benjamin, Archer, Vandy, and Bowen approach a bridge guarded by two children, armed with large guns. Archer suggests driving straight through the road block (that is the children), but Benjamin puts his hand on the wheel, turns to Archer and says:

Do you know where the word 'infantry' comes from?
It means child soldier.
They are just children. (Zwick & Herskovitz 2005: 71)

Benjamin's explanation of what a child soldier is, is profoundly disturbing for the viewer, and in this moment the film plays on the paradox of thrusting together the words "child" and "soldier". The tension created by juxtaposing these two words has two effects. Firstly, it reaffirms the ambiguity of the child figure, and consequently its liminality, because as Turner explains "[l]iminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (1969:95). Secondly, it expresses the realization that "under the right circumstances, children are capable of the most horrific acts and many remain haunted by them" (*Global Lessons* 2009). As discussed earlier, the phenomenon of the child soldier is neither new nor exclusively African. However, the Dia narrative highlights the fact that for many of the RUF child soldiers this new lifestyle was not a choice, and essentially their childhood and childlikeness was sacrificed by adults who robbed a generation of autonomy and compensated for that with trauma. Shortly after the convey stops beside the two children holding AK47's. While Benjamin tries to explain that the convoy is on its way to a school, the boys yell "only RUF on the road" and shoot him. By neatly exiting Benjamin from the narrative, the film suggests that there is little place for optimism in Africa, another indication of the film's Afropessimism.

Like education, the film's representation of childhood becomes both corrupted and ambiguous. The first representation is associated with Romanticism, an optimistic fantasy of childhood and Vandy. The second is associated with Captain Poison and the RUF and may be considered an example of what Nandy called a "savage childhood" (1987:67). It stands in complete contradiction to the "mythological idea of the child as a fully innocent, beautifully obedient, self-denying and non-autonomous being" (Nandy 1987:67). The scene which perhaps most adeptly illustrates this second kind of childhood is what will be referred to as the "gangster's paradise" scene.

Figure 15

Set in the middle of the Sierra Leone jungle, this scene is introduced by a small boy

riding a bicycle whilst holding in his one hand a Molotov cocktail. As the camera follows this

boy out of the shadow, it reveals to the viewer the extracurricular activities of *Blood*

Diamond's child soldiers (Figure 15). Some children are in the background waving guns,

whilst another group of boys plays with theirs. One boy is carving the acronym "RUF" into his

arm, and another, who looks no older than five years of age, is cleaning an assault rifle. In the

foreground are two boys arm-wrestling, watched by another boy holding a rifle. One boy just

off-centre of the frame is reading an adult magazine, and Dia, to the right of the frame, is

smoking with his commanding officers. Fanon explained this as follows:

> The young people of the towns, idle and often illiterate, are a prey to all sorts of
> disintegrating influences. It is to the youth of an underdeveloped country that the
> industrialized countries most often offer their pastimes….in underdeveloped countries,
> young people have at their disposition leisure occupations designed for the youth of

capitalist countries: detective novels, penny-in-the-slot machines, sexy photographs, pornographic literature, films banned to those under sixteen, and above all alcohol. (1963:195-196)

These tropes which Fanon associates with the Capitalist West are also tropes of adulthood,[34] linked to American popular culture. The RUF militia is constantly accompanied by gangster rap, many of them wear costume associated with American culture[35], and at some point we see that some of the soldiers are watching an American rap music video. It is important to note, however, that all of the tropes identified by Fanon are negative associations of adulthood that demonize western Capitalist culture as a corrupting force. It is also important to note that Dia fourteen, and if one is to assume that sixteen is the age which marks psychological, sociological and intellectual maturity, then Dia is not yet ready for the lifestyle of the RUF. The mythological link between age and maturity or immaturity helps to ensure that the empathy of the viewer lies with Dia, despite the atrocities he commits. This is aided by a number of cut-away shots taken from this scene.

In the first image, Dia is receiving drugs from Captain Rambo. The use of drugs may be the RUF's way of ensuring that the child, his childhood and the memories of his former life remain repressed.[36] The second image shows Dia and his comrades chanting in unison, this illustrates the group dynamic of the film's RUF, which is one voice, one mind, and one family. In the third and fourth images, Dia and the other infantrymen approach a village and open fire on unarmed civilians. Here Dia is not blindfolded but the viewer sees only his profile as the camera moves with the infantry. This is significant because when Dia committed murder during his initiation the camera was fixated on the boy's face. Notably one cannot see his eyes, suggesting that "Dia" is absent from the event.

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[34] Nandy explains that adulthood is an ideology which glorifies "work, performance, and productivity as normal and mature" (1987:71). For Nandy adulthood "was the prototypical theory of progress, designed to co-opt on behalf of the oppressor the visions of the future of their victims" (1987:71).

[35] On one occasion an RUF soldier wears a "Jordan" basketball vest.

[36] Nandy explained that children were repressed "in the name of socialization" (1987:71).

In this shot we see Dia participating in some kind of rally, he too is chanting along with his comrades, and has embraced the RUF as his family.

Here Dia is participating in the raid of a village, surrounded by his brethren.

Dia as an active member of the RUF opens fire.

This is the moment in which Dia. After having been handed a weapon, re-introduces himself as See-me-no-more.

The Absence of Dia – that we can see-him-no-more – is confirmed when See-me-know-more proclaims his new name and identity to his comrades, as demonstrated by the last image, which is a close-up taken from that moment of renaming. In this frame light is also of particular significance as it functions in such a way that splits the child in the frame, positioning him as partly in the shadows but also partly in the light, still betwixt worlds. The walk the boy takes in this scene is quite opposite to the walk he took with Vandy. The whistle of the wind is replaced with the sound of gunfire. The natural setting and lighting remains but is corrupted by flashes of discharged ammunition. In place of the intimacy between father and son stands the loneliness of strangers; and instead of conversation, the air is filled with screams of terror.

Thus *Blood Diamond* presents two distinct ideas of childhood. The first is demonstrated in the first two scenes of the film, which project a Romantic fantasy of childhood, privileging and idealizing it as a Utopia. However, these two scenes also engage colonial ideas of African backwardness and rural living. It also engages the idea that the most educated member of the household is the child, as made explicit by the script: "His [Dia's] English is more schooled than his father's" (Zwick & Herskovitz 2005:1). This normative childhood, as discussed in the Introduction, represents western and adult fantasies of what childhood should be like. Contrastingly, the second kind of childhood, represented via See-me-no-more, is characterized by the conditions of war and becomes the antithesis of kind of childhood. Dia is so overwhelmed by See-me-no-more and the RUF dystopia that when Vandy does find and try to rescue him, the boy seems unable to recognise his father. The drama unfolds as follows:

Vandy:	*Dia.*
Dia:	*[looking straight at his father] Leave me alone.*
Vandy:	*Dia I am your Papa, come with me.*

Dia:	*Ay, ay.*
Another soldier:	*Hey!*
Dia:	*Get away from me.*
Vandy:	*Dia. Dia.*
Dia:	*I do not know you. Traitor! Enemy! Enemy!*
Another soldier:	*What the hell are you doing? What are you doing?*
Dia:	*I do not know you.*
Vandy:	*What's wrong with you?!*
Dia:	*I hate you!*
Vandy:	*Dia, come with me!*
Dia:	*I hate you! Get away from me!* (Zwick 2006)

This scene is the climax of Dia's indoctrination. Evans and Glenn write that "Dia's indoctrination is played out as a kind of Oedipal rebellion" (2010:28), and this scene has been read by some, incongruously, as the climax of Dia's 'Oedipal rebellion'. However, as I have shown, this scene is the culmination of a number of processes which are far more complex. The initial indifference in Dia's dialogue demonstrates his psychic responses to the trauma of being indoctrinated into the RUF – namely that his ego has become split and doubled, and that his memories of Vandy and his family have become repressed. It is perhaps not that Dia does not know Vandy, but that he cannot reconcile that he is his father, a role now taken over by Captain Poison. However, when Dia screams out "I hate you!" the stage is set for the return of the repressed[37] – the return of the Vandy family and the morality that they symbolise, into the Dia narrative.

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[37] Dia's subjectivity, although repressed for a large part of the film, is always there, and eventually returns to his consciousness. When he has the opportunity to kill both Archer and Vandy he chooses not to. Here Vandy has his monologue, and the viewer is reminded that Dia is still:

Dia Vandy. Of the proud Mende tribe.
You are a good boy who loves soccer and school.
Your mother loves you so much.
She waits by the fire making plantains…
and red palm oil stew with your sister N'yanda…

Dia's story ends when he and his family, with whom he has miraculously been reunited, meet Vandy in London. This ending can be read in a multitude of ways. Firstly, it suggests that salvation lies outside of Africa. Secondly, it suggests that Dia's subjectivity becomes conscious again and that his superego and its contents are no longer repressed. Thirdly, it implies that the filiative order of the Vandy family and the relationships therein were uninterrupted and undamaged by Dia's kidnapping. Fourthly, it presents Dia as a kind of prodigal son figure, who (although this would be impossible) is able to return home and find rest in the embrace of his family. Although the film certainly has highlighted the plight of children forced into combat by the RUF, its ending skirts around two of the biggest social issues that are a consequence of the civil war - reconciliation and the reintegration of the these children back into society.

Through close analysis I have shown that *Blood Diamond*'s representation of Dia dichotomizes the boy into the child (Dia) and the soldier (See-me-no-more). This dichotomy occurs when Dia undergoes initiation and experiences the trauma of killing. The film is unable to articulate the full extent of this trauma and thus creates a space that the viewer and the psychoanalytic model that this thesis proposes may fill with meaning. In an attempt to do so

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and the new baby.
The cows wait for you.
And Babu, the wild dog who minds no one but you.
I know they made you do bad things…
But you are not a bad boy.
I am your father…
Who loves you.
And you will come home with me and be my son again.   (Zwick 2006)

This realization is extended by Vandy addressing the audience directly in his monologue (See endnote ii), the effect of which is to remind the audience that anyone is capable of anything under the right circumstance - even "you". By addressing the viewer directly the transnational theme of consumer accountability is reinforced, and the narrative of *Blood Diamond* becomes an all-inclusive one. Also, the quote indicates that Vandy wants to be able to return to the pastoral paradise, and the Romantic childhood both of which were destroyed by the RUF and the trauma of civil war. In this sense the film suggests that the only acceptable form of childhood is a westernised, Romantic childhood. This is Afropessimistic, as it limits the pluralism of human experience and privileges Romantic ideals of childhood of lived childhood in Africa.

this thesis has proposed that when Dia experiences the trauma of killing a number of psychic processes occur, the most spectacular of which is the splitting of his ego which produces the ego-double See-me-no-more and the repression of Dia's subjectivity and superego. Thus, it not the traumatic act that the film is unable to represent, but the psychic effects thereof. Dia's story is complex and central to *Blood Diamond*'s narrative, as indicated by the numerous close-ups of him. His story is in one sense the story of a boy's transition from filiation to what I have referred to as re-filiation, and in another, the story of a boy so traumatised that he represses his subjectivity and performs an identity which is not his own. Moreover, Dia is represented throughout the narrative as a victim of civil war, and it is through the Dia narrative that the film engages one of the largest traumas of the Sierra Leone civil war. Ultimately, Dia's is the story of too many traumatised youth in Sierra Leone, and as expressed during the director's commentary of the film, it was in the hope of reconciling these children with the society they themselves traumatized that Zwick wanted to tell this story.

As discussed in the opening sections of this chapter, the film also falls short of its own good intentions. Early on the film imposes Romantic ideals of childhood set in a pastoral space. However, the postcolonial landscape, a space in which the narrative of *Blood Diamond* situates itself, requires a new understanding of childhood. The film does go some way to try to suggest this; however, its alternative childhood is marked by violence, drug abuse, and gangsterism. By juxtaposing Romantic childhood with the corrupted style experienced by RUF infantryman, the film creates a situation in which the viewer is able to compare and contrast the two worlds. As the RUF style of childhood is marred by inappropriate adultness, the obvious preference is the style of childhood which is normative, bourgeoisie and western. Secondly, the postcolonial crux of the film is its engagement with materialist excesses of western capitalist culture. *Blood Diamond* is critical of the unethical exploitation of indigenous peoples and resources by multinational mining companies. However, its representation of the

negotiation of the Kimberly process redeems the very multinationals it is critical of. Yet, as Sharma has argued, the film does not extend the same courtesy to the RUF, indicating a privileging of the west over postcolonial Africa.

Blood Diamond demonstrates a number of the Afropessimistic tropes and limitations discussed by Evans and Glenn. Firstly, it continues in the tradition of Hollywood cinema which indulges extreme violence without indicating any of its causes. Secondly, its over-reliance on its white male focalizer undermines the significance of its African characters. Thirdly, as Marx has argued, the often recycled imagery perpetuates the colonial stereotype of Africa as a savage and untamed land. Fourthly, through its use of the narrative strategies of melodrama it limits the individuality of characters and instead boxes them into archetypes, which only further associates colonial misconceptions with postcolonial Africa. However, the film's representation of Dia, its postcolonial African child, is often ambiguous and paradoxical – being both Dia Vandy and See-me-no-more, the child is never wholly his RUF identity, nor can he ever again be wholly Dia. Thus, he should be considered an example of a liminal figure, and it is for this reason that one cannot simply accept the argument that the child soldier is a "monstrous child" and "the perfect embodiment of a doomed future" (Evans & Glenn 2010: 15).Furthermore, when Dia does have the choice to shoot his father and Archer he chooses not to, despite his re-filiation into the RUF. These are two occasions when the film redeems Dia and the viewer is reminded that Dia was taken by the RUF, and his autonomy was taken from him, and therefore Dia cannot be held completely accountable for his actions.

Chapter 3:

The Last King of Scotland: The myth-representation of the African Man-child

The Last King of Scotland (2006), described by Manohla Dargis as "a period fiction with a high-gloss historical finish" (2006:E1), is the first Hollywood feature film from documentary director Kevin MacDonald. The film, says Ella Taylor, "deals with real events filtered through Giles Foden's 1998 novel" (2006:n.p.), with which it shares its name. The narrative centres on the developing relationship between Ugandan dictator Idi Amin Dada[38] and the fictitious Dr. Nicholas Garrigan of Scotland. Because it thrusts together a historical figure and an invented character this thesis considers the film both a historical film and an adaptation. The subject of this thesis is the narrative antagonist Amin, who Foden described as a "'frozen child" (2003:n.p.). I argue that the film does represent Amin as a "frozen child" through the effects of cinematic doubling, and that the child, as Amin's double, represents his pathology. Doubling Amin with a child may be read as a regression into the colonial stereotype that the African man is underdeveloped, primitive, and as Fanon put it "just a child".[39] This colonial stereotype seems corroborated by the myths surrounding Amin, including his alleged cannibalism. These myths are alluded to in *The Last King of Scotland*, perhaps as a criticism of the global media that created the Amin mythology. As I will show,

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[38] It is speculated that "Amin was born around 1925" in Koboko, along the Sudanese border (Keatley 2003:n.p.). As Amin reveals to Garrigan, his father abandoned him and his mother. However, the film does not divulge that she was rumoured to be involved in witchcraft. In 1946 Amin found refuge as a cook in the King's African Rifles, and the British Colonial Army in 1956 – a military lineage articulated in the film by British bureaucrat Nigel Stone (Simon McBurney). After having helped fight the Mau Mau Amin was promoted to the rank of officer in 1961, and in 1965 President Obote promoted Amin to the rank of commander of the Armed Forces. On the 25th of January 1971 Amin lead a successful coup d' etat against the Obote government, and declared himself president of Uganda on the 2nd of February that same year (Keatley 2003:n.p.; Curtis 2007:n.p.). The film does narrate to some extent this background to its antagonist, however, it does so in fragments of conversation scattered throughout the film.

[39] An example of where this myth or stereotype regarding African men can be found in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which he writes: "It is said that the Negro loves to jabber; in my own case, when I think of the word *jabber* I see a gay group of children calling and shouting for the sake of calling and shouting—children in the midst of play, to the degree to which play can be considered an initiation into life. The Negro loves to jabber, and from this theory it is not a long road that leads to a new proposition: The Negro is just a child" (1967, 2008:16).

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the film's postcoloniality lies in its critique of global accountability for the crisis experienced in Uganda during Amin's regime.

It is important to note, as the film does suggest, that when Amin came to power his rule initially promised a better postcolonial future for Uganda. He received a lot of local support, which the film demonstrates in the scene in which Amin addresses the locals of a village near the bush hospital where Garrigan works. He also received a lot of international support, particularly from the British who still had a vested economic interest in their ex-colony (Curtis 2007). Stone, who represents British neo-colonial interest in Uganda at the time explains to Garrigan that "given that we were so intimately involved with the President coming to power...we would of course welcome any clarification that you might feel you need to share with us" (MacDonald 2006). The British, as suggested later in the film again through Stone, were well aware of that Amin was "a little unpredictable" but believed that he had "a firm hand", " [t]he only thing the African really understands" (MacDonald 2006).

Amin was famous as an anti-colonial figure, and was especially critical of the Apartheid regime. However, this anti-colonial stance later turned into the xenophobic expulsion of Indians, which was followed by the repression of internal opposition, marked by paranoia, the civil war, and increasingly sadistic violence. According to Richard Patrick Keatley "the death toll during the Amin regime [1971-1979[40]] will never be accurately known. The best estimate…is that it was not less than 80,000 and more likely around 300,000 [the figure the film assigns in its closing subtitles]. Another estimate…put the number killed at 500,000" (2003:n.p.).

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[40] This is a widely known fact acknowledged in various sources, including:
- Keatley, P. "Obituary: Idi Amin". *The Guardian*. 2003. n.p.
- Curtis, M. "The rise of Idi Amin Dada in Uganda, 1971-1972", An edited extract from *Unpeople: Britain's Secret Human Rights Abuses.* 2007.
- Foden, G. "My Brutal Muse" (2003), "The King and I" (2007), both for *The Guardian*
- Cooper, F. *Africa Since 1940.* 2002.

The Amin regime was a period of traumatic disintegration of Ugandan society, and according to Okurut "his presence and legacy live on" in Uganda "in the form of Aminism" (2002:n.p.). Aminism refers to the traumatic legacy of distrust, paranoia, and fear which took root in Ugandan civilians during Amin's regime and to the perception that violence seems a more effective means by which to obtain power than peaceful negotiation (Okurut 2002, Gombya 2007). This latter aspect of Aminism is a "political practice" of Lord's Resistance Army leader and war criminal Joseph Rao Kony.[41]

It is for these reasons that *The Last King of Scotland* must be read as a trauma narrative, despite it "skat[ing] over the worst bits of Amin's rule" (Von Tunzelmann 2009:n.p.). It is important to note here that unlike the RUF in *Blood Diamond* or MNU in *District 9*, the trauma of *The Last King of Scotland* rests predominantly on the shoulders of one man – Amin. Amin is the trauma that befell Uganda, and thus he is the real that the film, although it tries to, cannot represent fully. Part of the problem in attempting to represent Amin as this trauma is that:

> as well as being a genuine historical individual, Idi Amin was a signifier, a persona. He came to represent "essence of dictator", perhaps even Africa itself in its troubled rather than romantic (*Out of Africa*) mode. He was a bloodthirsty comic nightmare, but in his head another kind of dream was playing: that of the good but strong African leader. The problem, as ever, is how to tell the person from the persona, and to understand what both might mean. (Foden 2007:n.p.)

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[41] Kony is the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army guerrilla group in Uganda, and is a notorious war criminal. Like Amin, Kony claimed to have visions, and it is recorded that both believed that they could out-run death. Just as with the resurgence of interest in Amin generated by the film, global interest fell onto Kony when a documentary by Jason Russell called *Kony 2012* went viral. The documentary was made for the campaign group *Invisible Children*, in an attempt to increase the involvement of the United States of America in the horrors which began in Uganda in 1990's. A few sources relevant to Kony:
-   Daniel Howden (8 November 2008). "The deadly cult of Joseph Kony". *The Independent* (UK).
-   Polly Curtis and Tom McCarthy. "Kony 2012: what happens next?" *The Guardian*. www.theguardian.com
-   McLaughlin, Abraham (31 December 2004). "The End of Uganda's Mystic Rebel?" *Christian Science Monitor*. Global Policy Forum

The cinematography and narrative of *The Last King of Scotland* illustrate and emphasise the Amin persona, whilst Whitaker's performance humanises this historical figure. When the film demonstrates Amin's efforts to eradicate any internal resistance, specifically "Obote's men" (MacDonald 2006), it does present Amin as the "essence of [a] dictator". It also presents Amin as a jester performing for the world's media, as we see in the scene in which Amin hosts a press conference to explain the expulsion of all Indians from Uganda. There are also multiple references to the alleged cannibalism of Amin, which will be discussed later. These facets of Amin are in part based on actual historical events, and in part on the myths surrounding him.

Richard J. Reid explains that in the 1970's rulers such as Amin and Jean-Bede Bokassa of the Central African Republic, "became virtual caricatures of the corrupt, power mad and quite possibly clinically insane African military dictator" (2012:31). It is precisely because Amin became a virtual caricature of dictatorship and darkest Africa that, as MacDonald himself admits, "it's very, very difficult to separate the myth from the reality" (2006).[42] Amin became a jester for the world press. In his article "Political Sacramental and Leadership Non-Performance in Africa: The Synergy" Frank-Collins N. Okafor writes that:

> The flamboyant but tyrannical Idi Amin Dada of Uganda represents a symbolic leadership in absolute negativity. By most accounts, an illiterate and gluttonous buffoon, Amin had become the subject of many bizarre rumours and myths. There were stories of cannibalism, of feeding the corpses of his victims to crocodiles, of keeping severed heads in a freezer at his home and bringing them out on occasions for "talks" - most or all of which are unsubstantiated, but not necessarily untrue. (2012:55)

The film highlights Amin's grandiose nature through the use of costume – at one point he is dressed as "the king of Scotland", at another as a Ugandan cowboy. The film flaunts Amin's flamboyancy. However, its engagement with the myths surrounding Amin progresses

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[42] Quoted from: *The Last King of Scotland* – Kevin MacDonald The myth of Idi Amin. YouTube. Accessed 13/01/2014

more slowly. It is only towards the climax of the narrative that Stone shows a number of photographs to Garrigan, each used to substantiate a particular myth about Amin. One illustrates the mass murder of rural villagers, the number of which became so excessive that soldiers stopped burying them and began feeding the corpses to crocodiles. There are also pictures of the corpses of Amin's political opposition, and even Minister Wasswa. Twice in the film there is also reference to Amin's alleged cannibalism. These myths constitute the reception of Amin in the global imagination, encouraging the perception of him as evil (Foden 2003: n.p.), and are why his regime is remembered as a "a time when people were made to eat their totems and nothing was taboo anymore" (Okurut 2002:n.p.).

The film opens in Scotland 1970 and introduces Nicholas Garrigan who has just graduated as a doctor, but is dissatisfied with his "unremarkable" existence (Foden 1998:18).[43] After having spent his childhood imagining "Hickok's Wild West, Tarzan's Africa, [and] the Arctic of Peary and Nansen" (Foden 1998:19), Garrigan's yearning for adventure overwhelms him. Garrigan spins a globe, closes his eyes, and has his index finger at the ready, promising himself "the first place you land, you go" (MacDonald 2006).[44] Dissatisfied that his finger lands on Canada, he plays the game again, landing then on Uganda.[45] Garrigan, who will work in a "bush surgery" (Foden 1998:3) in Mbarara with Dr. Merrit, misses the military coup d' etat lead by Amin, but is just in time to witness and be swept up in the wave of celebration to mark his inauguration as President of Uganda. A chance encounter becomes the germ of friendship between the doctor and the dictator. Soon after they meet, Garrigan is summoned by His Excellency to Kampala, where he is persuaded to become personal physician to the president. As the two men share more experiences Garrigan quickly becomes Amin's "most trusted advisor" (MacDonald 2006), but soon rumours regarding Amin's brutality begin to

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[43] Hereafter the reference for the novel will be signalled by the author's name and the page number(s).
[44] This is to be the reference indicating the use of the film as a source.
[45] This moment is recalled and critiqued in Amin and Garrigan's final moments together. In the scene Amin says to the badly beaten Garrigan: "Did you think this was all a game? ....We are not a game Nicholas. We are real", (MacDonald 2006). This scene will be discussed at a later stage, and the quote cited again.

surface. As more and more of the atrocities orchestrated by Amin come to light, Garrigan is forced to abandon his childish naivety[46], and the film approaches its climax rapidly. Garrigan begins having an affair with Amin's third wife, Kay, who eventually falls pregnant with his child. The two are terrified of what Amin will do if he finds out. Soon their fears are realized and Kay is left lying on a coroner's table, with her arms attached to her hips and her legs attached to her shoulders. It is at this time that Garrigan decides to do what was asked of him by British intelligence – to kill Amin. However, the plot fails and Garrigan is discovered, not only for having an affair with the president's wife, but for planning to murder the president. At Entebbe airport Amin confronts Garrigan about it all, eventually leaving Garrigan for dead. However, Garrigan survives and escapes with the help of his predecessor, so that he can tell the world what he has witnessed. By the end of the story (both factual and fictitious) Amin and Uganda have become "the heart of the heart of darkness" (Howe 2007:n.p.).

Foden, who was born in England, has "lived in a number of African countries, including Malawi, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Nigeria, as well as Uganda itself" (Foden 2007a). Thus he is an author with, at least to some extent, a fuller understanding of the subject he is writing about. Foden has said in articles for *The Guardian* (2003, 2007a) that his intention was to write a novel about an invented African dictator of a non-existent African country when it dawned on him that he should write about Amin himself. In an interview for *Bold Type,* Foden explains that "he [Amin] thought of and presented himself as mythological, and long before I got to him was "'already a novel'".[47] Foden's writing of *The Last King of Scotland* has been informed by his personal history, a decision to represent history, and a number of literary influences including "John Buchan, Joseph Conrad, Paul Theroux, William Boyd, W Somerset Maugham" (Metcalf 2009:n.p.).

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[46] This childishness and naivety is indicated early in the film when Garrigan makes a game of choosing the location to which he will be deployed. Interestingly, as the narrative progresses, Garrigan grows out of this childishness, while Amin regresses into childishness.

[47] Giles Foden interview by *Bold Type*: http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/1298/foden/interview.html.

The Last King of Scotland is described in its production notes as "a powerful thriller that recreates on screen the world of Uganda under the mad dictatorship of Idi Amin" (2006, 2013:n.p). However, the Oscar and Bafta award-winning film is not an original screenplay, but an adaptation of Giles Foden's fact-inspired novel of the same name. The film, which was adapted by Peter Morgan and Jeremy Brock (Foden 2007:n.p), has been widely criticised for not "showing allegiance to the source work" (McFarlane 1996:7). This criticism was largely informed by a school of thinking within adaptation theory know as fidelity criticism.

Fidelity criticism is an important concept in adaptation theory, which accepts the primacy of the original text (novel) as a prototype for the film. Brian McFarlane, a notable film theorist and author of *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996) argues that:

> Fidelity criticism depends on a notion of the text as having rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct 'meaning' which the film-maker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with. There will often be a distinction between being faithful to the 'letter', an approach which the more sophisticated writer may suggest is no way to ensure a 'successful' adaptation, and the 'spirit' or 'essence' of the work. (8-9)

The "'letter'" approach to adaptation reveals what is perhaps the most common expectation of an adaptation from novel to film. Stephen Howe, for example, has been critical of the adaptation, claiming that "[the] novel got some way towards matching the fascination, the horror, and the complexity of its subject [Amin]…[whilst] the film – except for Whitaker's stunning performance – falls far short even of the novel's partial success" (12/01/2007:n.p.).[48]

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[48] Both the novel and film have been successful both commercially and critically. In the same year as its publication Giles Foden's first novel *The Last King of Scotland* received various awards; including the 1998 Whitbread First Novel Award, a Somerset Maugham Award, and the Winfred Holtby Memorial Award. In 2007 McDonald's film of the same name received much critical acclaim, particularly for the performance of Forest Whitaker whose portrayal of the dictator earned himself a Best Leading Actor win at the Academy Awards, the BAFTAS (Best Actor in a Leading Role), the Golden Globes (Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama), and the Screen Actor's Guild (Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Leading Role), to name but a few (Hoskins 2007: n.p.; www.ibm.com 27/05/2013)

The author of the novel himself describes screen-writers who adapt novels for the screen as "those lowest of scribes", and adaptations as "second-hand production" (2007:n.p.). Foden's prejudices are an example of what Eriíkur Stefán Ásgeirsson refers to as "privileging the literary source" (2009:12). He explains that when "adapting novels for films, the latter often is doomed to fail as it fades in comparison to the original work" (2009:12).

According to McFarlane this privileging is "ascribed in part to the novel's coming first, [and] in part to the ingrained sense of literature's greater respectability in traditional critical circles" (1996: 8). However, *The Last King of Scotland*, as Lesley Marx puts it, "takes on the challenge of adapting a novel, a man's life, and a traumatic period in Ugandan history", and its fidelity cannot be singularly reduced to faithfulness to the novel. While the film does not follow the "'letter'" approach, it can be argued that it took the "spirit" or "essence" approach. Thus the film attempts to maintain the ethos of the original work, delineating a complex, paradoxical historical figure accurately, and not distorting the history of a nation. Perhaps the film is slanted more towards its responsibility towards history than literature. Thus the complexities of the narrative of *The Last King of Scotland* make it a work beyond the scope of fidelity criticism, an approach to understanding film which McFarlane had branded "unilluminating" (1996:9).

Helen Fulton echoes this sentiment, and is sceptical of fidelity criticism stating that "privileging the authorial text over the film underestimates complexities involved in the construction of meaning in film" (2005:96-107). In order to avoid this binary opposition between film and novel, McFarlane suggests that one considers approaching adaptations from an intertextual perspective, explaining that "[m]odern critical notions of *intertextuality* represent a more sophisticated approach in relation to adaptation, to the idea of the original novel as a 'resource'" (1996:10). What McFarlane suggests is that the novel no longer be

regarded as the prototypical work, but that it should be regarded as an intertextual reference - just a one might consider *The Heart of Darkness*, or what has been recorded as "MacDonald's intertextual use of *Général Idi Amin Dada: Autoportrait* (1974)" (Production notes 2006).

The implication of this would be that the nature of film adaptations, and so adaptation theory, need not be based on the comparability of the film to the novel. Instead, as Fulton argues, the process of film adaptation should be regarded as an act of creative authorship (2005:96), as Foden elsewhere conceded when characterising the film adaptation of his novel as "another entity, to be judged by different standards to the original artwork" (2007:n.p). This is because the two media will produce two distinct narratives, each using its own modes of representation (novel: diegesis - words, film: mimesis - mise-en-scene),[49] conventions, logic of story-telling, and semiotic systems (Fulton 2005:96-107). For example, the novel *The Last King of Scotland* uses first person narration, which means that the narrative will be "filtered through the consciousness of the protagonist speaker" (McFarlane 1996:16).[50] Contrastingly, in film the camera acts as an external narrator that is focalised by Garrigan, and so the narrational modes have shifted from first-person narration in the novel, to omniscient narration in the film. McFarlane explains that:

> There is, in film, no such instantly apparent, instantly available commentary of the action unfolding as the novel's narrating prose habitually offers. In the omniscient novel … the continuing mediation between the reader, and the action of the novel is, by virtue of its privileged status as 'knowledge', the reader's guarantee of the truth of the proceedings. In a sense, all films are omniscient…the viewer is aware [by virtue of the camera]…of a level of objectivity in what is shown, which may include what the protagonist sees but cannot help including a great deal else as well. (1996:18)

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[49]The term diegesis is used to refer to the art of "telling", whilst the term mimesis is used to refer to the art of "showing" (Fulton 2005: 96-107).

[50] According to McFarlane there are two techniques which make it possible for a film adaptation to achieve, to some extent, the effect of first- person narration. The first is "the subjective camera" (1996: 16). The example McFarlane gives is "the point-of-view shot or succession of shots". He also explains that this technique is relatively ineffective as it cannot be maintained consistently throughout the film (1996: 16). The second technique is "oral narration", which essentially refers to the use of voice overs (1996:16). However, neither technique is present in MacDonald's *The Last King of Scotland*.

As the quotation rightly states, all films may be regarded as omniscient because they are narrated by the camera. However, the first-person novelistic approach could have been simulated with the use of a voice-over (McFarlane 1996:18), in this case by Garrigan. Instead MacDonald chose to adapt the mode of narration rather than transfer it.[51] In other words he chose to abandon the first-person point of view, which one may consider an unreliable account of the narrative events, and opt for what appears to be a more objective account of the narrative events.[52]

Another element the film chose to abandon is the journal entries and letters Garrigan provides for the reader in the novel – another aspect of the novel which renders the account of the narrative "suspect" (MacFarlane 1996:8). This suggests two fundamental shifts; the first of which is that the film's narrative is not centred on Garrigan, as is the case in the novel. Instead in the film there is the strong sense that *The Last King of Scotland* is a story about Amin. However, it is still potentially Afropessimistic as it is focalised, like *Blood Diamond,* by a white male protagonist, and in so doing follows in a long line of texts attempting to present a realistic image of Africa through western eyes. The second is that by shifting the narrative mode from first-person to omniscient, the film disregards the novel as prototype and embraces it as an intertextual source. Lesley Marx warns that this adaptation will "involve a convoluted imbrication of fact, fiction, and genre" (2011:59), suggesting that the film has more than one discourse it must engage, and in so doing maintain its integrity as an original work. There is in this case the paradox of adhering to the codes established in the novel, which by definition is a fictional story, and not distorting what the world accepts as historical truth, something the

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[51] I use the terms "adapt" and "transfer" in accordance with the work of Brian McFarlane, who stated that some elements of a novel are "transferable" (such as the narrative of a novel, the names, ages, and occupations of characters), and that others require "adaptation" ("novelistic elements [which] must find quite different equivalences in the film medium" - such as atmosphere, enunciation, and so on) (1996: 13-15).

[52] McFarlane explains that this is achieved when the camera is used "metonymically to donate its operator *and* whoever is telling him what to aim at, and how" (1996:18)

novel does better than the film. The implication of this is that the film has shifted genres from "fact-fiction" drama (*Boldtype*) to historical drama.

According to Robert A. Rosenstone, historical film can be divided "into three broad categories: history as drama, history as document, and history as experiment" (1995:50). He explains that history as drama is the most popular form of historical film. Rosenstone cites Natalie Davis who has further divided historical drama into two subcategories,[53] but then refutes this explaining it is common strategy for a film to place fictional characters alongside historical figures in settings alternating between the documentable and the invented (1995:51),[54] as is the case with *The Last King of Scotland*. Unlike those films which would be considered history as document, *The Last King of Scotland*, despite its claim to recreate 1970's Uganda on screen, is simply using the screen as "a transparent "window" onto a "realistic" world". Rosenstone goes on to explain that cinematic realism is a kind of realism "made up of certain kinds of shots in a certain kind of sequence seamlessly edited together and underscored by a sound track to give the viewer a sense that nothing (rather than everything) is being manipulated to create a world on screen in which we can all feel at home" (1995:54). One must remember that *The Last King of Scotland* is a Hollywood film, and so after having been disturbed, horrified, and offended, the audience must leave the cinema having ultimately been entertained.

Rosenstone argues that there are six characteristics of the historical film, whether it is drama or documentary. The first of these is that history is told "as a story…with a beginning, middle, and end. A tale that leaves you with a moral message and (usually) a feeling of uplift.

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[53] Rosenstone explains Davis' categories as distinguishing between "films based on documentable persons or events or movements…and those whose central plot and characters are fictional, but whose historical setting is intrinsic to the story and meaning of the work" (Davis 1987: 457-82; Rosenstone 1995: 51).

[54] It is interesting to note that in order to refute Davis' claim Rosenstone uses the film Glory as an example of how fictional characters and historical figures are used in collaboration, in a setting which alternates between the documentable and the invented. *Glory* is a film by Edward Zwick, the director of *Blood Diamond*, a film which would fall under Davis' second category.

A tale embedded in a larger view of history is always progressive" (1995:55). Secondly, he explains, film "insists on history as the story of individuals" (1995:57); that is to say that, because of the limitations of narrative film, history is shown through the story of one person. Thirdly, it "offers us history as the story of a closed, completed, and simple past. It provides no alternative possibilities to what we see happening on the screen, admits of no doubts, and promotes each historical assertion with the same degree of confidence" (1995:57). Fourthly, film "emotionalizes, personalizes, and dramatizes history …. it gives us history as triumph, anguish, joy, despair, adventure, suffering, and heroism" (1995:59). The fifth characteristic Rosenstone signals is particularly important. That is that "more than simply the "look" of things [the past], film provides a sense of how common objects appear when they were in use" (1995:59). Rosenstone considers this particularly important. Finally, he argues that film "shows history as process", and "provides an integrative image" of the past in which all social elements are interwoven (1995:60-61).[55]

The Last King of Scotland possesses all six characteristics of historical film. Firstly, it does tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end; and the film certainly has a moral message, condemning acts of savagery and extreme violence. Secondly, the film tells the story of individuals: Garrigan, Amin, Wasswa, and so on. The Last King of Scotland is certainly Garrigan's story, and perhaps that is why it offers no insight to the socio-political context which led to Amin's rise to power, or how his regime has affected the people of Uganda. What is particularly disappointing about the film is that it deals explicitly with Garrigan's trauma of life under Amin, but reduces the trauma endured by generations of Ugandans during and after Amin's dictatorship to a few by-lines at the end of the film. Thirdly, the narrative, as is characteristic of historical film, is closed, and offers no alternative ending. Garrigan flees to

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[55] Rosenstone explains that unlike written history which often has to split and categorize elements such as politics, race, class, gender, and so on, film often does not compartmentalize and engages these topics through perhaps a character or event.

his home of Scotland, and what becomes of Amin or the state of Uganda after his departure remains open to the imagination (until the closing credits that is). This closed ending suggests that there is no other alternative, that in order for Garrigan to survive, and in so doing "alert" the west to the atrocities being committed by the Amin regime, he must leave not only Uganda, but Africa completely.

Fourthly, *The Last King of Scotland* also emotionalizes and personalizes the past. Unlike a documentary, this historical drama is about Garrigan's experience of Amin. It is subjective (and of course fiction), and tells the story of their relationship rather than the story of Uganda under the dictatorship of Amin. The film's limited depiction of the gratuitous violence Amin became infamous for is a result of this. Here the film does two things that Evans and Glenn are critical of. According to Evans and Glenn in MacDonald's *The Last King of Scotland* there is "the reduction of Garrigan's interaction with Amin to a form of familial relationship" (2010: 32); and it has failed to "analyse the social power and circumstances which led to and maintained Amin's rule" (2010:32). Here one can see the limiting effects of genre on the quality and integrity of art.

Fifthly, the "look" of the film is highly period. Everything from the costume (leisure suits and bell-bottoms), to music and plush Afros clearly indicate that *The Last King of Scotland* is set during the 1970's, which was the decade of the Amin dictatorship. Finally, *The Last King of Scotland* does show history as a process, particularly the process of the changing image of Amin in the global imagination. Furthermore, it does offer an integrative image of the economics, politics, race, gender, and class issues of the time. For example, the film clearly shows that Britain is particularly invested in the economy of Uganda, and its interest there. Rosenstone explains that film, by rendering integrated images of history,

> summarizes vast amounts of data or symbolizes complexities that otherwise could not be shown. We must recognise that film will always include images that are at once

invented and true; true in that they symbolize, condense, or summarise large amounts of data; true in that they impart an overall meaning of the past that can be verified, documented, or reasonably argued. (1995:71)

Amin dressed as a cowboy, engulfed in flames (Figure 14 later on in this chapter) is an example of such an image; in it Amin appears to be merged with the flames, symbolising the dangerous magnetism he possesses. Amin was the "flame" to which western imagination was drawn. The disappearance of Jonah Wasswa is an "invention" in the film which represents something which may well have happened. After Garrigan suggests to Amin that Wasswa might be disloyal, the minister disappears. Rumours then surface that he has fled Uganda, and is an Obote supporter. Later it is discovered that he was murdered as Amin had instructed. This kind of invention Rosenstone refers to as "metaphor" (1995:74-75). According to Rosenstone it is vital that a historical film suggests nothing that may be contradictory to what is accepted as being the truth (1995:76).

Thus it may be argued that *The Last King of Scotland* is not simply an adaptation of Foden's novel, but it is a film that illustrates history as drama. Of course there have been certain artistic liberties taken with regards to the adaptation from novel to film, but the cardinal features of the novel have remained (such as character names, location, and period). One of the most significant indices of novel which have been transferred to the film is the representation of him as trapped in a state of childhood.

"Childhood", explains Nandy, "is seen as an imperfect transitional state on the way to adulthood, normality, full socialization and humanness" (1987:57). The liminality of childhood to which Nandy refers is marked by a state of not-yet-adulthood, normality, full socialization, and humanness. Because of this the child is considered an inferior version of the adult (Nandy 1987:56). Adulthood "is valued as a symbol of completeness and as an end-product of growth or development" (Nandy 1987:57). It is also naturally associated with

maturity (Nandy 1987:56). This thesis understands normality to be a controversial concept that like postcolonialism avoids definition, but is determined by the social milieu of an age and people. Full socialization is directly connected to normality, and refers to an individual performing his/her role in society in a socially acceptable way.

Nandy claims that "[m]uch of the pull of the ideology of colonialism … can be traced to the evolutionary implications of the concept of the child in the Western world view" (1987:57). To illustrate this point he cites Cecil Rhodes as saying: "The native is to be treated as a child and denied franchise. We must adopt the system of despotism … in our relations with the barbarous of South Africa" (1987:58). Nandy argues that the "equation" Rhodes makes between childhood and barbarism was not only a matter of racism, but that it indicated "a certain terror of childhood" (1987:58). Rhodes, Nandy explains, intuitively knew that "children could be dangerous" (1987:58). The danger posed by the child is that "once we have seen through our constructions of childhood" the child becomes a "persistent, living, irrepressible criticism of our 'rational', 'normal', 'adult' visions of desirable societies" (Nandy 1987:58). In line with this approach, it may seem that the representation of Amin as a child is part of the film's postcolonial critique. However, this thesis will show the film clearly makes a similar equation to that of Rhodes, and perpetuates the stereotype of the African man as child; a stereotype based on the ideology of colonialism which "required savages to be children, but also feared that the savages would be like children" (Nandy 1987:58).

Foden has been explicit about his perception of Amin as an overgrown child, referring to him as both "a sulky child" (*Boldtype)*, and a "frozen child" (*The Guardian* 2003:n.p.). The two adjectives Foden attaches to the term child create a tone that suggests disapproval. According to Nandy there is an aspect of the child which society disapproves of, claiming that "we have also already split the child into two: his childlikeness as an aspect of childhood which is approved by the society and his childishness that is disapproved by the society"

(1987:56). He explains further that "[c]hildlikeness is valued, sometimes even in adults. Childishness is frowned upon, sometimes even in children" (1987:56-57). It is this childishness, "those aspects of childhood which … are independent of the adult constructions of the child" (Nandy 1987:56), which the film, through both characterization and doubling, associates with Amin's monstrousness and pathology.

The scene in the film which best demonstrates the child figure as a double of Amin is really a dual scene, in which each facet competes for "screen time", informing the viewer of two separate events whilst making them appear as simultaneous. In this scene Garrigan is having his tea whilst watching (through a window) Amin play soccer with, presumably, his children. In this scene Garrigan foregrounds the narrative action as shown by the camera. However, there is secondary action available in the background. Through both the lens of the camera and the window the viewer sees children playing a game of soccer, outside on the lawn. This action is at first out of focus, and the figures are hazy at best. At this point the camera set up is that of a long shot, and a medium close-up, as if there were two different frames overlapping each other – demonstrated by Figure 1.

Figure 1

In Figure 1 Garrigan is shown at a medium close-up, which John Van Zyl defines as: "a figure seen from just above the head to approximately half way between the waist and shoulders" (1987:45). Here Garrigan clearly dominates the frame, and as he is the primary focus of the camera, he is the primary focus of the viewer. However, one is able to see background details, such as a number of children playing just beyond the window. As the children are a bit away but not yet distant, it could be argued that this is in fact a long shot (Van Zyl, 1987). Van Zyl describes a long shot as a shot where "the subject still appears to be at some distance from the camera, but not as far away as 'distant'. If the subject is a person, then the entire figure – with room to spare at both the top and bottom of the frame – is included" (1987:44). The significance of a long shot is that people appear as part of the environment (Hayward 2001:329). This contrast between Garrigan shot at a medium shot, and the black children shown at a long shot demonstrates the underlying tones of Afropessimism in the film. The secondary action of the children playing outside becomes the primary focus of the camera, and so the viewer, only once Garrigan's visual focus turns to it (see Figure 4). This is achieved by a cut-away shot, and is an example of how the narrative is focalized by Garrigan. Focalization by Garrigan in this scene is an important contributor to the symbolic effect of what has been visually constructed on screen. Had the camera not been positioned at eye level with Garrigan, the doubling effect might not have been achieved, as I will demonstrate by a close analysis which follows.

In Figure 2[56] the camera, focalized by Garrigan, remains on the game taking place outside. The viewer sees Amin leap into the shot; now he too is participating in the game of soccer. Amin is facing the camera, dressed in a chocolate-brown and white tracksuit, with the

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[56] This image will reoccur as this argument unfolds in order to demonstrate visually how through symmetry doubling is achieved.

ball at his feet. Directly opposite Amin, but still in front of the camera, is a young boy dressed in a standard issue military uniform.

Figure 2:

What the shot presents to the viewer is simply a man enjoying a game of soccer with some, again presumably his, children. However, this differs from the shot's representational logic. The representational logic of the shot, as I argue, is that Amin is represented as childlike through the effects of doubling in the scene. Otto Rank, in his study entitled *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* (1914), wrote that:

> The uniqueness of cinematography in visibly portraying psychological events calls our attention, with exaggerated clarity, to the fact that the interesting and meaningful problems of man's relation to himself – and the fateful disturbances of this relation – finds here an imaginative representation. (1914, 1971:7)

This happens in *The Last King of Scotland* in two forms, as there are various instances of doubling. In this chapter I refer to *sets of doubles*. There are potentially two sets of doubles in this scene, and it is important to note that these sets of doubles both overlap and imprint on each other. The first set is that of the narrative apparatus and the mise-en-scene. In this scene, the camera is the narrative apparatus, and its function is to narrate the events which take place (Bordwell 1993:145-239, 246-282).

Within the frame of Jean Louis Baudry's apparatus theory "the camera is the projector", whist the various elements of mise-en-scene are simply "images reflected back to the viewer by the mirror-screen" (1975:44-45). In this scene the specific piece of mise-en-scene I am referring to is the window through which Garrigan and the viewer watch Amin and the children. According to Baudry the viewer will identify both with what is being shown on the screen and with the camera. (1945, 1975:45).[57] However, there is with this particular scene the interesting phenomenon of the camera being juxtaposed with another reflective surface. This is perhaps a kind of mise-en-abyme.

According to the David Macey (2001) the term mise-en-abyme is a French term used "in heraldry to describe a small shield set within a larger shield bearing the same device" (256). Macey explains that "equivalent formal devices have long been used in literature and the visual arts" (256), and uses the examples of *Hamlet* (the play within a play) and Velázquez's "Las Meninas" (the artist painting the court scene shown on the canvas) (256). Macey explains, with reference to André Gide, that mise-en-abyme may also be defined as a "representation within a work of art of that work's structure" (256). In this case the mirror represents the camera lens which, simultaneously, acts as a window onto the world of Amin.

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[57] The apparatus theory of Jean Louis Baudry and its connection to the work of Jacques Lacan has already been discussed in one of the preceding chapters.

There are two interesting effects as a result of this. The first is that the window acts as a mirror reflecting action taking place behind the camera (and so the viewer). When the camera is being focalized by Garrigan it is located closely behind him; looking through the window at the outside world. But when the camera is narrating Garrigan's actions it is part of the outside world, as it is outside the window looking in at Garrigan, as shown by Figures 3 and 4.

Both the window and the lens of the camera are reflective surfaces, and when they merge optically their boundaries blur, and they begin to mimic each other, reflecting/showing the same thing. At this point neither the camera lens nor the window exist separately; instead they merge to form a 'virtual mirror', as demonstrated in Figure 7.[58] The effect of this is what I referred to earlier as the through the looking glass effect. In Figure 1, Garrigan is having his breakfast, and his focus is fixed on this activity. In the background one sees the grainy image of children playing in the garden. Here the window and its frame are distinct, and clearly separating Garrigan from the children, and the interior from the exterior. The focalization of the film by Garrigan directly affects the viewer. Effectively, Garrigan is still outside of Idi Amin's world, just as the viewer is, for this scene, still outside of the world of the film. In Figure 3, the gaze of the camera is fixed directly on Garrigan. In this particular shot, the camera is located outside the window, which is now clearly visible because of the reflections flickering on it. In Figure 4, the camera is still located outside of the window. However, the shot is now a medium close up of Garrigan. Hayward defines this kind of medium close-up as a "close-up…generally framing the shoulders or chest and the head" (2000:328). Here we see that Garrigan's focus has shifted from his meal, to the action outside. Because Garrigan is the focalizer the camera will now turn its gaze to that which now has Garrigan's attention: the action outside.

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[58] The virtual mirror itself is illustrated in figure 7 which will follow later.

Figure 3: Here the camera is situated outside of the building Nicholas is in. Here the camera is looking in at Nicholas *through* the window.

Figure 4: In this frame the camera is still outside looking in at Nicholas, but now his attention has shifted to the action outside, and so now the camera will redirect its gaze to action on which Nicholas is focusing.
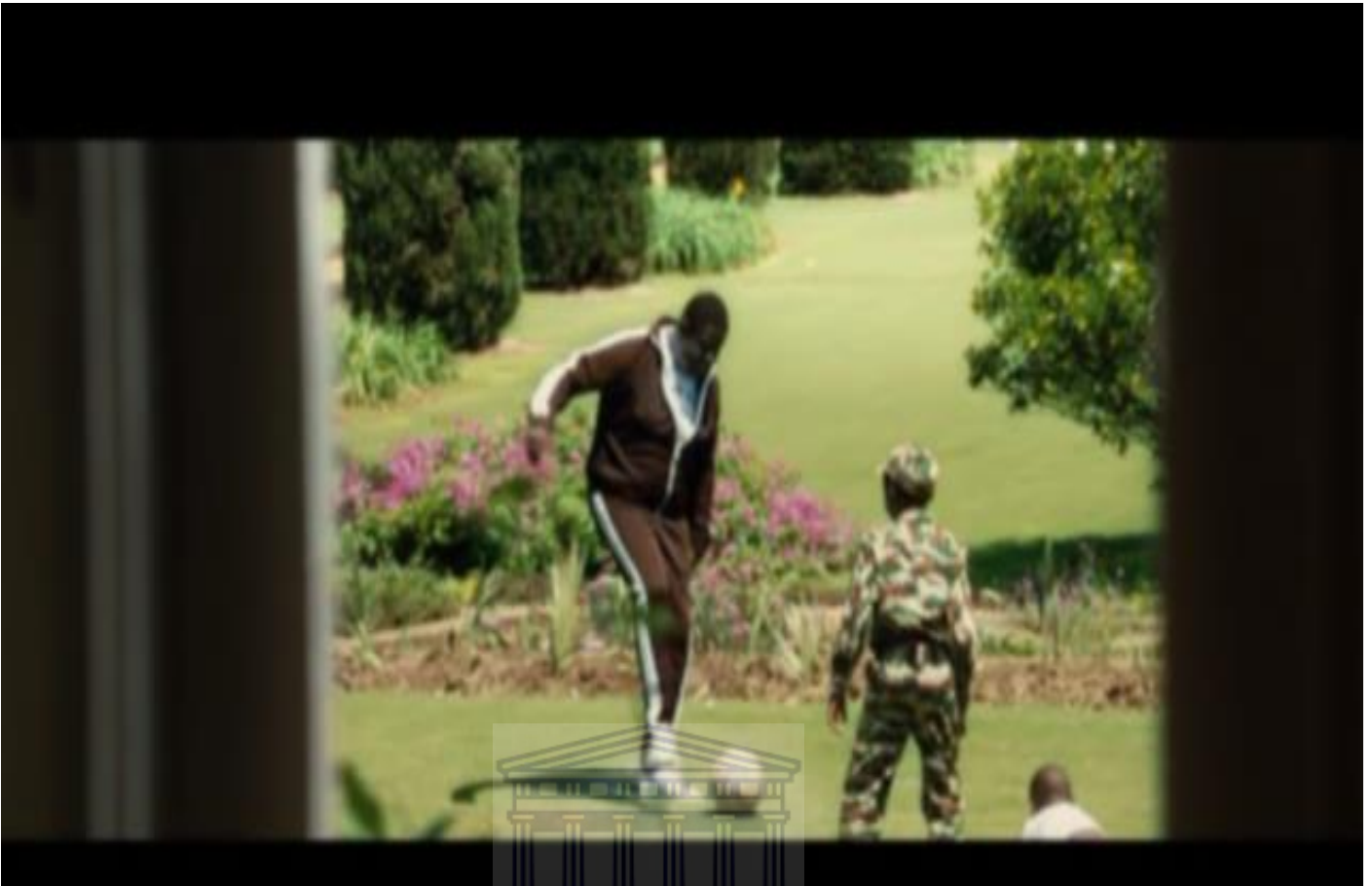
Figure 5: here, via a cut-away shot, the camera is now focusing on Amin playing soccer with the children. Notice that the camera is now located along-side Nicholas in the room, looking out through the window at Amin.

Figure 6: Following a cut-away to Sarah Merrit, the camera returns to show Nicholas now outside, with Amin, accepting the position of personal physician to the president. In this shot, one cannot distinguish between the window and the camera lens. The lens and window here become one.

Through a cut-away shot the camera is once again located inside the, presumably, dining hall. Garrigan is now out of view, but the camera is at his eye level. Now, as shown in Figure 5 which follows, Amin and the children are not only in focus, but are the focus of the viewer (as directed by the camera). Here the window pane is less distinct, and the only remnant of it as a separate reflective surface is the white-washed wooden-frame on the left. Here the camera and window are beginning to merge as reflective surfaces, illustrating the same image. This merger and mimicry of the camera lens and the window is complete in Figure 6, in which the two visually have become one, illustrating the same thing. Here the camera and window are essentially "mirror-images" of each other. In this instance, the viewer identifies with the cinematic apparatus (Ellis 1992:44), and the mise-en-scene of the scene. This is significant because it enables the viewer to become completely sutured into the world of the film. When the camera and window merge optically (the two reflective surfaces become one) a *virtual mirror* is created.

This virtual mirror effect depends on the viewer having been successfully sutured into the world of the film. If so, then given the angle of the camera in this frame, it appears as though the camera is peering over the left shoulder of the viewer, focusing on the mirror. Perceived in this manner the virtual mirror is reflecting the action as though it is taking place behind the viewer, and the viewer is spying on the unfolding action. This is significant because despite the viewer being sutured into the world of the film there is by this action a distance created between the viewer and Amin. The second effect of juxtaposing the camera with the window is that it appears as though their purpose is singular, by which I mean that they mimic each other, and in so doing create a 'through the looking glass effect'. Thus, the second set of doubles is that of Amin and the boy.

What one notices first is that aspect of mise-en-scene called costume. According to Bordwell and Thompson "costume can have specific functions in the total film, and the range

of possibilities is huge" (1993:150). Furthermore, they state that "[b]y integrating itself with setting, costume may function to reinforce the film's narrative and thematic patterns" (1993:151). This is so in *The Last King of Scotland*. In this frame, Amin is dressed casual sportswear, with the ball at his feet, and faces the viewer. Contrastingly, the child is positioned with his back to the viewer. He is wearing military garb and there is a baby crawling beside him. The acute angle of the above shot clearly juxtaposes Amin and the child for the viewer, creating a comparable parallel between the two. Here there is a reversal of the codes of attire that one would expect to govern the costume of these figures respectively. This suggests implicitly a reversal of the roles of child and man. The placement of the ball associates the film's Amin with childishness, whimsy, and a kind of naivety which in itself creates discomfort in the viewer. The child in contrast is wearing standard issue camouflage military uniform, as traditionally donned by soldiers. At the boy's feet is an infant. The infant is of course a dependant, by which I mean that he or she requires the support and protection of an adult in order to reach optimal development. If one was to demarcate the virtual mirror the aesthetic would be of two people looking back at each other:
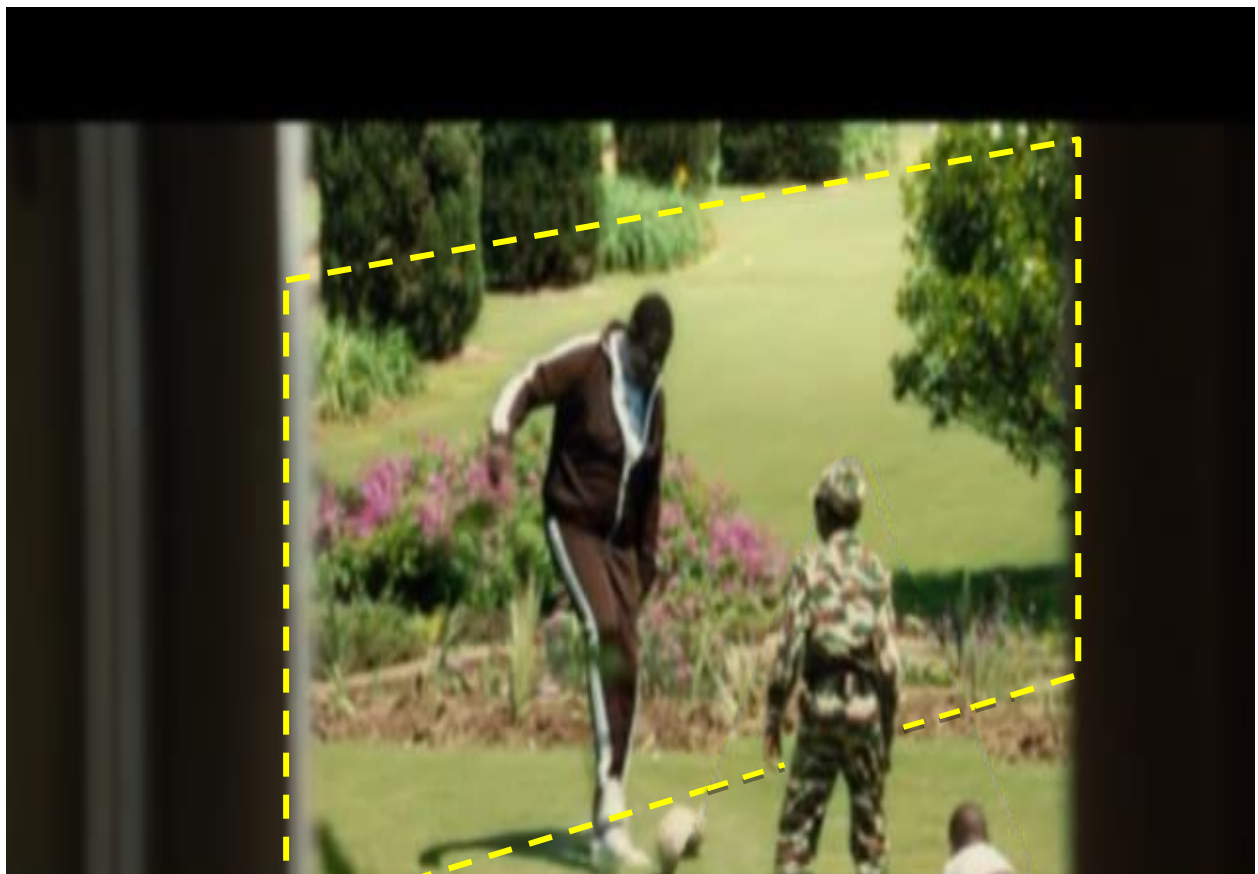
Here one sees that for each subject the other is his reflection, or mirror image, a notion emphasised by the synchronised movements of Amin and the boy – when Amin lifts his left arm, the boy lifts his right arm; as Amin steps right the boy steps left. Here the boy is mimicking Amin, mirroring him, as a double does.

Although Rank does not initially define the double he does, whilst explaining the theme of the double in *The Student of Prague* (a film by Hans Heinz Ewers), use various signifiers to describe or represent it. These signifiers include: "the apparition of his reflection", "the uncanny apparition", "his earlier self", "his other self", "the gruesome shadow", "the spectral figure", and "the phantom" (1914, 1971:5-6). What is clear from these signifiers is Freud's influence on Rank's conceptualization of the double theme, but more significantly for Rank the double is the figure which represents the past of the subject, from which he or she cannot escape and which will become "his fate as soon as he tries to get rid of it" (Rank 1914, 1971: 6). Another signifier often used by Rank to recall the double, which will become crucial to the study of film and which too is integrally psychoanalytic, is "the mirror-image" (1914, 1971:7, 9, 10, 18, 73, 86). As shown in Figure 8 above, the child is the *mirror-image* of Amin, and vice-versa.

There are correlations between those negative attributes of the child, and those negative characteristics belonging to Amin. For example, both share volatile temperaments, both cannot cognitively digest rejection fully, and neither a child nor the film's Amin possess the skills and necessary defence mechanisms to accept responsibility for their actions. According to the psychoanalytic theories of both Freud and Erik Erikson, a child will suffer a crisis of identity and grapple with feelings of inferiority under certain conditions; in the film's representation so does Amin, who over-compensates, has delusions of grandeur, and cannot distinguish fantasy from reality. Being unable to differentiate between what is real and what is

imagined echoes the symptom of misrecognition in Jacques Lacan's Mirror Phase Theory as discussed previously.

The theme of the double or doubling is no longer a theme found exclusively in psychoanalytic and literary studies, but has been integrated into postcolonial criticism by the work of, notably, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Neil Lazarus. In *The Location of Culture* (1994) Bhabha draws on the work of Sigmund Freud and Mikhail Bakhtin to further develop the psychoanalytic concept of the double. For Bhabha the double "is the figure most frequently associated with this [that is Freud's] uncanny process of 'doubling, dividing and [the] interchanging of the self" (1994:143-144). Bhabha also explains that doubling is essentially the act of mimicking and mirroring, and he refers to it as that aspect of the narrative which is "ghostly", a reference to the work of Bakhtin. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* explains that there are certain established pairs of doubles. He writes:

> Both colonizer and colonized are in a process of miscognition where each point of identification is always a partial and double repetition of the otherness of the self – democrat and despot, individual and servant, native and child. (1994:97)

Thus the double represents aspects of the self that one wants to deny, such as the inevitability of death, the basic instinct of man, and a misunderstanding that to be different from the "I" is to be other. This implies that the native is the double of the child, or as quoted by Fanon earlier "the Negro is just a child" (1967, 2008:16). If one was to accept the western model of childhood, this would mean that the child is symbolic of innocence, naivety, purity. However, colonial stereotypes construct the African as symbolic of sin, guilt, violence, and heathenism. Thus, the child should represent all the things that the film's Amin is not. However, contradictory to this, the child as Amin's double represents all of the things that are "wrong" with him (both for Amin himself and the viewer). The child becomes an uncanny

reflection of Amin, interchangeable with his self, despite representing all of the repressed psychological material he cannot surmount.

In MacDonald's *The Last King of Scotland* Amin is shown to have doubles from both categories and in both forms of mirror image and shadow the double takes the form of a child. If one is to step *back* through the looking glass, one will notice, as shown in the mise-en-scene of Figure 8, that Garrigan is not alone. In Figure 8 Garrigan is in conversation with Merrit whilst he watches Amin play with the children. Unbeknownst to him, he is no longer accompanied by the man who had been pouring his tea, instead he is accompanied by, to use Rank's language, a "gruesome shadow", "spectral figure", or "phantom" (1914, 1971:5-6) which looks quite like a boy. Rank places particular emphasis on the "shadow" or "shadow image" (1914, 1971:6, 10-11, 12, 15, 73, 82, 86); and explains that both the mirror image and shadow are doubles. One may argue that the mirror image is an extension of the ego, whilst the shadow represents the soul, and both, as a double does, represent the antithesis of the subject prototype. This reflection which is far more shadow than mirror image, represents that aspect of the narrative and Amin which is ghostly. Notice that in the previous still it is Amin who is located directly opposite to, and facing the window, not the boy in the military uniform. Again here the double takes the form of a child. However, this figure refutes any connotations of childhood, or at least Romantic or western childhood. It is dark, unidentifiable, and looms behind Garrigan. The positioning of the ghostly-figure behind Garrigan is symbolic of Garrigan's complete underestimation of Amin's character, intelligence, and violent insanity. Altogether an unnerving and disturbing image, especially as it is the viewer who is more often than not placed behind Garrigan. [59] Later in the film this shadow is doubled, and as it were its double is Amin's shadow as reflected in the glass panes of the door to Garrigan's home in Kampala, as shown in Figure 9.

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[59] This is because the camera is located behind Garrigan and as apparatus theory argues the camera becomes both eye and narrator.

Figure 8:

Figure 9

The shadow in Figure 9 is clearly that of Amin, despite his face not being visible. Like the previous shadow, this one is also to the left of Garrigan and is reflected in a window. Furthermore, as before, the camera and the viewer are situated on the outside of Garrigan's domain, looking in at him. These similarities allow one to consider this reflected shadow of Amin as a double of the reflected child shadow discussed earlier. This affirms the notion that Amin and the child become interchangeable figures that are uncanny reflections of each other. If this is to be accepted, the deduction may be made that Amin, although giant in stature and authority, is represented by the film as underdeveloped and disturbingly volatile psychologically. Furthermore, in this film the shadow, reflection and mirror image, though demonstrated as separate entities in, are all manifestations of the same double.

Using literature to illustrate his theory, Rank argues that the subject will, unconsciously, deny his double in "narcissistic self-love", because the double is "the messenger of death" (1914, 1971:86). However, this death need not necessarily be a physical death but may in fact allude to loss. It is plausible, as suggested by the film, that during Amin's time in power he did not fear death. *The Last King of Scotland* makes reference to Amin's strong belief that he would die in no other way and at no earlier time than what was foreshown to him in a dream. Thus the fear of death itself for Amin is beyond the scope of this film, but what is not is Amin's fear and paranoia regarding his self-image.

Amin's ostracising of Campbell and Kay may be considered a projection of his repressions – the fear of his weaknesses being exposed, the fear of disgrace, the fear of vulnerability, and most importantly a fear of death. Within the context of projection one could argue that Amin's constant insistence that he will not die is not only denial by a projection of thanatophobia (Rank 1914, 1971:77). This thanatophobia is echoed by Amin's other doubles - literally his body doubles, who were employed for fear of assassination attempts on the president. Again here the double becomes a symbol of death. The symbolism of the double

psychoanalytically is that it is a part of the ego that has become detached from the individual, it can be the alter-ego or "shadow-soul" (Rank 1914, 1971:82). Philosophically, the double is an omen of death, and by using child figures as Amin's doubles and highlighting his childishness the film uses "the metaphor of childhood to define mental illness, primitivism, abnormality, underdevelopment, non-creativity, and traditionalism" (Nandy 1987:65). This is a metaphor which Nandy explains is used by "every culture" that fears being childish (1987:65). By equating Amin's childishness with his savageness, the film perpetuates the stereotype and myth that the African is a child, in the worst sense of the word.

The following section of the chapter will engage the symbolism of Amin's costumes. Costume is an element of mise-en-scene that can help to add depth of effect to a particular scene or image; this is particularly significant in the context of Rosenstone's framework for historical film, as the use of costume can act to symbolize an aspect of Amin that may be deemed a true invention. The film uses costume to signify elements of the Amin persona and present him as a native who "terrorizes authority through the ruse of recognition, its mimicry, [and] its mockery" (Bhabha 1994:77).

When Garrigan and the viewer first encounter Amin he is on stage addressing a large crowd of people. In this scene there is symbolic tension between Amin's costume and the surrounding mise-en-scene. Amin is dressed in military uniform displaying a number of medals to highlight his status as a leader – see Figure 10. Surrounding him are two distinct sets of people. The first are armed men, wearing their military uniform, a reminder that Amin had come to power by using military force. However, this reminder is complicated by the thunderous pounding of drums in the background, which beat a rhythm that brings the crowd almost to a point of frenzy. On the stage just prior to and immediately after Amin's address are the second group of people: traditionally dressed women, dancing, while men carrying shields of animal hide and spears snare at the crowd who have never stopped chanting "Amin!"

Figure 11

The image and sound track of the scene both adhere to the codes of what is stereotypically associated with African tribal culture: the beating of drums, assegais and animal skins. Instead of representing the postcolonial modernity of Uganda in the 1970s, these elements as a whole suggest colonial stereotypes and associations of African primitivism. This is another example of how the film has a limited discourse. Figure 11 shows Amin lunging towards the crowd holding a spear and shield.

Amin is surrounded by people adorned in animal skins, feathers, assegai, and palm leaves. This suggests two things. Firstly, Amin who is the only person dressed in non-traditional attire, more specifically military uniform, stands as a "civilized" man amongst the savages, or as Stone puts it, is "definitely one of us" (MacDonald 2006). Amin is accomplished, educated, and ex-British Army, the latter being a very important factor. He was not, at least not at the beginning of his regime, a crazed and paranoid dictator. Secondly, the image of people waving palm branches, something which is recurring throughout the scene, suggests that Amin was (at the very least within the context of this film) a Christ-like figure. He promised salvation from oppression, a life beyond poverty, and homes and enough to eat for all. At the time of his inauguration he represented hope and possibility, and a rebirth of the nation. He promised to "set Uganda free!" (MacDonald 2006). Importantly, the camera is positioned at eye level. The effect of this is for the viewer not to be intimidated by Amin. This is significant because by positioning Amin, more or less, at eye level, he seems human rather than monstrous, and for the brief moment one is reminded of why, and is perhaps even able to understand why, the crowd was mesmerised by him. However, the animal skins, assegai, and beating drums are recycled images of so called African "fetishism" in the *Heart of Darkness*, which Patrick Brantlinger explains became synonymous with "witch craft and devil worship" (1985:179).

The novel's Amin is certainly informed by the mythology surrounding Amin himself: the rumours of cannibalism, of keeping severed heads in his refrigerator, and of Amin as both psychopathic and sociopathic, and so on. The film, more so than the novel, approaches these myths as unsubstantiated rumours by alluding to them through jest rather than illustration. For example in the opening chapters of the novel Amin is hosting a banquet for a number of diplomats. Garrigan narrates that during the course of the meal Amin exclaims:

> "And I have also eaten human meat!" This His Excellency almost shouted. ….Amin finally rose to his feet. "It is very salty," he said, "even more salty than leopard meat." We shifted in our chairs. "In warfare, if you do not have food, and your fellow soldier is wounded, you may as well kill him and eat him to survive. (Foden 1998:13)

This is precisely the kind of jest that made Amin such a sublimely attractive figure to the world media. One of the more disturbingly fascinating myths regarding Amin is his alleged cannibalism. According to Geoffrey Sanborn there was in the early-nineteenth-century a "reclamation of the ancient image of cannibalism" which created a "more general shift from the Enlightenment conception of humanity as everywhere the same to the racist conception of humanity as a moral substance inherent in white bodies" (1998:24). Sanborn explains further that "accounts of lustful cannibalism tended to weld together the moral, physical, and social connotations of 'savagery' ... were an especially important component of that shift" (1998:24). Cannibalism has been a longstanding stereotype in imperial narratives, and stereotype is, as Bhabha puts it, "an arrested, fixated form of representation" (1994:75). In this scene Foden writes an Amin who represents Bhabha's native – one who "terrorizes authority with the ruse of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery" (1994:115).

The film's engagement with the "Amin the cannibal" myth is more subtle. The idea of "Amin the cannibal" is transferred from the novel to the film in the same scene. However, Amin and Garrigan are not seated around the same table. Instead Amin is standing on a balcony, and it is during his welcome speech that he says to his guests: "All the food prepared

for you tonight are local delicacies, and I promise eh you, there is no human flesh"
(MacDonald 2006). Through its engagement with the discourse of cannibalism, the film
absorbs what Bhabha describes as the stereotype's "phantasmatic quality" (1994:77). This
means that it satisfies the cultural compulsion to retell old narratives, such as Joseph Conrad's
Heart of Darkness, in a new and fresh way that is "differently gratifying and terrifying each
time" (Bhabha 1994:77).

Figure 12 shows Amin laughing after the joke regarding eating human flesh. Here the
camera angle is a "low" or "upward angle", by which the camera and so the viewer is
"positioned *below* the subject and looks *up* at it" (Van Zyl 1987:48). This is because Garrigan
is among those below, being addressed by Amin – an example of how the film is focalized
through the protagonist. The purpose of an upward angle camera shot is in most cases to make
a figure seem taller, and suggests that the person in the frame is dominant, powerful, and
sometimes dangerous. The purpose of this is to have the viewer be intimidated by the figure on
screen. It is also a subtle way to make clear who the villain is.

In contrast to what is suggested by the composition of the shot, Amin looks like a
military hero: on his left breast area are countless medals, on his lapels and shoulders are
epaulettes, and he is wearing, importantly, a smile. Through his gesture and speech he seems
friendly, warm, and welcoming, despite making a reference to cannibalism. This is an example
of how Amin terrorizes, mimics, and mocks authority. However, this retelling of the story of a
white adventurer who meets an African savage is inherently Afropessimistic as it perpetuates
the stereotype.

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 13 is taken from the scene in which it seems that Amin first notices something between Garrigan and Kay. The music in the background is the sound of a choir singing in Swahili. Here Amin is surrounded by, presumably, either members of cabinet, staff, or security. To the far left of the frame is Garrigan, and more-or-less in the centre of the frame is Amin. Unlike the other men in the frame, who seem to have dressed appropriately for the occasion, Amin is dressed in a traditional Scottish kilt.

The image of Amin dressed in a kilt and tartan forage cap resonates strongly with the title shared by the novel and film. According to Frank-Collins N. Okafor, Amin "styled himself 'the last king of Scotland' and explains that the kilt and tartan forage cap are symbols of his love affair with Scotland that began when Willie Cochrane, Pipe Major of the King's African Rifles, taught Amin to play the bagpipes (Judd, 2003)" (2012:55). This styling can be understood as a deliberate choice to *mimic*. Homi Bhabha quoting Jacques Lacan writes that "the effect of mimicry is camouflage …. exactly like the techniques of camouflage practised in human warfare" (1994:85). In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha explains that mimicry is naturally ambiguous, it is black skins wearing white masks (120), and often mimicry, when it becomes mockery, is a kind of revenge. However, Amin's choice to style himself as a Scotsman does not seem to stem from a postcolonial desire to mock. Instead it speaks, as Okafor had pointed out, to his love affair with Scotland, and his admiration for both the nation and its people. Bhabha also speaks of mimicry resulting in the "ruse of recognition" (1994:115). There is in the narrative misrecognition, or miscognition, on the part of both Amin and the west. The British see Amin as "one of us" (MacDonald 2006), and Amin sees himself as a Scotsman, a westerner, someone better than the people he had claimed to be one with.

Amin used the kilt and tartan forage cap as "political sacramental" (Okafor 2012). According to Okafor political sacramental refers to leadership mythology, and may be

spiritual[60] or physical (2012:56). The political sacramental are the symbols used by an African leader, for "political supposes" (2012:54) and to establish his mythology. In the case of Idi Amin the sacramental is the kilt and tartan forage cap, which Okafor explains "became a rallying point in Kampala as children and the old tried imitating him in their attires and behaviours" (2012:55), and "'symbols of nationalism and Ugandan liberation'" (2012:55). However, Okafor claims that political sacramental cannot be dislocated from the "excruciating grips of dictatorships and *sit-tightism* prevalent in Africa" (2012:56). Furthermore, he claims, that "they [this political sacramental] instil physical fear in the minds of the people and disarm them against possible revolts or disobedience" (2012:56). According to Okafor:

> General Idi Amin's kilt and tartan forage cap and a swagger stick's message were very clear: he told his people that if he could be the 'Last King of Scotland and Conqueror of the British Empire' he was more powerful than pockets of opposition forces in Uganda and he went on to demonstrate it. His nickname of 'Big Daddy' and 'Butcher of Africa' represented a meticulous balance of terror and compassion.(Okafor 2012:57)

This terror and compassion is illustrated brilliantly through Whitaker's performance as both media darling and tyrannical psychopath. Evans and Glenn describe this as the "psychologizing of Amin" (2010:29). When Amin learns of Garrigan's betrayal he shouts at him that "you have most grossly offended your father", and on an earlier occasion he refers to Garrigan as his son. This is because for Amin, Garrigan is no longer a Scotsman but a Ugandan. This idea of himself as the father of a nation speaks both to the idea African dictators have of themselves as god (Okafor 2012:53), and to the Evans and Glenn criticism of the "big-man syndrome" (2010:15).[61]

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[60] Amin's spiritual sacramental refers to the myths surrounding him. According to Okafor "By most accounts an illiterate and gluttonous buffoon, Amin had become the subject of many bizarre rumours and myths. There were stories of cannibalism, of feeding the corpses of his victims to crocodiles, of keeping severed heads in a freezer at his home and bringing them out on occasions for "talks" - most or all of which are unsubstantiated, but not necessarily untrue (Moreorless, 2007)" (2012:55).

[61] Evans and Glenn are also particularly critical of the film because it does not "show us how Amin stayed in power: the strong tribal basis for the reaction to Obote, the use of informers, what Amin's long army service had taught him" (2010:30).

Amin's belief that he was superior to everyone around him is exemplified in the Figure 13. One notices that Amin is not only the only person there in costume, but he is the only one seated, and on a throne no less. Here the combination of costume and prop highlight Amin's megalomania, a feature of his psyche which will become increasingly prevalent as the narrative develops. Fashioning himself as the last king of Scotland also serves as an embodiment of his delusions of grandeur, narcissism, and childish fantasy. In the novel, as has been acknowledged by history, Amin bestowed on himself the title(s) of "His Excellency President for Life Field Marshal Al Hadj Doctor Idi Amin Dada, VC, DSO, MC, Lord of All Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Sea and Conqueror of the British Empire in Africa in General and Uganda in Particular" (Foden 1998:9-10). It is because of this narcissism, that for Amin "ideology was less important than the *folies de grandeur* of a leader" (F. Cooper 2002:1).

Having discussed mimicry as a form of admiration, it is also important to note, as we see in the scene where Amin addresses the western press, that he was "the jovial joker" (Evans and Glenn 2010:30). Figures 14 and 15 are taken from a scene in which Amin is entertaining again, this time he is dressed as a "cowboy". Once again, the film's representation of Amin evokes childish spectacle. Just moments prior Figure 14 Amin had said, "Nicholas, you did not know we had Ugandan cowboys, eh?" One might expect that the hat, lasso, and horse might have been enough for Amin, but the spectacle does not stop there. By roping one of his ministers, Amin not only looks like a cowboy but plays the role. The crowd and Amin laugh, but there is something disturbing about the event. In this scene Amin's costume reflects mimicry as mockery.

Figure 14

Figure 15

In this case the cowboy hat, stirrups, and lasso act as insignias of the authority the west had over the postcolonial subject's sense of identity, but here, as Bhabha puts it: "the insignia of authority becomes a mask, a mockery" (1994:120). The United States of America and its colonial struggle, which many historians are now calling the genocide of the Native American peoples, has been romanticised, and passed down the generations as a game: Cowboys-and-Indians. Thus, whether intentional or not, the spectacle of Amin as a Ugandan cowboy mocks the hypocrisy of the west believing it had always been civilized and superior, and that the savages are somewhere far away.

Furthermore, thrusting together the terms "Ugandan" and "cowboy" subverts the Manichean binary that Fanon says dominated colonial consciousness, because by joining two words which do not seem to belong together Amin claims the role of the white 'hero' without being white. Amin is a figure who represents what Bhabha described as the "area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double" (1994:86), and it is because of this that he was and remains such as fascinating and mesmerizing figure.

This magnetism that Amin posed is visualized in Figure 15 in which the Ugandan cowboy appears to be a man engulfed in flames. Perhaps this is even a reference to his monstrosity, but perhaps more significantly he is the flame to which Garrigan is drawn. Here the film is literally demonstrating that "Idi Amin Dada was a man who attracted stories like a street lamp attracts termite flies" (2007:n.p.), as Giles Foden in "The King and I" explains. In this frame the camera is set up behind a spit-roast and peers through the flames at Amin. Again here the mise-en-scene and composition of the shot tell far more than the dialogue of the narrative. Like a moth to a flame Garrigan cannot resist the allure of Amin – his power,

charisma, and peculiarity. [62] This dynamic echoes the relationship between Amin and the global imagination. He is once monstrous, and demonic (or perhaps demonized), but simultaneously "the poor boy made good, the antiapartheid crusader, the jovial joker, or one of the people" (Evans & Glenn 2010:29). Amin is shown by the film to be a magnetic figure, but like the flames which ensnare the moth, he ultimately represents danger and death.

When Garrigan and Amin are together for the last time the narrative climaxes in two ways. Firstly, Garrigan is confronted by Amin, not just about Kay, but about his denial of both the reality of the situation he is in and his complicity in it. In a shop in the airport Garrigan lies badly beaten when Amin enters the room. Towering over Garrigan, Amin sits down on his haunches. In Figure 16 which follows, the camera is located behind the shelving unit or stand that is supporting Garrigan's upper body as he lay powerless. It is a peculiar shot. The camera is still located behind Garrigan but here it appears as though the camera, that is the narrator, is hiding. I suggest hiding because, as Evans and Glenn put it, this is "the scene in which Amin's brutality is finally revealed" (2010:30). Usually at times when Amin dominates or becomes authoritative the camera pans up and down. This creates a sense of dread for the viewer, because suddenly he/she is no longer protected by the focalizer. This fear and sense of dread is accentuated by the extreme close-up of a threatening Amin and the musical score supporting it. Figure 16 captures a moment from Amin's confrontation of Garrigan. During the confrontation he says:

> *Did you think this was all a game? "I will go to Africa, and I will play the white man with all the natives!" Is that what you thought? We are not a game Nicholas. We are real. This room, here [pointing downwards], it is real.* (MacDonald 2006)

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[62] As the narrative approaches a climax of danger more and more moths appear, at times there are shots of hundreds of moths fluttering about in the night sky, and moths become symbolic of Garrigan.
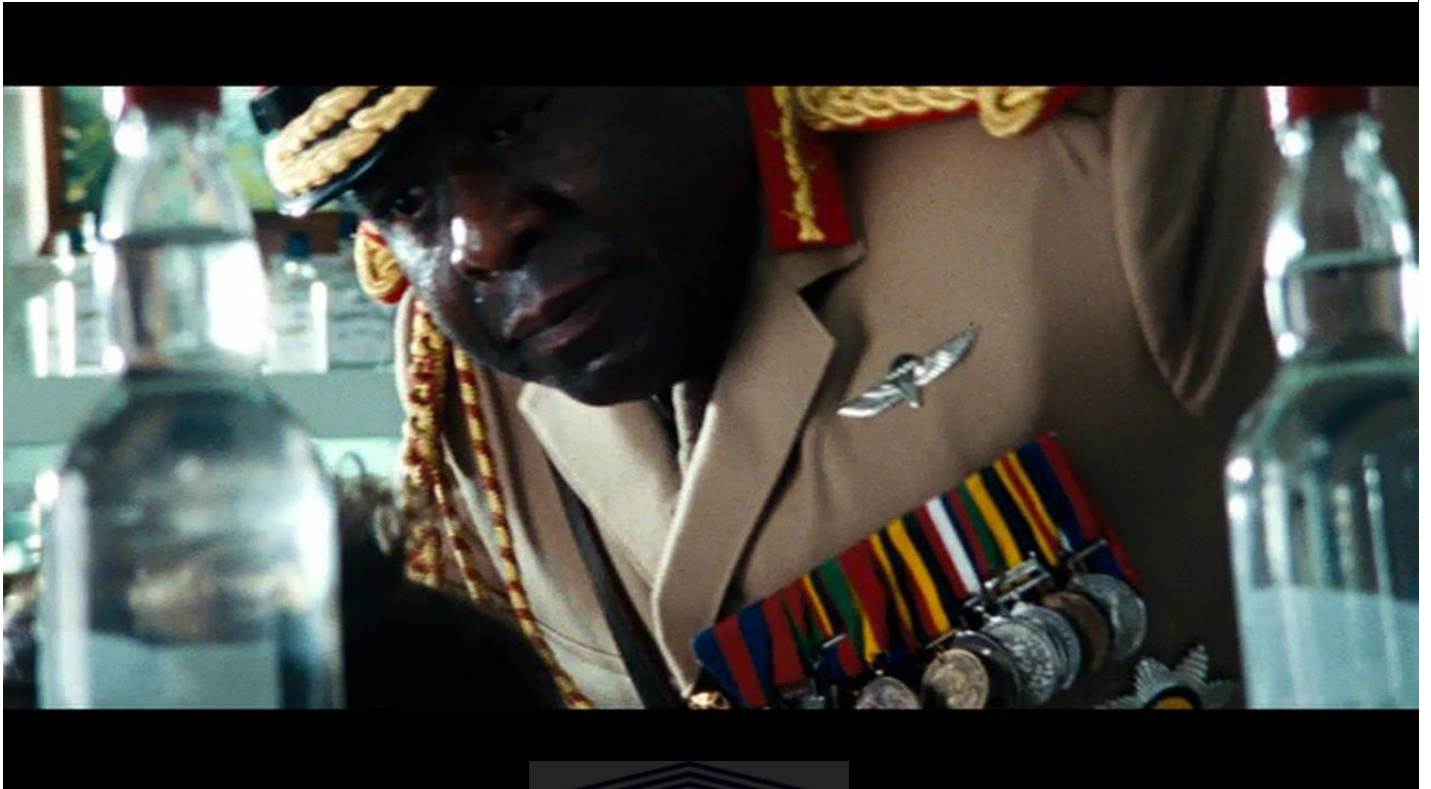
Figure 16

Figure 17

This confrontation of Garrigan by Amin is described by Evans and Glenn as at once "illuminating the West's mistaken perception of Africa and…regressing into a stereotype of atavistic brutality" (2010:30-31). Because the viewer is privileged with information the film's Amin cannot know, we know that to ask Garrigan if he thought coming to Africa would be a game is ironic, because we know that it was "by the spin of the globe" that Garrigan went to Uganda. By confronting Garrigan Amin also confronts the viewer. The statement "we are real" is explicitly present-tense, and more importantly applies not only to Garrigan. It says to the viewer that the images seen on television of suffering, violence, malnutrition, poverty, and political unrest are real, not in 1972, but now. What is profoundly disturbing about this moment in the film is that Amin, helped by the score, seems to suggest that all of the suspicions surrounding him are true. It is a frightening moment, because not until then, has the camera, and so the viewer, ever been as close to Amin.

This scene also represents the culmination of the film's postcolonial critique of western culture and colonialism's influence in Africa. It is a postcolonial critique perhaps best explained by Stephen Howe: "[there is] something still disturbing, indeed sickening, about the way wide sections of the British media and public [that] continued to treat Amin as a humorous figure even as evidence of his psychopathic brutality mounted" (2007:n.p.). The film is consistently critical of the way in which the British government privileged diplomacy above human suffering, and holds the global West accountable for the trauma that was the Amin regime. [63] Like *Blood Diamond*, *The Last King of Scotland* is also critical of the way in which western societies value resources and trade more than the lives of thousands of suffering Africans. The critique is, however, not solely geared towards the past. By having Amin address the viewer directly, the film engages the contemporary West. It too is held

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[63] See Curtis, M. "The rise of Idi Amin Dada in Uganda, 1971-1972", an edited extract from *Unpeople: Britain's Secret Human Rights Abuses* (2007), for a detailed discussion on this point.

accountable: like Apartheid and Sierra Leone's civil war, the Amin regime is a history that has not yet ended and a trauma which has not yet been healed.

Figure 17 is a frame taken from this moment in which Garrigan confronts Amin about his psychopathy. It is shot from behind Amin, and once again the camera avoids his view, guiding the viewer to feel fear. The downward angle from which it is shot positions Garrigan as a victim, and dislocates the viewer from his focalization. Yet, moments later, Garrigan turns to Amin and proclaims: "you're a child. That's what makes you so fucking scary" (MacDonald 2006). Although Garrigan does not elaborate on this revelation, Foden explains that

> Amin was like one of the adult psychopaths described in the work of psychotherapist DW Winnicott and his followers. A "frozen child", he developed a warped attitude to the outside world into which his unstable beginnings and lack of education had jettisoned him ill-prepared. He merged with his environment, losing boundaries to the extent that he believed himself omnipotent, chosen by God, protected by spells. Unable to make proper object relations, he simply broke the object, ordering killed those who opposed him, or whom he thought opposed him. (Foden 2003:n.p.)

This reaffirms that Amin's pathology is marked by his childishness, and so his incompleteness and inferiority. By equating the child figure with those facets of Amin's personality which are darkest, *The Last King of Scotland* perpetuates the colonial stereotype that the African is a child. Furthermore, by associating Amin's pathology with the child and making the child a screen on which to project the manifestations of this pathology, the narrative assigns to the child figure all of the taboos resulting from Amin's savageness.

Evans and Glenn argue that MacDonald's *The Last King of Scotland* "create[s] an image of Africa … [that] equate[s] the continent with famine, disease, violence, and political turmoil" (2010:15). When the film does show children it shows them in groups, not as individuals, and when it does this it shows them in one of three modes: as suffering from disease, malnourished, and comfortable with symbols of violence. This is shown in the scene

when Amin addresses the people, and the camera shows two children standing unflinchingly behind a soldier with a rather large gun. There are a number of other Afropessimistic traits which the film demonstrates. The film does draw on "earlier stereotypes and…familiar genres and narratives" (2010:15), particularly with the references to both tribalism and cannibalism. As is the case with all the films discussed in this thesis, *The Last King of Scotland* is dependent on a white protagonist. As discussed in the previous chapter, the perceptions of this protagonist can illustrate attitudes towards and about Africa. In one scene Garrigan says to Stone: "this is Africa, you meet violence with violence, or you're dead", which uncannily echoes Danny Archer's Afropessimistic "T.I.A." mantra. Furthermore, as with *Blood Diamond*, the narrative crisis is resolved outside of Africa, suggesting that African nations are incapable of resolving their own problems. The film ends with Garrigan on an aeroplane leaving Africa, with the mission of illuminating the dark deeds of Amin so that the world will not only know, but stop him. Evans and Glenn argue that this reverses the dynamic of *Blood Diamond*, as in this context it is "the black Dr. Junju [who] dies sacrificially so that Garrigan can tell the world 'the truth about Amin'" (2010:31).

What is most interesting about *The Last King of Scotland*'s representation of Amin is his deterioration into a childlike state. Consequently, there is an inversion of the phenomenon of the child soldier in Africa. Instead of children becoming soldiers, in this narrative, it is a soldier becoming a child. Unlike *Blood Diamond* this film does not present us with a child who has been turned into a monster, but rather that what is monstrous about Amin manifests in his childlikeness. This is deeply disturbing for the viewer because suddenly that "thing" that made Amin so terrifying, so unnerving is revealed, distorting the idea of the child. In this particular film the ambiguity of the child figure is slanted heavily towards the potential to do harm. Rather than being used as a signifier for hope, progress, and light, the child figure is used as a shadow, a mirror image, a reflection, thus ultimately a double. By presenting Amin's

double in the form of a child, Kevin MacDonald's *The Last King of Scotland* suggests that Amin, who represents African masculinity within the film, is an underdeveloped man who is a monster because of his childlikeness. These traits have become part of the mythological attributes of Amin, and his legend, and are an example of the intertextual influences which inform the fabric of the narrative.

The *Last King of Scotland* was a 2006 blockbuster, set in the Uganda of the 1970's, but framed by the continuing stereotypes of the colonial period. What this film does through its articulation of Afropessimism, particularly its unique and complex representation of the child soldier, is to re-establish the myth that the African man is primitive, incapable of developing beyond a certain point, and perverse. This is achieved not only through characterisation but also through the effect of doubling. As discussed earlier, the double is a symbol of the inevitability of death, and to have the double take the form of a child is, as Evans and Glenn have stated, "the perfect embodiment of a doomed future" (2010:15). Instead of showing the world a "more realistic image of Africa" (2006:n.p.), as was MacDonald's intention, the film focuses on one individual and illustrates only to some extent the violence he became infamous for. It highlights the imagined nature of Amin but struggles to find the balance between myth and reality, ultimately buckling under the weight of both the novel and the history.

Chapter 4:

"Prawn" and "Pawn": The Role of the Child in *District 9.*

District 9 (2009) is a documentary-style science-fiction film, directed by Neil Blomkamp[64] and produced by Peter Jackson (producer of *The Lord of the Rings*). [65] As its genre is hybridized, *District 9* is able to break away from the tradition of realist representations of Africa and produce an unique portrait of an African locale, peoples, and cultures. With the use of Computer Generated Graphics (CGI) and other special effects, a spacecraft full of alien creatures is inserted into the Johannesburg skyline. The aliens, referred to as "prawns", are removed from the spacecraft and herded into what would become the crime-riddled slum "District 9". [66] The narrative protagonist is Wikus Van de Merwe, a Multi-National United (MNU) bureaucrat, who during the "eviction" campaign stumbles upon the biochemical fuel which will transform him into an alien. It is at also at this point that he meets Christopher Johnson. Johnson is the exception to the masses of prawns that are presented as illiterate, criminal, and unambitious. He has a son, who is unnamed throughout the film, and it is this child who is the subject of this chapter. I argue that the boy is represented both as a pawn of the state subject to its racial politics, and a heroic, autonomous figure who resists bureaucratic control and represents an agentive urban childhood in postcolonial South Africa.

Like *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland, District 9*'s representation of the Johnson child is ambiguous and paradoxical. However, I will show through close analysis that its representation of the child, and childhood, is distinguishable from the other texts in three fundamental ways. Firstly, it situates the child in the urban space. Secondly, the child is

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[64] Blomkamp also co-wrote the script with Terri Tatchel.

[65] It is important to note this fact because it was only after Jackson attached himself to the project that the film became a big-budget production which now had financing for the CGI it has received so much praise for.

[66] When not italicized the name refers to the actual area that the narrative refers to and not its title.

represented as having both agency and autonomy. Finally, the child is the hero of the narrative. However, before close analysis can begin some discussion is needed on both the hybridized genre of the film and the film as allegory.

Stylistically the film draws from but parodies the documentary genre. "Documentary", according to Hayward (as in the tradition of John Grierson), "should be an instrument of information, education, and propaganda as well as a creative treatment of reality" (2001:90). Thus a documentary should tell a story based on reality that teaches the viewer something. Julian Schürholz explains that documentary as a genre "generally claims to portray reality in an authentic, undistorted fashion…and uses realism as a professional code" (2010:6). It is precisely this claim that *District 9* critiques by parodying the cinematography of the genre.[67]

Schürholz, who is the author of *Mockumenting South Africa? Race and Segregation in "District 9"* (2010), argues that the film should be considered a mockumentary. The term "mockumentary" "refers to a fictional film that presents itself as a documentary" (5) by "consciously adopt[ing] the form of a documentary" (6). He explains that when classifying mockumentaries at least three degrees can be found (7):

> The first includes rather non-reflexive parodies of documentary which "ultimately wor[k] by borrowing styles in order to mock and critique them" …. The second degree, critiques, is more critical of its subject and contains a higher level of reflexivity when compared to parodies ... This degree includes "mimetic fiction films that borrow documentary realist techniques to avail themselves of the authoritative verisimilitude that documentary films attempt to inspire so as then to subvert that authority" …. The third degree of mockumentaries has deconstructionist overtones. Those third-degree mockumentaries seek to subvert and deconstruct the genre of documentary and its claim to be able to portray reality via images by applying generic documentary characteristics to *fiction* and being openly reflexive with regards to portraying "reality" in both pictures and speech. (2010:7)

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[67] The "parody" is a variety of high burlesque which "imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject" (Abrahams 1999:26).

Schürholz explains that because *District 9* satirizes "issues of segregation and Apartheid in South Africa" (2010:10) it should be considered a parody, the first degree of mockumentary. He warns, however, that the film is more critical and reflexive than parody, and on a more abstract level "bears traits of critique and deconstruction, the second and third degree of mockumentary" (2010:10). Schürholz explains that mockumentaries "can be of multiple, even varying degrees of mockumentary, depending on the audience", and that *District 9* "is one of those mockumentaries which operates on all three levels of reflexivity, and hence can be assigned to all three degrees of mockumentary at the same time" (2010:11).

This mockumentary is also a science fiction film. According to Susan Hayward science fiction films resist categorization,[68] but as a literary genre science fiction was in the mid- to late nineteenth century a "response to advances in science and technology" (2001:315). She explains that science fiction films are "politically motivated – mostly, but not entirely negatively", and proposes that technology be questioned and that "attitudes towards outsiders … come under scrutiny" (2001:317) The racial and socio-economic politics of *District 9* show it to be a politically motivated film; and its engagement with xenophobia challenges the viewer to reconsider public attitudes towards outsiders. Furthermore, its ambiguous engagement with technology prompts the viewer to question the value of technology and its cost.

According to Hayward there are three main categories of the science fiction film, namely "flight, alien invaders, [and] futuristic societies". *District 9* unlike most science fiction narratives, such as *Star Trek*, *The Chronicles of Riddick*, and even *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, is not futuristic or a space travel narrative. Unlike films such as *Back to the Future*, *District 9* is not a film about time travel, but juxtaposes the conditions and

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[68] According to Hayward some critics consider science fiction films a sub-genre of the horror movie, others consider it a sub-genre of the fantasy film, and others recognise it as a distinct genre (2001:315)

circumstances of the past with those in the present to question the extent of progress.[69] It may seem that *District 9* leans towards being categorized as an alien invader film, however the film makes it clear that these aliens are more intergalactic refugees than an invasion threat. Thus it becomes clear that the film cannot be boxed into any of these categories. This does not mean that *District 9* is not a science fiction film. Instead it highlights the limitations of the genre and calls for its reconceptualization.

What makes the film unique is that it is a hybrid of mockumentary and science fiction set in Johannesburg, South Africa, between 1982 and the present day, paradoxically engaging history and presenting a snapshot of the now. John Rieder comments on this, explaining that

> One of the odd things about *District 9*, considered as a sf [science fiction] film, is that it sets the arrival of the alien ship above Johannesburg in the past instead of in the near future. One could say that, by foreclosing the anticipatory perspective conventional to sf, this strategy decisively emphasises the analogical function of the prawns as metaphors for displaced black South Africans. That is, the strategy insists that this is about history as it has already happened, not a fantasy of what might happen. (2011:51)

Rieder makes two interesting arguments, one of which is that the film is retrospective rather than futuristic. This assessment, although not incorrect, is perhaps too simplistic, because, as this thesis will show; *District 9* may open in the 1982 but is a snapshot of the now and a dystopian warning for the future. Like many trauma narratives *District 9* cannot separate past, present, and future, precisely because trauma disrupts temporality. It is, as cited elsewhere, history that is not yet over. Rieder's second argument is that the aliens in the film act as a metaphor for displaced black South Africans. Firstly, to accept that the aliens are metaphors for a group of people is to accept that *District 9* is an *allegory* of a social event. M.H. Abrahams explains that

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[69] A number of questions arise as a result of this juxtaposition: Have the politics of race really changed in the postcolonial era? Has the idea of the Other been re-centered? Are our preconceptions about outsiders really motivated by reality? What are we willing to sacrifice in the name of science and "progress"? And perhaps most significantly it asks that we consider not what distinguishes us from each other, but what it is that unites us.

> An allegory is a narrative … in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the "literal," or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of signification. We can distinguish two main types: (1) Historical and political allegory, in which the characters and actions that are signified literally in their turn represent, or "allegorize," historical personages and events …. (2) The allegory of ideas, in which the literal characters represent concepts and the plot allegorizes an abstract doctrine or thesis (1999:5).

One can accept that *District 9* is a politically motivated film which uses historical discourses as a point of reference. Therefore, it may be considered an allegory of the first type, in which the primary order of signification is the politics of race, and the secondary order of signification is class and caste. This system of signification, in conjunction with the setting of the narrative, has resulted in the popularly assumption that *District 9* is an allegory of Apartheid (A. du Toit, A.O. Scott, and P. Bradshaw).

South Africa during the period of 1948 until 1994 had been governed by the National Party (NP), whose policy of Apartheid promised all whites that their white supremacy would be protected in a world that was moving too quickly towards a non-racial, liberal state of being (A.S. MacKinnon 2004:211). Apartheid, as A.S. MacKinnon notes, "rendered the people visible only through roles based on race and class" (2004:211); and

> drew upon segregation and Afrikaner nationalist ideologies to create a landscape of social and economic dislocation….Blacks (African, Indian, and Coloured people) where exiled within their own country and forced to live in a twilight world which intersected with the white-dominated nation only through subordination and oppression (2004:211).

In South Africa exile was often preceded by forced removals, of which "one of the most infamous acts of apartheid's forced removals [took place] in District 6" (McKinnon 2004:291). District 6 was a "once vibrant and multi-ethnic neighborhood" (MacKinnon 2004:291), but has become an infamous symbol of forced removals during Apartheid, and a nostalgic fantasy of a Utopian sector in which all races lived peacefully together until the Apartheid government intervened.

Roger Ebert points out "The title "District 9" evokes Cape Town's historic District 6, where Cape Coloureds (as they were called then) owned [and rented] homes [from white people] and businesses for many years before being bulldozed out and relocated" (2009:n.p.). District 9 in the film, like District 6, is a diverse cultural locale which locates itself somewhat outside of the parameters of society delineated by the state. In District 9 aliens and humans do live together, although what is depicted in the film is hardly a harmonious relationship. The aliens in themselves represent a multitude of cultures, including that of gangsterism, addiction (in their case cat food being the substance), people collecting rubbish, and drunkenness. Yet only one human "race" is represented as living in District 9: Africans, specifically Nigerians. Many critics, including Peter Bradshaw and Ato Quayson, have been outraged at the film's representation of Nigerians as power-hungry, cannibalistic, savages. Du Toit writes that "like the aliens, the 'Nigerians' are rendered as surrealistically horrendous; in fact part of their awfulness is that they live so close to the aliens, doing business with them, even (or so some of the whites in the film fantasize) having sex with them" (2009:n.p.). This representation is of course naturally problematic. It depicts Nigerians as superstitious and dangerous beings, who dabble in what South Africans refer to as "muti" (witchcraft) (Quayson 2009:n.p.). Muti requires the mutilation of a body, in the belief that certain parts of the body cure certain ailments. In one scene the female sangoma explains to the Nigerian warlord that "if you eat this [holding up a severed alien arm], then their power will be yours" (Blomkamp 2009).[70] However, other Africans outside of District 9 are also shown to practice muti, as depicted by the footage documented presumably by the "crew following Van de Merwe".

MNU officials claim that because of the illegal practice of muti, the ensuing violence, the cat food trading (which is equivalent to drug trading), and interspecies prostitution that the

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[70] See Quayson's critique of the film's representations of Nigerians, entitled "Unthinkable Nigeriana: The Social Imaginary of *District 9*" (2009).

aliens should be moved from District 9 to District 10. However, the policies of MNU, like those of the Apartheid government, demonstrate little regard for the wellbeing of the alien other, and undermine whatever rights one might presume they have. The theme of forced removals in conjunction with the title of the film has led to a reading of the text as an allegory of Apartheid. Du Toit explains the interconnectedness of Apartheid and *District 9*:

> Every single thing you see … the harassed, edgy bureaucrats with their clipboards and their explanations; the ludicrous attempts to get the aliens to sign the consent forms prior to their removal to the tent town; the prowling military thugs; the constant threat of violence, spiraling out of control; the chaos and confusion – all of it is precisely how it all worked. Watching it, I suddenly remembered, with vertiginous clarity: Crossroads. KTC. The Witdoeke. Jeff Benzien. Dolf Odendaal. Some of you reading this blog – you were there too. You know of whom and of what I speak. (2009:n.p)

What du Toit proposes is that the film may be enjoyed by science-fiction lovers across the world, but that it may only be understood fully by South Africans. This suggests that the film's intended viewers are South Africans, because so much of the mise-en-scene, including exaggerated accents and language, resonates only with South Africans. Similarly, Roger Ebert explains that the name 'Van der Merwe' "is not only a common name for Afrikaners … but also the name of the protagonist of van der Merwe jokes, of which the point is that the hero is stupid" (2009:n.p.). He claims further that it would not "escape a South African ear that the alien language incorporates clicking sounds, just as Bantu, the language of a large group of African apartheid targets" (2009:n.p.). As a South African, the parallels between the world of the film and the world of Apartheid are obvious, so much so that they seem caricature-like or superficial, and satirical (as argued by Bradshaw).[71] Thus it is important to note that the film does not attempt to represent South Africa under Apartheid in a realist fashion, as so many Apartheid narratives such as *A Dry White Season* and *Red Dust* did, but rather may be offering social commentary and criticism under the guise of science fiction.

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[71] Bradshaw's reading of the film as satire is somewhat problematic. It seems an uncomfortable idea that Blomkamp, a South African born director who lived in the country during the regime and state of emergency, would find it something to mock.

Notices in the film which read: "FOR HUMANS ONLY", or images which depict an alien being banned from entering an establishment or area[72] echo the segregationist propaganda and regulatory mechanisms of the Apartheid regime.[73] This may be one of the reasons why Du Toit argues that "what you [are] seeing is not just South Africa, but that South Africa that we [South Africans] think we've left behind, that we think we've forgotten …. Apartheid South Africa; State of Emergency South Africa; forced removal South Africa" (2009:n.p.). Thus *District 9* may be categorized into the first degree of mockumentary which Schürholz explains "includes rather non-reflexive parodies of documentary which ultimately work by borrowing styles in order to mock or critique them" (2010:7). Schürholz further explains that "issues of segregation and [the trauma] of Apartheid" are those "aspect[s] of popular culture" (2010:10) that are not past but part of the exclusionist now. Figures 1, 2, and 3 are taken from a sequence in *District 9*, during which a number of academics act as voiceovers for these images, and are examples of the parallel to which Schürholz refers.

In Figure 1 the sign reads "No! Not welcome", with an image of an alien with a red line running through it below the warning. Figure 2 is an image of a sign on which the human nuclear family is represented, alongside which a symbol for alien has a red cross over it. This sign reads "for use by humans only". Finally, Figure 3 depicts a sign similar to many of the signs seen at the entrance of shopping malls and walkways to beaches, or in this case parks. On it there are a number of blocks, the largest of which bears the symbol for alien, under which it reads "no non-human loitering". These three images or signs suggest that Apartheid is a history and a trauma that is not yet over.

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[72] Often the image is of an alien with a cross drawn through it.
[73] The signs used by the Apartheid regime are integrated into the mise-en-scene of Tom Hoopers *Red Dust* - on the public swimming pool wall is a sign which reads "Slegs Blankes " which translates to "Whites Only"

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Apartheid has left in its wake a culture of discrimination, racial prejudice, and fear. These post-traumatic symptoms of Apartheid manifested in 2008, when South Africa suffered a spate of xenophobic attacks.[74] Loren B. Landau, in his work *Exorcising the Demons Within* (2011), offers an analysis of the xenophobic violence which ignited in South Africa in May 2008, including its causes and effects. Landau explains that the violence was the result of precipitating conditions in the political landscape of the country and what he calls the "South African statecraft" (2011:2). According to Landau, traditions of Apartheid remain in South Africa today and it is the particular tradition of creating a "divide [between] privileged insiders and demonic [or rather demonized] outsiders" (2011:7). Thus one might suggest that the xenophobic attacks of 2008 are a manifestation of the post-traumatic effects of the racial politics of not just Apartheid but the principles of colonization which create the binary of insider and outsider, which persist today. However, it is also important to acknowledge that xenophobia in South Africa is directly related to the growing economic demands of a society for whom resources are scare and the job market is becoming ever more competitive and difficult to enter into.

During the opening sequences of the film a number of "locals" are recorded as voicing xenophobic remarks. As part of a voice-over for a faux news clip, an unidentified voice narrates the action being shown on screen, explaining that "Residents in Tembisa rioted for the third consecutive night in an attempt to remove all the aliens from their township" (Blomkamp 2009). This is followed by a cut-away to a black man who thinks "they [the aliens] must fix that ship and they must go" (Blomkamp 2009). Via another cut-away, a white man offers a suggestion to the alien "problem": "A virus, a selective virus. Release it near the aliens". An opinion or two later and we are shown the last of them. A black man, in typical Loxian attire,

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[74] Landau explains that in the South African popular imagination the violence is understood as "Two weeks of violence, all targeted at immigrants from beyond the country's borders; 62 dead; 100 000 or more displaced" (2011: 18).

and with a not quite South African accent explains that "If they were from another country, we might understand...but they are not even from this planet at all" (Blomkamp 2009). These comments are not unfamiliar in South Africa[75] and engages the discourse of settler/outsider politics.

Figures 4, 5, and 6, which are taken from various scenes in the film, illustrate the ironic juxtaposing of labels attached to the footage and the content it shows, some of which is invented and some of which is quite familiar to South African audiences. These images are examples of how the film brands certain sequences as news media footage. Figure 1 is a still of what is supposed to be coverage of events by "SATV news", whilst Figure 2 is "footage taken by" "BNC news". The footage shown by SATV is being streamed "live", as part of breaking news, however, the person shown to be forcibly and violently evicted from the "township" is an alien.[76] This is an example of how the film undermines the authenticity of what it is showing by inserting a character the viewer knows does not exist; and it is an example of how the film undermines the genre of documentary by merging it with the tropes of science fiction.

Figure 6, like Figure 3, is constructed to look far more contemporary. In Figure 6 the footage shown was "taken" by "SΔBC News" reports, and it is too convenient a coincidence that both the name and symbol of the news station (bottom left of Figure 6) are almost identical to the symbol and name of the local South African news broadcasters, SABC 1, 2, and 3.

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[75] Tamlyn Monson and Rebecca Arian argue that it is the "media discourse that produced this memory of events" (2011: 26). Monson and Arian examine the way in which the media has effectively produced what South African society accepts as the "truth" of the 2008 attacks. They claim that the news, like documentaries, is a "productive process". This suggests that what one is being shown by the media (or director) are a number of selective images which will produce a particular narrative and memory. Much like the way in which history is represented in film, as discussed in a previous chapter, events publicized by the media are encapsulated, and do not only reflect but at times mimic and so perpetuate the politics of their production. *District 9* may be read as particularly critical of the presumed authenticity of both documentary and media as memory producer.

[76] This image echoes what happened to individuals who were not South African in Alexandra in Johannesburg in 2008.
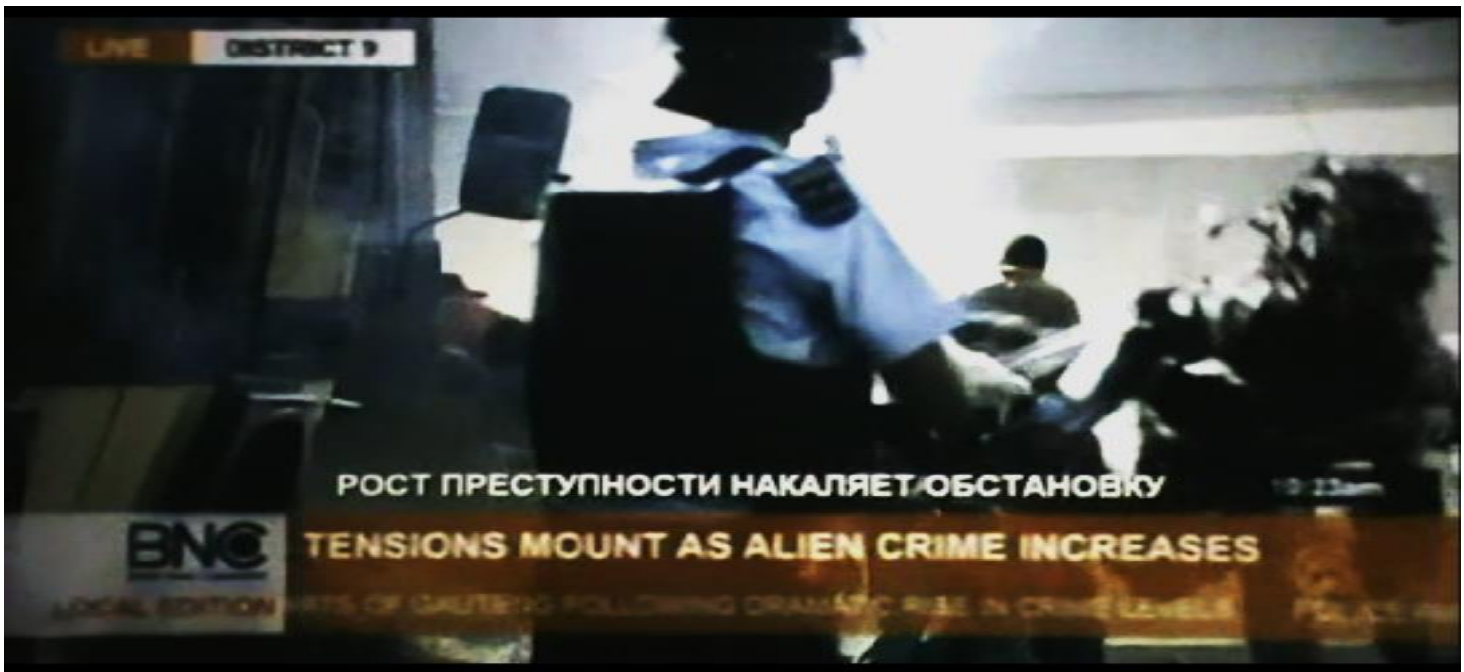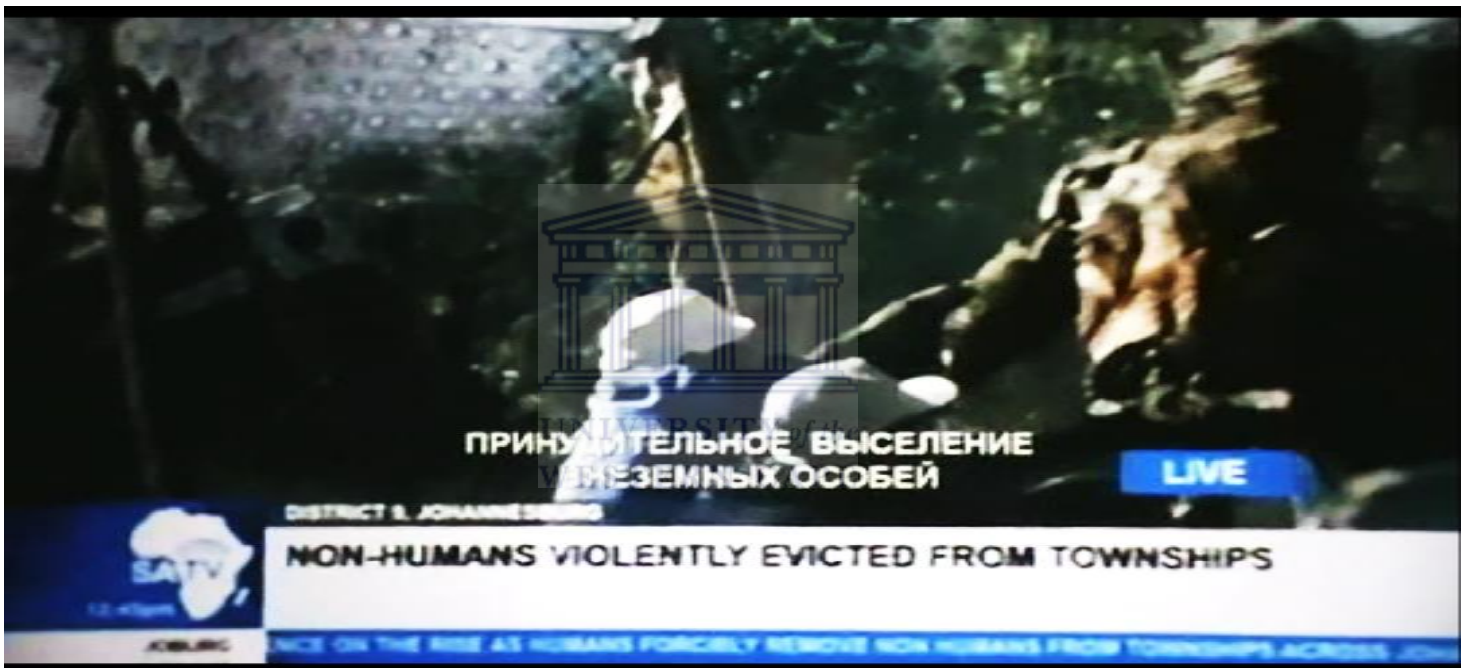
Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

This use of both contemporary and retrospective aesthetics emphasizes that *District 9* is indeed a trauma narrative and should be considered a snapshot of the now, because it reflects not only on the trauma of Apartheid, but the post-traumatic stress of South African society which manifested as the xenophobic attacks of May 2008.[77]

The way in which the "media" within *District 9* represents Van de Merwe is very important.[78] The film's illustration of Van de Merwe is dominated by the style of "hand-held" camera. This again emphasizes that what the viewer witnesses is documented footage taken by "Trent the camera man", and misdirects the viewer into apparatus identification, which in turn results in a misrecognition of the image for the real, a theory discussed in relation to the work of J.L. Baudry and J. Lacan previously. An interesting contrast to this is that the Johnson child is rarely shown or illustrated on screen in any form of faux footage. The style of camera used to show the child, especially when he is alone, is that of traditional cinematography - no logos for MNU or a news broadcasting agency are imposed into the image. This is significant because the logos associated with Van de Merwe, and even the timestamp on the 'raw footage' of the corporate video, date Van de Merwe's plight. By attaching signifiers such as those just discussed - the assignment of a name, and even the wardrobe of Van de Merwe - the film makes specific not only the plight but the individual and society he represents.

The child, however, like most of the aliens in the film, has no name, no cultural markers or affiliations, no distinguishable characteristics and has no history (at least none that

[77] Monson and Arian argue that the politics of "media memory" include how "categories of membership, belonging, and identity are naturalized; social conflict and popular justice are dehistoricised and depoliticized; and individual agency is erased" (2011: 27). This naturalization of membership, belonging, and identity is naturally problematic, and is a post-traumatic symptom of the ideology of Apartheid, which essentially endeavored to keep separate so as to keep pure. In *District 9* Afrikaner, or white identity is what is corrupted when Van de Merwe begins transforming into an alien. At first his hybridity corrupts because of allegations of inter-species sexual activity (something which is easily read as a critique of the Apartheid policies against inter-racial relationships). Then, because he is ostracized from his suburban middleclass white community he cannot return home, and so is forced to dwell with the aliens in District 9.

[78] One example would be when Van de Merwe sees himself on television. Onscreen behind him, although still clearly visible in the image, is an alien. The reporter then explains that Van de Merwe is suspected to have contracted an alien virus because of prolonged sexual activity with the creatures, and the suggestion is that the picture is evidence of this

the film shows). This detachment from all signifiers of culture, heritage and so on makes it difficult to accept that the alien, and particularly the child, is a metaphor for any particular group, as Rieder suggested. It is for this reason that Joshua Clover argues that, to read the film as an allegory of Apartheid is flawed in logic, as it presumes that the aliens must then represent some identifiable human group (2009:8). Instead he proposes that the film be read as a critique of humanity, arguing that

> What does [foreclose allegory] is the impossibility of establishing who the aliens "really are"; it can only be allegory, after all, if they stand in the place of some identifiable group. The apartheid allegory never comes together; neither does the superfluous population theory explain quite enough. It's not a film of institutional racism nor capitalist crisis. What is finally interesting, even compelling, about *District 9*, is that it seems to dislike pretty much every human, and human position, it can conjure up; if the aliens represent some fraction of humanity, well, it doesn't like them much either. It's driven not by cognitive estrangement, not by analytic displacements, but by a profound and remorseless contempt for present humanity—including the humanist desires of the audience it hails. It's surely the most Nietzschean film of the decade. (2009:8)

Clover's problematizing of the assumption that the film is as allegory asks one to consider who these aliens represent. Rieder, as discussed earlier, argues that the prawns represent the displaced black South Africa, and if one considers the film an allegory of Apartheid then it is plausible that the aliens do represent that specific group. However, this issue will be returned to later, and discussed in much further detail. What is clear is that the aliens are presented as one people, and one race. This is problematic because it reduces what may be a variety of peoples living as one homogenous group to one racialized nation. This totalizing approach to the aliens is similar to older representations of Africa which approach it with a totalizing gaze (Evans & Glenn 2010), and in so doing undermine individualism, autonomy, agency, and reduce trauma by universalizing it.

Furthermore, one cannot distinguish between genders amongst the aliens. There is one alien who, during the scene in which Van de Merwe and colleagues are distributing eviction

notices, is wearing a pink bra, but just moments earlier had urinated in the same manner a man would. The film avoids issues of race and gender. Nor does it provide context regarding the history, civilization, or culture of the aliens (Ebert 2009:n.p.). In this way the aliens of *District 9* have the potential to represent any group of individuals. Extending Clover's argument, Matthew Jones, in a review of the film (2010), explains that "entrenched in a strong sense of man's inhumanity to man, *District 9* is not satisfied with its allusions to apartheid but instead looks much deeper into the history of the 20th century and connects the dots between all the human cruelty it finds" (121). Jones' argues that *District 9* engages a number of the features of genocide.[79] In its essence, "genocide involves a specific intent to destroy a protected group as such" (D. Luban 2006:8).[80] However, in contemporary society this definition has become but the central point of a web of variants. For the purpose of this chapter I will discuss four of these, namely District 10 (the concentration camp), (alien) experimentation, the term "prawn", and what can be read as the film's representation of infanticide.

In 2010, twenty-eight years after their arrival, the prawn population has grown to unimaginable and ungovernable proportions. To accommodate the increasing number of alien refugees, MNU's orders are "to relocate...approximately 1.8 million alien residents from their homes" (Blomkamp 2009). These intergalactic refugees are to be relocated to the "tent city" District 10, which Van de Merwe first describes as "A city built for prawns" (Blomkamp 2009). Later, when Christopher Johnson tries to explain to his son that they cannot return to their home planet he uses the brochure Van de Merwe had given him, to reassure the boy that

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[79] During the 1948 War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity, Including Genocide Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide it was established that the term genocide would refer to "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: a. killing members of the group; b. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; its physical destruction in whole or in part; e. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group" – Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Jan 12, 1951).

[80] See also William A. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law: The Crimes of Crimes,* Cambridge. 2000.

they will have a home. In this scene Van de Merwe transcends his pedantic bureaucrat mentality of simply following orders, and reveals the truth of District 10:

Christopher Johnson:	*This is where we must go. [Pointing to the brochure, which has an image of a tent city on its cover]*
-	*See that tent there?*
-	*That might be ours.*
Johnson child:	*I want to go home!*
C. Johnson:	*We can't go home. Not anymore.*
V.D. Merwe:	*Hi. You don't wanna go to the tents.*
-	*They're not better.*
-	*They're smaller than the shacks.*
-	*Actually more like a concentration camp.* (*District 9*)

First used by during the South Afrian Boer War, concentration camps are spaces which facilitate death. However, in the modern imaginary, the use of the term "concentration camp" invokes the discourse of genocide. The most infamous case of genocide in the contemporary imaginary is the Holocaust of thousands of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, mentally challenged or handicapped people, and anti-Nazi Christian Germans. As an instrument of genocide, the Nazi's established a number of concentration camps in which many of the victims of the Holocaust were tortured, performed forced labour, and eventually succumbed to death. The most infamous of these concentration camps is Auschwitz.[81]

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[81] According to William L. Shirer in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1964), the "Nazi medical experiments are an example of this [what he referred to as "sheer"] sadism, for in the use of concentration camp inmates and prisoners of war as human guinea pigs very little, if any, benefit to science was achieved. It was a tale of horror of which the German medical profession cannot be proud" (1164). Shirer explained that these experiments varied in nature and purpose, and subject, which included women, men, Polish, Gypsies, and Germans. Some of the experiments conducted at concentration camps such as Dachau and Buchenwald subjected these people to being frozen to death, being shot with poison bullets, and suffering from gas gangrene wounds while being the subject of bone grafting experimentation (1165).

Among the many crimes against humanity committed by the Nazi in concentration camps was human experimentation. The Nazis during World War II became infamous for their experiments on living human beings. These experiments would be geared towards genetic modification so as to produce a pure German race, which Adolph Hitler referred to as the Aryan race. In some cases certain genetic material would be harvested from individuals, especially those who demonstrated rare genetic qualities such as twins.

In *District 9* the viewer is shown that MNU is conducting similar experiments on the aliens, although one is never give any reason why. Instead the viewer is left to speculate on what might be the purpose of these gruesome experiments, and one cannot help but presume that these experiments are motivated by MNU wanting to harvest alien genetic properties so that humans may operate alien weaponry. Van de Merwe is betrayed by MNU, and his own father-in-law, when he is tortured in the name of "science". This demonizes technology and science, which in this film are quite strongly linked, by suggesting that whatever can be done in the name of technological and scientific advancement, must be done. District 10 would thus function as a stockpile of aliens from which to extract specimens.

According to Gregory H. Stanton, one of the eight stages of genocide is dehumanization. This term refers to the "[d]enial of the humanity of others is the step that permits killing with impunity" (Stanton 1998:n.p.). Stanton explains further that "[i]n incitements to genocide the target groups are called disgusting animal names" and example of which is the "Rwandan Hutu hate radio referred to Tutsis as "cockroaches."" (1998:n.p.). [82]

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[82] In the case of Rwanda the genocide was motivated by a policy of Hutu power, and the "need" for ethnic cleansing.
- Naomi Kok, of the institute for Security Studies, explained that in "1994 Rwanda witnessed the genocide that left more than 800 000 Rwandans dead and thousands more displaced" (2012: n.p.).
- Helen Scanlon and Nompumelelo Motlafi claim that these 800 000 deaths along with "the estimated 500 000 [female] rapes…had been committed over 100 days" (2008:301).
The political policy that motivated the genocide was, similarly to that which motivated the gross violations of human rights which took place during Apartheid, was informed by a need to protect and keep pure identity. In South Africa, as discussed earlier, non-white individuals were made to carry identity documents known as the "dompass". These documents would stipulate a person's race, gender, homeland, and where and when they

The term cockroach was used to project onto Tutsis the myth that they are unclean, scavengers and, ultimately, to dissociate them from humanity. Similarly, *District 9*'s culture of impunity dissociates the aliens from humanity via the "derogatory term 'prawn'" (Blomkamp 2009). Like the term cockroach, the term prawn implies "a bottom feeder...that scavenges the leftovers" (Blomkamp 2009). This makes the inhumane treatment of the aliens permissible.

One variant of genocide is foeticide, which simply put, is the destruction of a fetus. Although there is widespread debate surrounding the term, as undermining the agency of the mother, [83] I do think that it is applicable to this film because, as we see, the destruction of the alien foetuses is decided on and executed by MNU – not either parent. Figures 7 and 8 are taken from the films "Foeticide scene", in which Van de Merwe discovers and gives the order to destroy the alien "nest".

Figure 7 is a shot which shows the alien nest and incubation system. The incubation system consists of a network of tubes and bottles providing the embryos with nourishment from the bovine carcasses. Van de Merwe explains: "I can just show you a little bit how it works. Basically, a cow is hung from the ceiling, you can see. Very little of it left, of course, because all these pipes supply the nutrition to the little prawn eggs" (Blomkamp 2009). In this particular nest Van de Merwe estimates that there are between 40 and 50 embryos (Blomkamp 2009), all of which need to be aborted in order to maintain population control in the slum.

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would be permitted to be at any given time. Similarly in Rwanda individuals were made to carry identity documents which indicated whether the individual was Hutu or Tutsi. This became a tool of terror during the genocide, as it was used as a way to separate the "cockroaches" from other Rwandans.

[83] I think here of the feminist critique of scholars such as Nevidita Menon − see Menon, N. "Abortion as a feminist issue – who decides, and what?" *kafila.org/2012/05/.../abortion-as-a-feminist-issue-who-decides-and-what?* (May 11, 2012), and "The Impossibility of 'Justice': Female Foeticide and Feminist Discourse on Abortion" in *Contributions to Indian Sociology,* January 1995 29: 369-392.

Figure 7Figure 10

Figure 8

The mise-en-scene of Figure 7 is a mess of tangled tubules compressed into a tin shack, containing a large number of offspring. The area inside the shack is dank and dark, and the embryos are dripping with mucus, true to the aesthetic of science-fiction imaginings of non-human babies as depicted in films such as *Van Helsing*. Figure 8 illustrates M.N.U employees incinerating the alien nest, exterminating the alien offspring; a tactic employed during genocide to ensure that there will be no more future generations.[84] Van de Merwe explains:

> *To go in and abort each egg one at a time would take a very long time. So this makes a lot of sense. Do you hear that? That's a popping sound that you're hearing. It's almost like a popcorn. What the egg does is, it pops up. The little guy, what's left of him, pops out there. So that's the sound that you are hearing with the popping.* (Blomkamp & Tetchel 2009)

The cremation of the unborn aliens, as shown in Figure 8, shows a determination by MNU to eradicate any trace of their existence, the very essence of genocide. This scene also provides at least one explanation for why the Johnson child is the only alien child shown in the film. In this scene Van de Merwe compares the sound emanating from the burning "nest" behind him to the "popping" of "popcorn" – indicating, perhaps, his indifference towards the aliens. During the abortion scene Van de Merwe is at the forefront of the screen and is narrating the action behind him. This is an example of first-person narration in the film, not through a point-of-view shot or subjective camera, but by the inclusion of an actual first-person narrator guiding the spectator through the events – a technique specific to the genre of documentary.[85]

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[84] This is explored more broadly in *Hotel Rwanda*, a feature film which attempts to explore through a single event the trauma of the Rwandan genocide.

[85] An example of how the film mimics the documentary genre can be found in the mise-en-scene of Figures 7 and 8. In the right-hand corners of the faux-archive footage of both Figure 7 and Figure 8 is the MNU logo. This establishes two things. Firstly it creates the illusion that what the viewer is watching on screen is somehow archive footage and so is "reporting some kind of truth" (Schürholz 2010: 11) - an example of the film pretending to be a documentary. Unlike the technique of suturing a viewer into the film (which will misguide the viewer into believing he or she is a part of the world of the film), the illusion created here misguides the viewer into believing

After having discussed the film's engagement with various characteristics or tropes of genocide one may consider Jones' argument perhaps the most convincing. Jones' argument essentially highlights three things as discussed. Firstly, the film draws on the historical traumas of multiple nations. Secondly, it suggests that although the film draws on these histories its comments on society are not retrospective, but rather a snapshot of the now. Thirdly, the narrative of *District 9* may be read as a dystopian trauma narrative, which uses the "metaphors and tropes of science fiction…to engage rather more deeply and disconcertingly with the nature of racism itself - with the way that racist ideology and discourse deals with the feared, hated, despised (and desired!) 'Other'" (Du Toit 2009:n.p.). Furthermore, in light of the multitude of readings of the film's allegory one cannot concede that the aliens only represent those "displaced black South Africans", as Rieder argues. Instead it may be more inclusive to consider the aliens representative of those Gayatri Chakavorty Spivak in her work "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988) referred to as the *subalterns*. Spivak explains that the subalterns are those "men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (78). This is perhaps the more appropriate and accurate understanding of *who* it is the film's aliens represent.

After having discussed the larger context of the film, one may now begin to unpack through close analysis the film's representation of the Johnson child. Figures 9, 10, 11, and 12 are stills from the first scene in which the Johnson child appears. In this scene the child, his father, and his (the father's) friend are trawling the rubbish mounds of District 9 in search of alien technology. These artifacts contain the fluid needed to generate power in the command pod (of the alien ship hovering above Johannesburg) which is buried beneath the Johnson's shack.

that the footage displayed is somehow true of his or her world, despite it being unreality. In other words the viewer will not for the duration of the film believe that he or she is a part of its world, but rather that its world is a part or extension of his or hers. This is a manifestation of the effect of parody in this film.

Figure 9

Figure 10

In this first scene the child is shown to understand more clearly the party's objective, and is able to distinguish between human and alien technology, a feat which seems too much for his father's friend. Both Figures 9 and 10 are cluttered with props and the child is rendered almost invisible in his surroundings. In this scene the child is depicted as a scavenger. According to Kay Sambell, in "Carnivalizing the Future: A New Approach to Theorizing Childhood and Adulthood in Science Fiction for Young Readers" (2004), "The child-as-scavenger can, like common "pest" species such as rats, effectively populate the dump cultures of far-future fantasies" (262-263). Above we see the Johnson child scavenging what is literally a dump next to his home. A dump, like the urban space, is an environment which starkly contrasts the pastoral environment associated with childhood through the lingering traditions of the Romantic conceptualization of childhood.

District 9's setting is a completely industrialized, futuristic, and urban world. Owain Jones explains that because of Romantic notions of childhood which still form the foundation of the global imaginary, "'childhood' and the 'urban' are, at best, uneasy companions, and, at worst, symbolically incompatible" (2002:17) and that there are various "symbolic disjunctures between notions of childhood and notions of the urban" (2002:17). According to Jones these "disjunctures are to do with romantic inheritances that see childhood as a state of naturalness and innocence, and the urban as a cultural (often corrupted) edifice which has moved away from nature" (2002:18). The film clearly depicts its urban space as being unsuitable for a child through the ever-present filth, bio-chemical hazards, and waste; *District 9* is a "bleak, natureless, unforthcoming urban wilderness" (Jones 2002:23). The urban culture also includes a different kind of education: technology (as discussed earlier), which is depicted as a necessary means to escape to paradise (which lies somewhere beyond Africa). Technology is a theme that the film engages with ambiguously and, as will be shown later, becomes a signifier for both the hope associated with education and danger.

Figure 11

Figure 12

In Figure 11 Johnson offers his son some validation and reward for his efforts, while the sound of gunfire grows louder in the background. This shot may be considered a medium shot, which Susan Hayward defines as one that "frames a character from the waist, hip, or knees up (or down). The camera is sufficiently distanced from the body for the character to be seen in relation to her or his surroundings" (2001:328-329). This particular image is what Hayward describes as a "two-shot MS" (2001:329), meaning a medium shot of two characters. According to her this "suggests intimacy" (2001:329), in this case the intimacy of a father and son sharing an embrace. However, Hayward explains that this shot can "change in meaning to one of distance … if the two characters are separated by an object" (2001:329), as demonstrated in Figure 12. In Figure 12 the Johnson's tender embrace is interrupted by the sound of an explosion and encroaching gunfire. They are also visually separated by a tyre.[86]

Although the tyre does not unction symbolically in this film, it has particularly powerful resonances in films such as *Otelo Burning*. Like *District 9*, *Otelo Burning*'s narrative hinges on a young character, Otelo, who has also grown up in an urbanized ghetto. However, unlike *District 9*, *Otelo Burning* is saturated with the politics and violence of pre-democracy South Africa. During the struggle against Apartheid, the tyre became a most gruesome weapon of resistance and intra-black violence – the necklace. According to Joanna Ball the necklace or necklacing "involves placing a tyre soaked in petrol around the victim's neck and setting it alight".[87] In the film, Otelo's younger brother, who is suspected of being a traitor (impimpi), is necklaced. Like Otelo, the Johnson child will use his talent to propel him out of his unfortunate circumstance. This talent to which I refer is an aptitude for technology.

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[86] The choice of the tyre as part of the mise-en-scene of the shot is significant. During Apartheid the tyre became a gruesome torture and killing apparatus used by civilians to exact mob justice, specifically "burning as a means of extra-legal punishment" (Ball 1994: n.p.). In a report for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation Joanna Ball in "The Ritual of the Necklace" wrote that there is a particular form of this burning that has developed in South Africa, known as necklacing.

[87] An example of when necklacing would be used as a form of mob-justice or extra-legal punishment would be if a member of a community was considered to be a traitor to the struggle (a government agent or spy for example) they would be caught, bound, and a tyre would be placed around their necks and then set alight.

Figure 13: The child is mesmerized by the hologram floating in front of him.

In Figure 13 the Johnson child is shown to be fascinated by an alien device, which may be considered some kind of projector streaming a hologram of a number of planets, one of which presumably is the home of the aliens. There are two points of light in this frame: that emanating from the hologram and that which is streaming in through the glass door. The former is known as fill light which David Bordwell and Kirsten Thompson define as "a less intense illumination which "fills in," softening or eliminating shadows cast by the key light" (1993:155). They define the key light as "the primary source, providing the dominant illumination and casting the strongest shadows" (1993:155), in this case the light coming in through the door.[88]

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[88] Given that the film is mimicking techniques used in documentary filmmaking one might presume that the key lighting is "the light available in the actual surroundings"; however the surroundings themselves are staged and so one must presume that the lighting is in fact being used to "obtain greater control of the images look" (Bordwell & Thompson 1993: 154).

In Figure 13 the key light is highlighting a portion of the image and so part of the child and particular elements of the setting of the mise-en-scene. Bordwell and Thompson define a highlight as a "patch of relative brightness on a surface" (1993:152). The highlight on (part of) the Johnson child is the sharpest, indicating that in the composition of the shot he is the most significant on the scale of importance (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:152-153). In this frame the key lighting is illuminating the child from the right, whilst the fill lighting illuminates it from the front. The kind of key lighting seen in this frame is referred to as a kicker, "a backlight placed to the side so as to produce a highlight on the figure's temple or check" (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:154). The fill lighting is an eye light that stems not from the camera but from the projector in front of the child. Together the key and fill light work to produce high-key lighting approach which "refers to an overall lighting design which uses fill and backlight [here the kicker] to create low contrast between brighter and darker areas" (Bordwell & Thompson 1993:156). The effect of this is firstly to establish that it is daytime. Secondly, the elements of the shot that are illuminated are the Johnson child, the projector, a metal mug, two tins of cat food, what one may presume is an alien weapon, and in the far back what appears to be a microwave. In this instance the child inhabits a space which contains signifiers for past (the worn enamel mug), present (the microwave), future (the alien technology), and "dump culture" (the cat food which functions symbolically as a signifier for drug addiction, traditionally associated with urban areas).

In this scene we learn that it is the Johnson child who, through his aptitude for technology, was able to make the projector work. Upon Christopher Johnson's entrance into the scene his son turns to him and says "Look I fixed it…I make it work", to which Christopher replies "I told you not to play with that" (Blomkamp 2009). This child, unlike the colonial stereotype cited earlier, is clearly not "lacking in…technological sophistication" (Reid 2012:6). Instead the technology he is engaging with seems advanced. Technology is a signifier

of human development and the advancement of civilization. However *District 9*'s depiction of the consequences of technology is ambiguous. Generally technology is depicted as "the science demon" (Hayward 2001:316)[89], as highlighted by the scramble for alien weapon technology, the acts of "cannibalism" committed by Obisanje in order to be able to operate alien technology, and so on.

Technology is constructed relatively negatively in this text. Firstly, *District 9*, in the scenes in which MNU runs tests to see if Van de Merwe can operate alien weaponry, highlight how, to use Nandy's words, "[t]echnology…has cannibalized science" (1987:45). Secondly, MNU applies what Nandy refers to as the "theory of imperialism", in which "technology and its culture" is used as a means to justify "colonialism and its civilizing mission" (1987:87).[90] For the humans of this film, technology is a resource to be taken from the aliens as a tool with which to dominate any opposition. Technology is "the organizing principle of the world" (Nandy 1987:79). In this way technology functions similarly to diamonds in *Blood Diamond,* and so the slum District 9 like Sierra Leone suffers the social impact of the resource curse hypothesis, which was discussed in elsewhere. As is suggested in *Blood Diamond*, the resource that drives mankind towards inhumanity, and similarly, as Nandy argues, it seems that technology pushes the world towards dystopia (1987:84). Thus *District 9* is an example of a science fiction narrative "dominated by authorial fears about the violent, inhumane social and political worlds young people seem likely to inherit" (Sambell 2004:247). In this way the Johnson child is a pawn or hostage of the socio-economics and racial politics of the world he inhabits. However, as he is the only child character in the film, human or alien, he is the only inheritor of both this dystopian present and the future. He is in this sense a messianic figure, as suggested by the halo of light emanating from the hologram in Figure 13.

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[89] Hayward explains that "science fiction films tended to focus on technology as the science-demon that would destroy humanity" (2001:316).
[90] District 9 is referred to as a "colony" by one of the professors interviewed for the 'documentary' on Van de Merwe.

Figure 14

Figure 15

To introduce the next scene, from which Figures 14 and 15 are taken, the camera follows the child through the door to the outside, something which is unusual in the film, but further emphasizes the significance of this child. In this scene Van de Merwe and the Johnson child will have an encounter, as a result of which the two protagonists of the film, Van de Merwe and Christopher Johnson, will meet. Figure 14 is a view of the Johnson home from the outside, a shot that is rare in the film. In Figure 14 one notices that the image is more constructed, and less documentary-style, and it seems as though what we are seeing is a theatre production. In this frame the Johnson child has selected a white container (possibly a milk bottle) as a play thing.[91] The motion of play mimics that of a child playing with a toy car. Thus the Johnson child *performs* the fantasy of childhood through play. The purpose of this, one presumes, is to create a false sense of normality for the outside world, thus protecting the ventures taking place inside the Johnson home – their efforts to restart the command pod and return home.

A key compositional element of Figure 13, 14, and 15 is the door. It is placed in the middle of the shot and is a signifier of the liminality specific to the child figure. The door represents a threshold through which the child has passed. The door is a border between that which is "sacred" (the inside world of the shack containing various alien artifacts) and that which is "secular" (the world outside the shack cluttered with waste) (Turner 1969:96). In this scene the child is the only figure the viewer actually sees crossing this threshold. Importantly he transitions from the "alien space", which is dark and seems quite constructed to the outside or "human space". This space, although seemingly more full, is actually far more open than the alien space and is barren. The inside may not necessarily be read as sacred, but through the gaze of the child it can be read as sanctuary.

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[91] This is a still and so of course it cannot demonstrate the motion the child applied to the container. However, in the film he clearly thrusts is back and forth on the ground, manoeuvring it just as a child would a toy car.

Figure 15 is representative of the moment in which the child becomes the device through which Van de Merwe and Johnson enter each other's worlds. This is also the moment when the child's agency is revealed, and from here is highlighted more and more. In Figure 15 the child is holding in his right hand the lollipop Van de Merwe had just thrown on the ground for him. This particular frame is a part of the act of throwing the "sweetie" back at Van de Merwe. Here he makes the choice not to be manipulated or seduced by the bribes of a man one may presume he has come to believe is bad. This is also a further indication that this child has some kind of agency, and is capable of taking a position. However, it is also in this scene that Van de Merwe uses the child as a pawn to manipulate Christopher Johnson into signing the illegal eviction notice, undermining the little agency the child has just displayed. This is scripted as follows:

Van de Merwe (VdM):	*Okay. So you've got a little one, eh?*
	Do you have a license for that?
Johnson:	*Yes.*
VdM:	*You see this litter out here? This is dangerous conditions for your child.*
	Article 75 says that because your child is living in dangerous conditions...
	...l'm gonna take him to Child Services.
	I'll have a chat with your son.
Johnson:	*You keep away from my child!*
VdM:	*Don't... Don't point your fucking tentacles at me.*
	Don't point your fucking tentacles at me.
	You want to stay,
	your boy is coming down with me...
	...to Child Services. He's gonna spend
	the rest of his life in a 1 -by-1 meter box.
	- Put the gun on him, Thomas.
	- Hello, little guy.
	It's the sweetie man coming. (Blomkamp & Tatchell 2009:n.p.)

The conversation cited above is only between Van de Merwe and Johnson, despite it being about the child. The exclusion of the child and Van de Merwe's patronizing tone are indicative of his underestimating the child's sophistication. Furthermore Van de Merwe refers

to the child as "that", re-entrenching the idea of the alien child is a non-human object rather than an individual with a history, heritage, and culture. The "1-by-1 meter box" suggests a caging of the child, and reveals Van de Merwe's propagandist manipulations as discussed earlier. The uneasy ambiguity of the Johnson child figure is that he is not just an alien, he is an alien child. The act of wanting to entice the child with a "sweetie" reveals Van de Merwe's perception of the child as naïve and simple, innocent and trusting. Thus, similarly to *Blood Diamond*, *District 9* engages the adult fantasy of childhood as a lost utopia, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, unlike *Blood Diamond* which privileges this invented childhood, *District 9* is particularly critical thereof.

Both protagonists represent the ideal other because each in his own way represents humanity.[92] Van de Merwe is in form (mostly) human, but ironically as he becomes more and more non-human, he seems to become more and more humane, and human in the moral sense. Christopher Johnson may be considered the film's moral center[93] and it is through this character that *District 9,* as a science-fiction, offers what Peter Brooks described as a "possibly liberating decentering, a search for a new plenitude, and ethical recentering" (1995:200).

The child, as shown in Figure 16 which follows, epitomizes the humanity of the aliens, who Scott argues are "made expressive and soulful without quite being anthropomorphized" (2009:C1).[94] The still shows the boy looking yearningly at the hologram of his planet and its seven moons. The upward glance of the child suggests an idealizing of his home planet as perhaps a Utopia.

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[92] As discussed earlier the film transcends binaries of race, and substitutes this with the juxtaposed binary of human versus non-human.

[93] I think here of Johnson's reaction when he sees what M.N.U is doing to his "people" in their laboratory, and consequently decides that he will return to Earth after he has fetched help from his planet so as to free them from the inhumanity that oppresses them.

[94] Scott actually refers to "the aliens themselves" but this is perhaps too much of a generalization as the only two alien characters the film focuses on are the Johnson men.

Figure 16

Figure 17

In this scene the mise-en-scene is similar to that of Figure 13 but it is configured differently as the result of a change in the camera set up. The door which provided backlighting from the right of the child, is now to the child's left and the light emanating from it has been dulled. The hologram image is now rather large and takes up a sizable portion of the screen, consequently highlighting the child. In Figure 13, the child was filmed via a long shot, but Figure 16 is a medium long shot. A long shot is used to create space between the viewer and the character, but by changing the camera set-up to a medium long shot the gap between the viewer and the character literally closes. This effect is reaffirmed by the change in camera angle.

In Figure 13 the camera is set up at a high angle,[95] which means that "the camera is located above the subject, and angled downwards so that it looks down on it" (Van Zyl 1987:48). In Figure 16 the camera angle is normal, which means that "the camera is set up at approximately eye-level … pointing more or less horizontally" (Van Zyl 1987:48). Bordwell and Thompson explain that the "context of the film will determine the function of the framings, just as it determines the function of mise-en-scene, photographic qualities, and other techniques" (1993:214) In both figures 13 and 16 the angle and distance of the shot work together to inform the function of the frame, and as the gap between the viewer and the character closes, and the boy's gaze is met, the film begins to humanize the child.

Figure 17 is the only close up of the child in the entire film, more specifically it is a medium close up, which "describes a figure seen from just above the head to approximately half-way between the waist and shoulders" (Van Zyl 1987:45). Thus there is less distance between the character and the viewer than a medium long shot (Figure 16), but it is not close enough to have the same effect as a close up. By filming the child at medium close up of only himself, the director is also signalling that this character is signifcant. Here also the child is

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[95] This is also known as a downward angle or top shot (Van Zyl 1987:48).

shown to be thinking, not of an object or a distant land, as was shown in Figures 13 and 16, but of something far more abstract. Here the child is beginning to critically assess the world around him, demonstrating not only emotion but understanding. He avoids eye contact with the camera, and so the viewer, which may be indicative of an interiority and autonomous sense of subjectivity that is inaccessible to the wesernized viewer. Notice also that he is completely alone in the scene, and in this particular frame he is surrounded by nothing. This reasserts the importance of this character as the key to resolving the narrative crisis and is the moment in which the child is most humanized.

This moment is interrupted by Van de Merwe and Johnson who burst through the door, startling the child. They are being chased by MNU as they had just infiltrated MNU headquarters, injured and killed numerous people, and taken back the vial which contains the liquid that had transformed Van de Merwe into a hybrid. Van de Merwe takes the boy "below", and closes the lid, leaving Johnson to be captured by MNU. The boy is confused and simply stands by the base of the access ladder calling out "Father! Father!", as illustrated by Figure 18. The boy hears the thundering of MNU operatives above as they seize Johnson and break apart his home in search of Van de Merwe. The high angle of the camera which looks down at the boy also reminds the viewer that although the boy now has an understanding of the flaws of the world which surrounds him, he is still just a child, ensuring that our empathy lies with him. However, rather than passively accepting that his father has been captured and that he has been taken hostage by Van de Merwe, the child chooses to act to prevent both of these things from happening.

Figure 18
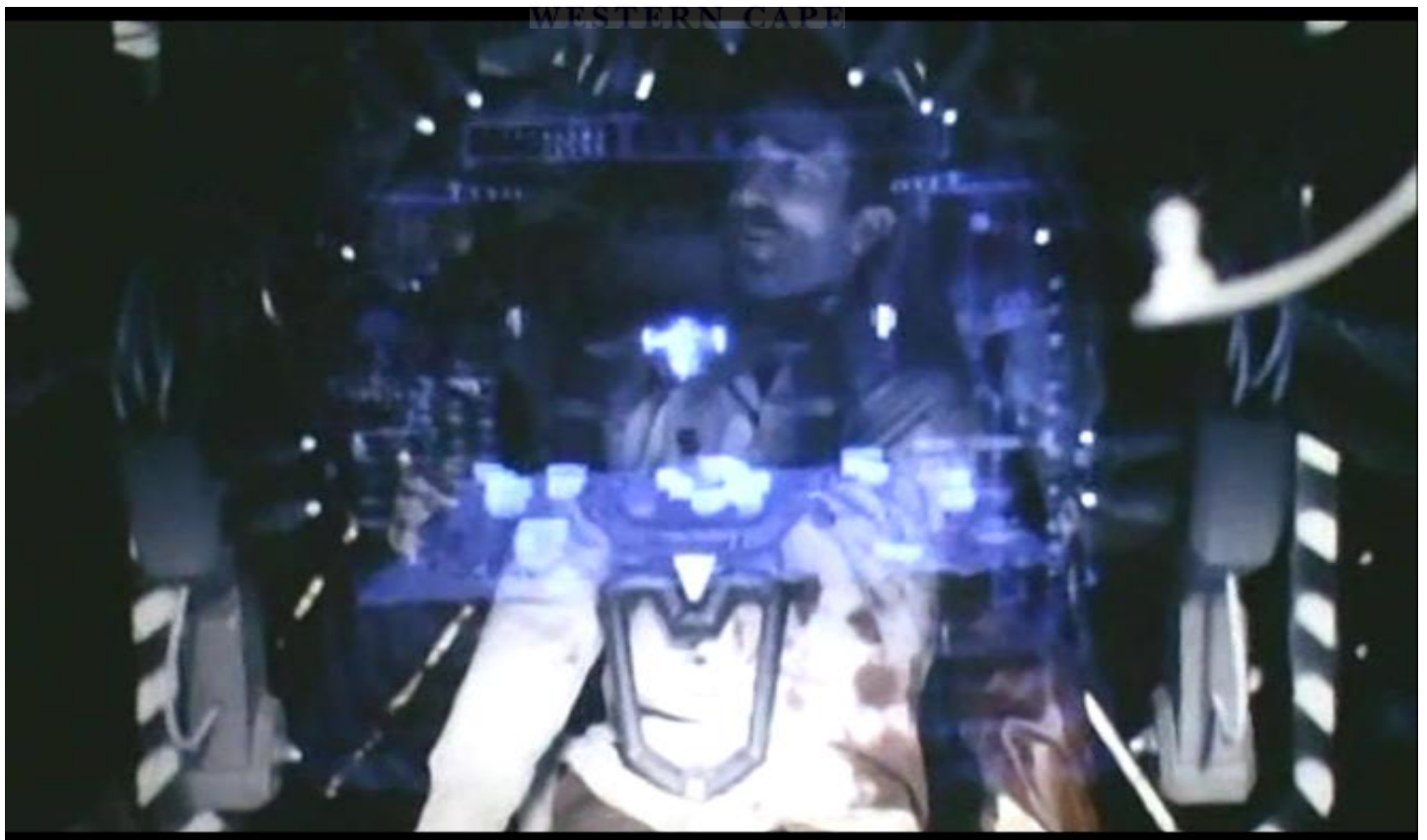
Figure 19

As shown in Figure 19, the boy, who is practically invisible in the shot, disrupts Van de Merwe's attempt to reach the mother ship. If it were not for Van de Merwe looking to the screen left, saying "Go sit down now, you can't play here now, Uncle Wikus is driving", one would not know that the child was there. The words "play" and "Uncle" are signifiers of childhood. The first signifier, "play", speaks to the western and Romantic notion of childhood as a state of freedom, being uninhibited, and happy. The second, "Uncle", signifies the decorum of childhood: children must play a certain role, adopt a certain register, and so recognize that adults are their superiors. Soon, however, the craft crash lands and just as MNU mercenaries retrieve Van de Merwe from the wreckage he is taken from them by the Nigerian gangsters. At this point, Johnson is still in MNU custody, and the Johnson child, who neither MNU or the Nigerians bothered to incarcerate becomes the two protagonists' only salvation.
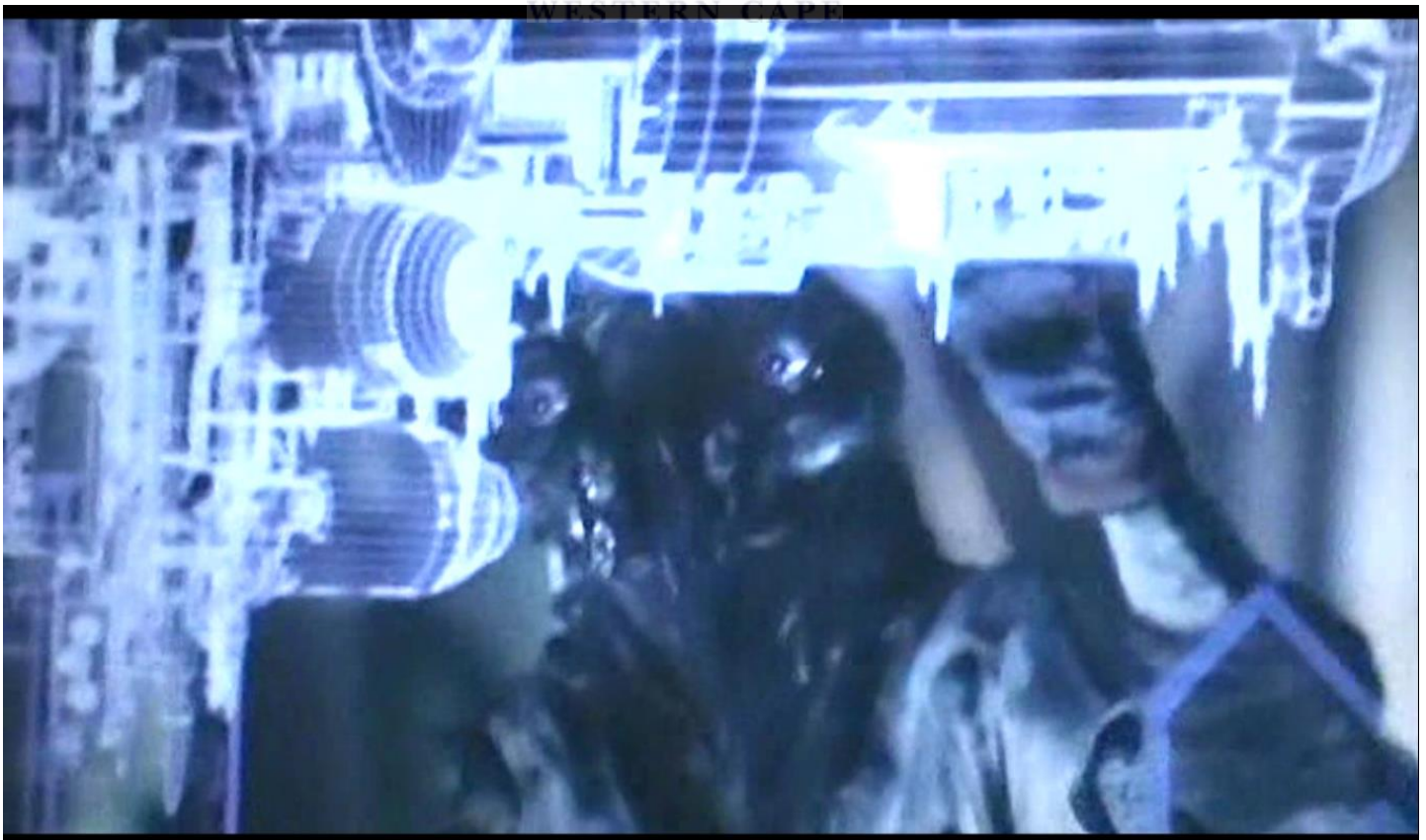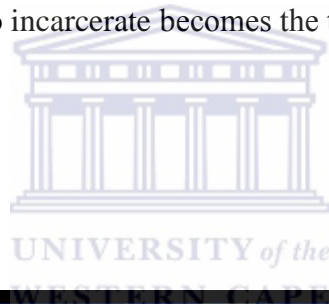
Figure 20

In Figure 20, the Johnson child activates both the droid which will save Van de Merwe from the Nigerians and the pod which will save his father from MNU Here the child is essentially controling the drone suit that will save Van de Merwe from the cannibal Nigerians. The mechanism he is operating on screen in this scene is shaped much like a gun, suggesting danger. It is also transparent, except for the lines of blue light which outline its various parts. At this time the boy is simultaneously activating the command pod that will serve as his and Johnson's escape vehical, and controlling the android that saves Van de Merwe's life. As suggested by the camera, which is almost at eye level, the child is no longer a victim or a passive and voiceless bystander, but can act, and most importantly can effect change. This is the moment in which the child's agency is most exemplified and is essentially his threshold into adulthood. This is also the scene in which the depth of the child's techological sophistication is revealed, and his role as messianic figure is affirmed.

In the scene in which we last see the Johnson child he becomes secondary once again. When he, Johnson, and Van de Merwe are all in the shot, the child's presence is overpowered by the authority that the two male leads have. Figures 21, 22 and 23 are taken from this scene and we see that the boy asks his father "We go home now?", and Johnson replies "yes!". In both these frames Johnson is braced against a ship wall, while the boy stands on the step of a ladder welded into the ship. In both these frames the depth of fiels is manipulated in such a way that the focus is very clearly on Johnson whilst one must scan each shot very carefully to find the boy, who has almost faded into the background. This suggests that despite his heroism, the boy remains secondary to Johnson.
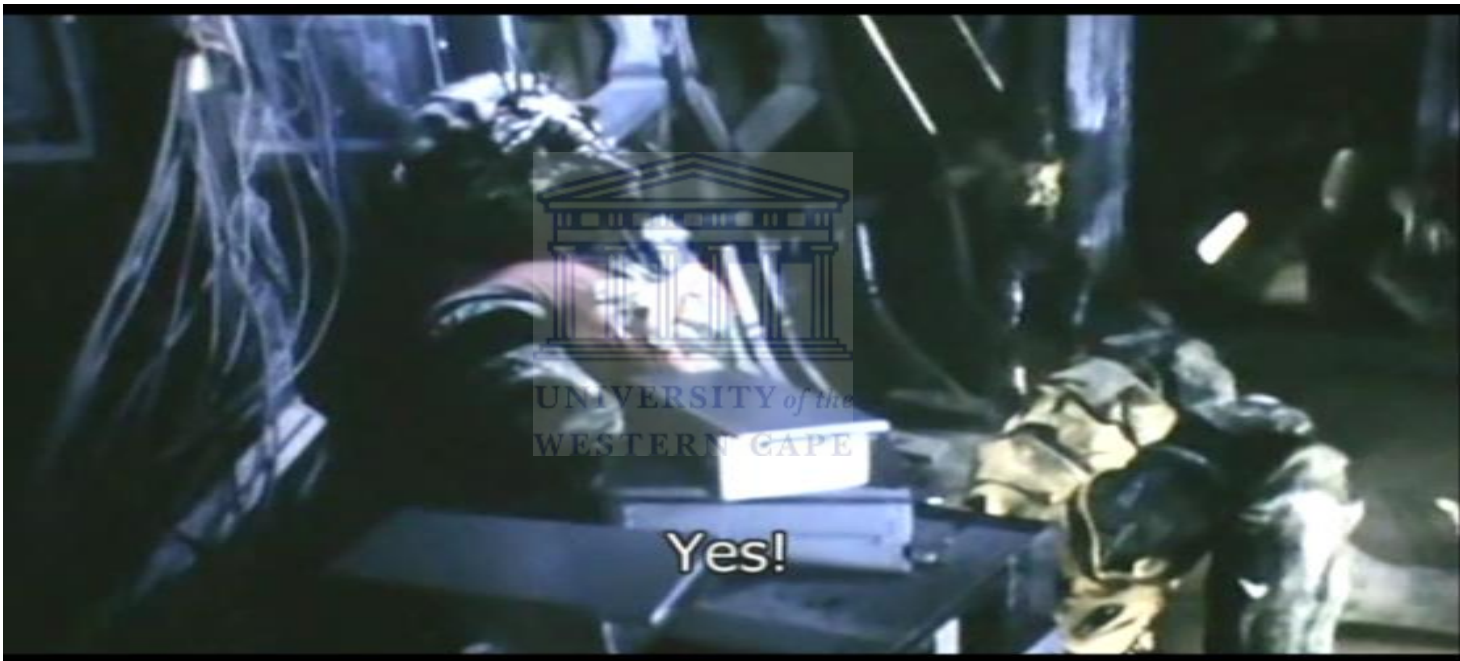
Figure 21

Figure 22

Figure 23

Figure 23 is a example of a super-imposition which Van Zyl explains is when "one scene is overlaid on another" (1987:117). In Figure 23 Johnson and Van de Merwe are visually hybridized, which both reminds the viewer that at this stage Van de Merwe is a hybrid (part human and part alien), and repares the viewer for Van de Merwe's assimilatio into an alien body (the last time we see Van de Merwe his appearance is completely alien, literally). Although this is beautiful cinematography, one must note that in the shot the child is rendered invisiable. The progression from Figure 21 to 22 to 23 suggests a heirarchy, at the bottom of which is the child, in the middle is Johnson and at the top is Van der Merwe. Thus the child, in the world view of the film, is less significant than, not only an adult, but an alien, which we know from the narrative of the film is considered a pest. Here the film regresses into what Nandy explained as a "worldview which sees the child as an inferior … but usable version of the fully productive, fully performing, human being [adult] who owns the modern world" (1987:61). As the film concludes the Johnsons fade out of the narrative and the heroism of the child is a truth that only the viewer and Van de Merwe is privileged with.

In this chapter the different allegories of *District 9* and their significance have been discussed. By locating itself in an urban ghetto the film reminds us that, as Leopold van der Rede put it,"[i]n the case of South Africa 'Race' is class and 'Class' is race - and the race struggle is the class struggle" (1990:115). However, despite its setting, to accept that the film's allegory as representative only of Apartheid would be too simplistic a reading of the film. Instead one should consider its allegory multidimensional as it draws on a multitude of international histories and traumas, and so the film may be understood as a commentary of the recent history of human kinds' inhumanity including the Rwandan genocide and the May 2008 attacks. Furthermore, the film depicts the hybridized cultural landscape that is *District 9*, the dump culture of the urban space, and is in its own form a hybrid of multiple genres, each undermining the other. Even its allegory is hybridized. Thus *District 9* has is a novel

representation not only of postcolonial African and the childhoods experienced, but of the traumas experience by subaltern peoples universally.

Furthermore, this chapter has shown that Johnson child, far more than Van de Merwe,[96] is the hero of *District 9*. If it is not for the child choosing to create the opportunity of escape for himself and his father it is likely that both would have been captured. He is shown to be a liminal being, an agent of change, and a threshold through which the worlds of Christoher Johnson and Wikus Van de Merwe are able to connect with each other.

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[96] It is an easy presumption to make that the protagonists is the hero.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

This thesis set out to analyse and critically engage contemporary representations of the postcolonial African child in select films. In each of the three texts studied in this thesis the child is predominately a secondary character. The implication of this is that there is a propensity in film, and consequently criticism as well, to overlook this figure and underestimate its importance. As shown in this thesis, the narratives of these three texts hinge on the child. In the case of *Blood Diamond*, the child is a catalyst for the narrative, in *The Last King of Scotland* the child is in fact a facet of the antagonist, and in *District 9* the child is a figure without whom the narrative would be unable to achieve resolution.

This study was based on the now confirmed assumption that the child is represented as an ambiguous and often paradoxical figure. By virtue of this, this thesis accepts that the child is a liminal figure (Turner), betwixt worlds. The liminality associated with the child allows for a unique perspective into the text. The child is able to knit together the past, present, and future. It is for this reason that the child can be considered the ideal figure through which to read trauma, because traumas are catastrophic histories that are not yet over (Felman, Berger). Furthermore, the child, as Nandy argues, functions both as a screen and a mirror (1987:63). Thus the child is at once a canvas, or blank slate (Locke), for the projection of adult fantasies, but also a device via which to reflect, critique, and correct.[97] Fanon, in *Black Skins, White Masks* delineated a similar metaphor. He wrote that "[t]he eye is not merely a mirror, but a correcting mirror. The eye should make it possible for us to correct cultural errors" (1967:151). Thus the child, like the eye, can function as a mode of cultural critique.

The idea that they child can be a mirror manifests literally in Kevin MacDonald's *The Last King of Scotland*. As discussed previously, the film represents Amin as a frozen child via a process of cinematic doubling. According to the psychoanalytical theories of Jacques Lacan, and Otto Rank, the double may take the form of a reflection, uncanny apparition, and mirror image of the subject. The child, as it mirrors Amin, represents that which needs to be corrected in the dictator: his psychopathy, and Thanatophobia, a symptom of which is his paranoia. Thus the child, as discussed earlier, becomes equated with Amin's decaying subjectivity, manifestations of which become more and more grotesque as he becomes more and more childish. The interdependent representation of Amin as a child and the use of the child as a metaphor for underdevelopment undermine the film's own postcolonial critique by perpetuating the colonial stereotype and myth that the African is a savage child (Nandy, Fanon).

As Nandy explained, society has divided and indeed reduced the child into two categories, namely childlikeness and childishness (1987:56). The notion that the child can be split is represented in a very interesting way in *Blood Diamond*. In this text, the child character Dia experiences the trauma of killing and consequently becomes split into the subjectivity Dia Vandy (the Romantic child) and the performed identity See-me-no-more (the demonized child soldier). The film, although it depicts the traumatic event, is unable to articulate the internalized experience of the trauma itself. By applying Sigmund Freud's theories of ego splitting and repression, this thesis has produced a reading of the text that fills the gap in Dia's narrative, theorizing that when Dia experiences killing for the first time his ego becomes split, producing a double ego. Furthermore, this thesis has proposed that Dia represses his subjectivity and the memory of its filiative world so that he may perform his identity as See-me-no-more and take his place in the re-filiative order of the RUF. *Blood Diamond* uses these two figures as signifiers for two oppositional kinds of childhood. Dia signifies the

Romantically influenced familial western model of childhood, which is a utopia of the adult imagination. Contrastingly, See-me-no-more signifies one specific alternative, dystopian childhood, determined by the circumstances of civil war. Problematically, by demonizing See-me-no-more, the film suggests that the only acceptable kind of childhood is the one signified by Dia. This hinders the development of childhood studies, particularly from the postcolonial perspective which, as discussed in the Introduction, calls for academia to consider childhood a pluralistic phenomenon (Nieuwenhuys, Davis).

District 9's representation of the child is exceptional in the films under discussion. Despite the tension with its urban setting, in its representation of the Johnson child the narrative ironically draws on the most positive aspects of the Romantic tradition of childhood. The film represents the child as "innocent and yet wise, weak and yet strong, young and in a strange way mature … other and yet ourselves" (Plotz 2001:54). This paradoxical ambiguity allows just enough positive representation to leave the viewer with some optimism with regard to the child, and thus subalterns. Despite the aliens finding safety and stability outside of Africa, it is one of the only films which propose returning to it. Furthermore, despite the representation of the Johnson child drawing on Romantic ideals of childhood, the film does not impose a pastoral setting onto the narrative. Instead it embraces the diversity of Africa and depicts an urbanized, alternative, dump-culture childhood that is a viable, and even acceptable, alternative to normative childhood.

It is important to note here that although *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland* may both be considered, ironically, postcolonial texts, *District 9* alone may be considered a "tricontinental" text (Young 2001:5). In an interview with Michael Chapman (2006), Robert Young explains that

Postcolonialism makes the obvious argument that the nations of the three non- Western continents (Africa, Asia, Latin America) are largely in a situation of subordination to

Europe and North America, and in a position of economic inequality. But this position of subordination is also one of insubordination. The subaltern, it turns out, can also be insubordinate. That is the moment when the postcolonial turns tricontinental. (201)

Therefore this thesis contends that because the aliens of *District 9* metaphorically represent subalterns and are an allegory of their suffering, the film should be considered a text of global insubordination. Thus, *District 9* stands as an example of how representations of Africa can avoid what Mbembe described as the "racialization of the (black) nation and the nationalization of the (black) race" (2002:239). By creating a polarised opposition between humans and non-humans the film undermines, and so critiques, the racial politics that it parodies.

What has been affirmed by this thesis is that there is a trend in films to represent Africa historically, as a result of which their gaze becomes retrospective. In this way, these films are intrinsically intertextual, connecting with past discourses, particularly those of colonialism. This results in the perpetuation of colonial stereotypes (Evans & Glenn, Mafe, Marx) and the texts become particularly marred by Afropessimism (Evans & Glenn). One feature of Afropessimism shared by the three case studies is an over-reliance on a normative white male focalizer, thus undermining the significance of African characters. Evans and Glenn's critique of this kind of focalization is directed towards its racial bias. However, there are films are focalized by "black" males, an example of which is Terry George's *Hotel Rwanda* (2004). This film, which is also an adaptation, is focalized by Paul Rusesabagina (played by Don Cheadle), who was the "real-life" manager of the Hôtel des Mille Collines during the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Evans and Glenn's critique, although valid, is limited, as it skirts around the issue that this kind of focalization is also gendered. As Marx, Mafe, and others have pointed out, narratives attempting to represent Africa are largely dominated by male characters. This is a

transnational trend. Disturbingly, it is also a trend paralleled by the use of only male child figures in contemporary First cinema representations of Africa. This kind of gendered narrative situates the women and girls who endured the same traumas as many men and boys on the periphery of the history and a narrative that remains open-ended. There is a gap in literature, particularly postcolonial trauma narratives, for not one but many female voices. One film which veers away from a male orientated narrative is Tom Hooper's *Red Dust*, which is focalized by a female Sarah Barcant (Hillary Swank).[98] However, like the other protagonists, Barcant's idea of a better life is set out of Africa, away from the trauma of being a postcolonial subject. Thus although the film successfully transcends one Afropessimistic trend, it features some of the limitations of Afropessimism. The only way to break away from recycled images, plots, and stereotypes of Africa and its peoples is to reinvent the proverbial wheel. Africa need not be a dystopia, and childhood need not be man's, or perhaps more accurately humanities, tragedy.

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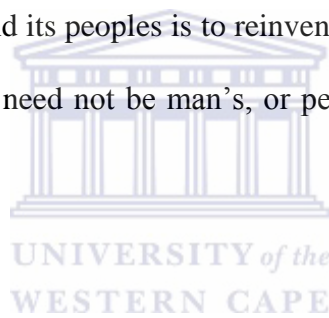
[98] Sarah is South African born, but an American citizen. She was sent to the United States after her mother died, but most probably because she has a history of developing close relationships with the black boys near her home; she had even been jailed for this, as was the law during Apartheid. The film is an adaptation of Gillian Slovo's novel of the same name.

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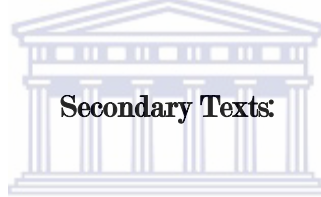
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