»This is Africa«

Representation, Agency and the Employment of Master Narratives in Edward Zwick's Blood Diamond

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Hollywood films such as Edward Zwick's Blood Diamond (2006) are powerful tools for spreading different narratives and ideologies, as they are usually consumed by large numbers of recipients. The way they represent groups of people, events and history therefore plays a significant role in the construction of our cultural reality, since images and the imaginations that result from them eventually do have real effects. Hollywood Cinema for example often supports and reiterates, but to a certain extent also creates the master narratives that circulate in a culture, which according to Robert Kolker contain »the elements that please us with their ease of access, with the way they raise our expectations and satisfy them«.[1] However, Hector Rodriguez for example argues that films in general are indeed also capable of supporting counter-discursive or non-dominant systems of thought by criticizing given master narratives and offering an »alternative moral picture«.[2] This is a supportable approach, since films form a major system of representation today, a system in which reality is not only reflected, but also constructed in various ways: »how anything is represented is the means by which we think and feel about that thing, by which we apprehend it«.[3] This constitutive nature of representations remains, regardless of whether it works towards a dominant or a non-dominant stance.

Blood Diamond could be read in the latter way, as it openly criticizes various instances portrayed in the film: not only the ferocious troops of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), but also the fictional corporation Van De Kaap, which closely resembles the actual De Beers Corporation. It can therefore be understood as a critique of unethical capitalist business practices, the exploitation of African countries and consumerism. On a different layer, the film also has the potential to take a critical stance and to create a space for a postcolonial voice

1 | Robert Kolker: Film, Form and Culture. New York 2006, p. 213.

2 | Héctor Rodriguez: Ideology and Film Culture. In: Film Theory and Philosophy. Ed. by Richard Allen and Murray Smith. Oxford 1997, p. 260–281, here p. 271.

3 | Richard Dyer: The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation. London 1993. p. XIII.

within the dominant system of representation that is Hollywood Cinema, since it apparently narrates from inside of Africa and attempts to give a voice to those affected by the civil war/western consumerism. However, a close analysis of the film unveils certain problematic issues concerning these critical stances. In order to answer the question whether the film could ultimately be regarded as being critical and challenging towards master-narratives of capitalism and western superiority, it is therefore important to have a closer look at what and how the film narrates – the relation of form and content and the narrative that emerges from both, as well as the relation between different layers of criticism. This shall be done by answering various questions: how does the film portray Sierra Leonean civil war in terms of narrative and form? Which layers of criticism do we find and how do they relate to each other? How is agency conceptualized and where is it located? And finally, how does the film narrate its content and what are the implications for the analysis and evaluation?

The movie centers around three main characters: Solomon Vandy, a Mende fisherman (played by Djimon Hounsou), Danny Archer (played by Leonardo DiCaprio), a white self-proclaimed ›Rhodesian‹ and professional smuggler, and finally Maddie Bowen (played by Jennifer Connelly), an American journalist who is on a mission to unveil the unethical and illegal involvement of the South African corporation Van de Kaap with the trade of conflict diamonds to the ›First World‹. Vandy, whose village is raided by RUF troops and whose son is later on taken captive and turned into a child soldier, is separated from his family and enslaved by the rebel group. Working in a mine, he finds an enormous pink diamond, which he can bury before a RUF Commander can take it away from him (because the mine is raided by government troops). Members of the RUF as well as Solomon are imprisoned in Freetown. This is where Archer, being imprisoned as well, overhears a conversation between Solomon and the RUF commander and thereby hears about the stone. Together with Maddie, whom Archer meets at a bar, they go on a quest to reach their individual goals: finding evidence for her investigation for Maddie, finding his son and reuniting with his family for Solomon, and finding the stone as a ticket out of Africa for Danny Archer. Whereas the latter dies as a martyr, both Maddie and Solomon attain their goals. In the closing scene, Solomon is invited to speak as a witness at a fictional version of the South African conference that resulted in the Kimberley Process.

The Sierra Leonean civil war took place between 1991 and 2002 and was a particularly devastating and violent conflict, characterized by outstanding violence and human rights violations against large parts of the civilian population. These were conducted by various groups involved in the conflict, some of which funded themselves through the illegal trade of so-called »blood diamonds« or conflict diamonds via the neighboring state of Liberia. The term blood diamond refers to stones that have been illegally mined in war zones, often in order to finance a rebel group's or a warlord's activities.

This was also the case for the Sierra Leonean rebel militia Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which committed immense atrocities over the course of the years. Blood Diamond situates itself within this very specific historical position and tries to reflect it in an accurate way – however, the viewer receives practically no information on how the given situation has emerged. The RUF is introduced in the very beginning of the film when raiding Solomon's village. Even though the displayed practices connected with these raids, such as the amputation of civilian's limbs and the abduction of boys are historically accurate, the historic situation is in itself completely detached from its context. There is no information on other groups that were indeed involved in the war, the actual government or the political situation that preceded the civil war – and which tremendously contributed to the rise of the RUF. The lack of contextualization, the stark focus on the relation between resources and civil war and the generalization that results from it could have a twofold effect: either portraying the issued questions of human rights and the exploitation of the African continent as a general concern and problem, or it could, and this is according to my analysis the case in Blood Diamond, lead to a highly reductionist and therefore possibly problematic approach. The viewer is thrown into a depiction of Sierra Leone as a pit of violence and crime, and the only explanation for that situation that the film gives us is: »this is Africa«, or in short, »T. I. A.« This verbal leitmotif is uttered by Danny Archer at several moments in the film, usually when faced with severe violence or severe structural problems. There are several critical issues concerning that phrase. First of all, the role and emergence of political instability and the roles of various influential factors are entirely left out of the picture. Secondly, it is not only blatantly essentialist, but furthermore conceptualizes not just the state of Sierra Leone, but the entirety of the African continent as a sort of monolithic, hyper-violent chaos pit that is the Other to the western world. This othering and the resulting juxtaposition, but also a close connection of ›First‹ and ›Third‹ World are conveyed on the level of content, but, arguably even more intensely, also on the level of form, which both play a significant role in the constitution of the narrative.

Economy (Criticism) and the First and Third World

In the sequence that follows the raid of Solomon's village, the recipient faces a crosscutting between Sierra Leone (specifically the mine in which he is enslaved) and a fictional G8 conference in Antwerp, visually connecting both spaces to each other, whilst the Mis-én-Scene contributes to an antithetical conceptualization of them. From the first to the second shot, the film cuts from the image of RUF troops leaving a burning village to the conference, creating a

visual antithesis that is conveyed throughout the entire sequence. The Antwerp[4] setting is inside, dominated by blue and black colors. The first extreme long shot establishes a sense of space and introduces the recipient to the focus of interest (the U. S. ambassador and those surrounding him) through the means of lighting, as a specific group of people is positioned in the brightest part of the frame. The setting itself as well as the ordered distribution and the lack of movement of white bodies convey a sense of order; the props that are used (such as the technological equipment and the fact that all of the people are dressed in formal business attire) convey inferred meanings such as modernity, ›developedness‹ and reputability, and also evoke connotations of wealth and elitism. The focus lies on the acts of speaking and listening, as we see the conference leader and those who listen to him in medium close-ups. Cutting to the African scenery, it becomes clear that in this instance the focus lies on physical acts, on labor, as slaves are shown conducting the hard, physical work in the mine. Furthermore, there is a focus on the Black body, as the viewer does not see the faces of the workers in various shots, but rather sees mere parts of their bodies, such as their arms as well as the tools they use. Along with this partialization and the focus on the body and its labor power goes a certain degree of depersonalization.

Generally, the visual juxtaposition between the two settings is striking: the muddy-brown color scheme opposing the artificial blue in Antwerp, the random movement and positioning of bodies, as well as the absence of developed technology (the workers use rather simple tools) and proper clothing in the African scenery contribute to it, establishing a sense of the western center as ordered, sleek, and developed versus the African periphery as rough, chaotic and improvised. The formal aspects of the scene can be read in two apparently opposing ways: In the first reading, the visual representation is a reiteration of the colonial topos of the west as the locus of civilization and order versus Africa as savage and chaotic within the first few minutes.

However, recipients might also read the scene as a criticism of the institutional treatment of the issue at stake: The blue lighting could be read as an indicator of technology and developedness, but also as a hint towards a certain artificiality, a comment on the fact that people who discuss the issue or even actively engage in the practices that trigger this war (namely the representatives of Van de Kaap) are indeed detached from it, protected in a kind of ivory tower. They hide away in the ›clean‹, ordered environment of the west – and therefore remain untouched by their object of discussion (the depersonalized African civilian) and, most importantly, unaffected by their own practices. This approach is supported by the extradiegetic soundtrack, which creates a feeling of tension and threat that is connected to both settings. Here, the reading would rather offer a twofold perspective on diamond trade – the elaborate, but detached position of the west and that which shows the ›reality‹ of the mining work. Ul-

4 | Edward Zwick: Blood Diamond (USA/Germany 2006), TC: 06:32–08:37.

timately, these two readings are not necessarily diametrically opposed to each other, but rather both apply: in (seemingly) criticizing the detached position of western representatives, the film still falls pit to a derogatory portrayal of Africa. This also becomes clear through the portrayal of authority.

In the Antwerp scenery, authority is located in the men discussing the issue – mainly in the U. S. ambassador – whereas the African authority figure is Captain Poison. The ambassador is talking to and with other representatives (implying a democratic stance), in a self-assured and calm, but insistent way. The way his character is portrayed evokes a sense of trustworthiness and competence. The viewers are shown the faces of other representatives, in fact many of them, in medium-close up tracking shots, emphasizing the fact that they look at and listen to him. The RUF commander however is portrayed as a megalomaniac, a hypocritical dictator. In the first shot he appears in, we see him reading a *Hustler* and wearing a flamboyant, eye-catching watch, which is a stark contrast to his utterances about the white masters and their greed (since he apparently happily consumes the output of exactly western capitalism and globalization and enjoys owning expensive things). In giving his speech, he yells almost hysterically and is in permanent movement. This, on one hand, implies insecurity, but could also be interpreted as a portraying the Black body as animalistic and uncontrolled. His utterances in themselves are nonsensical, as he talks about the abolishment of slavery to the civilians that he has indeed enslaved and that he threatens to kill within that very same scene. The exaggeration of acting and conceptualization of character make him appear almost comic.

The problem that is at stake here is not the ridiculed depiction of a terrorist militia leader, but once again the underlying juxtaposition. Presuming that the film uses both characters as a pars-pro-toto to represent a larger structure, the U. S. ambassador embodies the western institution, which is portrayed as measured and self-critical, whereas the commander is a single figure incorporating African nationalism and the upheaval against existing governments and the west – issues about which the recipient is likely to (even if maybe unconsciously) make generally negative inferences due to Captain Poison's portrayal. Hence, especially when taking into account the fact that the U. S. ambassador is also functioning as a voice-over in the mining sequence (which once again implies knowledge and dominance) this scene is narrated from a Eurocentric western perspective and therefore reassures it.

Thinking about the portrayal of the western institution and system of thought, there is a last remark with regard to this scene I want to make. The various voices of the people at the conference give different perspectives and opinions on the issue of conflict stones (one of them openly mentioning the role of the U. S. in purchasing them) and thereby educate the viewer on the topic. What is interesting here is that the scene does convey a somewhat balanced approach to it. However, what is *generally* at stake in this discussion is global capitalism. Even though the global desire for resources and the exploita-

tion of Africa is an issue that is discussed, the ›real‹ perpetrators in the scene (Van de Kaap and Simmons) are spatially detached from the group of people discussing – they are on the margin of the event. This leads to an inferred externalization of the undesirable practices and therefore also of guilt, portraying the perpetrators as not directly connected to the larger system that the G8 stands for. The film therefore, at least on a form-level, denies the interlinking of politics and economy and enables the political institution and the system it is embedded in to remain untarnished. This system, once again embodied by the ambassador, can therefore remain unstained and does not have to be brought into the focus of criticism. However, articulated in the ambassador's statement »we must act to prohibit the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from conflict zones« lies an additional interesting implication the film makes: namely that the power to change the situation lies within the very association of the G8, which ultimately consists of industry nations with a distinct economic agenda. This agenda shall be discussed in more detail further below when discussing the topic of agency.

Agency, Representation and the Witness

The U. S. Ambassador in this case speaks for the suppressed subaltern (the civil population / ›locals‹) and voices the need to save them. It is apparent that his utterances have a performative power, they do not merely describe, but constitute the agenda of the representatives. His voice and position of enunciation is worth a closer evaluation. On a formal level, he frames the film with his appearance in the aforementioned and the last scene. This already implies importance and stresses his role as a narrative and formal instance. However, we also find a concentration of agency in his figure regarding his utterances and their consequences. In the G8 scene, he voices concern about the subaltern class, namely the civilians affected by the civil war. His voice and enunciation are what brings the subject matter into the focus of interest. The remarkable thing in this scene is that he implies that the power to change the given situation lies a.) on the side of those present at the conference (representatives of the G8 states, therefore the developed west) and b.) is grounded in the ability to economically influence the situation (namely by inhibiting the trade of conflict diamonds). This means that political agency (which is discussed here on a larger scale than that which the individual characters carry) in this regard is connected to three premises: the ability to speak and be heard, affiliation with western industrial nations, and economic power. The ability of *handeln as acting* is therefore closely connected to that of *handeln/Handel as trading/trade*. The implication that this carries ultimately leads to a deconstruction of the critical approach towards capitalism that has just been discussed, since it can be inferred that partaking in exactly these

capitalist practices and the connected economic power are indeed a determinant of agency.

In terms of the ability to speak and to be heard, the controversial approach of ›speaking in the name of‹ or ›for‹ the ›third world‹ and/or the subaltern is obviously problematic: various authors have criticized the idea of being able to represent the/a subaltern group. Representation is in itself problematic in this regard, since Gayatri Spivak points out the often overlooked ambiguity of the term ›re-/representation‹: the difference »between representation [...] as tropology and as persuasion. *Darstellen* belongs to the first constellation, *vertreten* – with stronger suggestions of substitution – to the second«.[5] The notion of vertreten, ›speaking for the subaltern‹ is therefore marked by persuasion. Spivak furthermore criticizes »[t]he unrecognized contradiction within a position that valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, while being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual [...] representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent«.[6] She claims that therefore »[s]ome of the most radical criticism coming out of the west today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject«.[7] This problem is of course not only applicable to academic/intellectual work on the subaltern, but also other representational forms, such as film.

The applicableness with regard to Blood Diamond is threefold: firstly, we have the movie itself as part of a larger institutional system representing the African position, secondly the intradiegetic conference-as-institution discussing the fate of African civilians and, what I would like to focus on now, also representation on the level of diegetic character relations. Solomon Vandy is neither capable of acting out his own interest (finding his family), nor of speaking – the agents in these regards are both Danny Archer and Maddie Bowen. Vandy is portrayed as having no power to attain a goal by himself, since, as Danny Archer points out very explicitly, without him he is »just another black man in Africa«. Even though Archer is African himself since he has been born in Zimbabwe, race is and remains the critical factor of determining who is capable and who is not. The latter is generally the case for Solomon: he is in need of constant tuition and instruction by Archer, their relationship is hierarchically structured – even though their dependence on each other is mutual. Archer is therefore constructed as the agent of power as well as knowledge. Maddie, on the other hand, is clearly the locus of ethics due to the way her character is conceptualized: she has intrinsically moral intentions and is on a quest to unveil the truth and fight for humanism. In that instance, she is the direct antagonist to Van De Kaap. More

5 | Gayatri Spivak: Can the Subaltern Speak? In: Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader. Ed. bei Patrick Williams and Laura Christman. New York 1993, p. 66-111, here p.71.

6 | Ibid., p. 70.

7 | Ibid., p.66.

importantly though, she is also the locus of the voice in her role as a journalist. It is her distinct agenda to record Solomon's story in order for it to be heard by the world, and is therefore functioning as the representative instance in the film lending her voice to Solomon – the singular subaltern. It is due to her engagement that Solomon is finally brought to the South African conference, where he is supposed to function as a witness.

There are several interesting remarks with regard to this scene.[8] First of all, the ambassador we have seen in the formerly analyzed scene, once again is the one who speaks, also once again in a seemingly self-critical fashion. As mentioned above, he thereby clearly frames the narrative of the film and is emphasized in his powerful role and as an instance whose words constitute reality. Also, the scene brings up a second point of interest from Spivak's essay, which is the conception of the subaltern group as a monolithic entity: »[o]ne must nevertheless insist that the colonized subject is irretrievably heterogenous«[9]. Quoting Guha, she adds that

> taken as a whole [...] this category was heterogenous in its composition and, thanks to the uneven character of regional economic and social developments, differed from area to area. The same class or element which was dominant in one area could be dominated in another. This could and did create many ambiguities and contradictions in its attitudes and alliances.[10]

The subaltern class is therefore not monolithic, it does not have a pure form of consciousness and therefore can never be represented by a single voice. Solomon Vandy in the given scene is not only a witness for himself or even the Sierra Leonean population, but for the entirety of the ›Third World‹: »[t]he Third World is not a world apart, and the witness you will hear today speaks on its behalf. Let us hear the voice of that world, let us learn from that voice and let us ignore it no more«.[11] However, Solomon Vandy is ironically cut off by the film before he utters a single word – even the singular voice of the subaltern in a very literal way does not speak. The scene, however, is at first sight gloriously orchestrated, and it is important to take a closer look at what is communicated on a formal level. Clearly, the focus in this scene is on Solomon, who undergoes a certain transformation in it.

After establishing the space in the first extreme long shot (once again at a conference), the film cuts to show the recipient Maddie's finished article that Solomon, who is now also dressed in formal attire, is reading. The close-up shot of the article works as a sort of flashback trigger, emphasizing the stark

8 | Zwick, Blood Diamond, TC: 02:12:43–02:14:25.

9 | Spivak, Can the Subaltern Speak?, p. 79.

10 | Ibid., p. 79 f.

11 | Zwick, Blood Diamond.

difference between what Solomon has gone through and the situation he is in at that very moment. It conveys a certain feeling of distance and implies that now, since Maddie's story has been published, there is closure and good has succeeded over evil. However, it also draws back to Archer and undermines his role as a romantic martyr. In the shots/reverse shots between Solomon's face and the picture of Archer, the former seems to contemplate on the latter and is apparently sucked back into his memory for a moment. He is brought back into the diegetic present when he is called in with the words »they are ready for you, Sir«. As he stands up, he puts away the newspaper, which could possibly be read as symbolically leaving behind the influence of Archer, and walks up to the entrance of the conference room. During that shot we cannot see his face and are deprived of his emotions. As the ambassador speaks the words »let us ignore it – no more. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Solomon Vandy«, he steps into the room. He is now in the gaze of the people present, but also of cameras, and a moment of transition, which is conveyed via the meanings of cinematography, sound and acting, begins. As he enters the room, Solomon's mimic expression and the hesitation and slow pace of his motions convey insecurity and make him look alien to the setting. However, with the rising volume of the song (which is called »Solomon Vandy« and is written in Luganda, one of the most widely spoken languages in Uganda), and the applause, he walks on – looking through the room, finding Maddie as a point of support and finally steps onto the stage, standing literally in the position of the ambassador. He is shown in close-up, the transformation as being conveyed by the way he carries himself well visible to the audience, as he breathes in and looks up as people give him a standing ovation. The setting, which resembles a theatre with a gallery and the swelling noise convey a moment of celebration. At 02:14:12 finally, we see Solomon in the position of the ambassador, in the exact same way that the latter has been framed in the beginning of the scene – he therefore enters a western, white position in which he finally becomes visible and perceivable. In the final shot, we see him looking up, standing straight and secure.

What is interesting about the scene is that even though Solomon does not actually give testimony, the film form conveys the feeling of closure. The rising sound, the standing ovation from Solomon's perspective and the close-ups draw the recipient in emotionally and create a sense of euphoria and content. The way his body/the acting is used to convey meaning in the scene invites us to read it formally different than on a content level. Solomon is reinvented or rather reconstitutes his self as he enters the stage, literally and metaphorically. This process of transformation could be understood as one of subjection, one »in which social power and regulation are in operation in the formation of the psyche, but which also allows for the possibility of resistance«[12] – Solomon in

12 | Gill Jagger: Judith Butler. Sexual Politics, Social Change and the Power of the Performative. London/New York 1999, p. 89.

this sense would develop a (political) agency that is based in the very subjection that he has experienced throughout the film. Even though he does not speak verbally, it might be argued that he does so on a bodily level. Donna McCormack argues that »communication is not just about words or body language. *Queer Postcolonial Narratives* argues that speaking with, through and on the body is possible«.[13] However, even in this reading, Solomon still has to be introduced and made visible by the ambassador in order to gain this implied agency and ›step onto the stage‹.

Master Narratives in Film Content and the Importance of Form

Even though the scene could therefore be (at least to a certain extent) interpreted as actually establishing Solomon as a subject with agency, the argument can be made that there is indeed a more pragmatic and likely interpretation of why the film orchestrates the last scene as described, if one looks at the film and its form and content in total. That pragmatic reason would be that the film needs to obtain closure, which unfortunately is ultimately diametric to actually taking on a critical stance and having a political effect.

Blood Diamond seems to be torn apart by different and even opposing agendas. It apparently wants to talk about and to criticize western consumerism, exploitation of the third world by western capitalism, human rights violations, child soldiers and many more topics, which is in itself an ambitious agenda (even though the topics are obviously indeed related to each other). A sound criticism of any of these concepts would indeed imply a counterdiscursive stance. However, looking at the film as a whole in terms of narrative and form, it also becomes clear that the film does indeed employ various master narratives, which ultimately is diametric to such an elucidating and counterdiscursive stance. Blood Diamond is and remains a Hollywood production, with a specific intended audience. This particular audience is one that is familiar with specific forms, actors and narrative patterns and therefore also has preunderstandings and expectations that want to be met or even guide the reading of the film. On a narrative level, the exposition of Denny Archer as a complex, evolving character and the classic soldier of fortune with a softer side, as well as his martyrdom mark examples of these dominant patterns. Also, the developing love relationship between Danny and Maddie is an element that is utterly unnecessary with regard to the political stance of the film and even distracts from it. However, it is

13 | Donna McCormack: Queer Postcolonial Narratives and the Ethics of Witnessing. London/New York 2014, p. 181.

once again tied in to the film in order to satisfy the audience's needs and expectations – just like the implied closure in the last scene.

In many ways, the film also technically and formally works within the formal frameworks and master narratives of Hollywood Cinema. By casting Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Connelly as two of the main characters, it directs our attention to their characters and automatically raises an expectation of who the hero of the film is going to be. What is additionally interesting is that in terms of genre, many of the scenes show action characteristics (such as when Freetown is raided by RUF troops), entertaining elements such as explosions, chases, non-stop motions and fast cuts. Action as a genre usually invites the reader to escapism rather than reflection and focuses on spectacle, offering »the spectator an endless roller-coaster of violent, action-packed images«.[14] Also, in its general form it is a mainstream film, as it employs continuity editing, is character-driven, shows motivated causes and effects and generally tries to make us understand it immediately. Hence, referring back to Kolker, it does indeed grant ease of access and satisfies our expectations, not only on a narrative, but also on a formal level. Kolker argues that film form can in itself be read as master narrative: »we could, stretching the point, even consider the classical Hollywood form itself a master narrative. It is not only the form of narrative that the majority of films use to tell their stories but a narrative in itself. It offers an invitation to pleasure without work, invites us to see without really having to understand what we see«.[15] Ultimately, portrayal and film form guide our perception of the work, just like the content. A critical film, according to Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, is one which attacks its ideological assimilitation by political action: »they deal with a directly political subject. ›Deal with‹ is here intended and in an active sense: they do not just discuss an issue, reiterate it, paraphrase it, but use it to attack the ideology«.[16] This refers to the level of the ›signified‹, hence that which is narrated. Blood Diamond already fails in this regard, as it does not ultimately manage to criticize an ideological framework in general, but rather has to extract a specific evil subject that has to be defeated, and against which representatives of the capitalist western world can be reestablished as ethical and in charge. However, even if the political act of subverting ideology were given in the film, it fails the second requirement: »[t]his act only becomes politically effective if it is linked with a breaking down of the traditional way of depicting reality«.[17]

14 | Susan Hayward: Cinema Studies. The Key Concepts. 3rd Edition. London/New York 2006, S. 5.

15 | Kolker, Film, Form and Culture, p. 213.

16 | Jean-Luc Comolli und Jean Narboni: Cinema / Ideology / Criticism. In: Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings. Ed. by Leo Braudy, Marshall Cohen and Gerald Mast. New York/Oxford 1992, p. 686.

17 | Ibid.

The movie therefore turns, on a certain level, into exactly that reiteration of master narratives – a spectacle, in which the recipient is invited to passively consume, in which Africa is merely the stage on which the white soldier of fortune conducts his adventures, and on which (on a larger scale) the ideological criticism is nulled by the reassurance of the West as the locus of agency, ethics and ratio. This happens in order to please an audience that is in the same film asked to at least superficially reflect upon itself, which is a paradox that the film does not manage to overcome. In the way in which it prompts its viewers to think, it does not narrate from an African perspective, but rather employs topoi of colonial fantasy, such as the juxtaposition of civilization and savagery as well as that which Frantz Fanon identified in *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961: namely of the west as the caring mother who prevents the immature (post)colonial child from self-destruction.[18] This unveils a lack of self-reflection on the side of the film, which ultimately falls into a pit between the need to entertain, between sensationalism, spectacle and narcissism, on one hand and an accessible, thought-out critical attempt on the other.

18 | Frantz Fanon: The Wretched of the Earth. New York 1963.