

Exposé of the power of money: Re-reading the Marikana Deaths as truth in and beyond Rehad Dessai's *Miners Shot Down*

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Abstract: The language of activism may be a tool of critique of society, but its substance could also be subjected to criticism. Rehad Dessai's *Miners Shot Down*, under analysis, is a documentary film whose success lies in its clear report of the Marikana massacre which occurred on 16 August, 2012 at Lonmin mining company in South Africa. Certainly, there is much to learn from this visual text, but the political challenge subsumes all other aspects. While the film claims to give voice to the fallen Marikana miners but its real business is stereotyping the black leadership. The film is a story concerning which so many facts, images and the interpretations of the events have been offered that it becomes difficult to trust its critique of society without considering a possibility of a fresh look on its realism. Taking my cue from other sources on Marikana, I propose a broader theoretical framework for comprehending the event than the tragic view alone could provide.

Keywords—*South Africa, Marikana, Miners, Mining industry, Massacres, Capitalism, Agency*

I. INTRODUCTION: AIM AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1990, as a young man I visited the mining site of Kipushi, a five to six kilometres deep cobalt mine pitowned by *Gecamines* (the Democratic Republic of Congo's state-owned mining company in the province of Katanga). I still remember this adventure as if it was yesterday: the paths created out of the rocks and out of which gushed streams of hot water. The miners stood here and there covered in mud and clay as a result of the hard work they had done for the whole night. In most underground paths we were able to see each other thanks to the torches we carried on our foreheads. For the purpose of discovery, I followed my host, a miner himself, in the solitary paths, narrow and crooked in which I walked with fear, haunted by the thoughts of an accident that could happen. Surely I was in a place that led to many mining accidents over the years. But how can I trust myself to do such a work? I asked myself. For an hour of visit or so, I sensed how near I was to death. As a mature person now I have come to realise that there are people whose lives have ceased to be private. This experience did not produce any scientific change in me as much as it created respect for the miners. These miners spend most of their time underground to build the economies of our countries while some of us enjoy life in our homes. In all these, the miner is not even seen as a key player in the development process of a country. I will return at some length, in the next sections, to the way in which societies perceive miners as 'the Others'; that this has political consequences is obvious.

Men naturally rebel against social injustice. It is, therefore, not unusual to see the miners protesting for higher wages or striking to end poor working conditions. This is perhaps the place to ask the question: Can we have political freedom without economic freedom? *The Law*, original French title *La Loi*, is an 1850 book by Frédéric Bastiat. In this book the author argues that: "Political economy precedes politics: the former has to discover whether human interests are harmonious or antagonistic, a fact which must be settled before the latter can determine the prerogatives of Government" [1]. The major task which Bastiat sets in this book is primarily to clarify the human rights: "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain Unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among Men." [1]. Bastiat urges us to understand that laws take from some people what belongs to them and gives it to other persons to whom it does not even belong. With such a manipulative character of law we cannot escape the conclusion that "most government activities are legalized plunder or legalized theft" [1]. Walter Williams, commenting on this book, also shows that over the course of a century and a half, we have created more than 50,000 laws. But most of these laws permit the state to initiate violence against those who have not initiated violence against others, he adds. Such laws range

from anti-smoking laws for private establishments and Social Security “contributions” to licensure laws ... and in each case, the person who resolutely demands and defends his right to be left alone can ultimately suffer death at the hands of our government [1]. Commenting further, Williams also remarks that our history is “a tragic history where hundreds of millions of unfortunate souls have been slaughtered, mostly by their own government [1]. The extractive or mining industries generally have long been touted as key to anchor ‘development’ or ‘economic growth’ to alleviate poverty in developing countries. Since emerging from colonisation, many developing countries continue to struggle to meet their development ambitions and to alleviate poverty, while simultaneously having to contend with a myriad of problems caused by extractive processes¹. In this sense one is not wrong to associate this modern form of slavery with white capitalism which is its precondition; this is to suggest that the *rich* mine owners cannot do without exploiting the *poor mine* workers. In so far as the poor needs to survive, they are made to desire those things we call necessities and whose supply the industrialist controls, and so they subordinate themselves to the Bourgeois whom they look up to for help while the same men rejoice in exploiting them even further. While to the miners, the protests are the symbolic space in which they express their disenchantment, this is space which the employers fear the most and do not hesitate to turn into the site of the workers’ death.

Turning to South Africa, there has been a growing mistrust towards Black leadership and a deep yearning among the people for unfair income distribution. Two decades after South Africa’s democratic dispensation, the country still grapples with its internal structural challenges. A few events have equally marked this era’s unsteady development: the xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals in 2008 and 2015 when the natives accused their brothers and sisters from other African countries for stealing the jobs they were supposed to have and the massacre of the mine workers at Lonmin Marikana² in 2012 which tragedy left 34 miners dead and many injured, of which this paper bears the title. Most people saw in these strange acts of behaviour a tangible break away from human rights. For his part, Rehad Dessai documented the events that took place in a documentary film, *Miners Shot Down* [2] in which he attempts to show how the revolt of the *weak* (the mine workers) against the *strong* (state) led to that catastrophe. Before going into detail with the story of the suffering of mining communities, it is important to recall that a country cannot overcome its underdevelopment by simply relying on the mineral resources. It is thus in a world which is the legacy of colonial violence: a government wakes up one morning only to discover that the assets of the white capitalists it manages are being put at risk by the famished angry citizens. Yet, the government also knows that the survival of its people depends on the same assets. The contradiction is solved only by turning guns on its own people assuming to send a tough lesson to the rest of workers in the country and silence them. But when the government thinks it is stopping the crisis, and yet it is devoid of any profound ideals such as, making education free, a move which can put millions of its youths into a new direction of an economy based on services (knowledge) as oppose to the one based on the minerals it relies on, then there is something fundamentally wrong it needs to address. Speculating on the future, for example, Africa’s population is expected to increase from 900 million to 1.5 billion by 2050. As a continent largely made of youths between 15 and 19, this would mean that working age per child will double and more resources will be needed for living. Economists are of the view that not meeting such challenges by giving youths education or skills for labour supply could result into further problems. South Africa has youths but prepared for a future but only that of unskilled labour.

Allow me to go back to the film as a tool that was used by its maker to report on these events of Marikana. It is important therefore to see how in its imagery (aesthetic or narrative form) this film succeeds or fails to represent what came to be seen as unresolvable social contradictions. Most reviewers of this film have blamed the situation on the “deep fault lines in South Africa’s nascent democracy, of enduring poverty and a twenty year old, unfulfilled promise of a better life for all” [3] and rightly so. How does one quarrel with this view? If democracy had values the killings of the miners were not going to happen. Bastiat said that “The task of modern democracy is to periodically appoint

¹See “Introduction” to Tumai Murombo (2013) *Regulating Mining in South Africa and Zimbabwe: Communities, the Environment and Perpetual Exploitation in Law, Environment and Development Journal*.

²Lonmin started drilling for platinum in South Africa 30 years ago. It employed 28000 people, exported platinum, the most precious metal out of the country and around the world [2].

those who shall be our societal dictators” [1]. Speaking to *Cine Vue*, Dessai, the film maker, is clear about why he made the documentary. He says: I couldn't ignore it, it was much too big, much too dramatic and upsetting for me. I had to do something for these miners. I just felt that I had to give them a voice. If authority strikes in such a brutal fashion, artists have to pick a side and indicate which side they are on [4].

About the Marikana massacre there is now a literature available and some documentary films although there is no denying that Dessai's film appears to be the most popular. The artist's contribution to the image industry is astounding. He has a number of documentaries in his name seen to be generally works of an intelligent artist and activist. The artist is a talented film-maker with several awards-winning productions and many on these on the present film. Dessai has, in my view, two qualities most film makers appear not to have: his love for the truth and the courage to challenge power. The film, under scrutiny, creates the space within which to discuss the weakness of the unions; a space which allows us to appreciate Dessai's views as a former trade unionist himself. Not only is Dessai's account of the Marikana events detailed, but it is also truthful having witnessed them himself from beginning to end. Although there is enough room to praise the film maker for his talents and the merits of the film itself but the analysis needed of it necessitates carefulness and caution.

The centrality of emotion, facts and his challenge of power will lead us to interrogate the text. I want to figure out among other things, 'how does the film maker make the 'bad guy' of his film-villain and make them memorable? How did he select who to include and who not to include in his report? What does he say about the agency of the mine workers? What is the meaning and value of death in this text? Of course, one may ask: Marikana is a massacre of mine workers we all know about so why would one go about theorising it? A first step has been taken when you come to understand that it is not the result of the miners' choice that they died, their death was determined by many other factors, some economic, other political, some immediate, other historical. More than that, the other step would be to go beyond the *reductivist approach*. Such an approach, for some unknown reasons, would want to understand complex things by reducing them. In this context it would imply repressing history or other aspects of the events by strategically framing one's view. I believe omission can be used as strategy.

As my reader will notice, my critique is not to despise this great memory text; it simply leads to re-read the story, as it is presented to us, beyond its limits. I feel important to argue that, perhaps with the exception of *Sarafina!* and few others, neither in its present look at events nor at any time during the past twenty years has the South African film industry done enough to fairly represent the Black race in its good as in its bad moments. The same will be said about the film under analysis. While *Miners Shot Down* has its merits as *The Daily Maverick* argues that it is "one of the most important physical remembrances, not only of the lives of the men who were killed, but also of a shameful and cowardly chapter of our recent history" [5], however, its story-line respects only the secondary issues. 2012 and 2013 saw the publication of books whose stories, as I shall demonstrate, contrast that of the film as the authors here deal with the underlying issues that led to the Marikana tragedy rather than merely denouncing it. Surely there is something that should not be taken for granted here: the miners did not die in vain. This alone suffices to make one to revisit the Marikana story. I analyse this film not because of its sensational portrayal of events, but because I think that such an analysis might be of help to those who are interested in seeing other things than just death which the present film, by its crude *realism* or reflection of truth, betrays. The degraded space of Black miners' conditions which the film displaces or hardly touch upon stands in contradictions with its assigned objective: 'to give voice to the miners' [4].

The film tends to overemphasise one aspect -the massacre of miners by the state- over many others and by so doing not enough is retrieved from its story that would inform the viewer about the mining industry and how institutions work together to obtain wealth and destroy lives of the lower member of society. Ultimately, what this paper suggests is a way of re-reading the film, one that takes its viewers beyond its obsession with the trope of death (although the mine workers' death still needs a place in the national memory). Such a reading suggests therefore understanding death not as an act of no-meaning but as a site where the miners' agency has to be accounted for. This also implies that the viewer takes into consideration the brief history of mining in South Africa. I contend, therefore, that the

emotional feeling upon which Dessai's film, *MinersShotDown*, has based its views is not strong enough to incorporate them into a reasonable framework.

It is necessary to begin at the beginning. More than any other events that has happened to Blacks as a people, the radical change from communal life to capitalism overturned the course of South African history. The year 1870 marks not only the discovery of mines in South Africa by the British but also indicates the beginning of the change of this country from an agricultural-based society to one of the leading industrial places in the world. Economists know, "the transition to the capitalist mode of production occurs when labour-power becomes capital". As the structures of societies changed so did the lives of people and the labour laws. It would seem more likely that Black people in South Africa became merely tools to be utilised to build the economy for the happiness of other people. They became instruments of profit-making for the White minorities. Nor is this the worst: Black miners have, for centuries, been made equal to, if not only slightly less elevated than, the beasts of burden. We must remember that what is happening to the miners today is not only dictated by the immediate circumstances, it has been shaped, as in a mould, by colonial history. It is as if the black man's racial status will help one apprehend his social and economic conditioning. Did not Van Riebeeck, upon his arrival in South Africa in 1652, refer to the natives as beasts? Thus, prayed the Dutch commander: "We are now assembled that we may arrive at such decisionsthe propagation and extension of Thy true Reformed Christian Religion among *these wild and brutal men*" [6]. This will give rise to new forms of enslavements later on. As Martin Bernal puts it: "If Europeans were treating Blacks as badly as they did throughout the 19th century...Blacks had to be turned into animals or, at best, sub-humans, the noble Caucasian was incapable of treating other full humans in such ways" [7]. The purpose of capitalism cannot be mistaken. E.D. Morel who saw the exploitation of the Congolese by the Belgians puts it plainly this way: it was "to make of Africans all over Africa a servile race" [8]. Related to the above is the question of education. It will be remembered that when this new capital oriented empire rose, it rigidly controlled the world bending itself upon industrial education as the traditional system eclipsed. The school became a place to create skills to be utilised for and by the industry as opposed to responding to the needs of the community which the traditional education strove for. The purpose of the new system became to derive the highest possible profit to the industry. It remains to draw attention to the fact that a new class of Blacks was formed in countries like Congo referred to as the *évolués* while the masses remained unskilled and unable to compete; they were perpetually slaves. If, for some reasons, the system ushered in a few Blacks, it only favoured those whose minds once read were found not to present any threat to the colonial rule. It is also important to note in passing that a little bit of education, money and fame would commonly buy the educated Blacks off from their pursuit of dignity, peace and brotherly love. Status and work prestige are linked to education and discrimination against the uneducated (as understood according to Western standards) became the burden most Black men had to carry; they had nowhere else to work except the mining industry which had room for facetiousness and absorbed them in their numbers. Mine workers in this film know this too well: "We we're not educated that's why we're rock drillers so don't give us papers from your files" [2] said one of them. And this has been going for centuries. In fact, there are only very few in the country who are well employed to the satisfaction of their ability as it is often against the will of many; they are where they are because they have no other option: it is either mining, domestic work or taxi industry.

Marikana is not the only place pointing to the miners' crisis even if the media made it appear so. History has not failed to point out a few other places with their stories of pain, work stoppages, strikes and massacres. Let me list some of these:

Zondereinde mine, Arnot,

Matla, Leeuwpan, Inyanda coal,

Grootgeluk, Lanxess Chrome Mine,

Somkhele, Cullinan Diamond Mine,

Thembelani mines, etc. [8]

In his two short articles, 'Marikana Tragedy: History Repeating Itself?' [10a] and 'Mine revolt: It's the working conditions' [10b], Tula Dlamini reminds us of the complexity of the Marikana story, which, not without precaution, encloses in his large interest of the history of mining of his country. The limitless possibility of death remains but, other things being equal to it, one them which Dlamini's

questions in his reading of Marikana as he asks: What is driving discontent in South Africa among mine workers? Is it working conditions or poor wages? What strikes viewers the most about Marikana, should it be death or the miners' working conditions? The focus of the film on the killings of Marikana could be a useful estrangement to place death in a dramatic context than those in which it regularly occurs: mine accidents which have taken millions of our people due to poor working conditions. Both Dlamini and Alexander (whose book I will have time to return to shortly), report a peak of unbundling killings by domestic conglomerates in 1922, what came to be regarded as 'Rand Revolt', in which approximately 200 people, both soldiers and miners, died. According to Dlamini in 1956, 816 miners were killed in accidents. SA Chamber of Mines Facts and Figures 2006 also reports that the total fatalities in the mining South African industry "were 533 in 1995 and had fallen to 199 in 2006" rising by one to 200 in 2007. We cannot amuse ourselves to be as out of this danger yet: 171 mine fatalities were recorded in 2008, 169 in 2009 coming down to 128 in 2010. However, it is not South Africans alone who were and are affected by pain in this industry. Dlamini takes us again to the copper mines of Katanga (in Congo) where in 1941 the industrial action was dealt with brutally when the miners went on strike and the results were what you already expect them to be: 45 men, 2 women and a child shot dead while 74 others were wounded by the Belgian security forces known as *La Force Publique*. The realisation that Marikana is a repetition of history as Dlamini suggests could be the only way of understanding the dilemmas posed by capitalism in decades. With the above account in mind, one will be able to notice the superficiality associated with the narration of *Miners Shot Down*. Marikana crisis can be better understood, not least, in the light of its attachment to the history of apartheid and capitalism. One will be surprised to hear that, in fact, previous decades have had more strikes than we have witnessed them today. South African Congress of Trade Unions' (SACTU) records reveal shocking statistics: since 1950 strikes had increased from 33 to 102 in 1955 and 105 in 1956 to 119 strikes in 1957 with 1, 158 participants [11]. What these figures do is to expose the external appearance by which the viewers of *Miners Shot Down* are deceived into the reality of Marikana as the massacre of mine workers at a large scale. Records show that this is not the case. Besides, companies in the mining sector are praised for absorbing our unemployed masses. Well, that is not entirely untrue. But as Adam Smith whose book, *The Wealth of Nations*, Claude Ake quotes from, has pointed out, "It is not through the generosity of the baker that we get bread, but rather because he is mindful of his own interest; we appeal not to his charity but to his selfishness" [12].

II. ANALYSIS OF THE MOVIE

A. The Unavoidable Truth

I was just doing it for....

For the sake....

I was just doing as told.

They said we shouldn't do anything foolish.

We didn't follow the instructions.

We did but it was impossible to [2].

Although violence is apparent and observable through the working and living conditions³ which led to the strike, however, it is with the police footage of the killings the film chose to open up its story. The

³ A Commission of Inquiry into the events of Marikana was set up by the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, in order to establish a causal link between specific matters which led to the tragic events: 44 people in total dead, more than 70 injured and 250 arrested for related crimes. After long years of waiting the commission finally published a 660 page-long report in 2015. One of the findings was that Lonmin adopted a Social and Labour Plan in terms of which it would convert its existing hostels into bachelor or family units and build 5500 houses by September 2012. According to this report, "60 hostels out of 114 were converted over the 2007 to 2011 period" (2015:3). And those converted hostels, "could accommodate only 12, 5%" of the miners and "only 3 houses of the 5500 Lonmin was expected to build had been built. In short, the critical reception sent the public into polarized positions, many of its clauses appeared inconclusive. Both its quasi-impunity logic and language of double articulation had convinced many that the country is far from dealing with the labour rights of its citizens. The film anticipated these results as it concluding its narrative with this hard truth: 'The suspects of crimes ascend to higher positions of power whereas the victims, including those already rotting in their tombs, are convicted of crime and condemned in absentia'. Perhaps the movie's end was, if anything to go by, anticipatory of what has come to be seen as a weak report with many truths related to the events remaining hidden to the large public (see <http://www.gov.za/documents/report-judicial-commission-inquiry-events-imarikana-mine-rustenburg-25-jun-2015-0000>).

scene of the massacre successfully penetrates our screens and through it the film controls its audiences leading them into emotions. By opening the film with the gunning down the miners violence finds an arresting home on the sounds of the film. No one will dispute the savagery of these killings but the police hunting the miners, like one does with wild beasts, are not the only killers but a people made to obey orders they claimed. The “I was just doing as told “makes it reasonable to admit that the state is engaged in this ‘war’ against its own citizens’. As N. E. Aderson argues, “war presents man with the opportunity of employing his faculties, everything at risk, and testing his ultimate worth against an opponent as strong as himself” [13]. The question, however, is: Who is that strong opponent here? Yes, if one assumes that the miners are the opponents both the state and the company shareholders fight against, so this makes them to be a real threat to these institutions of power. From these sounds, without images, of the hunting police, we cut across to the scene where we are made to hear the gun shots as loud as thunders hail of bullets as we watch the bodies of the mine workers, who have been shot several times, lying on the ground. At this point, the scene is just an appetiser, for the complete scene awaits the viewers towards the end of the film. The end of this shot is a close-up of the police turning over the bodies of the fallen miners making sure that the retaliation is not possible or that they are completely lifeless. The scene is an incredible one to watch for the viewers, the action is at this point unthinkable, if not absurd. In these opening scenes death is clearly the key element by which the film sends a powerful invitation to view Marikana only in terms of tragedy. Nothing from the visual images (see Figure 1) at this moment prepares the viewers to think of Marikana beyond death, the police’s action, guns, flesh and blood. It is after this that the narrator’s voice is heard for the first time as he begins to introduce his story before cutting to another shot of equally disturbing images. Here we are shown the massacres under the apartheid regime: Sharpeville in 1960 and Soweto in 1976 thus setting the tone of violence as the film’s unavoidable subject matter. The film maker strikes the hearer’s ears by his opening remarks:

Events like this took me to the massacres of apartheid, Sharpeville 1960, Soweto 1976. Killings like this led South Africans to support Mandela and his struggle for freedom. But today these miners are shot by the new government to show that it is business as usual [...] lives are being sacrificed for money and the young democracy we had so much hope for was under threat [2]; and see Figure 2).

The narrator’s position incites him to show us that man in uniform in 1960 and White on the one hand, and man in uniform in 2012 and Black, on the other hand. Judged by their mischievous behaviour they are both seen as murderers. This is nowhere more manifest than in his use of two connected images ‘Whites’ massacre on Blacks’ and ‘Blacks’ massacre on Blacks’ that cover the cosmic division of night and day (night of apartheid and the dawn of democracy) and the conflict between the Natives as victims and the Boers as oppressors. The massacre, as he explains, is closely associated with Sharpeville and later with Soweto, 54 and 38 years ago, from those events to Marikana, more respectively. The movie visually and verbally reflects the bigger part of violence. Dessai, the man behind the screen, as a master of his skill, narrates his story so well that the audience can understand what they are watching. He equalises the past to the present making this a strategy in his retrospective construction of the storyline. His message to his viewers is simple: apartheid equals post-apartheid. This means, what apartheid did is what democratic South Africa does today. While this resonates as logically well put, what is wrong with this connection is that it is based on a situation in which the past still dictates the present and one in which the non-Black minorities still control the economic system in spite of the Black man’s apparent rule. The film narrator’s judgement would be correct, but it perverts the truth of the movie had not it been that it is the apartheid which planted the seed of economic exploitation and racial exclusion from labour privileges that carries on till now. Ideally, one would have expected the democratic South Africa to be different from the apartheid regime if the two dispensations did not all have capitalism as common denominator. But with it, frustrations and massacres were, if not expected, but inevitable; history-effect. The meeting point between the two dispensations would be violence, strikes, and the Marikana massacre a completion of capitalist inexorable moral of killing still on the roll.

As the story unfolds, it is now the Lonmin non-executive director, Dr Cyril Ramaphosa, who becomes the central character whose appearance in the film the narrator announces: “The story of Marikana would be incomplete without a close look at the involvement of Cyril Ramaphosa” [2] says the storyteller. Ramaphosa is portrayed as once imbued with socialist and revolutionary convictions which

had attracted him masses of Black people to fight against capitalism. He is reported as saying that it is “the mining industry and specifically the chamber of mine which pioneered the most oppressive features of apartheid South Africa” [2] (Words reported by film from Ramaphosa public speeches). Not long than one minute after that scene is another of a large crowd of National Union of Mineworkers’ (NUM) members marching; then comes another similar shot in which walking right in front of this group is Ramaphosa in a heroic fashion. This image is quickly contrasted with the other image of a poor filthy slum, probably of mine workers, whose view makes one to cry. This, we are told by the narrator, is what Ramaphosa was determined to change” [2]. The film takes us to the shot of the same character 16 seconds later which is put side by side with the head of state Nelson Mandela, as an emerging influential member of the African National Congress (ANC). And at this point, we are told by the narrator that Ramaphosa joins the country’s white elite and as the angle of the shot changes, so is he also made to appear in the other shot where he has talks with men who appear to be upper class world citizens. His presence here is made to be far too appealing, this asserts itself by the narrator’s words that “now he finds himself on the other side of the table” [2]. The point the narrator drives at is that Ramaphosa’s rejection of capitalism created his unconscious love of it (money) against which he will be unable to raise himself above. The narrator seems to suggest that the cruel ideas in the man are soon to contrast his first victories. Ramaphosa is brought in to show the viewers where in this crisis black leaders stand. From there, we are taken to the board of Lonmin. We are informed that the same man has 9% investment as its shareholder; perhaps the stage is not prepared to make him look good but the critical viewer has more to learn than to reject the speaker unfortunately:

We’ve gone through our waves of strikes and we always have strikes because we have such a robust democratic system that allows workers to express themselves and people should never be alarmed. This is South African way! And we need to accept that workers will voice their dissatisfaction through withdrawing their labour. What we are against is that quite a number of these strikes have tended to turn violent. That is one behaviour pattern we have to get out of our system [2]. It is Ramaphosa who latter on adds:

Black people who get into a white owned companies through the black empowerment process then get into a system, one, which is very reluctant to change, and two, which they don’t own completely and which they don’t control and at best what they do or what we do is to be advocates [2]. The inescapable inference is that Black capitalists are collaborators. They act according to capitalist orientations; they do things not because they want to but because the system forces them to. What is less understood is why can’t they propose another model of production from which they can transcend egotism? It is clear that the West cannot be asked to change the world or to transform itself. To think about such a process means to invent a system which goes beyond capitalism and socialism either by abandoning them or understanding their interrelationships by creating something in between the two worlds. The egalitarian model from the Ubuntu perspective as an holistic or integrated model, as Leopold Sédar Senghor taught us, which is in a sense called *dualism*, a way of combining things of different nature together is not an error at all; it is rooted in the idea of sharing space and combating individualism: what is good and big is mine, what is mediocre and small belongs to other people. The laziness or incapability to seek out new systems of management is what was intolerable to Frantz Fanon. To Fanon this laziness is “manifested by the bogging down of the national middle class in the methods of production which were characteristic of the colonial period” [14]. The present Marikana debate is an occasion for demonstrating that Fanon was right and when “the (Black) middle class cuts itself off from the people it will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of manager for Western enterprise” [14].

One account in the movie or books common to all by virtue of its disturbance, is that of Lieutenant-General Zukiswa Mbombo, who is shown to us as briefing the journalists in the Lonmin board-room saying:

We are ending this today: don’t ask me how, but today we are ending this. I don’t want to explain to you if they don’t, what then... What I told you is, today is the day we are ending this matter’ [2].

One cannot without intellectual dishonesty listen to such a statement without feeling some sense of activism. The heavy police presence, the bringing of the mortuary vans sent a clear message of what had been intended. There was no desire to negotiate at all. The rest is history, but not a good one to remember: the use of lethal force against the miners who in fact had partly surrendered as they

were changing direction as they saw the police getting ready to shoot. You do not shoot somebody who has surrendered. The killing of the miners was not only brutal, but a violation of those miners' unalienable right to life Bastiat spoke of [1]. While facts such as presented are true, one still needs to take seriously their representation in the film. The relation between truth and representation could be two different things and analysis resists any work of art that reduces its story-line to reality as its ideal. Here the work of Achille Mbembe has a useful lesson for us. Mbembe argues that "the image.... is never an exact copy of reality" and "as a figure of speech the image is always a conventional comment, transcription of a reality, a word, a vision or an idea into a visible code..." [15]. By speaking of visible code, the critic seems to suggest that the image though something which is given a form but it remains open to subjective interpretations. The transcription of reality into pictures, drawings, cartoons, etc. becomes the work of the author's own creation of reality, opposed to the one 'out there'; reality cannot be fully apprehended, one can only submit to the laws of subjectivity. Put in other words, images, regardless of the facts they point to, once put within a story frame become the artist's aesthetic creation which are either exaggerated but more than often lacking in neutrality. I also learn from Okwudiba Nnoli, Ezeigbo cites, that "each out of his confrontations with reality builds an ordered image of reality for himself" but "such an image or conception is usually subjective and might even be a distortion of reality" [16]. In this manner, to expect absolute objectivity from one's perception is unlikely.

The dilemma in this film has been in its omissions of some characters, a technique which I argue to be the central mechanism of the film's organisation. We can better see this if we reflect on the relation between the state and the company owners whose presence in the film has remained ambiguous. Humby's review of Hanri Mostert's book, *Mineral Law: Principles and Policies in Perspective* [17] provides evidence in support of the above relationship. In reading this book, Humby discovers that Mostert shows us how "this continuity of economic clout masks the complex and shifting class, racial, ethnic and gendered power relations implicated in the extraction of South Africa's considerable mineral wealth" [17]. As Henry A. Giroux correctly observes, "the laws of the market take precedence over the laws of the state as guardians of the public good" [18] and, as a result, "issues regarding persistent poverty, inadequate health care, racial apartheid in the inner cities, and the growing inequalities between rich and poor have been removed from the inventory of public discourse" [18]. Indeed, Marx and Engels themselves argued that "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" [19]. Like Marx, Humby said that "although the state controls the mines by issuing licences to the mine owners, it still depends largely on the privates to raise its capital" [17] and that while "the mineral right holder [company] controls access to the resource while the state controlled access to exploitation" [17]. It seemed clear to Humby that "the exercise of the state's regulatory powers and the end effect is the reinforcement of private interests" [17]. To put it succinctly, the state's brutality against its citizens as witnessed at Marikana reveals not its power but its impotence towards those who own the means of production it simply manages instead. While we severely condemn the insensitivity of Blacks towards their own, Lonmin long-standing file of abuse has remained unaddressed in the film and this is just incomprehensible. And we should not forget Marx's insight and warning that "capitalism even at its best must destroy human life and associations to exist" [19]. It is said of Lonmin company that "in 1973 this British-based firm, then called Lonrho, was described by Edward Heath, the Conservative prime minister, as having shown 'an unacceptable face of capitalism' by the exploitation of its employees will agree with Alexander that "this portrayal remains apt today" [20]. If Lonmin is the central line of the story of Marikana, then the state can no longer be considered the only villain. It is only in the family of tyrants. In other words, if the understanding of the story of Marikana requires economic and historical preconditions, then the omissions of key characters in the film are less unintended than they are intended; the artist's refusal to enter into the lives of the company owners may, in this context, be taken as his valorisation of capitalism than he is willing to acknowledge their direct implication in these killings.

The film concludes with these questions: What about those who pull the strings. Who give the orders... who are they? [2]. It is indeed impossible to imagine, a more shocking statement than this: *We don't want to see a Commission ...that in the end pushes the blame.... to the mine owners.* I cannot possibly understand how the police force can use the company's facilities without the company being

aware, and thus the killing escaping the attention of the owner whose assets people are being killed for. Thus, returning to the text's omissions, I find that the actual problem involves more than technique as the Westerners constitute the team of both the film maker's donors and his intended audience. The absence from the filmic space the owners whose assets led to the killing of the miners, the owners who have accumulated wealth on the labour produced by Black people for three decades, proves not only to express a technical error, it is an ideological choice by the artist. It seems to me, the artist is conscious of his omissions and what motivates them. To conclude this section, before I deal with the agency of the miners on the level of their activism which the artist also omits, I will anticipate my discussion of the next section by arguing that this film is characterised by 'potholes' or "Stations of Silence" or "the unsaid" to use V.Y. Mubimbe's words [21]. And these holes worry me as they send a wrong ethical message to me as a viewer. The question of agency is, indeed, the only context in which we can properly appreciate the idea to challenge a system of production that destroys lives. And for me, the thematic of 'death' is here but a disguise for the sharper pain of exclusion of the uneducated miners by human history in which they fight their way back by trying to challenge the system despite their limitations.

B. Yet not passive victims: the mine workers' agency.

To be killed, exploited are not by themselves enough to make a victim. But reading through their actions and words it becomes clear that the miners did not die in vain. Any sense of agency causes man to enter into a certain kind of action with others by transmitting his actions to others either by means of thoughts, ideas or words. The miners' songs, speeches are in this regard very revealing: "Your guns won't stop us': let's fight, let's fight because white people won't let us negotiate" [2]. The words speaks to the strength of the miners' determination. These words of the song result first from their frustration. The miners had no refuge but the divided trade unions and in the end their feelings gave way to their resistance; they decided to fight alone. We are accustomed to view the fight against capitalism as Marxist by ideology and fight for freedom as French by tradition. And Karl Max himself was convinced that Western society would become socialist and that it was more likely to do so than other societies"[12]. That the uneducated miner faces capitalism, which Lonmin represents, would surprise all in a manner that even Marx himself would have been impressed by. Lonmin undermined the agency of the mine workers just as the French did with the Negro of Haiti as Michel-Rolph Trouillot reminds us: "...there is no movement among the Negroes....They don't even think of it. They are very tranquil and obedient." And again: "the Negroes are very obedient and always will be." [22]. The result at Marikana, as it was in Haiti, proved just the opposite. It is, of course, not at all surprising that this idea of willing to rule over passive mankind still appeals to many as it did in the past. Like a chemist, Napoleon considered all Europe to be material for his experiments. But, in due course, this material reacted against him [1]. People are no longer prepared to accept slavery. But this is not the way in which Lonmin management understood the matter. It forcibly imposed upon the miners everything by the power of its laws. It is Lonmin vice President, Barnard Mukoena who now complains: "We did not anticipate this type of violence. That is why we are looking and searching and using the police especially the crime intelligence to understand the root cause of the situation" [2]. Can the people be mistaken? Have they not given ample proof of their intelligence and wisdom? Are they not adults? Are they not capable of judging for themselves? Do they not know what is best for themselves? [1]. The mine workers knew well how to withdraw their labour. As Trouillot notes: "a strike is a strike when it "claim[s] access to the workers as purposeful subjects aware of their own voices" [22]; Figure 3).

One of my main arguments against this film is its lack of emphasis on the agency of the mine workers. Although the film shows some actions by mine workers but the overall tone of the film is overshadowed by political challenge.

'How does one read the film in such a way that the actions of the miners come alive? The interrogation of the film's approach shows that it is contradictory to itself and fails to give voice to the miners whom it presents as victims. The single approach to Marikana story – that of death- will not be challenged unless one measures it from other sources, namely: *We Are Going To Kill Each Other Today*[23]: *The Marikana Story* and *Marikana, A View from the Mountain and a case to Answer*[20]. Unlike the film, the book takes a different and useful approach, a bottom up approach. There is a deep

concern in these books for the exaltation of life. Despite being written separately in time and space, their authors show how the Marikana tragedy disrupted domestic spaces: children asking their mothers of the whereabouts of their fathers, the widows now called upon to step in their husbands' roles as breadwinners, the miners' shattered dreams as young men before they came to work for the white man, how the old parents who depended on their children's help are left to suffer, but most importantly they create a universe in which miners regain their dignity as a people who had dreams and aspirations which Marikana will never silence. The strength of [20], for example, lies in its small stories of the miners' lives. Economically, no doubt, they are small stories of poverty, but socially and psychologically they are accounts that relate how the poor say no to indignity and exploitation. One notes from the book an entry into real sociology of events. On the other hand [23] concludes with a very insightful chapter by Gavin Hartford, entitled "The Mining Industry Strikes: Causes-Solutions?" Inhere Hartford argues that: "The most prominent feature of the commentary to date on the strike in the mining industry is the lack of any analysis of the economic and socio-drivers. Commenting on Nathaniel Fick's *One Bullet Away*, N.E. Anderson notes, "War's death is not a passive experience for its recipient...Each of these men killed is not without name, family, personality, skill and various 'makings' of his civilisation" [13]. If there is a question that should be asked, it is not first, 'What happened at Marikana? Rather 'Why did it happen? I argue that the 'why question' touches on the workers' inner struggles that led to the strike. Magidiwana, one of the strike leaders says:

We want to see the manager. He is treating us like puppets. We're just asking a question. Now he is avoiding our demands. We have been straightforward with him. He thinks we're stupid. Unlike us he gets a good salary. No don't avoid us. The blood of the rock driller is no different than that of a manager [2]. Anyone uncertain about the pain of the mine workers can listen to the wives of the miners speaking. Asked by the journalists during the Marikana strike if they came to support their husbands, this is what one of them had to say: Yes. I am here to support my husband, he has 27 years working here. He earns R 3,000 [per month]. He starts work in the morning at 3 am and knocks off at 2:30 pm...", "Which policeman" she asks, "can say he's living a good life earning R 3,000 for 27 years?" and the woman concludes as she says: "This is the 27th year he's here, now the police are carrying wire. They are fencing for rats and dogs therein the mountain, they are killing them" [20]. One may ask: Would the effect of the film have been different if the film had spent more time commenting on the maldistribution of income, the mine workers' family conditions, the working conditions of miners in South Africa as opposed to other countries, and so on? My answer is: Yes. I wish the film had expanded on ideas such as those advocated by the woman in order to open the space from which the killer will be the one to be alienated by the wisdom of those on the other side of the class line he had despised. The construction of postcolonial subject is inscribed both in the discourse of racism and resistance. Only Joseph Matunjia, the leader of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction (AMCU), understands the intelligible unity of the body of mine workers and its resistance. "Comrades", he says, "the life of a Black person in Africa is so cheap". He continues: They will kill us, they will finish us...and then they will replace us and continue to pay salaries that cannot change Black people's lives. That would mean we are defeated, but capitalists will be the ones who win [20]; [2].

It is true many died that day. But for values which are too obvious to see in this death one should not dismiss them to praise death. If capitalists could worship labour rather than 'capital', they would undoubtedly adore Black men's patience and strength, for it is through their toil that the world's economy, in freedom as in slavery, was built. We lose everything we cannot understand that the miners died because they wanted work. Like Xuma, in Abrahams's *Mine Boy*, the dream of a better South Africa offers an embodiment of agency:

And the country was the good country. And the world was the good world. Full of Laughter. Full of friendliness. Full of food. Full of happiness. The good world....
Xuma drifted into blissful slumberif only it were so.... [24]⁴

⁴*Mine Boy* by Peter Abrahams is the first South African novel written in English in 1945. It is, at once, detailed and dramatic. Its setting, Camp Malay, South of Johannesburg became a place where Blacks and Coloured alike were bound to suffer every humiliation at the hands of the mine owners and White police, a situation it was impossible to come out with one's whole skin.

III. CONCLUSION

The paper encouraged an approach to Marikana story that goes beyond the spheres of interest covered by the filmmaker: blood, massacre, political challenge. It took issues with certain aspects of a view best expressed by the film which claims to “give voice to the miners” whose story it tells while trying, at the same time, to create a discourse of hatred against Black leadership wittingly or unwittingly. The fact of this massacre may appeal to many who watch this film not because they understand the destructive effects of capitalism which caused it rather it is because they are terrified by what they see without consequent need to see beyond. I have argued that we might, as viewers, become so gullible as to ignore the need of a critical look at what is said about the miners while the real issues at the heart of events are brushed aside. This film is clearly a good example of how one’s lived experience can resist other form of meaning as, Barthes had once observed

The pure and simple “representation” of the “real”, the naked account of “what is” (or what has been), thus proves to resist meaning; such resistance reconfirms the great mythic opposition between the *vécu* [the experiential or “live experience”] and the intelligible; we have only to recall how, in the ideology of our time, the obsessional evocation of the “concrete” (in what we rhetorically demand of the human sciences, of literature, of social practice) is always staged as an aggressive arm against meaning, as though, by some *de jure* exclusion, what lives in structurally incapable of carrying a meaning-and vice versa [25].

However, if “the naked account of “what is” (i.e. the killing of the miners), we all know about, is what comes raw as it is in our film, then the latter brings nothing new to our intelligence except the emotion of anger against the state. But as might have been suggested by fragments of stories of ordinary reality in the books I have mentioned: if small stories of children looking for their fathers, the stepping of women in their husbands shoes to raise children, the dying of the widows without their children to bury them, etc., were brought into our view they will teach all of us (including the perpetrators) a lot about our losses, bring healing to the country and anticipate a future from which people imagine unity as opposed to division while not losing sight of the *reality of senseless killing to be effaced*. If, however, the film has failed in what I think it chose to represent: the miners’ lives; it is precisely why there is a need for more artists to write stories about Africa responsibly. It is also my view that filmmakers should start questioning the past for the past can only answer the questions it is being asked. Based on the above analysis, I am unwilling to regard the credits given to the film by its viewers as evidences of its excellence.

What Marikana taught me in particular is the *repudiation* of the world that has shown to be the symbol of exclusion of the mine workers. In his *Class* Fussell makes the following remark:

Imagine ...the universal outcry that would occur if every year several corporate headquarters routinely collapsed like mines, crushing sixty or seventy executives. Or suppose that all the banks were filled with an invisible noxious dust that constantly produced cancer in the managers, clerks, and tellers. Finally, try to imagine the horror...if the thousands of university professors were deafened every year or lost fingers, hands, sometimes eyes, while on their jobs [26]. This simple but profoundly important insight is what Fussell uses in order to demonstrate our lack of consideration for the mine workers. And let South Africa and the world learn from the miners that even people who led others to discover their rights can, if they become distracted, remain the most governed, the most regulated, the most imposed upon, the most harnessed, and the most exploited. To quote from Bastiat

This will remain the case so long as human beings with feelings continue to remain passive; so long as they consider themselves incapable of bettering their prosperity and happiness by their own intelligence and their own energy; so long as they expect everything from the law; in short, so long as they imagine that their relationship to the state is the same as that of the sheep to the shepherd [1].

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VIPICTURES



Figure 1: Photo showing the gunning down of miners by SA police at Marikana. **Source:** *Miners Shot Down* (Dessai, 2014)



Figure 2: Photo showing the massacre of Blacks by the apartheid government. **Source:** *Miners Shot Down* (Dessai, 2014)



Figure 3: Photo of Mine Strikers. **Source:** *Annual Industrial Action Report 2013*, 22