

Rewriting History in Edward Zwick's movie *Blood Diamond*: A New Historicist

Reading

Based on Edward Zwick directed *Blood Diamond*, this research work explicitly retraces reflections of the war torn Sierra Leone during the 1990s. A political war thriller, *Blood Diamond* reenacts the politics behind rich minerals like diamond in this African country that prompts the Sierra Leone Civil War (1996-2001). Leonardo DiCaprio starred *Blood Diamond*, with its title, connotes violence and unrest in the African country at the end of the twentieth century. The film represents a true history of Sierra Leone in violence and disorder. Natives of Sierra Leone resort to exile and refuge in the mean time, keep on searching treasures and valuables in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone faced the critical situation due to the Civil War during the period 1996 and 2001. A country was torn apart by the struggle between government loyalists and insurgents. Many atrocities of the war include the violence associated with rich minerals, political instabilities and the rebels' amputation of people's hands to discourage them from voting in upcoming elections are some of the main features of Sierra Leone in the contemporary time.

The history of Sierra Leone relates the primary reason behind the chaotic situation in Sierra Leone. It is the historical fact of the country. White Americans and Europeans' quest for diamonds involve illegal trade create various terrorist groups according to the design of international smugglers. The struggle between government loyalists and insurgent forces lead the country further destruction. It is clear that Sierra Leone's history captures the nation which is torn apart by the violence and terrorism. The terror of war in Sierra Leone is reflected through the image of rebels' amputation of people's hands, the terrorist attack in capital city, forceful recruitment

of child soldiers and uses them in attack on innocent villagers. Similarly, millions of people are exiled from their land. They kept as refugees in various camps in Sierra Leone's history.

Blood Diamond represents a true history of Sierra Leone in realistic representation. It shows African countries torn apart to violence and struggle. Most of the characters in the film go through the plights and consequences related with the diamond smuggles and terrorism in the nation. It includes the issues of search for diamonds and its consequences like civil wars, chaotic circumstances, violence and murder of ordinary people and their refugee lives and exile, etc. All these incidents of Sierra Leone reflect in the scenes of the cinema represent the historical documents. The suffering of the characters associated with Sierra Leone's political situation presupposes that the film is a historical representation of particular time frame of the society and nation.

Blood Diamond rewrites the Sierra Leone's history in order to foreground the African culture which has been ignored by colonial narratives. This research work primarily explores undocumented details in the Sierra Leone. It deals with the issue of social and political realities of Sierra Leone during 1990s. As a historical discourse, it tries to depict the blend of Sierra Leone's history in the form of visual art. This research concentrates upon the reflection of social and political events. It aims to analyze the historical references of Sierra Leone reflected in the movie.

The historical background of Sierra Leone is reflected within the very first scene of the cinema. The beginning shot introduces the major character Solomon, his family and natives of the Sierra Leone. Solomon, a hard working native talks with his son and tells that he aims to make his son a doctor in future. Similarly, the scene presents the identity of other family members including Solomon's wife, a younger

daughter of twelve years old and an infant brother. It gives the picture of harmonious and optimistic lives of common villagers in Sierra Leone.

Drastically, the scene from this peaceful lower class family environment changes into a horrific circumstances. The terrorist group, The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attacks the entire village with heavy machinery weapons. Most of the rebels are teenager boys with AK-47 on their hands and grenades on their belts. The film presents the scene of attacking the village as Solomon says to his wife and children “Go back inside...now” (00:03:56- 00:04:04) terrifying with the attack. The chaotic situation of the village attack is presented further as:

Dia is confused. Solomon runs into the hut as grinning teenage rebels appear. One wears a Tupac T-Shirt. He racks everything with AK-47 fire. Villagers run screaming. Chickens squawk, oxen bray. Two mud-splattered PICK-UP TRUCKS with sawed-off roofs crash through the bush, full of RUF REBELS, who quickly jump off. . . shouting, wielding machetes and automatic rifles, BANDOLIERS of AMMO crisis-crossed on their bare chests, GRENADES on their belts.

(00:03:37-00:05:08)

Solomon is captured by the rebels but his other family members are able to escape, “Jessie cries in a hut, infant in her arms, mad with fear” (00:03:51-00:03:56). Jessie calls Solomon but Solomon only utters a word “Run” (00:04:31) in order to escape them from the attack. Most of the villagers who are unable for work are killed and some of their hands are cut, so they can not vote in forth coming national election. In this connection the colonel says, “No hands, No votes. Revolutionary United Front is coming” (00:05:48-00:06:05). In this sense, terrorist groups were against to the government.

Among the victims of such criminal act there are basically the incapable people to work. The scene is well captured in the film while Solomon is in line to cut his hand, it is clear that the capable people are sent for laborious work for the terrorist group like searching for diamond. The team leader of terrorist group thought that Solomon's physical body that he can work hard and find diamond for them. In this connection the Rebel group leader says, "Bring him to the mines, He can work" (00:06:40-00:06:44) and like previous young man Solomon is also kept to the waiting truck. Then, Solomon is imprisoned to hard labor of searching diamonds for the terrorist group. He finds a large sized pink diamond while doing work in mine that was not found ever. He tries to bury it in soft soil near the riverbank in diamond mine. Rebel leader, Captain Poison observes and sees the same diamond. As he follows, at the same time, government security force attacks in the place. Similarly, Solomon hides it another place. Later, Solomon, Captain Poison and Danny Archer, a white diamond smuggler incarcerated jailed in Freetown. As Poison is taken there, he sees Solomon. The conversation between them presented as:

Poison: Hey.

What did you do with it?

I'm talking to you, you hear me?

Where the diamond? The pink one

I saw you take it.

Soloman: You're mad. I do not know you.

Poison: Liar! I saw it with my own eyes.

This big. Biggest I have ever seen.

Hey! My brothers! I go give \$ 1000...

... to the man, who cuts the diamond out of this bastard.

Solomon: You the craze! You the craze!

Solomon: You devils have taken my family!

My home! I done lost everything!

Here, look. What is left?

What is left?

If there is a diamond

You are the one who has taken it!

Poison: Liar! The man is a liar!

I know your name, Solomon Vandy!

You have a name!

You have a family!

And I'll catch them!

And I'll find them! (00:19:38-00:20:44).

Danny Archer closely observes their discussion. Later, Poison and Archer attempt to get the same diamond by using his family. Poison uses his son, Dia and Archer takes oath for reunion his family in order to get diamond. That is why; the same pink diamond becomes one of the main causes of violence in Sierra Leone. Thus, the film centers on the politics behind diamond and its consequence of violence, terror and exile of thousands of Sierra Leoneans. Solomon's family members like other thousands are obliged to go to refugee camp. Major cause of conflict in Sierra Leone is diamonds of its nation. Diamond is taken by such rebel groups and sold to other Western trade groups. The film not only captures the issues happening within Sierra Leone but also presents the greed of westerners upon the diamond.

The movie is analyzed from the new historicist perspective. It deals with the relevancy of the events and incidents mentioned in the movie with the historical facts

of Sierra Leone. A text is not free from the sociopolitical and historical as told by Michel Foucault. Keeping this notion into the consideration, this research work includes the ideas from the new historians such as Stephen Greenblatt, Friedrich Nietzsche, Louis Montrose, H. Aram Vesser and Peter Barry as the theoretical tools. According to new historicist every literary text has its situation within the institutions, social practices and discourses that constitute the overall culture of particular time and place. This research is also analyzed from the perspective of Michel Foucault's new idea about 'discourse', 'power', 'truth', and 'representation' in order to show the loopholes inherent within classical history. By using new historicists' idea, the research gives the message that historical facts of Sierra Leone and it also presents that the war is inhuman, brutal, chaotic and injustice for innocent humans.

Blood Diamond has received wide critical acclaim from different perspectives. However, historical issues or contextual reading of the film is not found to be done in an appropriate way. Some of the critics have even focused on the westerners' politics behind diamonds trade and chaotic circumstance of Sierra Leone. Connecting the westerners' influence in Africa as expressed in the film, Walter Rodney writes in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*:

The movie is yet another depiction of supremacy of west. Through a tragic event in a third world nation, the west depicts the hegemony of west as the messiah even at the cost of excessive damages caused by the western capitalist. It is an irony that on one hand the west is responsible for culminating internal chaos, and on the other hand it acts as if applying ointment over it. (76)

Walter Rodney states the west is playing double roles in the entire process of smuggling diamonds from Sierra Leone and it also makes into the war turned zone as

well as controlling these illegal activities. For him, this movie is the way to show the superiority of west upon non-west. In the same way, G8 Conference and the behavior of Danny Archer to the Rebel group and government in order to make disorder in Sierra Leone to get diamond clearly shows the superiority of west.

The politics of Sierra Leone is major issue reflected in the film. Concerning the politics behind the diamond in Sierra Leone, Rebecca Winters Keegen writing in *Time* argues:

It is indeed hard to quantify the real impact of a film. But there are in fact small changes wrought by recent movies, including *Blood Diamond* where the diamond industry launched a per blitz to educate consumers about conflict free diamonds, but actually stone sales were unaffected. Movie makes advocates out of supporters. They change the world not in wide swaths of multiplexes but one popcorn bucket at a time. (60)

It is clear that the film is based on the trade and smuggling of diamonds in African context according to the above mentioned criticisms. It gives the realistic picture of Sierra Leone's politics related with diamonds and violence.

The illegal diamond supply to West is the major aspect associated with the violence in Sierra Leone. Jeremy Ginifer and Kaye Oliver write, "The historical conference concerning illegal diamonds refers to an actual meeting that took place in Kimberley, South Africa in 2000 too has focused on Sierra Leone's history associated with diamond and conflict" (27). For them, it leads to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, which seeks to certify the origin of rough diamonds in order to curb the trade in conflict diamonds. In this sense, the fact behind the conflict in Sierra Leone is its rich minerals, diamonds. The social and political events happened in

Africa during the last decade of 20th century is related with people's greed upon diamonds. The government of the United Kingdom also had its fair share to say about the prospects for peace in Sierra Leone with the connection of diamonds in Sierra Leone. United Kingdom assumed that the illegal diamonds supply is major cause behind the violence in Sierra Leone. Jeremy Ginifer and Kaye Oliver argue:

Diamonds and Other Economic Causes of Conflict: the use of diamonds to finance the conflict was a major conflict multiplier in Sierra Leone. . . Further, there is the potential for diamonds to be exploited again should another rebel group emerge. Moreover, the lack of government revenue being generated through diamond mining is hindering recovery in Sierra Leone, although the 2003 figure will double that of 2002. (28)

The political conflicts of the nation, the fight between government and terrorist groups and smuggling of diamonds are some of the real incidents connected with contemporary time frame of Sierra Leone which ended in 2002. In this connection, Ibrahim Abdullah writes, "Taylor supported the March 1991 insurgency of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh in neighboring Sierra Leone. That support continued until the official declaration of the end of hostilities in January 2002" (54). In the rebel group like RUF there were the involvement of youths and teen agers. Jeremy Ginifer and Kaye Oliver write, "Concerns still remain that ex-combatants and youths currently engaged in diamond mining in the east—potentially one of the future conflict hotspots in Sierra Leone—may become a source of trouble if they disengage from diamond mining" (28). The primary reason behind the violence is natural resources like diamonds and other. In this connection, Daudi Mwakawago writes, "Sierra Leone faces a spectrum of challenges, from explosive youth

unemployment to take legitimate control of its rich mineral resources, as the United Nations peacekeeping mission winds down and the next phase of the West African country's development begins" (1). The Americans through their use of eagle eyes try to get the natural resources of Sierra Leone. The exploitation and violence is no other than their mission to encroach the resources.

Similarly, *Blood Diamond* has received keen attraction from various cine critics and academicians. One of the cine critics, Claudia Puig said in the *USA Today*, "*Blood Diamond* is a gem in a season with lots of worthy movies" (8). He further praises DiCaprio's acting and noting that "it is also the first time the boyish actor has truly seemed like a man on film"(8). Since DiCaprio has been playing leading in the love stories and *Blood Diamond* became the action and violence oriented film Claudia Puig marks DiCaprio's shift in the film.

Like Puig, Peter Rainer also gives the film a positive review in the *Christian Science Monitor*. He also praises DiCaprio's acting, "As strong as *Blood Diamond* is in its best moments, I wish it had been even harder-edged. DiCaprio is remarkable - his work is almost on par with his performance this year in *The Departed*" (9). *Blood Diamond* provided distinct identity even to the established actor due to the different type of roles than his former films.

The risky life of journalist in critical area is also one of the major aspects of the film. The film is also shown as the depiction of risky journalism in the scenario of war-torn nation, Sierra Leone. Connecting with the issue of journalist in film, Alexa Milan writes in "Modern Portrayals of Journalism in Film":

The movie seems to be implying that young, attractive female reporters are not afraid to use their sex appeal if it will help them land a story, a practice seen again with the character of Time magazine foreign

correspondent Maddy Bowen in *Blood Diamond*. In her pursuit of a story about conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone, Maddy recognizes smuggler Danny Archer at a bar and proceeds to flirt with him. (55)

Maddy Bowen does not identify herself as a reporter until Danny realizes she is a journalist when she asks him about blood diamonds. The first few times Danny meets Maddy. They are at a bar, and she often has a beer in hand. According to Alexa Milan it is a negative stereotypical representation of journalist. It is mentioned that Maddy Bowen asks for strong drink, "Vodka. Rocks" (00:26:48). About the female journalist Maddy Bowen, Alexa Milan further writes, "Of the three flirtatious journalists in these films, however, Maddy is perhaps the most professional. She uses her resources as a reporter to help Danny's friend, Solomon find his son, who has been forced into the military as a child soldier" (55). These reference marks that *Blood Diamond* captures multiple aspects connected with war, violence and poverty occurred in African continent realistically.

Thus, various critics have viewed the film through various perspectives and issues. Most of them have focused on the smuggling and trades of diamonds in Africa and Sierra Leone. The theory of new historicism has not been applied, so there exist a strong need to carry out research on this film from a new perspective. Therefore, this project tries to focus the representation of Sierra Leone's history through new historicism. It explores how new historical discourse is an appropriate to dig out the traditional and documented history.

Discourse stands for the utterances whether spoken or written that refers something at underlying level including the generation of meaning through images, sounds, cultural performances, etc. So discourse indicates images, sounds and practices that are close to sign system of language. In this way, *Oxford Advance*

Learner's Dictionary states, "The use of language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning; language that is studied, usually in order to see how the different parts of a text are connected" (432). Lois Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today* writes, "A discourse is a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experience" (285). It means discourse is socially constructed and transformed in the members of the society.

A text itself is a discourse according to the New Historicism since it has captured certain issues, ideology and stand point in history. A film or cinema too belongs to a text and it too has some sort of issues, ideology and historical outlook. Based on similar ideas of discourse, this research is a study of the film *Blood Diamond* observing how it has stood on the historical facts of Sierra Leone as well as how it raises the reality of diamond smuggling, terror and violence occurred in Sierra Leone during 1990s. For this purpose it examines the film from the New Historical perspective.

New Historicism is a counter against the classical perspective of history. Classical history refers to the earlier or traditional perspective upon history. It indicates history as the collection of factual events or incidents. Earlier traditional historians used to read literature with the base of history. They seek whether it was based on real historical events or not. They only search answer of what happened? What does the event tell us about history and so on? In the contrast to this, new historicists ask how the event has been interpreted. Traditional historians believe that history is a series of events that have a linear causal relationship.

Traditionally history is regarded as the collection of fact events and incidents. It presupposes that history is opposite to literature or fiction since, literary work is

supposed to be the outcome of author's imagination. After the arrival of new historicism even the fact within the history is questioned. For new historicists, history is also guided by power influence and discourse so it bears the quality of fiction. Fictional writing, on the other hand, is based on the social, cultural and historical reality of author's timeframe. In this sense, there is also historical reality within the literary writing. Thus, New Historicists try to blur the gap between history and fiction.

Now after the arrival of new historicism, there is the trend to mark the history which is reflected in literature. The literature, now, has a relation with the history because there is an influence of social, political, cultural and historical reality upon the author. No writer can go completely beyond the reality. The work of art cannot be a product of mere imagination of artist. Modern reading of literature has a reciprocal concern of historicity of texts and the textuality of history. New historicists consider historical accounts as equally interpretable as literary texts, since both are seen as the expressions of the same historical moment. Literature itself stands as the history of contemporary circumstance of its writing.

The film *Blood Diamond* being a form of art or literature or a text, this research concerns the reflection of the Sierra Leone history in fictional form as a reciprocal concern between history and literature. In this connection it is based on the idea of Louis Montrose and Peter Barry. 'New Historicism' is a frequently quoted phrase by the theorist Louis Montrose as he mentions as 'reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history' (219). It means that history is seen as 'textualized' within the fiction or fictional representation. New historicists consider historical accounts as equally interpretable as literary texts, since both are seen as "expressions of the same historical moment" (173) as mentioned by Peter Barry.

Set during the Sierra Leone Civil War in 1996–2001, *Blood Diamond* depicts a country torn apart by the struggle between government loyalists and insurgents. It also portrays many of the atrocities of that war, including the rebels' amputation of people's hands to discourage them from voting in upcoming elections. All these incidents reflected in the film stand as the parallel history of the country. Similarly, the film's ending, in which a conference is held concerning blood diamonds, refers to an actual meeting that took place in Kimberley, South Africa in 2000. It leads to the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme, which seeks to certify the origin of rough diamonds in order to curb the trade in conflict diamonds. In this sense, the film does not go beyond the social and political events happened in Africa during the last decade of 20th century. In this regard, it could be claimed that the text bears the certain quality of history with certain historical incidents, it derives.

Blood Diamond not only stands as the political war thriller rather it captures the chaotic and conflicting issue of violence in Sierra Leone Civil War in 1996–2001. Furthermore, all the events and incidents like westerners' extreme quest for diamonds, the interest of diamonds which creates various terrorist groups according to the design of international smugglers, the struggle between government loyalists and insurgent forces as well as the representation of various worldwide conferences regarding issues of African struggles, issue of diamonds and refugee of Sierra Leone, all are directly related with the history, politics and society of African continent and in particular with Sierra Leone. There is even the realistic portrays of the atrocities of that war, including the rebels' amputation of people's hands to discourage them from voting in upcoming elections. What might be the objective of the film to capture the social and political realities of Sierra Leone during the last decade of 20th century? Doesn't the film try to blend the history of Sierra Leone in the form of art?

Blood Diamond, by bringing the story of Sierra Leone during 1991 to 2001 capturing the social and political realities of contemporary timeframe with the issues of search for diamonds and its consequences like civil wars, chaotic circumstances, the struggles between government loyalists and rebel groups, violence and murder of innocent people and their refugee lives and exile, etc., represent the part of the history of Sierra Leone. In this sense, *Blood Diamond* is a fictional or literary text based on certain historical timeframe.

As the film begins, “Sierra Leone 1990” (00:00:21- 00:00: 25) which indicates that it deals with the location of Sierra Leone and captures the time frame of last decade of twentieth century. The information is followed to audiences in order to mark the time and locality which presupposes that the film somehow related with certain history. Then, with the first scene of the film, major character, Solomon is introduced with his family members. The director establishes him as a hard working common people of Sierra Leone. It marks that the film captures the realistic portray of Sierra Leone during Civil War.

New historicism was emerged in 1980s primarily through the work of Greenblatt gaining widespread influence in the 1990s and beyond. Favoring Foucault’s work in the beginning, new historicism aims to analyze a literary text as an expression of reaction to the power-structures of the surrounding society. The voices of people who are dominated, marginalized, and suppressed from the mainstream culture get primary focus in new historicism. It means new historicism tries to dig out the real history that is sidelined by the people who are in power. It is the propaganda of the people to create false discourse, make it knowledge by universalizing it and later spread it as truth to gain the power and superiority.

New historicism is also concerned with the questions of power and culture. New historicists are like cultural materialists interested in the questions of circulation, negotiation, profit, and exchange. They take this position further by claiming that cultural activities may be considered as equally important texts for historical analysis. For them history is literature, and interpretation. It is not fact but stories about the past thus subjected. It is a matter of interpretation. Every historical age is full of contradictions, baffles, surprises, and disagreements. History and literature are interconnected. The film *Blood Diamond* too interconnects the fiction and history of Sierra Leone. The terrible violence of Sierra Leone reflected in film is an example of blend between fact and fiction.

The picture of terrible violence is reflected while the operation of rebels to the villagers comes in screen. All these appear with perspective of Solomon as “Solomon cowers amidst the gunfire, looks around frantically. Men and boys are being mended up. Huts set on fire. Suddenly he is yanked up as two rebels pull him away” (00:04:55- 00:05:00). Thus, Solomon is captured by the rebels but his other family members are able to run, “Jessie exits their hut, infant in her arms, mad with fear” (00:04:11- 00:04:59). Jessie calls Solomon but Solomon only utters a word “run” (00:04:55- 00:04:59) in order to make her escape from the attack.

The attack on the entire village by the gun holders, randomly killing the innocent people provides the realistic pictures of violence and civil war of Sierra Leone. All the captured people of the village are placed in line waiting for death or to cut hand or to be herded for work. The situation is presented as:

REBELS prod them with rifles, making them from a line. All under the watchful sunglasses of a RUF COLONEL. The first villager is shoved to his knees in front of a tree stump. A muscle-bound, SHIRTLESS

REBEL with a gleaming AXE struts over, his eyes glazed from palm wine and marijuana. A second rebels grabs the village man's hand and places on the stump. The man pulls his hand away. Tupac T-Shirt puts the AK-47 to his hand. The choice is clear. Your hand or your heads. The villager tries to scramble away. RAT-A-TAT! Bullet through his hand. (00: 04:01- 00:04:15)

The scene captures the killing and cutting the hands of innocent villagers by RUF. Most of the villagers who are unable for work are killed. For the physically strong men they take for work in diamond mining. It is presented as, "The next in the line, A STRONG YOUNG MAN, is pushed to the stump" (00:05:56-00:05:59) and RUF Colonel says, "Not him. He can work" and the "He is herded into a waiting truck" (00:06:52- 00:06:40).

Most of the people are killed and some of their hands are cut. Their hand is cut so they cannot vote in forthcoming national election. In this connection the Colonel of RUF. says, "No hands. No votes. Revolutionary United Front. is coming" (00:06:59-00:06:05). Among the victims of such criminal acts there are basically the incapable people to work. The scene is well captured in the film while Solomon is in line to get his hand cut, it is clear that the capable people are sent for laborious work for the terrorist group like search for diamonds. Solomon's laborious and harsh hands make sure to the team leader of the terrorist group that he can work hard and find diamonds for them. In this connection the team leader says, "You will need your hand" (00:06:40-00:06:57) and like previous young man Solomon too is herded to the waiting truck. Thus, Solomon is led to the imprisoned hard labor of searching diamonds for the terrorist group. Now the film centered on the politics behind diamonds and its consequence of violence, terror and exile of thousands of Sierra

Leone people. Solomon's family members like other thousands are obliged to go to refugee camp.

The attack of terrorist, mass killing, burning villages and force to people to work for the group, etc., are some of the realistic pictures of Sierra Leone during the last decade of 20th century. Furthermore, it realistically refers to the terrorist group as Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The RUF is a real terrorist group of contemporary Sierra Leone and the use of child soldiers as well as attack on common villagers all are not beyond the realities of Sierra Leone. Similarly, the major cause behind such consequences is the rich minerals like diamonds and outsiders' interest on it. The use of forced labor by RUF in search for diamonds too is not beyond the historical reality of contemporary Sierra Leone society. The incidents occurred in the film truthfully refer the historical facts of Sierra Leone.

In this sense, the film *Blood Diamond* has captured a certain time of history creating certain discourse and truth about Sierra Leone history. Foucault opines that discourses are rooted in social institutions and that social and political power operates through discourse. Oppositional nature of new historicism subverts earlier monopolized tendency of the works and of certain institutions. Foucault attempts to negate official history because it documents information in linear order by sidelining other hidden information that later may become the core medium to expose politics of official history. Opposing official history Foucault argues, "Effective history, however, deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations" (94). In his first volume of *History of Sexuality*, he claims, "Power is everywhere [. . .] power comes from below; that is there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between ruler and ruled at the root of power relations and serving as a general matrix" (93-4). He assumes that power is not force of

prohibition rather it has productive nature. It traverses and produces things, induces pleasure, forms knowledge and discourse.

Michael Foucault's "Truth and Power" posits the view of discontinuity in history. Disregarding the structuralists' systematic effort to evaluate the concept of the event not only from ethnology and other sciences especially from history he leads to susceptible analysis of history. He further states, "It's not a matter of locating everything on one level, that of event but of realizing that there are actually a whole order of levels of different types of events differing in amplitude chronological breadth and capacity to produce effects" (1137). It means when the power changes, changes the truth. The circulation of power and truth is based on the changing of power politics. The person in the power does not remain in the same status forever. Hence, power is circulatory.

On the basis of Foucault's idea regarding the analysis of historiography it can be said that he is in favor of effective history, i.e. genealogical approach to history which explains the loopholes of history, observes suffering of repressed, dominated and marginalized people. His radical view about reality, identity, history, truth and knowledge have given sufficient impetus to new historicism to rethink about these ideas and make contextual study of the text to get meaning of the text.

Truth itself is the product of relations of power and of the systems in which it follows; it changes as system changes as Michel Foucault states:

Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as the true.

(qtd. in Adams1144)

Power is generated in society by producing discourse and by constructing truths. Power determines the truth and as soon as the system of society changes truth also changes. Foucault further states that “Truth is the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it was hardened into an unalterable in the long baking process of history” (85). However, there are illusions instead of truth. Truth is the illusion of which one has forgotten it to be so. In this regard, Stephen Greenblatt says, “Truth itself is radically unstable and yet constantly stabilized” (74). In this sense, the ‘truth’ raised by traditional history is questioned by New Historicist.

For New historicism, not only the history, fictional text too captures some sort of truth which is clear while observing the film *Blood Diamond*. The film on the one hand captures the reflection of history within text and on the other, it tries to seek the discourses created by text through the perspective of hidden voices. *Blood Diamond*, the film captures both the dimensions of new historicism. On the one hand, it reflects the parts of historical reality of Sierra Leone during the last decade of 20th century. On the other hand, the film revives the hidden politics behind diamond and minerals evoking the westerners’ interest upon it and tries to deal with the issues how the common people like Solomon have been victimized due to the power politics and play between different terrorist groups and government force.

Major cause of conflict in Sierra Leone is diamonds of its nation. Solomon after captured by the RUF is sent to the work in diamond minerals. Diamonds is taken by such rebel groups and sold to other Western trades groups. The film not only captures the issues happening within Sierra Leone but also presents the greed of westerners upon the diamond. After being captured by RUF, Solomon is searching diamond for RUF and at the same time an International G8 Conference is presented in the film which tries to address the issue of illegal diamond supply of Sierra Leone as

the conference is marked “G8 Conference on Diamonds Antwerp, Belgium” (00:06:59- 00:08:45). The G8 conference, visualized in film, captures the true essence of Sierra Leone history during the conflict. It presents the reality that legal or illegal supply of diamonds has contributed for the purchase of weapons and increased the violence in Sierra Leone. It is quite justifiable and the film too is centered with the relation between diamonds and conflict.

The title *Blood Diamond* captures the association of violence with diamond. Each and every scene of the film is thematically associated with the issues. While Solomon is searching diamond in minerals, a forced labor hides a diamond within his mouth. He is shot on the spot seizing his diamonds. The incident occurs just before Solomon finds another large sized diamond and he hides it within toes. Painted with blood, the diamond seems as if pink in its color. The color of diamond symbolically refers to the violence associated with it. Most of the time diamonds are presented painted with blood. While Archer is smuggling diamonds through Sierra Leone and Liberia’s border, the diamonds are brought out from goats’ body and washed with blood. The diamond found by Solomon is major turning point of the film which is little larger and pink in color. The blood painted diamond symbolically refers to the terrorism and violence of Sierra Leone due to the diamonds.

In Sierra Leone, during the civil war, the property rights regime over diamonds was weak enough that rebels from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were able to seize control of the diamond producing region almost immediately after the groups’ inception as a violent movement. These already inadequate property rights were thoroughly disrupted over the course of the decade-long war, with the RUF, the government-backed and later rebellious military, and South African Executive Outcomes mercenaries instituting new property rights at the point of a gun. While

there are many constraints on the government of Sierra Leone in the use of its natural resources resulting, for example, from the practice of mortgaging rights to diamond mining to pay for the war. There is a post- conflict opportunity to take a critical look at the governance of natural resources and include innovative approaches to their use in plans to improve income generation, social and economic development, and participation in the international economic system.

There is the role of foreign tradesmen especially Euro-Americans behind the critical situation of Sierra Leone. Even the RUF Colonel pours his agony to white master who are the cause of terrorism. He says, “The violence situation is the result of the greed of westerners” (00:08:09-00:08:13). Thus, it is clear that the connection with diamond politic and terror in Sierra Leone during the rise of RUF in the film *Blood Diamond* is a perfect example of reflection of Sierra Leone’s history through visual representation in fictional form. The horrific picture of Sierra Leone that it has been turning to be a critical war zone due to the unequal power relation of Western worlds and Africa as well as due to the greed of westerners for the valuable minerals of Sierra Leone is expressed in film through the arrival of Danny Archer (Leonardo DeCaprio).

Just before the scene Solomon finds the pink colored diamond, Archer appears in the scene, with the team leader of rebels where he makes agreement with rebel commander and takes diamonds. The scene justifies that he purchases diamonds with weapons for the rebels to wrestle against the government force. The scene presupposes that the smugglers of diamonds have relationship with rebellious groups.

The smugglers not only have relationship with rebel groups but also with the governmental forces. It is clear while Archer smuggles the diamonds to Liberia with the support and commission of government armies. The critical conflict zone is the

border line of Sierra Leone and Liberia regarding the smuggling of diamonds as Iryna Marchuk writes, “Beyond the neighboring country of Liberia, there is still a broader international link in the beginnings of the Sierra Leonean conflict” (89). Archer’s smuggling of diamond on the way to Liberia too is not untouched with social reality of diamond smuggling of Sierra Leone. The scene captures the bitter reality of Sierra Leone that how the country has been turning to a critical location due to the play of Western tradesmen and companies who use both the governmental and rebellious group in order to fulfill their greed. The commoners like Solomon should be scapegoat in such situation.

In this sense, *Blood Diamond* is a form of Sierra Leone history from a different perspective. Unlike a classical history it captures the suffering of commoner in Civil War. Classical history is always contaminated, oblique and subjective. Classical history itself claims as the collection of truth and facts. Similarly, it tries place itself in different position than literary writing. However, there are many loopholes in classical history. Old historicists like Hegel and Ranke believe that they are capable to make objective analysis but new historicists believe that one can never have objective analysis. New historicists believe that we never have clear access to any basic facts of history. In this regard, Louis Tyson comments:

The first and most important reason for this difficulty new historicist believes, is the impossibility of objective analysis. Like all human beings, historians live in a particular time and place, and their views of both current and past events are influenced innumerable conscious and unconscious ways by their own experience within their own culture.

(279)

Every human being lives in certain time and place. Their consciousness is shaped by society, state and their socio-economic status. Our views regarding past and present are shaped by our culture and society.

For new historicism, a text is not free from the socio-political and historical as told by Michel Foucault. He states every literary text has its own situation, background within discourse, institution social norms, values, characterization, conflicts and social practices that become the document culture of particular space and time. 'New Historicism' is a frequently quoted phrase by the theorist Louis Montrose identifies the new historicists', "reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history" (qtd. in Abrams 219) as a key feature of the approach. It means that history is seen as textualized. New historicists consider historical accounts as equally interpretable as literary texts, since both are seen as "expressions of the same historical moment" (173) as mentioned by Peter Barry. Barry in *Beginning Theory* further writes new historicism is "a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period" (172). Even in the literary text the new historicism might be effective because every text is situated in certain time frame. So, in contrast to former approaches, new historicism does not privilege the literary text, but instead "literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other" (Barry 172). This new understanding of the relationship between these different types of texts also calls for a new understanding of the relationship between texts and history.

Similarly, Stephan Greenblatt dubbed 'new historicism' from an older, reflectionist, and positivist literary historical scholarship and from New Critical formalism. It utterly rejects the old historicists' distinction between 'literature' and 'history', between 'text' and 'context'. It also resists the idea of autonomous

individual. No author or a work can be set against a social or literary background. In this context, Greenblatt comments, “The contours of art and literature are socially and historically configured: distinctions between artistic production and other kinds of social production. [. . .] are not intrinsic to the texts; rather they are made up and constantly redrawn by artists, audiences and readers” (398). Each and every literature are not only the product of artist but they also present the social, political, cultural and historical context. It means while doing new historicist reading text and context should be considered.

Every text is shaped by historical and social factors of our society and time of its production and writer’s individuality. Author’s individuality is also shaped by the time and social, cultural, economic and political situations in which the literary figure is living. Regarding autonomy in his introduction to *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* Greenblatt writes, “That family, state and religious institutions impose a more rigid and far reaching discipline upon their middle-class and aristocratic.

As told by Peter Barry, the text has certain historical quality because it is situated within a certain historical timeframe and influenced by current social and political reality, the film *Blood Diamond* has some sort of historical reality. It captures the chaotic and conflicting issue of violence in Sierra Leone Civil War in 1996–2001. Furthermore, all the events and incidents are directly associated with the part of history of Sierra Leone. The events like westerners' extreme greed for diamonds, the interest of diamonds which creates various terrorist groups according to the design of international smugglers, the struggle between government loyalists and insurgent forces as well as the representation of various worldwide conferences regarding issues of African struggles, issue of diamonds, refugee of Sierra Leone, etc., are some historical facts reflected in the film. In this sense, the history and text cannot be

separated like *Blood Diamond* and official history of Sierra Leone during the last decade of 20th century as H. Aram Vesser comments, “Literary and non-literary texts circulate inseparably. History and literature have been endlessly juxtaposed before now, but never in quite so insouciant fashion” (16). As stated in the theory of new historicism, the reality of Solomon, Solomon’s family and common people of Sierra Leone has reflected in the film. Moreover, the film represents a true history of Sierra Leone in violence and disorder. Natives of Sierra Leone resort to exile and refuge in the mean time, keep on searching treasures and valuables in Sierra Leone. The illegal diamond supply to West is the major aspect associated with the violence in Sierra Leone. Jeremy Ginifer and Kaye Oliver write, “The historical conference concerning illegal diamonds refers to an actual meeting that took place in Kimberley, South Africa in 2000 too has focused on Sierra Leone’s history associated with diamond and conflict” (27). In this way, all the incidents happened in the last decade of 20th century has reflected in this movie.

The history should be analyzed in terms of context for new historicist. The person in power creates their own history. The new historicists make their own kind of discourses in the contextual way in order to constitute the real history. The reader should go through the text to analyze how the history has been created. So the new historicism is the way of challenging the documented history that is written by the person who is in power position.

Foucauldian notion of power presents that power is unstable thing. The person who comes in power tries to create his/her own discourse and make it knowledge to other to follow it. But when the powerful person becomes powerless the power is handover to another person. In the same line s/he wants to create his/her own discourse and truth and rule the society. In this regard Foucault argues:

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates or rather something which only functions in the form of chain. It is never localized here, never in anybody's hand, never appropriated as a commodity or piece. Power is employed and exercised through a net like organization. And only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application. (89)

Power is something which circulates from one person to another person or one system to another. It is like a chain and moves in the hand of different person. The person today in power may not be in the power tomorrow. The powerless victim can be a powerful person in coming days. So it is never fixed or localized in anybody's hand. It is rather exercised in a net-like organization. Individuals are in the process of undergoing and exercising power. It means all the individual can be the vehicles of power not its application.

New historicism postulates that truth is constructed, when power changes, the knowledge changes and also changes the truth. Therefore, the truth is changeable. For them knowledge is independent of perspective. The western people produce a body of knowledge about non-westerners that is merely their perspective. Connecting the westerners' influence in Africa as expressed in the film, Walter Rodney writes in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*:

The movie is yet another depiction of supremacy of west. Through a tragic event in a third world nation, the west depicts the hegemony of west as the messiah even at the cost of excessive damages caused by the western capitalist. It is an irony that on one hand the west is

responsible for culminating internal chaos, and on the other hand it acts as if applying ointment over it. (76)

Walter Rodney states the west is playing double roles in the entire process of smuggling diamonds from Sierra Leone and makes into the war zone as well as controlling these illegal activities. This film, for him, is the way to show the superiority of west upon non-west.

From these perspectives to analyze the movie, westerners are in power, they produce the body of knowledge over non-westerners. They created the various terrorist group and made war torn zone for the quest of diamond. Diamond is taken by such rebel groups and sold to other Western trade groups. The film not only captures the issues happening within Sierra Leone but also presents the greed of westerners upon the diamond. After being captured by RUF Solomon searches diamond for RUF and at the same time an International G8 Conference is presented in the film which tries to address the issue of illegal diamond supply of Sierra Leone as the conference is marked “G8 Conference on Diamonds Antwerp, Belgium” In this conference, the participant addresses:



Fig.1. G8 Conference on Diamonds Antwerp, Belgium

Throughout the history of Africa . . . whenever a substance of value is found . . . the locals die in great number and in misery . . . Now, this was true of ivory, rubber, gold and oil. It is now true of diamonds. According to a devastating report by Global Witness . . . these stones are being used to purchase arms and finance civil war. We must act to prohibit . . . the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from conflict zones. May I remind you. USA is responsible for two-thirds of all diamond purchases worldwide . . . I don't anticipate that demand diminishing. (00:06:53-00:08:45)

The G8 conference, visualized in film, captures the true essence of Sierra Leone history during the conflict. It presents the reality that legal or illegal supply of diamonds has contributed for the purchase of weapons and increased the violence in Sierra Leone. It is quite justifiable and the film too is centered with the relation between diamonds and conflict.

To the same point, Rebel group, Revolutionary United Front (RUF) is in power over the Sierra Leone. They attacked Sierra Leone, killed most of the innocent people and some of their hands are cut so they cannot vote in forthcoming national election. They used capable people for laborious work for the terrorist group like searching for diamond. Furthermore, they also used the forceful recruitment the children in order to involve in terrorist activities as RUF soldiers. They manipulate and brain wash of children in order to use them in criminal activities. All these incidents happen because of they are in power. In order to motivate the children for terrorist activities, the Colonel says:

Your fathers and mothers are dead. Your brothers and sisters are dead.
You are dead. You have been reborn. We are your family now. Your

parents are weak. They're the farmers. They're the fishermen. They've done nothing but suck the blood from this country. But you are the heroes who will have this nation. You're men. You are not children anymore. (00:36:24-00:36:48)

The address of the RUF leader marks how they brainwash the innocent children to involve in terrorism and violence. The use of child soldiers is one of the historical truth of Sierra Leone Civil War.

The movie reflects a true history of Sierra Leone through different cinematography techniques. The film ties diamonds to particular exercises of physical violence in the war through visual language. Solomon finds a large sized pink diamond while doing in the work shows in close-up shot to give importance of thing. The G8 Conference is shown in long shot to view all presented members.

Similarly, in the beginning, the film presents the map of Sierra Leone of Africa continent and words appear, "Sierra Leone 1999" (00:00:21-00:00:25) which indicates the location of Sierra Leone and captures the time frame of 1990s. The information is viewed to audiences in order to mark the time and locality which presupposes that the film is somehow related with the certain history of the nation. Then, the film captures the reality scene of Solomon, one of the major characters, his family and it also views the real life of common people in Sierra Leone at that time.





Fig.2. Solomon, his family and common villagers fishing

Solomon, the hard working native talks with son and provides the detail that he aims to make his son a doctor in future. Similarly, the scene provides the identity of other family members including Solomon's wife, a younger daughter of twelve years old and an infant brother. Throughout the scene director introduces the lower class working people or native villagers as the primary focus in the film .Solomon is also working class fisherman. It gives the picture of harmonious and optimistic lives of common villagers in Sierra Leone.

Drastically, director changes the scene from this peaceful lower class family environment to a horrific circumstance. The entire village faces the sudden and unexpected attack by RUF with the weapons. The attackers are alike with Solomon since all are from native community and similar socio-political background. Only the difference is that the attackers present brutally and most of the members of this terrorist group are teenagers with heavy machinery weapons like guns and weapons.





Fig.3. Mass killing to villagers, hand cutting and Solomon's turn to cut hand

The attack on the entire village by the gun holders, randomly killing the innocent people provides the realistic pictures of violence and civil war of Sierra Leone. All the captured people of the village are placed in line waiting for death or to cut hand or to be herded for work. The situation is presented as:

REBELS prod them with rifles, making them from a line. All under the watchful sunglasses of RUF COLONEL. The first villager is shoved to his knees in front of a tree stump. A muscle-bound, SHIRTLESS REBEL with a gleaming AXE struts over, his eyes glazed from palm wine and marijuana. A second rebels grabs the village man's hand and places on the stump. The man pulls his hand away. Tupac T-Shirt puts the AK-47 to his hand. The choice is clear. Your hand or your heads. The villager tries to scramble away. RAT-A-TAT! Bullet through his hand. (00:03:37-00:05:10)

The scene captures the killing and cutting the hands of innocent villagers by the RUF. Most of the villagers who are unable for work are killed. For the physically strong men they take for work in diamond mining. Solomon is pushed to cut his hand but the RUF. Colonel says, "Not him... He can work" (00:06:33-00:06:41) and he is herded into a waiting truck. The shot of the first scene of this figure is taken as a long shot to visualize the attack of terrorist, mass killing, burning village. In the same way, the shot of the second and third scene of the figure is captured as a close-up shot to show

the brutal hand cutting and Solomon's turn to cut hand but he is escape to work in mine for Rebel group.

The war has caused a tremendous refugee crisis and internal displacement. It is realistically presented in *Blood Diamond*. It reflects the internally displaced persons during the terrific village attack by RUF.



Fig. 4. Replacement of Large Number of People as Refugee

The film captures the reality of people's replacement as refugees through its scene of the Guinea Refugee Camp. According to the war report, it is estimated that more than two thirds of the population was displaced internally. In the film when Solomon visits the refugee camp to find his family. The large numbers of displaced people appear in the scene.

Blood Diamond depicts the actual political and social reality of Sierra Leone during conflict. While Danny Archer returns from Cape Town after meeting Colonel Coetzee, the camera captures the scene from Freetown, the capital city as an unplanned city of developing nation. Through the bird's eye shot, the film captures the roof top setting of the city. Unmanaged bus stops, the old turned vehicles, the frightened people, etc., are not beyond the reality of war torn country. In this sense, the contemporary social reality of Sierra Leone is the major concern of the cinema.

The bird's eye shot is taken here in order to reflect the contemporary picture of Freetown.



Fig.5. A Bird's Eye Shot in the Film to Capture Actual Picture of Freetown

Since the title of the cinema *Blood Diamond* refers to the diamond found by Solomon who has been hidden in the jungle, the film makes this stone as the central and makes other characters directly or indirectly connected with it. While Danny Archer has known the fact he is behind Solomon for diamond. Similarly, the Colonel of RUF too has kidnapped his son Dia and has made him devoted rebel in order to bargain for pink diamond with Solomon.

New historicism assumes that literary work too captures some sort of historical facts since it gives the historical sense of certain places and timeframe. *Blood Diamond* is set in Sierra Leone during the civil war in 1999 and is not beyond the true historical facts of the nation. As its title indicates it links blood and diamonds. The film is able to connect both blood and diamond with Sierra Leone's history. Sierra Leone is well known for its diamond minerals. And much more than this, it is known for the continuous terror, violence and tussles between RUF rebels and unstable government of the nation during the last decade of 20th century. The film tries to address the conflict due to the valuable minerals like diamonds in the country.

Through the visual language, the film also ties diamonds to particular exercises of physical violence in the war. Diamonds are directly associated with the terror in the film. Similarly, the use of child soldiers, the enslavement of men for work in the diamond mines and the massive displacement of the civilian population, etc., are not beyond the social and political reality of Sierra Leone. With the continuous arm conflict, there is the death of thousands of innocent people, displacement of citizens as well as extreme suffering. These are the historical facts associated with Sierra Leone. *Blood Diamond* as a political adventure and action movie. It tries to visualize similar realistic incidents which makes it as a reflection of certain part of history of Sierra Leone.

Diamonds are directly associated with the terror in the film. Similarly, the use of child soldiers, the enslavement of men for work in the diamond mines and the massive displacement of the civilian population, etc., are not beyond the social and political reality of Sierra Leone. Not surprisingly, the first diamonds shown in the film are blood stained. They are briefly shown when Archer gets them from RUF commander Zero, in the close up shot when one of the boarder guards shows them. These diamonds are sullied with blood, as the guard has just cut them out of the goat which Archer has used to smuggle them into Liberia. Symbolically the violence associated with diamond is the historical fact of Sierra Leone.

The film discloses the main cause of illegal trade of diamonds. Maddy Bowen brings the reality to media as she has the mission to capture the real process and root of illegal diamond supply from Sierra Leone. Maddy Bowen knows that Solomon has pink diamond and searching for his family. She not only brings him to London but also compels greedy businessman, Mr. Van De Kaap to bring and unite Solomon's family. Maddy Bowen, with the help of Solomon, captures the incident how the big

businessman like Mr. Van De Kaap buys such illegal diamonds from Sierra Leone. It reveals Van De Kaap's real identity in media as the diamond smuggler who has been playing major role for the civil war in Sierra Leone.

As a commercial cinema, the film, as the major element, brings the attachment of Maddy Bowen and Danny Archer, the major factor to bring them together is nothing else but diamonds. Maddy Bowen, Danny Archer and Solomon Vandy all three are united due to the diamond with different purposes. Maddy Bowen aims to reveal the reality of illegal diamond supply. Similarly, Danny Archer aims to get diamond and to make his life secure. Solomon with the help of diamond wants to reunite all his family. The film gives justice to Solomon by reuniting his family. It even fulfills the mission of Maddy Bowen but Danny Archer faces the tragic death however his death seems heroic. However, the film finds the happy ending of Solomon's family and Maddy Bowen too accomplishes her mission. Through the triangular relationship among a diamond smuggler, Danny Archer, journalist, Maddy Bowen and common native Solomon Vandy the film stands as a historical meta-fiction due to its representation of historical facts of the last decade of 20th century from Sierra Leone's history in fictional form. The film also makes the audience to think differently about diamonds and wars with historical knowledge of Sierra Leone's civil war. The film makers have conquered the place and time frame of Sierra Leone's part of history as a cluttered landscape like historians, anthropologists, and sociologists. In this sense, *Blood Diamond* is a reflection of Sierra Leone history in fictional form.

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