

Gabriel Da Silva

Portuguese 80

Professor Ana Maria Seara

5/20/2023

WORD COUNT: WC: 598

FILM RESPONSE 3: SLEEPWALKING LAND

"Sleepwalking Land" is a film adaptation of Mia Couto's novel, directed by Teresa Prata. While successfully portraying the catastrophic impact of the Mozambican civil war, the film veers away from the mystical scenes of the novel, grounding the narrative in harsh realities and keeping it more relatable to the viewer. It focuses more on the human resilience and the potency of storytelling but doesn't completely encompass the fantasy-reality duality present in the novel. The story(novel) tells a dual narrative of survival and journey. Tuahir, an old man, and Muidinga, an orphan, find comfort reading a series of journals by a wanderer named Kindzu. As they navigate their own survival in a burnt-out bus amidst a brutal civil war, they follow Kindzu's pursuit of finding Gaspar, Farida's son, a journey marked by a mix of harsh realities and magical realism.

In Couto's novel, fantasy and reality are intricately mixed together, creating this magical world between fantasy and the harsh reality of the war. This magical realism is significantly toned down in the film. For instance, the ghost of Ramao Pinto, a character that contributes to the mystical atmosphere of the novel, is completely absent from the film. This could be interpreted as the director's attempt to portray a more linear and realistic narrative, compared to the novel

that depicted Pinto as a greedy Portuguese that even after his death he tries to get money from people around there; even going so far as to sell his own coffin.

Also, the scene involving Skellington in the novel is significantly altered in the film. In the book, Skellington's interaction with Tuahir and Muindinga adds another layer to the story, even the mystical and unrealistic parts of how Tuahir was able to make the old man sleep by telling him of a brighter future and the scene where Muridinga writes in the ground and the tree. The film took a different approach by making the two characters run away after the old man left to get a shovel. Tuahir uses the cigarette to weaken the net to be able to escape with the boy before Skellington can bury them.

Another deviation is the omission of the scene where Muindinga and Tuahir create a river. In the novel, they start doing that after they met Nhamataca a old acquaintance of Tuahir and he explains to them what he was doing and the two characters decide to also help him on the digging for this river and after it rains and this river is created and it also help on a totally different chronological time compared to the movie. However, in the movie, the river is created after the two character give up after going back to the bus for the second time and Muridinga decides to create a hole and from this hole the river was made and that also caused then to use the bus as locomotion to get to the sea that didn't happen in the novel.

While *"Sleepwalking Land"* is a great film, the dilution of the mystical elements from the novel restricts its narrative complexity. The fantastical elements in the novel, such as the ghost of Pinto and the backstory of the creation of the river, provide an escapism that softens the harsh realities of war. They also serve as metaphors for deeper themes of the story . By omitting these elements, the film presents a more realistic, but arguably less rich, narrative film compared to the novel.