

# Lights...Camera...Africa: Images of Africa and Africans in Western Popular Films of the 1930s

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The steady beating of the war-drums grows stronger. An exotically painted black face peers out behind a bush. The African porters drop their packs and cower in fear, but the tall, courageous white hunter forces them on. Suddenly a spear flies out of the bush and hits a porter in the chest. The rest of the porters, screaming, disperse into the jungle, only to be cut down by the savages. With his trusty gun, the white man fends off the brutes and retreats to a nearby cliff. As the tension mounts, the audience sits spellbound.

Such images became the staple for "jungle" movies in the early part of this century. During the Depression era, the economic importance of the West's African colonies greatly increased. What these celluloid images suggest is that, consciously or not, the filmmakers were acting as cultural colonialists by reinforcing and legitimizing Western political practices in Africa. These images contributed to the viewing audiences' misperception of Africa and Africans and helped to perpetuate and strengthen racist and colonialist modes of thinking.

For this study, I have chosen nine films from the United States and Great Britain that can be considered "popular" films based on their box office success and wide distribution: *Trader Horn* (1931), *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), *Sanders of the River* (1935), *Tarzan and his Mate* (1934), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), *Tarzan Escapes* (1936), *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939), *Four Feathers* (1939) and *Stanley and Livingstone* (1939).<sup>1</sup> In order to establish a sufficient framework to analyze these films, a review of recent theoretical writings relating to this topic is necessary. This will be followed by a discussion of the historical context in which these movies were produced. Such a discussion will provide an understanding of the social, political, economic and cultural climate of the thirties and will help explain why certain images were used and what effect they would have upon the viewing audience. Finally, I will analyze each film and the images presented within, drawing several conclusions which I hope will be highly illuminating

and useful in the continued studies of Africa, popular culture and cultural anthropology.

### The Image of The "Other"

An examination of how Africa and Africans have been represented in Western films is, at heart, an examination of the relationship between 'otherness' and the dynamics of power.<sup>2</sup> To fully understand this, some review of recent theory and scholarship is necessary. A number of recent academic works examine the representations of Africans and Africa in Western literature: *White on Black: Contemporary Literature about Africa*, John Cullen Gruesser (1992); *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*, Christopher Miller (1985); and *The Africa That Never Was: Four Centuries of British Writing about Africa*, Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow (1970, reprinted 1992). Each work seeks to answer how and why various representations of Africans and Africa emerged. These works draw heavily upon other cultural/literary critics such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Edward Said. These works, however, are focused almost exclusively on representations in literature. In his recent work, *White On Black: Images of Africans and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (1992), Jan Pieterse argues that popular ideologies take shape in images as well as in words: "Every picture tells a story: visual imagery too has a narrative character and structure" (226).

Like literary representations, cinematic representations are constructions of an *other* by a *self*.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this paper, I would like to stress a few key points with regard to theories of "otherness." First, images of the "other" are projections from the "self" and do not represent actuality. Related to that, such imagery tells us more about the "self" than the "other." In Pieterse's words, "ideology of *alter* involves an ideology of *ego*. Representations of otherness are therefore also indirectly representations of self" (1992, 232). Therefore, one can actually learn more about the makers of the films in this study than the subject of their films, i.e. Africa.

It is important to realize that images of "otherness" are constantly in flux. The images of Africa and Africans in the 1990s, for instance, are different from the images presented in the 1930s. Such changes in imagery have more to do with changes of the "self" than of the "other." What is in flux is 1) the dynamics *within* the labeling group [self] as well as 2) the relationship *between* the labeling group [self] and the group being labeled [other].<sup>4</sup> There are many and varying images of the African "other" constructed in the films of the 1930s. This study attempts not only to identify the similarities of these images but more importantly to examine and explain the differences. In order to understand the images that were produced in the thirties, one must

examine the dynamics within the labeling groups (the United States and Great Britain). In addition, there should be an examination of the relationship between these labeling groups and the group being labeled—Africa and Africans.<sup>5</sup>

### The “Selves” and “Others” of the 1930s

The overriding event of the 1930s for both the United States and Great Britain was the Great Depression. This economic disaster brought about major social changes that had a direct impact on imagery in the movies of the time, especially when portraying issues of gender, class and race.

For the white, middle class Americans and British most affected by the Depression, these times frequently meant that the male breadwinner was out of work, which was a severe blow to the masculine self-image. Therefore, films of this era frequently seek to reaffirm this injured masculinity. Characters such as Alan Quartermain (*King Solomon's Mines*), “Lord Sandy” (*Sanders of the River*) and especially Tarzan did much to restore and strengthen the white, middle class male viewer's ego. However, different characters projected different societal ideals of manhood. America's Tarzan, for instance, represented brute strength, perseverance and individuality while the British hero Sanders stressed the virtues of efficiency, leadership and strong parental guidance.

Because of the unequal distribution of wealth, class divisions were especially visible in the 1930s. Many negative images of the upper class surface to reflect this class tension, even in films set in Africa. The fact that Tarzan's aristocratic blood (the primary intent for Edgar Rice Burrough's books) is never even mentioned in the 1930s films is very telling. Rather than being of nobility, the celluloid Tarzan is a champion of the average white man, which connects to the populism flourishing in the thirties.<sup>6</sup> Closely related to this populism is the emphasis placed on the individual work ethic in many Hollywood films of the time, *42nd Street* (1933), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), including those set in Africa (*Stanley and Livingstone* (1939)).

The thirties were also a time of conflicting racial attitudes. On the one hand, governmental actions of the decade sought to increase equality among the races (such as Roosevelt's civil rights programs). However, there were growing racial tensions as jobs became scarce. As white males lost their jobs, they would frequently seek to force blacks and other ethnic groups out of what had traditionally been non-white sectors of employment. Many working women suffered a similar fate. Therefore, constructed images of inept Africans (and women) dependent upon the survival skills of white men can be seen as reflecting and

reinforcing the white, middle class male viewer's attitudes in this regard. Such examples can be readily found in all nine of the films in this study, particularly *Stanley and Livingstone* and the Tarzan series.

The harsh economic and social conditions of the day also explain the escapist elements of the films. People flocked to theaters, leaving their troubles for awhile, to sit inside a movie theater and travel to a world where white men still dominated and were in control. Attendance grew at a phenomenal rate: in the United States attendance averaged 60 million per week and in Great Britain the annual attendance in 1939 reached 990 million (Adams 1994, 11; Richards 1984, 11).

After the advent of sound in the late 1920s, the film industry sought to achieve a more realistic, documentary style. Camera crews were often sent overseas to bring back footage of authentic African scenery to increase the realism of the films. For example, the production of *Stanley and Livingstone* was postponed to give Osa Johnson time to film the necessary footage of Africa for backdrops, while *Trader Horn* was filmed almost entirely on location in Africa.<sup>7</sup> Because of these "realistic" effects and the way in which the studios presented these images in an "educational" fashion, the audience was often led to believe that these images accurately represented African reality (Richards 1984, 23-4; 67-85).<sup>8</sup>

In Britain, the domestic film industry was never able to achieve the prominence that Hollywood enjoyed. In her book *British Genres*, Marcia Landy refers to the economic and cultural dependency of the British cinema on Hollywood. Despite this cultural imperialism, British cinema did establish its own unique styles and genres (1991, 24). For example, all three of the 1930s British popular films set in Africa (*Sanders, King Solomon, Four Feathers*) belong to the "empire film" genre, in which Britain and its culture are glorified.<sup>9</sup> As their African empire covered "the Cape to Cairo," relations with Africa were very important for Britain during this time.<sup>10</sup> After the First World War, Britain and the rest of Europe had to depend on the raw materials and resources provided by their colonies to rebuild. Due primarily to domestic economic woes, there was an increase in British emigration to Africa during the 1930s which was encouraged by the government. Therefore, inviting images of Africa, ripe for settlement with promises of riches, can be found in the British films about Africa. As will be seen, images relating to Britain's unique policy of "indirect rule" will also be prevalent in the African empire films. During the latter half of the decade, constructed images of the empire were further affected by Britain's slow but inevitable drift towards war.

### **Trader Horn (1931-MGM)**

In 1931, *Trader Horn* became the first non-documentary film to be shot almost entirely in Africa. Based rather loosely on the 1927 biography of the white hunter Aloysius Horn, the film was a stunning success both domestically and abroad, receiving an Academy Award nomination for Best Picture. The book itself is a selection of reminiscences and tall-tales. The film, directed by W.S. Van Dyke, focuses almost entirely on one of the latter.

While short on plot, the film is full of adventure and excitement, establishing the precedent for subsequent "jungle" films such as *Tarzan the Ape Man* and its sequels. The film opens with the veteran trader Horn (Harry Carey) and his rookie side-kick Peru (Duncan Renaldo). Together they travel into the interior of Africa where "no white man has gone before." They are accompanied by Horn's faithful African gun-bearer, Renchero (Mutia Omoolu). In the interior, they rescue Nina, the "white goddess" (Edwina Booth), a young white girl who has been captured and raised by natives. After rescuing Nina, the group treks back to the coast. Along the way Nina and Peru fall in love and Renchero dies.

At the center of the story is Horn, who provides Peru (and the viewer) with an endless stream of wisdom and knowledge. As Horn proudly asserts in the opening scene: "No white man knows more of Africa than I." His favorite expression is "That's Africa for you...," followed by an experienced insight provided for the audience's education (i.e. "when you're not eating somebody, you're trying to keep somebody from eating you"). Horn is an excellent example of the experienced, wizen, masculine hero found in many Hollywood adventure films. In fact, his character (and the movie's premise) is quite similar to John Wayne's character in *The Seekers*, even down to his strong distaste for miscegenation.

The audience identifies with the naïve Peru and he becomes the cinematic go-between for the viewer. When Horn is lecturing Peru on Africa, he is indirectly lecturing the audience. The film acquires a definite documentary feel as Horn identifies African wildlife and discourses on the ways of Africa and Africans. Peru's education is the audience's education.

The images of Africa in *Trader Horn* fall into two basic categories:

- 1) Africa as an untamed wilderness; and
- 2) Africa as a dream/nightmare.

The image of Africa as an untamed wilderness, an "open zoo" teeming with wildlife and undisturbed by man, is central to the film.

At times the film becomes similar to a travelogue with extensive footage of African scenery and wildlife. As Horn educates and “explodes myths” about African wildlife, viewers may well wonder if they are watching a documentary. The film’s Africa is completely untamed without any cities, towns or any other symbols of “civilization” which would infringe on the purity of the image.

With the untamed wilderness for a backdrop, the film also portrays Africa as a dream/nightmare. This convention is found in almost every 1930s feature film that is set in Africa. Often, in the eyes of the naïve, Africa is a dream: beautiful, peaceful and beckoning. To the experienced eye or to the naïve eye after education, Africa exists as a nightmare: terrifying, horrific and frequently fatal. At the beginning of *Trader Horn*, Peru rejects Horn’s hardened view of Africa and Africans. For Peru, Africa is a dreamscape, a paradise. He is quickly rebuked by the brutal “reality” that he encounters: murder and native savagery. Later, the wildlife paradise of the interior turns into a nightmare, first by the brutality of the wildlife, then by the savagery of the natives. The fatality of Africa is constantly stressed throughout the film. The early death of a female missionary (the mother of Nina) serves as a warning to Peru and the audience that Africa is inhospitable to white people.

The film constructs three images of Africans:

- 1) Africans as savages;
- 2) Africans as lazy, untrustworthy porters; and
- 3) Renchero, the loyal servant.

Throughout the movie, the experienced Horn repeatedly refers to Africans as black devils, black apes, monkeys and children. His loyal gun-bearer Renchero is not exempt from such names. Introducing the film’s first Africans, Horn comments that “they’d trade their mothers” for a fistful of salt. Peru argues that Horn is mistaken and that the Africans “are just happy, ignorant children.” However, Peru soon discovers the savagery of the Africans when he sees a skeleton hanging upside down. “Just a little childish prank,” chides Horn. During the trade transaction, drums are suddenly heard (“juju” states Horn) and the Africans begin to work themselves into a frenzy. When Horn and Peru retreat to their boat, they find two of their native attendants murdered. Thus, the first Africans are shown as savage, simplistic and murderous. This image of the savage native is continued and reinforced throughout the film.

In the interior, the African tribe led by Nina tortures and kills all of Horn’s remaining porters in a bloodthirsty frenzy. They are about to kill Horn, Peru and Renchero when Nina releases them, despite the protests of the natives. The lesson of this scene, and the entire film, is

encapsulated in Peru's statement to Nina: "Don't you understand, white people must help each other." Despite having "gone native," Nina somehow comprehends her inherent white superiority and morality and escapes with Peru and Horn.

The second image of Africans in this film is that of the lazy porters. This convention of the "colonized" African became a staple throughout the 1930s Africanist films. The porters frequently hesitate out of laziness or fear and cower behind the group's white leaders. The porters must be forced on by whippings and beatings, usually administered by the African supervisor, in this case Renchero. The porter's eventual (and imminent) deaths help to convince the audience of the hazardousness of Africa (i.e. being trampled by a rhino) or the savagery of the natives (i.e. being burned alive). Furthermore, Horn and Peru, like the white men in other jungle films, rarely comment on the demise of these Africans; they are expendable.

*Trader Horn* also contains the image of the loyal African servant, Renchero. This is the "good" African who cleans underneath Horn's toenails, translates for Horn and eventually dies for Horn. Despite being kicked, pushed and verbally abused by Horn, he follows his "master" like an obedient dog. He is completely subservient and submissive to Horn. His loyalty is repaid only after his death when Horn lovingly imagines Renchero's face floating above the horizon at the film's conclusion. As I will show, the image of the loyal African servant will be modified and continued in other films throughout the decade.

***Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1932-MGM), *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934-MGM), *Tarzan Escapes* (1936-MGM) and *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939-MGM)**

During the 1930s, the American Africanist film genre was dominated by the Tarzan series. There have been roughly forty Tarzan movies, from the 1918 Elmo Lincoln silent feature *Tarzan of the Apes* to the 1989 made-for-television feature *Tarzan in Manhattan* starring Joe Lara, all rather loosely based on the books by Edgar Rice Burroughs. In the history of cinema, the Tarzan movies are perhaps the most enduring and prolific of all movie serials. Moreover, they are arguably the largest shaper of the West's perception of Africa. Because of their original box office success and the continued production and distribution of the series through television and video, Tarzan movies have helped to influence and shape Western perceptions of Africa more than any other cinematic force.<sup>11</sup>

In the minds of millions, the name, the face and, perhaps more importantly, the infamous yell of Olympic swimmer Johnny Weissmuller springs to mind at the mention of "Tarzan." No other

Tarzan reigned for as long or through as many movies as Weismuller, originally for MGM and then for RKO. It was Weismuller's Tarzan, accompanied by Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane, who established Tarzan as part of every childhood in America. Though there were earlier versions, many spin-offs and rival Tarzans from other studios, they all failed to have the impact or popularity which the Weismuller and O'Sullivan features enjoyed. For most, the original Weismuller-O'Sullivan's *Tarzan, the Ape Man* remains THE Tarzan movie. Conceived originally by MGM as a sequel to *Trader Horn*, it was released in 1932 and was immensely popular among the Depression-era audiences. During the 1930s, Weismuller and O'Sullivan returned for the racy *Tarzan and His Mate* in 1934, the graphically violent *Tarzan Escapes* in 1936 and the "jungle family values" entry, *Tarzan Finds a Son!* in 1939.<sup>12</sup> For our work here, the original in the series, *Tarzan, the Ape Man*, created African images which were to be repeated and reinforced in the three sequels. While focusing primarily on this particular film, reference will be made to the three sequels as they relate, reinforce or alter certain images.

The images of Africa in the Tarzan movies fall into five categories:

- 1) Africa as inhospitable to the white man;
- 2) Africa as the keeper of a great treasure;
- 3) Africa as a hunter's paradise (in *Tarzan Escapes*);
- 4) Africa as a dream/nightmare; and
- 5) Africa as a land which time forgot.

The first image, Africa as inhospitable to the white man, is clearly the most prevalent and easy to recognize in the Tarzan movies. *Tarzan, the Ape Man* opens with James Parker and his trader partner Harry discussing how they hate "this awful hole." Their introduction of Africa to Jane is based upon the repetition of this theme. The movie seems to bear out their conclusions. Africa is fraught with danger from the wildlife, the environs and the savage natives. The majority of the first movie follows Jane and her party traveling from one danger to the next. Another danger is always around the corner and this is the basic theme of all the sequels as white people foolishly tramp around the African jungle. If it were not for Tarzan, everyone would quickly die in Africa. In fact, all the white people except Tarzan and Jane *do* die. The lesson is clear: stay at home; don't go to Africa.

Why then does the white man go to Africa? In *Tarzan, the Ape Man* the reason is that Parker and Harry are seeking the ivory wealth of the secret "Elephant's Burial Ground." Here the viewer encounters the second image of Africa: as keeper of a great and undiscovered treasure. This is reflective of the oft used convention that equates



Africa with a fantasy world. Africa is the plausible home of any treasure a writer wishes to bestow upon it. This source of ivory wealth is also the goal in *Tarzan and His Mate*, in which Harry and his new partner Martin try to return to the Elephant's Burial Ground only to die from the dangers of Africa. In *Tarzan Escapes*, the treasure for the antagonist Captain Fry is Africa's rich wildlife, introducing the image of Africa as a hunter's paradise into the Tarzan series. For the evil Captain Fry, however, the real treasure is the Ape Man himself. As one can probably guess, Africa continues to keep its treasures and all the foolish white men trying to steal them come to grizzly ends. In this case Fry falls prey to some camera lens-enhanced killer lizards.

Perhaps the most prevalent image of Africa is that of a dreamland at odds with itself: at times a dream/paradise and at others a nightmare. In the 1930s, no movie is more illustrative of this image than *Tarzan, the Ape Man*. Jane wanders through the African dreamscape, slipping from one extreme to the other and frequently with a foot in each realm. The movie begins with Jane arriving in Africa to join her father and immediately falling in love with the continent. However, this dream image of Africa is reserved for the coastal area where the white man is in control. As she journeys beyond the safety of "civilization," Africa becomes a dangerous nightmare. Hippos, crocodiles, savages, cliffs, leopards, apes, lions and yet more savages help contribute to this nightmare image.

It is Tarzan and the protection that he provides which restores Jane's vision of Africa as a dream/paradise. Because Tarzan has conquered and tamed the savage African wilderness, he provides the same security that can be found in the colonized coastal regions. In this sense, Tarzan has colonized the African interior and the white man again reigns supreme. Despite the facts that the dangers of Africa continue to exist, it will remain a dream/paradise for Jane as long as Tarzan is around. Take away Tarzan and the nightmare creeps back in.

The fifth image of Africa, as the land that time forgot, is reflective once again of the convention of Africa as a fantasy world. When white travelers enter into the interior of Africa, they return to nature: the original, untamed world. As a fantasy world, any culture or creature can plausibly be placed in Africa for the viewing audience. Perhaps nothing is more illustrative of this point than the presentation of the previously mentioned prehistoric lizards-cum-dinosaurs in *Tarzan Escapes*.

In the Tarzan movies, Africans are imaged as part of the general backdrop: natives being synonymous with nature. Africans are never given roles, but instead as "others" are constructed to fit snugly into two general categories:

- 1) Africans who have been colonized, but remain at heart "natural" Africans; and
- 2) Africans au naturel.

*Tarzan, the Ape Man* contains the only presentation of "colonized" Africans as trading partners in the series. This construct provides useful and interesting imagery which helps establish the "authenticity" of the film. While Jane, Harry and her father chat in front of a screen, behind them footage of "real" African ethnic groups is projected. The contemporary viewers are presented with what will often be their first exposure to "real" Africans. The viewer joins the three white actors on their journey through this African "zoo." For the viewer, this is a very "educational" presentation of a variety of African ethnic groups and their customs. In actuality, the African's primary purpose in this scene is to be the butt of Jane and Harry's jokes as they belittle African dress, physical features and customs. This scene serves well as a lesson on exoticism and a classic presentation of the "self" gazing at a constructed "other." The Africans (the "other") are presented in a manner that seeks to exaggerate, emphasize and belittle their "unusualness" in the Western eye. Thus their characteristics are the negative opposites of the positive Western characteristics with which the filmmakers use to define the "self."

The more common role of the "colonized" African is as a porter. These are the Africans who have come under the protection of the whites and who perform the valuable service of carrying their luggage. They wear the rags of Western dress to show that they are at least attempting to emulate the white man. Importantly, these Africans are exclusively imaged as being superstitious and lazy. In *Tarzan, the Ape Man*, one African is unable to speak out of a superstitious fear of the Mutia Escarpment, the barrier mountains protecting the Elephant's graveyard.<sup>13</sup> The cliffs are *juju* (taboo) for the Africans and the African mentioned above actually dies of fright after looking at the cliffs. The porters are portrayed as being fearful of everything that exists in their own land. The viewer cannot help but note that the Africans would probably die if the white man was not there to protect them.

Throughout the Tarzan films, the colonized Africans are portrayed as being worthless and lazy. The bearers must be constantly whipped in order to make them move ("the boys need a bit of first-hand persuasion to keep them going"). These whippings are depicted in the movie with indifferent brutality. In one particularly enlightening scene, a bearer falls to his death climbing the cliffs (a scene which was repeated in *Tarzan and His Mate*). After his terrifying screams subside Harry immediately asks Parker what was in the pack that the bearer was carrying. Only afterwards does he express any emotion for the "poor devil" and then only to comment that "I don't suppose it could

have been helped." The conclusions are obvious for the viewer: the colonized African is only slightly removed from his natural state of being, which is a lazy, slow and a superstitious heathen. It is the duty of the white man to protect these simple children from the dangers of their natural surroundings. In order to work, the African needs constant prodding and supervision. The loss of an African is regrettable only in that it inconveniences the white man.

The second image of the African is in his natural state. That is to say, the African who is as one with the savagery of Africa. There are never images of Africans involved in "normal" acts such as cooking, working, eating or sleeping. The African *au naturel* is either at war or torturing his prisoners. Thus, the images of heathen savages created earlier by European slave traders are perpetuated as they become part of the established image of Africa. The African *au naturel* is constructed as a savage, blood-thirsty, cannibalistic beast who performs the primary role of attacking Tarzan and innocent white travelers.

The epitome of this created image can be found in *Tarzan, the Ape Man*. Jane, her father, Harry, and the remaining bearers are captured by a blood-thirsty, torturous tribe of African dwarves. No, they are not pygmies, for the dialogue clearly states that they are a tribe of dwarves. To argue that this entire construct is bizarre would be a tremendous understatement. The rationale for using dwarves for this role (many of which appear to be whites in black face) remains a mystery. However, the imagery is extremely powerful, as it adds to the exoticism of Africa and reinforces the distinction between African and white. For the viewer, Africa is truly a bizarre and otherworldly place.

These African dwarves prove to be extremely vicious, taking ecstatic glee in torturing their victims and dropping them into a pit where a gorilla-type animal kills them. The scenes of the African dwarves working themselves into a frenzy during this orgy of death strengthens the view of Africans as savages and blood-thirsty brutes. The vileness of the African is built up to the extent that, when Tarzan and his elephant friends wipe out the entire village, the viewers are actually cheering the massacre and annihilation. At the end, all the bearers are dead and the savages' village is wiped out. The message is that the life of an African is cheap. At heart, they are savages and probably deserve to die. In all, very powerful conclusions and images to walk out of a movie house with, especially for the young and impressionable.

*Sanders of the River* (1935-London Films [UK])

In 1935, one of director Zoltan Korda's first empire films, *Sanders of the River*, was released. This film, starring Leslie Banks, Paul Robeson and Nina Mae McKinney, was based on the enormously popular literary series created by Edgar Wallace in 1910 and continued after his death by Francis Gerard.<sup>14</sup> An excellent example of the empire film genre, *Sanders* succinctly represents the colonial imagery and mentality of the British at the height of its African empire. The film is also interesting for it contains an African female character in a major role, a noticeable exception to a gender imbalance that continues today. In the film, Nina Mae McKinney portrays Lilongo, an African slave turned chief's wife. However, it must be noted that Lilongo stands out against the nameless African women in the movie because of her "white" features: light skin, thin lips, straight long hair and distinctly Western dress.

The plot of the movie centers around the work of Henry Sanders, a British colonial official in a section of Nigeria. He is assisted in his job by the fugitive Bosambo who Sanders establishes as a local chief at the beginning of the movie. Sanders' nemesis is the old King Mofalaba, whose land is just outside of Sanders' colonial control. The old king is involved in the trading of slaves and, with the assistance of two bad Europeans (pointedly not British), firearms and gin. When Sanders leaves on vacation, his region falls into warfare and chaos. Sanders is forced to return and restore security. At the end of the film, Sanders succeeds in destroying King Mofalaba and establishing Bosambo as the new king.

The self-image of the British in the embodiment of Sanders is quite fascinating. In the words of Marcia Landy, Sanders is "the prototype of the colonial administrator...[as a] product of the British public schools and its avowed ethos of fair play, duty and responsibility, he rules over the natives not only like a father but as a surrogate for the king of England" (1991, 101). He is portrayed as being brave, wise and knowing the Africans better than they know themselves. He has a strong concern for the interest of the British taxpayers. Above all, he is paternally strong-handed with his "black children." The most pronounced lesson created in the film is that Africans fear and respect the strong, harsh authority of their British protectors. Sanders patronizingly refers to the Africans as "his children" whom he "loves," and they in response claim that he is "father and mother to the peoples of the river."

The constructed images of Africans in *Sanders* underscore the colonial mentality of the day. There exist three easily distinguished images:

- 1) Africans as servants;
- 2) Africans colonized by the British; and
- 3) Africans au naturel.

In this first image, Africans in crisp uniforms serve the dual purpose of manservant and soldier. They rarely speak, except to say "Yes mah Lord." These images reinforce the British relationships of superiority and servitude with regard to the Africans.

Bosambo, played by Paul Robeson, represents the good, loyal, obedient African, i.e. the "colonized African."<sup>15</sup> He is not a "noble savage," but rather an obedient servant. This was a necessary image to support the British colonial policy of Indirect Rule. In Africa, the British officials would rule through the "traditional" tribal systems. They would use the tribal chiefs as mediators between the administrators and the masses. They would empower or replace chiefs as they saw fit and if the community did not have a male ruler, the British would alter it so that it would. This policy helped save money for it required only a few British men to rule over large sections of Africa. In order for the system to work properly, there had to exist loyal and obedient chiefs who would do the bidding of the British officials, such as Bosambo. Thus, such constructions were important for the British audiences. Because the US did not have an empire and audiences were unfamiliar with Indirect Rule, the relevance of such images were unimportant and are not found in the Hollywood films of this era.

The colonized African, however, was still an African au naturel at heart. Bosambo is a criminal, a fugitive and a liar. Bosambo states that "I lie to anybody if I think it is good for me." Indeed, all speaking Africans (except his servants) lie to Sanders throughout the movie. Fortunately for the British, Sanders knows that the Africans are inherently liars. Africans are also imaged to be without religious convictions. Bosambo claims to Sanders that he is a Christian, only to accept Islam for the sake of Lilongo soon afterwards. The Africans ability to understand Christianity is mocked by Bosambo's stated commitment to the teachings of "Markey, Lukey and Johnny." In the end, British colonialism cannot completely defeat the inherent savagery of the natives. This is illustrated by the violent song Bosambo teaches to his child:

On, on into battle/ make the war drums rattle/ mow them down like  
cattle/ onward, on into battle/ stamp them into the dust/ into the dust/  
charge, cheer/ shoot, spear/ onward, smash/ slice, slash/ fight and slay.

Further proving this point, the facade of civilization crumbles when Sanders leaves. Within a week, the "colonized" Africans have reverted to their supposed natural state of warfare, anarchy and chaos.

The British remedy? "Be quick and strong with them like a father would with his misguided children."

In contrast to the "colonized" African are the images of Africans *au naturel*. In *Sanders*, King Mofalaba is the quintessential African *au naturel*. He is defined as an African without the benefits of British colonialism and civilization who retains the "natural" African characteristics. He is evil, wicked, violent and brutal. He lies to Sanders and brutally murders the colonial officer who replaces Sanders. In the end, he is killed and, in accordance with the practice of Indirect Rule, Sanders establishes Bosambo as the new king.

There are no portrayals of Africans in normal daily activities such as farming, working or even cooking. Instead, images stressing African exoticism are constructed, frequently focusing on ritualistic pre-war "blood" dances. There is also a clear effort to equate Africans with nature. In one particularly revealing sequence, the image of an African climbing a tree is sandwiched between rapid images of African wildlife, leaving the viewer with the clear connotation of African as ape or monkey.

### *King Solomon's Mines* (1937–Gaumont [UK])

*King Solomon's Mines* is the story of a group of whites led by the great white hunter, Allan Quartermain, on a journey into the unknown interior of Africa to search for the mythical diamond mines of King Solomon. Based on H. Rider Haggard's novel, this British version released in 1937 was directed by Robert Stevenson and starred Paul Robeson and Cedric Hardwicke. Though the film was a tremendous success, today's audiences usually pass it up for the more famous 1950 American version starring Stewart Granger and Deborah Kerr, which differs greatly from the original.<sup>16</sup>

The 1937 film constructs three images of Africa:

- 1) Africa as the keeper of lost treasures and wealth;
- 2) Africa as an untamed void; and
- 3) Africa as a dream/nightmare.

These are similar to the images found in other movies of the same era, such as *Tarzan*, *the Ape Man* and *Stanley and Livingstone*. However, *King Solomon's Mines* alters some of the images for its British audience.

The plot of *King Solomon's Mines* relies on the fact that there is a lost diamond mine in the interior of Africa (in this case, South Africa). In keeping with the fantasy world tradition, placing a lost treasure in the middle of Africa is not unreasonable because the entire continent is a void on which the artists (writers and directors) can construct

alternate realities without fear of rejection or disbelief. As Patrick O'Brian, the Irish opportunist in the film points out, Africa is keeper of fortunes in ivory and wildlife as well. This image of Africa as a source of wealth was useful in encouraging British emigration (Hammond and Jablow 1992, 157-68). It is noteworthy to recognize that the treasure is the product of a white man, King Solomon. It would undermine the foundation of European paternalism and colonialism to admit that the Africans were able to amass a fortune in diamonds or even that they were capable of controlling that much wealth.

Illustrating the second image of Africa as a void, Allan Quartermain points out that beyond a certain river Africa is a great unknown where "no man has ever set foot." Thus, Africa is an emptiness; a void waiting to be filled, named and settled by the white man. What proves interesting in this film is that this unknown and "uninhabited" land is actually inhabited by numerous African peoples. Ironically, Quartermain knows the name of the tribes, speaks their language fluently and is surprisingly knowledgeable of their customs and beliefs.

Finally, there is the image of Africa as a dream/nightmare. Africa oscillates wildly between both extremes, often existing in both realms simultaneously. The first part of the film constructs images of Africa with lush landscapes and beautiful open spaces. Africa is seen here as a dream, particularly for farmers, hunters and settlers. However, once the group of whites leaves the safety of the colonized coast and proceed into the unknown interior, Africa becomes a harsh and cruel nightmare. The group almost perishes from dehydration in the desert. Fortunately, Robeson saves the day and takes them over the mountains to where the dream image is restored. On the other side of the mountain, the lush vegetation is restored and Quartermain refers to it as a "paradise." However, that dream image is quickly turned into a nightmare when savage natives show up. Because of the natives, this nightmare image becomes more dangerous for the whites than the desert had been. Only the victory of the white man and his ally Robeson can dispel the nightmare.

The images of Africans presented in *King Solomon's Mines* are similar to the images found in the other movies, with the important exception of Paul Robeson's character. Therefore, in this film constructs three distinct images:

- 1) the loyal, yet superstitious, "colonized" Africans;
- 2) the savage and barbaric African au naturel; and
- 3) the noble Paul Robeson.

The first image can only be found in the first five minutes of the film. However, this image is an interesting one for while it is similar to the portrayals of colonized Africans found in the other movies, there

are also marked differences. Similar to other film representations, the colonized Africans are presented as an amorphous entity without any attempt to individualize. Moreover, the colonized Africans in *King Solomon's Mines* are at heart superstitious beings. They refuse to cross the river because "devils" reside on the other side. This image is similar to that of the servants in *Sanders*, yet there is less emphasis placed on servitude. The viewer is shown constructed images of village life in which people are performing "natural" roles such as working and eating. Similar images cannot be found in other films of this era. Such images were useful for 1) encouraging Europeans to settle in the colonized lands (nice, friendly domestic servants); 2) supporting the policy of Indirect Rule, which relied on the existence of loyal Africans; as well as 3) showing the success the British had achieved in colonizing and "civilizing" the Africans.

Like other cinematic constructions of the African *au naturel*, the native Africans in this film are characterized by being savage, brutal, cruel, untrustworthy, heathen and degenerate. The epitome of the African *au naturel* image in this film is the one-eyed king of the Kukuana. As the viewer is expected to gather from his physical deformity, the king is the embodiment of evil and cruelty (similar to King Mofalaba from *Sanders of the River*.) Following the tenets of Indirect Rule, the whites kill the bad king and help install the new king, Robeson, who it turns out was the rightful heir to the throne all along.

The similarities between imagery in *Sanders of the River* and *King Solomon's Mines* are striking. However, there are some important differences. Though Paul Robeson is once again cast as the loyal and friendly African leader who depends upon the white man's help to install him, he is definitely not another Bosambo. In *Sanders*, Robeson's character was an inherent liar and scoundrel who saw the personal benefits allegiance to the white man would bring him. In *King Solomon's Mines*, he is portrayed as an honorable and upright individual. Though he is still subservient to the white man, it is a "kinder and gentler" relationship of servitude. The difference can be partly explained by the fact that the directors, Korda and Stevenson (or at least their screenwriters), are different "selves" constructing different "others." More importantly, the dynamics within the "self" (the British film industry) had changed. The 1937 Paul Robeson had more power as an actor than he did in 1935. After the *Sanders* incident, Robeson was increasingly careful to make sure that his characters were presented in a positive light (Low 1985, 257; Buni 1995). Therefore, in *King Solomon's Mines* a relatively more positive portrayal of an African is found.



### **Four Feathers (1939-London Films [UK])**

Based on an A.E.W. Mason story, *Four Feathers* is the tale of British bravery overcoming personal cowardice. The film takes place during Britain's reconquest of the Sudan in 1898-99 against the Sudanese Mahdists ("Dervishes") and their Islamic black African allies ("Fuzzy Wuzzies"). The story was previously filmed in 1921 and 1928. The 1939 version is a British release directed by Zoltan Korda and starring C. Aubrey Smith, Ralph Richardson and John Clements as the coward-cum-hero. Though the story would be remade twice, once in 1955 under the title *Storm over the Nile* and again in 1977 as a made-for-television movie starring Beau Bridges, the 1939 version remains the most well-known.

Like other Africanist films in the empire genre, *Four Feathers* has more to do with the British self-image than with Africa. This is acutely important in *Four Feathers* because of its historical context. By 1937, overt calls for military preparedness began to emerge in British films such as *Fire Over England* and *Our Fighting Navy* (Richards 1984, 286-88). As the British drifted to war with Nazi Germany, *Four Feathers* stands out as a strong call for the heroic defense of the Empire. The film is the story of how Clements overcomes his cowardice and fights for the glory of the empire. While it would be misleading to regard the film solely in terms of pre-wartime propaganda, its role in this regard cannot be denied. With this in mind, the reason for the film's construction of its African images can be better understood.

There are basically two images of Africa which can be found in the movie: 1) Africa as imperial possession; and 2) Africa as the "White Man's Grave." First and foremost to the plot, Africa (in this case the Sudan) is defined as a British imperial possession. The viewing audience is never told why the Sudan is worth fighting for. In the beginning of the film, the viewer is shown a screaming Moslem horde killing the British colonial Governor overrunning Khartoum, the capital of the Sudan. Assumedly, the British must defeat this "occupying" force. The image that is created is that Africa is an inherent extension of the Empire. It is currently being occupied by hostile forces who must be defeated.

The second image of Africa is the oft-used image of the "White Man's Grave." Africa is a place of death and sickness that, if it does not kill the white man, it will at least leave him broken. Perhaps no scene illustrates this image in the film more than the one in which a British scout ascends a small rocky mound to look for the approaching enemy. At the top, his helmet falls off and rolls to the bottom of the incline. Without his European protection he is exposed to the harshness of Africa. He is lost against the elements and instantly becomes dizzy, disoriented and incapable of functioning normally. He desperately

climbs down the short distance, but Africa is too much for him and he succumbs. Upon reviving he is blind and just a little off balance mentally. The obvious lesson is that Africa is hostile to the white man.

As for the portrayals of Africans, there is only one image constructed, that of the brutal, warring savage. In the film, there are two different racial Africans: the Arabs of North Africa and the Islamic black Africans. However, they are both imaged in the same manner. The only difference is that the Arab is usually shown as the leader and the black African as the subservient follower.

The Africans are shown performing only two actions: riding across the desert, waving guns and attacking the British (the screaming horde image) or gleefully torturing their prisoners of war. Both images, useful in developing hatred toward an enemy, reinforced the already established image of Africans as uncivilized barbarians whose natural state is one of brutality and war.

### *Stanley and Livingstone* (1939- 20th Century Fox)

This famous 1939 movie is based upon the "greatest story of journalism:" Henry Morton Stanley's discovery of Dr. David Livingstone.<sup>17</sup> The film was quite successful, strengthening Spencer Tracy's status as an actor while ensuring that the legacies of Stanley and Livingstone would be preserved for generations to come. Perhaps because the film was released more than sixty years after the actual events, most viewers never questioned the authenticity of the film. In fact, the greatest exposure to the legacies of Stanley and Livingstone, and for the most part African missionaries and explorers, has come from this film. Therefore, *Stanley and Livingstone* is an important film to analyze due to its tremendous impact as an image shaper, as well as its role as a historical narrative.

The movie begins with ace reporter Henry M. Stanley (Spencer Tracy) returning from Wyoming to a hero's welcome in New York and being convinced by his exuberant boss James Gordon Bennett of the *Herald* to go find the lost missionary-explorer-saint, Dr. David Livingstone (Cedric Hardwicke). Such events never actually occurred.<sup>18</sup> The studio had originally included the statement "based on the diary and autobiography of Henry M. Stanley" in the credits, but wisely removed it for fear of a lawsuit. In fact, the film is rife with historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations, most of which do not concern this study except to reinforce the notion that anything was possible in Africa and adherence to history in historical films was not a requirement in the portrayal of that continent.

There are two misrepresentations in the film that do relate to this paper. First, Stanley and Livingstone are horribly misrepresented, particularly Stanley. Hardwicke and Tracy compete for humbleness,

understatement and humility, while in fact, Stanley and to a lesser extent Livingstone were anything but understated or humble. Livingstone was self-assured, cocky and quite egotistical (Hugon 1991, 67-87). In describing Stanley, one cannot fail to employ terms such as brutal, vicious, arrogant, egomaniac and dishonest (Hugon 1991, 94-99; Boyles 1988, 87-98). However, the film has the honor of creating or at least concretely reinforcing images of Livingstone and Stanley as saintly and humble bearers of civilization and Christianity.

The second misrepresentation involves the constant reference to the American West via Stanley, his side-kick Jeff and the surrounding African environs. Equating Africa to the American West is the underlining theme of the movie, culminating in Livingstone's moving speech to Stanley in which he explains Africa: "It's much the same as in any new country. How do you suppose America looked to the first settlers who saw it only as an unknown wilderness teeming with hostile savages? That is our trouble here in Africa." The comparison of the African landscape with Wyoming and the portrayal of African savages in traditionally stereotypical savage Indian roles reinforce this notion.

Why does the film stress this image of Africa as equivalent to the American West? Possibly it was an attempt to present Africa in a way that the American viewers could easily understand, or to present European imperialism and colonialism in an understandable context. Perhaps it was a call for America to join in the settling and taming of the Dark Continent. More than likely it was a combination of all three. Regardless, Africa as an untamed wilderness populated by savages similar to the American "Wild West" is the film's dominant image. In this film, the untamed wilderness is waiting not only to be discovered by the white man, but to be named by him as well (i.e Stanleyville, Stanley Falls).

The film constructs four images of Africa, some of which have been noted in other movies of this decade:

- 1) Africa as a physical and psychological challenge to be conquered;
- 2) Africa as a dream/nightmare;
- 3) Africa as a void; and
- 4) Africa as an untamed wilderness.

In *Stanley and Livingstone*, Africa is defined as a land that can make or break a person both physically and psychologically. The viewer is first introduced to this Africa through the Kingsley household in Zanzibar. Africa has broken the mental balance of Mr. Kingsley, leaving him in the condition of a senile man who has aged beyond his years. His daughter Eve explains to Stanley that "Africa has done this to him. It's killing him just as it did my mother." Before

Stanley leaves, Eve reinforces the image of Africa as the destroyer of men:

You don't realize what's ahead of you. Do you want to come back like all the others? Broken? Old before your time? Shattered by something that is far too big for any of us to conquer? Do you think you can fight Africa alone and win?

In the end, Stanley does conquer Africa and in the process becomes a better person, reaffirming the image of Africa as a challenging ground; i.e. a place that can make or break the white man both physically and psychologically. This is a twist on the "white man's grave" image, for it now allows the possibility that the white man may be victorious.

Related to this is the image of Africa as a dream and a nightmare, often with one overlapping the other. Eve warns Stanley of the nightmare qualities of Africa. Stanley ignores her entreaties and proceeds on his journey describing the dreamlike qualities of Africa. In this section of the journey, Stanley reinforces the popular image of Africa as a "hunter's paradise." However, the further he goes into the constructed Dark Continent, the farther removed he is from the safety of civilization, and the more nightmarish the image of Africa becomes. Stanley's group is assaulted by savage natives, the inherent brutality of the African climate and the untamed wildlife. Just as the nightmare is reaching its peak, Stanley finds Livingstone. Livingstone has tamed the wilderness and has established an outpost of civilization. This serves the purpose of returning to the constructed image of Africa as dream/paradise. The obvious lesson here is that Africa *au naturel* is a nightmare. Only an Africa that has been conquered and controlled by the white man can be a dream/paradise. Stanley's dream-nightmare-dream journey is quite similar to Jane Parker's in *Tarzan, the Ape Man*, with Livingstone playing the role of Tarzan.

Images of Africans constructed in *Stanley and Livingstone* fall into two general categories which have previously been introduced: the colonized African and the natural, savage African. Despite operating underneath the thin guise of civilization, the colonized Africans in Stanley's caravan are lazy, fearful and superstitious. Indeed, they would all perish along the way if it were not for Stanley's superior knowledge and understanding of the Africans' own surroundings. The colonized Africans in Livingstone's compound are also operating under the thin guise of civilization. It is not civilization that is at fault, rather these created Africans are "simple people" who cannot overcome their natural disposition to thievery, lying, laziness and incompetence. In seemingly stark contrast to the colonized African images are the African *au naturel* images who are exclusively defined as savage and warlike. Stanley and his men come under attack from these

screaming hordes who dance themselves into a frenzy then descend upon the innocent intruders. The only images the viewer has of "natural" African life is the preparation for battle.

The film goes to pains to assure the viewer that the colonized African is not that far removed from his natural, savage state. In seeming contrast, the dominant lesson presented is that the white man must work steadfastly towards colonizing all the Africans. As Livingstone says to Stanley, without the white man Africa "never before in all its history has heard one single syllable of kindness or hope."

### **Conclusion**

Building on centuries of odiously constructed images of Africa and Africans, the growing film industries of the 1930s contributed further to their viewing audiences' misperception of Africa and Africans and helped to perpetuate and reinforce racist and colonialist modes of thinking. In some cases, these representations were continuations of earlier colonialist literature which portrayed Africa and Africans in ways which would encourage or validate European colonial practices. Some of the images were altered or constructed to reflect conditions within Western society or its changing relationship with Africa.

Of the images of Africa employed during the 1930s, the most pervasive is of Africa as a dream/nightmare. While this transformation of the film's setting helps develop the plot, it also contributes to the viewers' mental images of Africa. While on one hand Africa is presented as a beautiful, unspoiled land ripe for settling, it is also a terrible, untrained wilderness that requires taming by whites, especially white men. The nightmare Africa is often populated by savage natives, which further illustrates the need for the colonization and civilization of the continent. The fact that the nightmare (interior) Africa is fatal for the inept and lazy "colonized" African confirms that such a job must be done by whites.

Subsequent images of Africa as an untamed void, open zoo and keeper of lost treasures further encourages the white man to settle Africa. The representations of Africa as a physical/psychological challenge that is inhospitable to whites reinforces the mythical achievements of those white men who have tamed the jungle: missionaries, explorers, hunters and colonial authorities.

The cinematic representations of Africans helped to confirm the dangers of Africa for the audience. They also pointed out the benefits of colonialism. The *au naturel* savage and the colonized servants were the "before" and "after" example of the effects of civilization. The colonized Africans, however, tended to be untrustworthy and shiftless, reflecting and reinforcing racial attitudes that existed both at home

and abroad. If there was a "good" African in the film, he was defined by the characteristics admired in servants: honesty, courage, submission and unflagging loyalty.

While the viewing audience was definitely not a sponge for such representations, the constant and consistent bombardment of these images, without any significant alternatives, undoubtedly had a shaping effect on how Western societies thought of Africa and Africans. The continuation of these representations in later popular films, even today, testifies to their accepted "truthfulness" by audiences and film-makers. For example, it was only after the end of colonialism and the acceptance of independent African countries into the world community that the image of African tribesman was transformed from the savage beast to the noble warrior that appears in such films as *Zulu Dawn* (1979).

While it is next to impossible to accurately judge how an audience internalizes the films that it sees, it is commonly accepted that the media does have an effect on society. These representations of Africa and Africans that were employed by the feature films of the 1930s helped shape Western societies' views of that continent and its peoples.

### Film List

*42nd Street* (1933) Warner Brothers. Director: Lloyd Bacon. Producer: Darryl Zanuck. Screen Writers: Rian James and James Seymour. Starring: Warner Baxter, Ruby Keeler, George Brent, Bebe Daniels, Dick Powell, Guy Kibbee, Una Merkel, Ginger Rodgers, Ned Sparks, George E. Stone.

*Bulldog Drummond in Africa* (1938) Paramount. D: Louis King. P: Harold Hurley. Scr: Garnett Weston. John Howard, Heather Angel, H.B. Warner, J. Carrol Naish, Reginald Denny, Anthony Quinn, Michael Brooke.

*Four Feathers* (1939) British. London Films. D: Zoltan Korda. P: Alexander Korda. Scr: R.C. Sherriff, Arthur Wimperis, Lajos Biro, from the novel by A.E.W. Mason. John Clemments, Ralph Richardson, C. Aubrey Smith, June Duprez, Allan Jeayes, Jack Allen, Donald Grey, Clive Barker.

*The High Command* (1937) British. Fanfare. D: Thorold Dickinson. P: Gordon Wellesley. Scr: Katherine Strueby, Walter Meade, Val Valentine, from novel by Lewis Robinson. Lionel Atwill, Lucie Mannheim, Steven Geray, James Mason, Allan Jeayes, Wally Patch.

*King Solomon's Mines* (1937) British. Gaumont-British. D: Robert Stevenson. P: Geoffrey Barkas. Scr: Michael Hogan, Roland Pertwee, A.R. Rawlinson, Charles Bennett, Ralph Spence, from the novel by H. Rider Haggard. Paul Robeson, Cedric Hardwicke, Roland Young, John Loder, Anna Lee.

*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) Columbia. D,P: Frank Capra. Scr: Sidney Buchman, story by Lewis R. Foster. James Stewart, Jean Arthur, Claude Rains, Edward Arnold, Guy Kibbee, Thomas Mitchell, Eugene Pallette, Beulah Bondi, Harry Carey, H.B. Warner, Charles Lane, Porter Hall, Jack Carson.

*Old Bones of the River* (1938) British. Gainsborough. D: Marcel Varnel. P: Edward Black. Scr: Marriot Edgar, Val Guest, J.O.C. Orton, from books by Edgar Wallace. Will Hay, Graham Moffatt, Moore Marriott, Robert Adams, Jack Livesey, Jack London, Wyndham Goldie.

*Rhodes of Africa* (1936) British. Gaumont-British. D: Berthold Viertel. P: Geoffrey Barkas. Scr: Michael Barringer, Miles Malleon, Leslie Arliss, from the book by Sarah Millin. Walter Huston, Oscar Homolka, Basil Sydney, Peggy Ashcroft, Frank Cellier, Renee de Vaux, Bernard Lee, Lewis Casson, Glennis Lorimer, Ndaniso Kumala.

*Sanders of the River* (1935) British. London Films. D: Zoltan Korda. P: Alexander Korda. Scr: Lajos Biro, Jeffrey Dell, Arthur Wimperis, from the books of Edgar Wallace. Leslie Banks, Paul Robeson, Nina Mae McKinney, Tony Wayne, Martin Walker.

*Song of Freedom* (1936) British. Hammer. D: J. Edgar Wills. P: Fraser Passmore. Scr: Fenn Sherie, Ingram d'Abbes, Michael Barringer, Philip Lindsey. Paul Robeson, Elisabeth Welch, George Mozart.

*Stanley and Livingstone* (1939) 20th Century Fox. D: Henry King. P: Darryl Zanuck. Scr: Philip Dunne, Julien Josephson. Spencer Tracy, Cedric Hardwicke, Nancy Kelley, Richard Greene, Walter Brennan, Charles Coburn.

*Storm over the Nile* (1955) British. London Films. D: Zoltan Korda, Terence Young. P: Zoltan Korda. Scr: R.C. Sherriff, Lajos Biro, Arthur Wimperis, from novel by A.E.W. Mason. Anthony Steel, Laurence Harvey, Ronald Lewis, Ian Carmichael, Mary Ure.

*Tarzan Finds a Son* (1939) MGM. D: Richard Thorpe. P: Sam Zimbalist. Scr: Cyril Hume, based on characters created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Johnny Weissmuller, Maureen O'Sullivan, John Sheffield.

*Tarzan in Manhattan* (1989) TV movie. D: Michael Schultz. Joe Lara, Kim Crosby, Tony Curtis, Jan-Michael Vincent, Jimmy Medina Taggart.

*Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1932) MGM. D: W.S. Van Dyke. Scr: Cyril Hume, based on characters created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Johnny Weissmuller, Maureen O'Sullivan, Neil Hamilton, C. Aubrey Smith.

*Tarzan Escapes* (1936) MGM. D: Richard Thorpe, John Farrow, James McKay. P: Bernard Hyman. Scr: Cyril Hume, based on characters created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Johnny Weissmuller, Maureen O'Sullivan, John Buckler, Bunita Hume.

*Tarzan and his Mate* (1934) MGM. D: Cedric Gibbons. P: Bernard Hyman. Scr: James Kevin McGuinness, based on characters created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Johnny Weissmuller, Maureen O'Sullivan, Neil Hamilton, Paul Cavanagh.

*Trader Horn* (1931) MGM. D: W.S. Van Dyke. Scr: Richard Schayer, Dale Van Every, John Thomas Neville, Cyril Hume, based on the book by Alfred Aloysius Horn and Ethelreda Lewis. Harry Carey, Edwina Booth, Duncan Renaldo, Mutia Omooula.

*Zulu Dawn* (1979) US-Dutch. Samarkland. D: Douglas Hickox. P: Barrie Saint Clair. Scr: Cy Endfield, Anthony Story. Burt Lancaster, Peter O'Toole, Simon Ward, John Mills.

## Notes

1. In addition to the "lesser" Tarzan entries from smaller studios, there are several other notable feature films about Africa from this decade such as *Rhodes of Africa* (1936), *Song of Freedom* (1936), *The High Command* (1937), *Old Bones of the River* (1938) and *Bulldog Drummond in Africa* (1938). These films are not considered in this study because of their limited distribution and success. That is, they fail to qualify as "popular" films because of their small viewing audiences.
2. For a discussion of the history of African images in US, European and South African feature films please see Kenneth M. Cameron's recently published *Africa on Film: Beyond Black and White* (1994).
3. As discussed by such writers as Michel Foucault (1972) and Edward Said (1979).
4. At any given time, there will also be several "selves" producing many images of various "others." Thus, "otherness" is plural. In the words of Pieterse:

There are *others*—they are many, and their identities vary according to time, location, and the status, gender, relationships and so on of the labelling groups. To generalize and pontificate about 'the other' means losing sight of this multiplicity and complexity, homogenizing the process of othering, introducing an essentialism of otherness, and



creating a static dualistic relationship between Self and Other, us and them (1992, 233-34).

Therefore, one must talk about the images of Africans in popular western films.

5. For a discussion of the evolution of African representations before 1930 please see Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow's excellent work, *The Africa That Never Was: Four Centuries of British Writing about Africa* (1992).
6. In the materialistic 1980s, however, the retelling of the Tarzan story in *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (1984) hinges on his blue blood.
7. Much of the footage from Africa was recycled endlessly by studios. For instances, MGM reused footage from *Trader Horn* throughout its Tarzan series. Both *Tarzan, the Ape Man* and *Tarzan and His Mate* open with the same clips and there was enough footage left over from *Four Feathers* to allow Zoltan Korda to remake the film in 1956 as *Storm Over the Nile*.
8. A 1931 review of *Trader Horn* praised the film for its "authentic atmosphere" and its "genius for realism...in bringing [actual history] vividly before us" (Skinner 1931, 440). A 1939 review of *Stanley and Livingstone* stated that the film "seems like the real thing" (Hartung 1939: 380). Despite the fact that the Commissioner for Nigeria in London objected to the portrayal of his colony in *Sanders of the River*, the general public was "untroubled by such thoughts" and helped make the movie a success (Low 1985, 170). Furthermore, students have asked me for information about the "Giboni" tribe that is portrayed in several of the Tarzan movies. The fictional tribe was actually named after director Cedric Gibbons.
9. Jeffrey Richards (1984) states that: "Significantly, these [empire] films and others like them were largely supportive of the existing social structure and the dominant ideology. For in Gramscian terms, the producers saw their interests lying in more than just making money. They were anxious to maintain government protection for the industry and to gain respectability for themselves and their industry. It was for these reasons that they set up and operated the censorship system and depicted themselves as playing a vital role in the projection of Britain" (44).
10. The role of the empire films in promoting and projecting British policy cannot be overlooked. As Jeffrey Richards (1984) states: "The fact that the scripts of the Gaumont British Imperial epics [*Rhodes of Africa* (1936), *The Great Barrier* (1936), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937)] were all vetted and passed by the British Board of Film Censors and that the Korda epics [*Sanders of the River* (1935), *The Drum* (1938), *Four Feathers* (1939)] were produced with the full-hearted cooperation of the army and the colonial authorities in India, Nigeria and the Sudan confirms that the government were happy with the Imperial image that was being projected" (136). It should also be noted that the foreign offices of the Kordas' film company were used as covers for British intelligence agents (Korda 1979, 138-39).
11. In 1975, on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Tarzan's creator, Edgar Rice Burroughs, the world-wide gross from the Tarzan enterprise was reportedly over \$50 million a year (Lindsey 1975).
12. For those interested in the impact of film censorship in the 1930s, the Tarzan series provides ample material. *Tarzan and His Mate* was rejected by the censors because it contained full underwater nudity. Three different versions of the film were eventually released, two in direct violation of the Production Code. The length of Jane's costume, from very small bikini in *Tarzan and His Mate* to a one-piece, knee-length dress in *Tarzan Finds a Son!*, also testifies to the evolution of the Production Code's vigorous implementation throughout the 1930s.
13. The Mutia Escarpment was a fictitious place created by the writers and named for Mutia Omoolu, *Trader Horn's* faithful gun-bearer.

14. George MacDonald Fraser states, "Probably no colonial writer except [H. Rider] Haggard so shaped Western imagination of Africa and its people [than Wallace]" (1988, 142).
15. *Sanders* gained further notoriety when Robeson claimed that he was duped by Korda into believing the film would portray Africans positively. Robeson protested the film and sought to distance himself from it. However, as Andy Buni (1995) has pointed out, it is hard to believe that Robeson was unaware of the film's motives. In fact, Robeson's reaction to the movie stemmed more from embarrassment than anger. For the next decade, Robeson continued to work with the Korda family and would again play unflattering characterizations of blacks. However, Robeson did learn some lessons from *Sanders*. In the future, he demanded and got the final edit for his movies. More importantly, it began the long road of Robeson's politicalization, which eventually removed him from films altogether.
16. For starters, the 1937 film is set in South Africa where an older, fatherly Allan Quartermain escorts a young woman and two hunters (one of the hunters and the young woman fall in love) on a quest to find her renegade father. In the end, father and daughter are reunited and all ends well. In the 1950 version, the dashing Allan Quartermain escorts a young woman and her brother through East Africa on a quest to find her missing husband. In the end, the husband is dead, Quartermain and the young woman are in love.
17. The original concept for the film was a portrayal of Stanley's life. When Fox submitted the idea to the British Board of Film Censors, they rejected it because of the section dealing with Stanley's coverage of the failed Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). At the time, Italy was once again engaged in an invasion of Ethiopia and the censors were worried about the film's reception given the current climate. It was rewritten and accepted as *Stanley and Livingstone* (Richards 1984, 142).
18. The fact of the matter was that Stanley was in Madrid and called to Paris by Bennett, who did not even know the young reporter by sight. Bennett wanted him to travel through the Middle East writing reports and travel guides, eventually culminating in a trip into the interior of Africa to find Livingstone (Stanley 1890). The screenplay for the film was written by Philip Dunne and Julien Josephson. Historical research was done by Hal Long and Sam Hellman.

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