Hollywood and Africa

Recycling the 'Dark Continent' myth, 1908–2020

by

Okaka Opio Dokotum
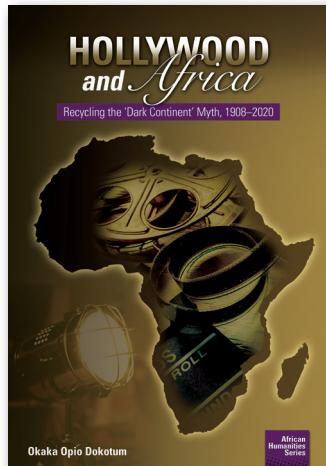
TERMS of USE

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Prof. Emeritus Dr Robert T. Self — teacher, mentor, writing coach and friend, for grounding me in cineliteracy and the grammar of the moving image,
and
to my dear wife Pamela Renee for her gentle encouragement without which this book would probably have become one of many abandoned projects!

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HOLLYWOOD AND AFRICA

Recycling the 'Dark Continent' Myth,
1908–2020

OKAKA OPIO DOKOTUM

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Acknowledgements

Many people and organisations helped to make this book a reality in over a decade of research and writing. While it is not possible to mention all of them, I acknowledge them and am deeply appreciative of their contributions.

Foreward

Joseph Conrad's famous novel *The Heart of Darkness* condemned the whole European imperial project in Africa. It cast in negative lights the motives, the behaviours, and the values of the 'pilgrims' who conducted a 'colonial squeeze' of the continent. Its divergent narrators are caught in moral ambiguities of greed, desire, and lies overlaid by a veneer of faith and certitude. Yet despite the dominant thrust of its critique of colonialism, the novel simultaneously reiterates the presupposed perceptions of the colonial mind about Africa. Work evolves around white bosses, white business, white authority, white religion, all exercising power over a native population that is either passive or savage. Going there may be only a job but one freighted with the trappings of a momentous journey. Africa offers riches and danger, romance and death. This adventure of discovery may make one a chief; it may enthral with a nightmarish beauty. But the biggest treasure to be found in this Dark Continent is self-knowledge.

Conrad's novel is a masterful critique of the colonial endeavours in Africa, but nevertheless it assumes the likelihood of succumbing to the allure of the landscape, the wild animals, the inferior natives, the natural resources, the untamed wilderness. It imputes the lusts of the human heart to the magnetism of the African other. Even in its denunciations, Conrad's book assumes a colonialist perspective on Africa that is characterised by Okaka Opio Dokotum in *Hollywood and Africa* as the mythos of the Dark Continent. This is the worldview of the enterprise that branched out from Europe in its attempt to master the whole of the planet, that saw other world cultures as inferior to its own and thus 'naturally' there for European domination. Fed by the ideological impetus of the arts, of science, of religion, the colonial enterprise filled the coffers of Europe with sugar, spice, tobacco, coffee, chocolate, and slaves. It motivated the missionary impulse, it galvanized the heroic quest, it fuelled the romantic imagination, it fed the entrepreneurial spirit, it championed conquest, and it encouraged political domination.

The cultural heritage of colonialism seeps into English culture everywhere, especially at the height of empire during the 19th century. It establishes the context that shaped much of the fictive imagination in the 19th century, in particular its representations of Africa by novelists like Sir H. Rider Haggard in *She* and *King Solomon's Mines*. This work as with most popular culture productions reflected and fed the ideology behind the 'Scramble for Africa'. The motifs of adventure, mystery, and romance fill this literature and support the political agenda of colonialism. It is

no surprise that the advent of the movies at the end of the 19th century turned to popular middle-class fictions to fuel its story engines. If one understands that the United States undertook its own form of political and cultural imperialism in the 20th century, Hollywood becomes important as its storytelling arm.

Hollywood as a successor to the Haggardesque adventure novel quickly and extensively began to mine the ideological wealth of the Dark Continent for its fictions. In particular, the various adaptations of *King Solomon's Mines* provide the master template for the stories, structures, and themes that constitute a modern representation of the colonial mindset. Dozens of films from the silent era to the present have told stories of 'the white man in Africa'. Lost in the Sahara, treasure in the jungle, apes in the mist, savage warriors, generals and genocide, lion kings, safaris, apartheid. Just as it inspired adventure novels of exploration and discovery in the 19th century, the Dark Continent mythos of Africa affords classical Hollywood cinema with characters, settings, plots, themes for the entire library of its popular genres of mystery, comedy, romance, adventure, combat, gothic, and even science fiction films. Africa thus continues for the moviemaking industry a paramount blank spot on the globe where it can project its visions of great white hunters finding romance and treasure amidst the jungles and deserts, the pygmies and cannibals, the lions and the crocodiles of the deepest darkest continent.

Postcolonial critical discourse has illuminated the ways that popular fiction reinforces mainstream ideological values in 19th century and 20th century fiction. The worldviews taken for granted by dominant discourse emerge from and in turn shape cultural values, and the impulses of colonialism motivate stories of imperial power and domination, of superior and inferior cultures, of potential and exploitation, of civilised and primitive. Formalist narrative analysis reveals the ways that story structure, character development, and thematic tensions resonate with the taken-for-granted personas and values of an era. In particular, generic formulae mobilise thematic oppositions — good guy/bad guy, crime/detection, civilisation/wilderness — to investigate longstanding conflicts and contradictions in society. It teaches the ways in which narrative structure resolves conflict in favour of the status quo and celebrates particularly successful human strengths. It dramatizes tensions half imagined and half real about the roles of the English in Africa. It depicts an African landscape replete with the contours of colonial goals and obstacles. It presupposes the cultural, social, political, and economic inferiority of Africa.

Adaptation theory further reveals ways in which the transposition of fiction to film adapts a wide range of already-existing scenarios and stories. The many adaptations of novels about Africa to the screen expose the very process of the transmission of ideas and values that represent the mythos of the Dark Continent at work. The juxtapositions of Haggard's novel and Robert Steven's film *King Solomon's*

Mines, John Carlin's *Playing the Enemy* with Clint Eastwood's *Invictus*, and Giles Foden's novel with Kevin Macdonald's film *The Last King of Scotland* display not only a continuing fascination with the central stories of these works, but a commitment both conscious and ideological to an old imperialist and contemporary neocolonial representation of Africa. As late as 2016 Walt Disney's *Queen of Katwe* retells the true-life sports narrative of a young Ugandan girl whose struggle and success in the international world of chess also replays the western rags-to-riches saga against a vivid depiction of Kampala as a sprawling slum. In 2018 Marvel Studios again under the aegis of Walt Disney Studios adapts the comic book superhero Black Panther into an internationally acclaimed film that once again celebrates the tradition of 'Truth, Justice, and the American Way.'

Okaka Dokotum's *Hollywood and Africa* embraces these theoretical commitments; it employs these critical contexts; it develops these historical understandings. This is an important book that wants to define the master trope of Africa as the Dark Continent, to show its work in the past, and to show that this mythos 'is still alive and well in contemporary Hollywood films about Africa.' Its compelling look at half a dozen contemporary films about Africa not only reaches into the past to excavate the colonial trope that shapes the study but discovers rich new aspects of that past in the modern films. Even as it uncovers the continuing Dark Continent motifs, the book also reveals how these films engage contemporary celebrity, military, economic, and political cultures in the development of a neocolonial aesthetic. Militainment appropriates the African context for American war games. Ventriloquist adaptations rewrite the colonial as American hegemony. True-story journalism hides the imperial impulse. Memory construction reclaims the violent present from the traumatic colonial past. The transcendent saviour syndrome of the American Western elides with the white man's burden to civilise the savage other. The comic book superhero strides through the violence of family and tribes and comes out of Africa to defend the security of all humanity. A young girl and the game of chess under the guidance of a missionary lights the path to victory over the blighted landscape of modern Kampala.

A recent representation of the map of Africa demonstrates the huge size of the continent by locating all the other continental landmasses of the globe within its boundaries. The map participates in efforts to free Africa from Dark Continent status imposed upon it by the colonial powers of the 19th century. The contemporary struggle for African identity and sovereignty emerges in part as a contestation of space, and that space is constituted by conflicting stories of development, genocide, disease, natural resources, and liberation. *Hollywood and Africa* demonstrates that it is also a space of all these colonial stories.

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Preface

During early childhood I was introduced to fascinating black and white Charlie Chaplin films and cartoons at Alenga Catholic Mission in northern Uganda. Over the years I have had keen interest in film, and I enjoyed those classical Hollywood Africa films that showcased the great white hunter while debasing my own African identity. Once I became minimally cineliterate, I became uneasy with Hollywood's derogatory depiction of Africans. While pursuing my PhD at Northern Illinois University, the graduate film classes I took in the English and Communications Departments, and in the School of Theatre and Dance provided me with critical tools for reading Hollywood Africa films and their theoretical underpinnings. In 2005, a major Hollywood film, *The Last King of Scotland* shot in Uganda, mostly on the streets and in the suburbs of Kampala City, increased my interest in Hollywood's Africa films. I watched *Last King* in an AMC theatre in Chicago and noticed its obvious recycling of what I came to designate 'Dark Continent' tropes of Africa, yet this film left a very positive impression on me for a number of reasons: (1) the incarnation of the skyline of modern Kampala City due to location shooting in Uganda; (2) deployment of Ugandan actors (many of whom I knew personally) and the employment of a local cultural advisor, Charles Mulekwa (who is a good friend of mine); and (3) the academy-award winning performance of Forest Whitaker which made the character Idi Amin — considered the incarnation of darkest African evil — likeable. For a moment, I was carried away with the notion that Hollywood's representation of Africa was changing radically. This euphoria galvanised my resolve to do my doctoral thesis on Hollywood depictions of Africa.

I crafted a smug dissertation title, 'Redeeming the Image of Africa in Contemporary Hollywood Africa Films'. On further research around the topic, my 'progressive' thesis collapsed. It became evident to me that Hollywood's depictions of Africa were far from redemptive and were for the most part recycling the time-tested colonial mastertext of 'Darkest Africa'. What I considered radical change was the sprinkling of metatextual elements that gave a mainstream Hollywood film local flavour through the context of location shooting. Even the films of the 1990s that had heavy humanitarian leanings were still recycling these same colonial mastertexts, although in more disguised ways. My dissertation committee would not pass the topic due to glaring gaps in the theoretical framework. I was challenged to acquaint myself further with postcolonial theory and the genealogy of the Dark Continent myth before attempting another redemptive take at interpreting New Hollywood-

Africa films. I decided therefore to focus on the works of Ousmane Sembene (widely considered the father of African cinema) as a counterpoint to Hollywood. I still hoped to do a comparative study of Sembene's engagè cinema and Hollywood and Africa films, but Sembene proved too big for just a few chapters, and I ended up doing my entire dissertation on Sembene's novel *Xala* (1976) and its progenitor film text (1975). I titled it: "Sembene's *Xala*: Alternatives to the Representation of Africa in Colonial and Neo-colonial Novels and Films." I considered Hollywood films briefly in the last chapter. My dissertation chair, Professor Robert (Bob) Self, advised me to shelve Hollywood and Africa for a post-doctoral research project. I continued to do sporadic research and academic presentations on Hollywood-Africa films at academic seminars and conferences over the years. This book project took shape in 2010 when I won the American Council of Learned Societies Post-Doctoral Grant through the Africa Humanities Program Fellowship, and supplementary funding from the Kyambogo University Research Grants and Publications Committee after submitting a proposal to investigate Hollywood's representation of Africa from 1908 to 2010. One of the outcomes of my research is this book. The project, however, expanded after Adam Haupt, the first AHP assigned reviewer advised that I include Hollywood directors from Africa, living in Africa or working from a more Afrocentric outlook to provide alternative perspectives on the workings of Hollywood with regards to Africa — advice which I took by extending the range of my analysis to include more films, especially two significant ones: *Queen of Katwe* (2016) and *Black Panther* (2018) which I tackle in the chapters on Afro-optimism and Afrofuturism, respectively.

A fellowship residency at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape in the spring of 2011 enabled me to do comprehensive research on Nelson Mandela in film generally, a research project that took me to Robben Island, Soweto and Johannesburg. In 2012, I also travelled to Rwanda to research the production of *Hotel Rwanda* (2004). I visited Hôtel des Mille Collines — the hotel of the film's title — talked to government officials and genocide survivors of Mille Collines, and visited the Kigali Memorial. In 2014, I won the Fulbright African Research Scholar Grant (2014–2015). That fellowship was particularly useful in that I was able to access vast film and other scholarly resources within the State of Illinois and, indeed, from the entire United States through interlibrary loans. I had access to rare films, microfilm materials and 35mm film reels! The yearlong fellowship gave me a research base in the English Department, Northern Illinois University, my alma mater, where as a Fulbright Professor, I also taught Aspects of African Film and, along with it, illustrations from Hollywood Africa films. The Fulbright grant also enabled me to travel within the United States to make presentations at universities through the Fulbright Outreach Lecturing Fund. I also took advantage of my family

trips to the US during the summer to do further work on this project. The release of Ridley Scott's film *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) while I was in the United States helped me to understand the power of cyberactivism. Scott was accused of whitewashing black history by casting white actors in historically black roles and assigning black actors the roles of slaves, lower servants and assassins. An arrogant Scott dismissed his accusers saying he cannot trust a lead role to a 'Mohamed so-and-so from such-and-such!' The twitter hash tag #BoycottExodusMovie was retweeted massively around the United States and was able to hit Ridley Scott's film where it hurts most — the box office. I was able to track the debate in real time and to witness first-hand the empty theatres. Being in the US during the release of *Black Panther* also helped shape my understanding of Afrofuturism and to witness history, especially how the unparalleled success of *Black Panther* disproved Ridley Scott and other such naysayers who argued that a film with a black lead and large black cast cannot succeed at the box office.

The Ugandan leg of my research was much easier because I was familiar with the locations where *Last King of Scotland* and *Queen of Katwe* were shot, and in the case of *Last King*, I had lived part of the history portrayed, and interviewed some of the actors and knew some of the songs in the film. For *Last King*, I was able to interview actors and Charles Mulekwa, the cultural advisor to director Kevin Macdonald. There was also lots of local news coverage of the film's production and release to which I had easy access. For *Queen of Katwe*, I was even luckier. Director Mira Nair granted me an exclusive interview at her residence in the suburbs of Kampala, and I had a few more conversations with her at Maisha Gardens during a public screening of *Queen of Katwe* where she also gave a talk. I was also able to interview Phiona Mutesi, the Ugandan Chess Queen, and her coach, Robert Katende, whose stories are featured in the film. I met them at Sports Outreach Ministry (SOM) Chess Academy where Katende is training more youth in the game of chess, a place visited by many foreigners due to the exposure that has come with the film. I was not able to travel to Sierra Leone or Nigeria to do field research on *Blood Diamond* and *Tears of the Sun* due to financial constraints, although I had desired to do so.

Over the years, I was privileged to share my research findings on this book project through guest lectures, academic seminars and conferences in Africa, Asia and the United States, which generated lots of feedback that helped sharpen my focus further: Makerere University, 2016; Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Chicago, 2014 and 2015; University of Kansas, Lawrence, 2015; Youngstown State University, Ohio, 2015; Lakeland Community College, Ohio, 2015; John Carol University, Ohio, 2015; Huntsville, Alabama, 2014; Indianapolis, 2014; East Carolina University, Greenville, 2014; Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, 2014; Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, 2014; Uganda Christian University 2013;

Osaka, 2012; Kigali, 2012; University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam, 2011; Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, 2011; University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 2011; University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 2011; University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2011; Kyambogo University, Kampala, 2011; Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, 2011.

Earlier versions or content related to some of these chapters were published in the following journals: Chapter 4, "TIA (This is Africa!): Reproducing Colonial Violence in Edward Zwick's *Blood Diamond* (2006)," *Journal of African Cinemas. Special issue*: Everyday violence(s) and visualities in Africa. Eds. Maurice T. Vambe and Nyasha Mboti. Volume 6 Issue 2. October 2014, pp. 175–183; Chapter 5, "The Biafran War According to Hollywood: Militainment and Historical Distortion in Antoine Fuqua's *Tears of the Sun* (2003)," *Lagos Historical Review*. Vol. 12 (2012), pp. 23–40; Chapter 6, "Re-membering the Tutsi Genocide in Hotel Rwanda (2004): Implications for Peace and Reconciliation. *ACPR: African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review 3*, Special Issue on Peace Education, Memory and Reconciliation in Africa. Vol. 2. (Fall 2013), pp. 129–150. I also presented the first version of the *Hotel Rwanda* Chapter, "Re-membering the Tutsi Genocide in *Hotel Rwanda* (2004): Negotiating Reality, History, Autobiography and Fiction," at the SIT Conflict, Memory, and Reconciliation Symposium, Kigali, 12th January 2012; Chapter 7, "Encountering Mandela on Screen: Transnational Collaboration in Mandela Image Production from 1987–2010." *Sociology Study*, Vol. 5 No. 11, November 2013, pp. 794–802; Chapter 8, "Metatextuality in Kevin Macdonald's Transcultural Cinematic Adaptation of *The Last King of Scotland* (2006)," *Africa Notes*, Ed. Senayon Olaoluwa. Vol. 40: 1&2. 2016, pp. 33–56. I presented an earlier version of Chapter 3, titled, "Consolidating the Myth of the Dark Continent in Rider Haggard and Compton Bennett's *King Solomon's Mines* "at the Mid-West Popular Culture Conference (MWPCC), Indianapolis, 2006. These earlier published versions were expanded and revised beyond their original scope over the years due to the benefits of further research and continuous editing. I would like to thank all my publishers for granting me the permission to reproduce some of that content.

Over the years, I was confronted with the argument from those who say Hollywood's representation of Africa has always been bad and that I had no case beyond stating the obvious. My response has always been that the derogatory representation of Africa in Hollywood need not become normal and that this darkest Africa trademark must be confronted vigorously. There are a number of books that offer critical analysis of Hollywood Africa films from a Western perspective. Authors of these include: Richard A. Maynard (1974), Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1992), Kenneth M. Cameron (1994), Peter Davis (1996), Ruth Meyer (2002), Curtis Keim (2009), and MaryEllen Higgins (2012). Some of these authors

have been very critical of Hollywood's demeaning representation of Africa. There is little analysis from African perspectives except for chapter-length or article-length treatment by authors like Manthia Diawara (2010), Joyce Ashuntantang (2012), Christopher Odhiambo (2012), Ricardo Guthrie (2012), Iyunolu Osagie (2012), Garuba and Himmelman (2012), and Litheko Modisane (2014). This book adds to these efforts by providing a close reading and analysis of Hollywood and Africa films using postmodernist models of literature film adaptation that emerge from Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality which helps disaggregate intertexts, hyperreality, metanarratives and metahistories that feed into the Hollywood-Africa cultural franchise. In addition to raising awareness and more questions, I trace the development of Hollywood's 'Dark Continent' representations of Africa from the invention of the term 'Dark Continent' itself, or 'Darkest Africa' in the early 19th century through to 2020, in order to isolate its colonial mastertext and to show the mutations of this mode of seeing Africa across time and space while situating my analysis firmly in film adaptation theory. On the whole, the representations are largely negative, yet there are also signs of hope as seen in the last three chapters of this book. I enjoyed doing this work immensely as a scholarly exercise but also as a duty to humanity! It is my hope that this book will make a modest contribution to combating negative stereotypes about Africa and help emphasise our common humanity.

List of plates

Introduction

Negative imaging of Africa through the Dark Continent trope continues unabated in Western cultural productions. While colonial historiography has been successfully challenged by various professional historians on the continent, like Ade Ajayi, Ali Mazrui, Adu Boahen, Grace Ogot and J. Kizerbo, among others, and most contemporary historical literature no longer entertains such biases, the same cannot be said of cultural productions on Africa emanating from the West. The negative representation of Africa has persisted in Western literature and more especially in Western film through to the postcolonial era via instruments of Euro-American cultural imperialism, with Hollywood as the biggest avenue for this warped image production, dissemination and consolidation. There is, therefore, a need to enlighten Hollywood's viewership, literary adaptation scholars and policymakers on the systematic racism in the fantastical construction of Africa in Hollywood-Africa films and to challenge this derogatory framing of Africa as the Dark Continent with its negative impact on Africans.

This book is a study of stereotypical Hollywood film productions about Africa over a 112-year span. It traces the origins of the Dark Continent myth about Africa from the 19th century in order to situate this mode of image production in the context of British colonialism, racism and the ideology of empire, and to show how the tropes of this mode of seeing Africa are incarnated across time and space. I argue that the myth of the Dark Continent has influenced Western cultural productions about Africa for centuries as a cognitive-based system of knowledge, especially in history, literature, film and Western media at large, with a debilitating chain of negative consequences for Africa. Dark Continent tropes this book tackles include the first contact encounter between civilisation and savagery; Africa as the unpolished, Edenic romantic utopia; Africa as the dangerous alluring; default violence as a way of life in Africa; cannibalism as the primary marker of African savagery; the trope of virology, where Africa is seen as the source of all killer viruses; Africa as a cultural and intellectual *tabula rasa* needing to be filled with civilisation; Africa as mere background canvas for Western action flicks; and the helplessness of Africans and their need for Western saviours in line with Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden." Other recurring colonial modes of representing African reality are selection/omission and contextualisation through which specific facts are projected without historical context; and the trope of 'synecdoche' where a particular crisis in an Africa country, or even in a part of a country, is used to characterise the

entire continent of Africa. This book also examines the Dark Continent narrative methodology that collapses the walls between facts and fiction in order to play fast and loose with African reality. Directly linked to this methodology is the abuse of the terms 'Africa' and 'Africans' without any understanding of the geographical, racial, political, economic, cultural or religious complexities of the continent. The book shows how the Hollywood cinematic apparatus is deployed over time to consolidate this image of Africa on a large scale in the age of US hegemony. These tropes are analysed in different chapters with illustrations from selected Hollywood films. Using contemporary film adaptation theories, especially postmodernist approaches, I show how changing modes of Hollywood production about Africa recycle, revise, reframe, reinforce, transpose, interrogate — and even critique — these tropes of Darkest Africa while sustaining the colonial mastertext. In the third last chapter of the book I explore the rise of Western spectator resistance and anti-Dark Continent cyberactivism as a new awakening that confronts this mode of representing Africa. I also examine rising Afro-optimist and Afrofuturist productions in Hollywood, pointing towards a new awakening in Western film production that is scaling down the protracted negative stereotyping of Africa. Finally, I argue that Africans cannot rely on the West to tell Africa's stories. African filmmakers need to produce alternative images, not reproduce Hollywood's way of seeing Africa and Africans, as counterpoint to the perpetual negative stereotypes of Africa it dishes up.

Scope

Although the largest chunk of the commercial American film industry is based in Hollywood, California, this book engages other US, British and Anglo-American co-productions from 1908 to 2020 to help provide larger colonial and neocolonial geocultural contexts to my discussion of Hollywood. An array of films is discussed, from D. W. Griffith's short, seven-minute film, *The Zulu's Heart* (1908) to Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* (2018). Upcoming productions like the American-Congolese production, *The Heart of Africa* (2020), *Coming 2 America* (2020) — the sequel to Eddy Murphy's famous 1988 blockbuster, *Coming to America* — and the much-anticipated *Black Panther* (2022) sequel, are only mentioned here. While providing an overview of all Hollywood-Africa films between 1908 and 2020, this book gives reasonable treatment to a number of films, reserving detailed analysis for selected films. The aim is to provide a broad historical and stylistic overview of the Dark Continent system of representing Africa in Hollywood and wider Western productions to date while giving special attention to films that represent major waves and modes of Dark Continent incarnations. Chapter 2, the longest chapter, discusses several films to illustrate the colonial template of earlier Hollywood films. Detailed examination of specific films begins with the long analysis of *King Solomon's Mines* (1950) in

Chapter 3. Nine other films are given chapter-length treatment to illustrate what I consider the major adaptation strands and modes of the century-long Hollywood representation of Africa: the colonial template — *King Solomon's Mines*; colonial nostalgia (neocolonialist representations) — *Blood Diamond*; militainment and historical distortion (the 'based on a true story' model) — *Tears of the Sun*; the 'this *is* a true story' model — *Hotel Rwanda*; heroic self-transcendence — *Invictus*; metatextuality — *The Last King of Scotland*; cyberactivism — *Exodus: Gods and Kings*; Afro-optimism — *Queen of Katwe* and Afrofuturism — *Black Panther*.

The Hollywood-Africa films discussed here include American films, as well as Euro-American and American-African productions to show the nexus of intercontinental collaborations in the imaging of Africa. Sometimes tricontinental British-American-African productions are discussed to show the transcultural negotiations that can complicate or improve the imaging of Africa as is the case with *The Last King of Scotland* (2006). Bennett and Marton's 1950 screen adaptation of Rider Haggard's 1885 classic novel *King Solomon's Mines* (the first colonial novel set in Africa) is the first film in this book to be given in-depth analysis because it is considered the epitome of the negative establishment shots of Africa created by earlier films, and has thus exerted the most influence on subsequent Western film productions about Africa. Using Julia Kristeva's concept of 'intertextuality' as applied by film critics like Robert Stam (2000), James Neramore (2000), Kamilla Elliott (2003) and Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn (2013), I argue that *King Solomon's Mines* itself is a confluence of intertexts and subtexts of late 19th century British and larger European mindsets about Africa based on 'othering' best captured by Edward Said's concept of 'orientalism'. While referencing other films, the book then examines in detail contemporary films from Hollywood to evaluate the different modes in which they incarnate the Haggardesque template in the age of US hegemony.

This book relies heavily on contemporary literary and paraliterary film adaptation theories to help analyse the theoretical premise of Hollywood-Africa film adaptations. A number of film adaptation texts, theories and models are used in this book. Chief among them is Kamilla Elliott's book *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2003), where she discerns six 'mostly unofficial' concepts that have shaped the critical discourse about cinematic adaptations of fiction. These are the Psychic, Ventriloquist, Genetic, De(Re)composing, Incarnational and Trumping concepts of adaptations. Elliott's models attempt to summarise the general theory of 'transtextuality' coined by Gérard Genette in his book *Palimpsests* (1982) and in turn propagated by film critics like James Neramore, André Bazin, Dudley Andrew, Robert Ray, and Robert Stam in a collection of essays titled *Film Adaptation* (2000). Because nearly all the major films analysed in this book are literary and extraliterary adaptations, I deploy these theories extensively. Thomas Leitch's book *Film Adaptation and its Discontents* (2000) offers

critical perspectives on the 'based on a true story' films and the concept of heroic self-transcendence analysed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, respectively. Using Hayden White's arguments in his seminal work, *The Fiction of Narrative* about the fallibility of historical narratives due to 'emplotment' (2010, 280–281), I also critique 'based on a true story' and 'this *is* a true story' film models. Two books that challenge the hero worship in Terry George's *Hotel Rwanda* are particularly useful in providing counter-narratives by survivors of Hôtel des Mille Collines: Alfred Ndahiro and Privat Rutazibwa's book, *Hotel Rwanda or the Tutsi Genocide as Seen by Hollywood* (2008) and Edouard Kayihura and Kerry Zukus' (2014) book, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story… and Why It Matters Today*. These books deconstruct Terry George's heroic narrative and Rusesabagina's appropriation of that superhero image.

I rely on Roger Stahl's ground-breaking book, *Militainment, Inc.: War, Media, and Popular Culture* (2010) to analyse the US military-industrial-entertainment-complex and the Pentagon sponsored films like *Tears of the Sun* (2003) and *Black Hawk Down* (2005). Stahl shows how the aestheticisation of war and especially the celebration of 'technowarfare' is projected into war movies set abroad which in turn militarises the nation. Two other related books I use are David Robb's *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors Movies* (2004), and Jean-Michel Valantin's *Hollywood, Pentagon and Washington* (2003). The collection of essays edited by MaryEllen Higgins titled *Hollywood's Africa After 1994* (2012) is the first volume of essays that focuses on Hollywood films about Africa since 1994. It discusses selected films and documentaries from 1995 to the mid-2000s. I also use *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela* (2014) which provides multiple theoretical and disciplinary approaches to understanding Mandela the man and the myth. John Mowitt's book *Retakes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages* (2005) is deployed in the analysis of Macdonald's *The Last King of Scotland* (2006) to argue that the use of Ugandan languages and songs gives the film a multicultural status that makes it a foreign language film to the film's larger Western audience inasmuch as the message of the songs is concerned. I use essays in *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice* (2003) edited by Martha McCaughey and Michael Ayers to understand the politics and framing of the cyber protest that crippled the box office performance of *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) and how it signals a new awakening in the Western audience against 'whitewashing' in Hollywood films about Africa. I deploy essays, articles and speeches on Afro-optimism in Chapter 10 and Afrofuturism in Chapter 11 to discuss the improvements in the imaging of Africa in Hollywood-Africa films since 2018.

This array of historical, theoretical and critical texts is used to establish the thesis that Hollywood films about Africa recycle the Dark Continent myth of the progenitor colonial texts, simultaneously showing that the representation of Africa and Africans in Hollywood is also improving in selected films.

There are also a number of books that function as progenitor texts in as far as critical treatment of Hollywood and Africa is concerned. The seven outlined here, despite their limitations, are the most significant. Richard A. Maynard's *Africa on Film: Myth and Reality* (1974) provides insight into the origin of the Dark Continent myth in the context of Africa's past while *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (1992) by Jan Nederveen Pieterse offers a comprehensive overview of European and American stereotyping of Africans and black people over a 200-year period from 1789 to 1992. Pieterse shows the deployment of Western media to promote Eurocentrism, classism, sexism, racism, colonial ethnography and exhibitionism. Kenneth M. Cameron's *Africa on Film: Beyond Black and White* (1994) examines Africa as the site for European fantasy projection. Divided into four parts, it uses a thematic approach to study selected Euro-America films about Africa, from the beginnings of cinema to the early decades of the African independence period, and then on to the 1990s. *In Darkest Hollywood: Exploring the Jungles of Cinema's South Africa* (1996), the seminal work by Peter Davis, is the first attempt at a comprehensive study of Hollywood's racist and colonialist representation, particularly of South Africa, and establishes the historical pattern of negative stereotyping of Africans in Western cinema. Ruth Mayer's landmark *Artificial Africas: Colonial Images in the Times of Globalization* (2002) uses a thematic approach to map negative Western representations of Africa. Working with colonial texts and 22 Western films, mostly from the 1980s and 90s (and at least one African film), Meyer discusses some of the major tropes of colonial representation of Africa and how they are repackaged in the age of globalisation. The historical treatise *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind* (2009) by Curtis Keim explores the origins of Darkest Africa. from the birth of the Dark Continent myth, and examines major misconceptions about Africa in the form of negative stereotypes and tropes perpetuated by US television culture, movies, video games, print media, corporate advertising, amusement parks, African-themed resorts, tours and even celebrities. *Hollywood's Africa After 1994* (2012), edited by MaryEllen Higgins, is a collection of 16 essays on recent Hollywood films about Africa written by a diverse range of scholars in the fields of literature and culture, film, communications and media, women and gender studies, political science, ethnic studies, sociology, and African and African American studies. The essays use diverse random approaches to reading the films, from postcolonial readings to minstrelsy, visual metaphor and counterpoint analysis of African films.

Building on the works of past scholars, including the authors discussed above, this book makes a fresh contribution to scholarship about Hollywood-Africa films in several ways. First, it isolates the DNA of Dark Continent tropology of Africa which I call the 'colonial mastertext' while providing a historiographic genealogy and context for the term's development and consolidation in Western cultural

productions. Second, I show how the deep genetic strands of Dark Continent tropology are recycled through various adaptation models across time and mediums, and specifically in colonial literature and neocolonial Hollywood films. Third, I show how the transmission of the Dark Continent mastertext from 19th century British literature to 20th and 21st century Hollywood films parallels the power relay from British colonialism to US hegemony where Hollywood functions as the new imagescape for cultural imperialism and hegemony. Fourth, unlike other texts about Hollywood-Africa films that take a thematic approach, this book situates the analysis of Hollywood films firmly in contemporary literary and extraliterary film adaptation theories with the thematic approach being deployed only in some films as a sub-methodology. Each chapter uses selected theories for analysis to problematise Hollywood's representation of Africa in various guises. Fifth, the book attempts to cover 112 years of Hollywood films. While not all films are given in-depth analysis, and some minor ones are skipped or just mentioned in passing, selected films that represent what I consider the major waves, modes and mutations of Dark Continent representation are discussed in detail. Most of these films emerge from the 1990s which marked an upsurge in interest in big-budget Hollywood productions about Africa that explored new ways of imaging Africa. Each major wave or mode of Hollywood representation is given an entire chapter and focuses on a particular film or films to illustrate specific theoretical paradigms. Sixth, the book tackles rising Western spectator resistance to stereotypical representations of Africa in Hollywood through cyberactivism, a topic that has not been attempted in any previous texts. Finally, the book looks at the phenomenon of Afro-optimism and Afrofuturism that respectively examine representations of Africa in the present that are positive and projections of a better future for Africa.

This book is primarily conceived as an academic text for film studies — especially for literature-film adaptation scholarship. However, it is a multidisciplinary book that is relevant to fields like cultural studies, media studies, philosophy, history — especially visual history — visual and performing arts, heritage, media, celebrity and cyberculture studies, peace and conflict studies, and strategic studies in general. It can also help African governments develop culture policies, especially in regard to national cinema, and help shape debates around humanitarian interventions in Africa. Above all, the book provides a framework for deconstructing the negative imaging of Africa for Western and African audiences alike, and functions as an index of human values and international understanding.

Breakdown of chapters

Chapter 1 provides a theoretical overview on the origins of the Dark Continent myth and its consolidation in 19th century European scholarship. It traces the genesis of

the myth in the age of European exploration, colonialism, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to show the role of the myth in the colonial project. Also engaged is literature by Africa's foremost Egyptologist, Cheik Anta Diop and how his insight into Western appropriation of ancient African civilisations provided the foundation for Darkest Africa mythology. The chapter then examines the role of colonial literature in advancing the Dark Continent fallacy as a forerunner to Hollywood and its new and versatile technology of seeing, mass production and global distribution of this myth.

Chapter 2 introduces Hollywood's Africa and the modes and forms through which Hollywood's representations of Africa have manifested across time. Examined are classical, neoclassical, New Wave Hollywood-Africa films, white focalisation in post-apartheid films and the phenomenon of 'Africa Rising' Hollywood films. This chapter, the longest, attempts a century-long broad analysis of films as a prelude to in-depth textual analysis of nine selected films in the succeeding chapters.

Chapter 3 examines the literature/film interchange between Rider Haggard's novel *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and its 1950 film adaptation by Bennett and Marton with a view to establish how the Dark Continent myth is ventriloquised in the adaptation. The 1950 film adaptation is read against the novel to show how Hollywood perpetuates the same old colonial stereotypes about the Dark Continent. The chapter weaves historical, literary and cinematic texts, intertexts and subtexts on colonial representation in order to establish how the Dark Continent myth is incarnated across representational mediums, time and cultures.

Chapter 4 examines colonial nostalgia that recycles the Dark Continent template and re-creates colonial power structures through casting and acting. Edward Zwick's film, *Blood Diamond* (2006), is used for illustration. The chapter revisits colonial discourse reminiscent of dystopian accounts of Sierra Leone as 'the whiteman's grave' as the overarching narrative framework. This chapter identifies patterns of representations and motifs that consolidate the Dark Continent myth. The chapter shows how the film transposes Rudyard Kipling's colonial anthem, "White Man's Burden", and the white salvation complex as the African characters are denied agency.

Chapter 5 discusses the phenomenon of 'militainment', a genre of Hollywood films that produces military themed entertainment with direct sponsorship from the Pentagon. The films are then used to boost recruitment efforts. The chapter focuses on the filmic reconstruction of the Biafran War in director Antoine Fuqua's *Tears of the Sun* (2003). It shows how the film deliberately distorts Nigerian history and demonises the Nigerian military and rebels through a selective narrative that majors on portraying Dark Continent style carnage and mayhem in order to justify a historically false US rescue mission. The film uses Africa as a mere backdrop to glorify and exhibit US military hardware and technowarfare in the age of US hegemony and manifest destiny.

Chapter 6 investigates the 'this *is* a true story' film genre with its main focus on Terry George's film, *Hotel Rwanda* (2004). It evaluates the validity of the 'true story' trademark of the film as a marketing code as well as the film's degree of fidelity to history. The chapter examines the conflict between the Hollywood template of the larger-than-life superhero versus communal African heroes. I examine the complex interplay between individual memory, genocide history, autobiography and fiction. Also examined is the validity of Rusesabagina's claims against testimony from survivors of Mille Collines in order to establish the role of artistic licence in memory construction and its shortchanging of history and truth. Finally, this chapter examines the political controversies surrounding the film to show how Hollywood through *Hotel Rwanda* contributes to genocide negation and post genocide conflict.

Chapter 7 discusses Thomas Leitch's concept of ideological effacement and heroic self-transcendence. It celebrates Clint Eastwood's film *Invictus* which stands out as one of the most positive contemporary films about Africa and the best representation of Nelson Mandela to date, yet it ironically dispossesses African history. The film reflects the dangers of Mandela 'mythography', hero-worship, and commoditisation that trivialises his sacrifice and the anti-apartheid struggle. This chapter shows how the screen rendition of John Carlin's *Playing the Enemy* overdramatises Mandela's contribution to the 1995 Rugby World Cup while obscuring South African anti-apartheid history. It examines how the celebrity image of Mandela is invoked in an ideological vacuum, leading to the projection of Mandela as a universal symbol of human goodness at the expense of the whitewashed history of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Chapter 8 uses *The Last King of Scotland* to explore positive ways of reading a Hollywood film about Africa, employing Garuba and Himmelman's (2012) idea of locating 'the uncited' between colonial and anticolonial discourse. This film underscores the hybridity of transcultural film production and its impact on content and form. The film has a strong Ugandan spirit and ambience and to a large extent trumps Foden's overtly racist representation of Africa in the novel hypotext in spite of the film's white focalisation. Macdonald's film is certainly not redemptive, but this chapter shows how the academy-award winning performance of African American actor Forest Whitaker reverses the dominant white screen iconography. This chapter also examines the role of the Uganda Government, Ugandan cast and crew, indigenous Ugandan songs, and location shooting in a modern Kampala City in 'improving' the cinematic realisation of Foden's overtly racist novel.

Chapter 9 analyses Ridley Scott's film, *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) which has been slammed for its historical inaccuracy and for whitewashing of black history by casting white actors in Hamitic and Semitic roles while consigning black Africans to limited roles as the lower class, servants, thieves and assassins. This controversy

underscores the main argument in this book that the Dark Continent tropology of Africa continues to be recycled in contemporary Hollywood, emphasising the imperative for African directors to produce alternative images of Africa that can challenge the persistent negative imaging of Africa in Hollywood films. The chapter also records rising disaffection with overt Hollywood stereotyping of Africans in an era of greater racial integration and harmony.

Chapter 10 examines Afro-optimism, a model of contemporary representation that highlights Africa's political, cultural and economic progress. Afro-optimism emphasises Africa's agency in marked departure from the pessimistic and dystopian mastertext of Euro-American imaginaries of Africa. Major strands of this narrative are: 'Africa rising', 'African Agency', Africa is 'Emergent', Africa's 'coming of age', and the 'African Century', best captured in Jean-Michel Severino and Olivier Ray's book *Africa's Moment* (2013). Another version of this uplifting narrative is Thabo Mbeki's idea of an 'African Renaissance'. The chapter looks at how Mira Nair's sports biopic *Queen of Katwe* about Ugandan chess child prodigy Phiona Mutesi exemplifies this positivist model of representing an Africa that departs markedly from the negative colonial template.

Chapter 11 examines Afrofuturism, a cultural aesthetic that amalgamates science fiction, history and fantasy to explore African American experience and its connection to the black diaspora and African ancestry. Afrofuturism draws upon African history and its mystical past rooted in the power of nature and its enduring traditions. Ryan Coogler's epic film, *Black Panther* (2018), dramatically illustrates this phenomenon. The highly civilised African nation of Wakanda is the most affluent and technologically advanced on earth; a country that escaped invasion and exploitation through a holographic camouflage. The chapter then shows how this science fiction largely trumps the Dark Continent depiction of Africa and speculates and envisions a future triumph for Africa. *Black Panther* showcases the battle for black counter-memory within Hollywood which strives to push back the colonisation of Africa's image and destiny.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

1

Constructing the 'Dark Continent'

This chapter traces the origins of the myth of Africa as a Dark Continent, its relation to colonialism and scientific racism, and how this Darkest Africa mastertext is recycled in Euro-American history, literature and film. I identify the array of tropes and themes through which the myth is recycled in Western cultural productions about Africa and deploy them in analysing archetypal films that represent the major waves of Hollywood representations of Africa. The myth of the Dark Continent was birthed during European exploration of Africa and consolidated by colonialism and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Patrick Brantlinger traces this genealogy in his book *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*:

> By the 1860s the success of the antislavery movement, the impact of the great Victorian explorers, and the merger in the social sciences of racist and evolutionary doctrines had combined, and the public widely shared a view of Africa which demanded imperialization on moral, religious, and scientific grounds. It is this view I call *the myth of the Dark Continent; by myth I mean ideology…discourse that treats its subject as universally understood, scientifically established, and therefore no longer open to criticism by political or theoretical opposition.* (1988, 174; my emphasis)

Europe considered Africa a mysterious continent because it was 'unknown to the European man.' Prior to 1795 when Mungo Park begun his historic Niger exploration sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society, white settlements in Africa were limited to the coast. The interior of Africa was considered a dark and mysterious enclave, and this gave rise to speculations about primitive, backward and savage cannibals who lived there in deep moral depravity. As Curtis Keim (2009, 16) observes, Darkest Africa image-building came into operation with the onset of the European exploration from the mid-1400s. Cornelius Rudolf Vietor had begun work on 'a four-volume illustrated description, drawn in "true colours", of "Africa, the field full of skulls", swarming with satanic butcheries and perversities. Only he had never himself set foot in Africa' (Pieterse 1992, 69–70). American author Sir Edgar

Burroughs, the creator of *Tarzan of the Apes*, would later create the Tarzan series that became the authoritative introduction to savage Africa for Euro-American children, although he too, like Vietor, never ever set foot in Africa. Ray Bradbury considers Buroughs 'the most influential writer in the entire history of the world' (cited in Kerridge 2016). Buroughs gained fame for his derogatory and fantastic imaging of Africa. Explorer narratives were not objective records of events as they unfolded in Africa but biased attempts to confirm some of these pre-existing mythologies. The first recorded use of the term Dark Continent was in the title of Henry Morton Stanley's book, *Through the Dark Continent* (1878), a description of his journey to the source of the Nile River. The myth of the Dark Continent also served another purpose: it turned attention away from the fact that Europe was the actual Dark Continent because of its engagement in the slave trade. Slave trade fed the greed of Europe for slave labour which formed the backbone of capitalist expansion. The abolition of the slave trade focused attention on Africa, yet ironically, the slave trade was redefined as a manifestation of Africa's primitiveness. Renewed focus on the Arab slave trade, therefore, became 'an alibi for European intervention' (Pieterse 1992, 64). The myth of the Dark Continent thus conveys negative Victorian ideology about Africa that permeated every sector of that society leaving political, moral, religious and scientific legacies that continue to influence stereotypical perceptions of Africa. The myth became the justification for colonial intervention in Africa and for the perception of Africans as savages and therefore as inferior to Europeans. It continues to be the benchmark for negative stereotypes about Africa and justification for neocolonialism.

In his book *Africa in History* (1968), Basil Davidson argues that contempt for Africans and theories of racial inferiority that emerged in 19th century Europe and America were a result of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and eventually of the invasion and conquest of the African continent. It is important to note that slavery was practised in medieval Europe and even earlier in Asia and Africa. Davidson says the Venetian Republic made colossal profits from selling its Christian slaves to Egypt and other Muslim nations in spite of Pope Clement V's edict against the trade (1968, 179), yet that exploitation of slave labour did not carry the brutal and inhumane scale of the Transatlantic slave industry. From the 16th century, there were small-scale movements of slaves from Africa to Europe and to the Americas, but it was the development of the Americas that escalated the Transatlantic Slave Trade. There was need for hard labour to open the mines and to work in the fields. Because Africans were skilled in tropical farming, their strength and expertise in working the fields played into the need for African labour since indigenous Amerindian populations were drastically reduced by disease and the wars of European conquest (1968, 181). The increased dependence on African slaves by colonial powers transformed the

Transatlantic Slave Trade from the usual exploitation of human labour to the large-scale commercial sale of human beings. With commercialisation of slavery, men and women were now purchased as goods for their strength, size or looks and were reduced to objects. These men and women uprooted from the sociocultural context of their humanity were now valued purely for their utility on the other side of the Atlantic. As a result, the slave traders who became increasingly greedy and more callous crammed their captives into ships like cargo and treated them inhumanely like animals or worse. During this time Davidson says Europeans began to see Africans as inferior and sought to justify that lie to appease their conscience.

> The degradation went beyond the slaving ships and plantations. Ramifying through European and American society, it formed a deep soil of *arrogant contempt for African humanity*. In this soil fresh ideas and attitudes of 'racial superiority', themselves the fruit of European technical and military strength, took easy root and later came to full flower during the decades of the nineteenth-century invasion and 20th century possession of the continent. (1968, 187–188; my emphasis)

From this point on, European anthropologists, historians, physiologists, psychiatrists, explorers and even theologians sought to erase all history and traces of civilisation in Africa. In his seminal work *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (1974), Senegalese Egyptologist Cheik Anta Diop also points to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and European technical superiority that facilitated the execution of the heinous trade, as well as the 'economic necessity to exploit' as the defining moment that led to the reversal of roles where the black race that founded the earliest and longest human civilisations, was suddenly considered inferior to the white race and black history eventually blurred by ignorance or buried under archaeological ruins. The term 'Negro' henceforth 'became a synonym for primitive being, "inferior," endowed with a pre-logical mentality.' Diop goes on to say: 'the desire to legitimize colonialism and the slave trade…engendered an entire literature to describe the so-called inferior traits of the Black. The mind of several generations of Europeans would thus be gradually indoctrinated' (1974, 24–25). A conscious effort was therefore made in Western scholarship to proclaim the inferiority of Africans under the cloak of the 'civilising mission' in order to justify the slave trade which by now had become the backbone of European and American economies. Chancellor Williams underscores this process: 'The steady conquest and enslavement of a whole people made it imperative to create both a religious and "scientific" doctrine to assuage the white conscience' (1971, xvii). Some liberal authors like John Bunyan attempted to refute the popular claim that Africa — and South Africa in particular — had no history. 'The truth is nearly as the opposite pole,' he asserts, 'South Africa is bound to the chariot-wheels of the past…Phoenician, Arab, Portuguese, Dutch, English…' (as cited in Smith 1965,

134). Noticeably, the author is silent about indigenous African history and attributes a past to Africa that starts with the foreign invaders. The overt irony of such Western historiography is that they exhibit wilful amnesia in tackling the history of a continent that is credited with the birth of human civilisation and with building some of the world's first great empires like the Egyptian and Kushite/Meroe civilisations. It blots out over 4 000 years of African history, which includes 'the golden age of the history of blacks' from 3100 BCE which saw among others, the reign of Ethiopian leader Menes to the end of the sixth dynasty (1971, xx). By starting African history from the Arab invasion of North Africa in 700 CE and fast forwarding to European colonialism of Africa in the 1800s, white historians present the history of Arabs and Europeans in Africa rather than the history of Africa itself. This whitewashing and white focalisation would eventually influence scientific, anthropological and general cultural discourses about Africa in the West for centuries. On a lighter note, some have also called Africa the 'Dark Continent' because of the shortage of electricity on the continent. Seen from space, Africa at night is unlit — as dark as all-but empty Siberia. But this seemingly harmless reference to the electricity blackout in Africa plays on the same imagery of Darkest Africa.

Which Africa? Whose Africa?

The Africa of Western scholarly discourse is mainly an imagined Africa constructed on mythological foundations from imperialist perspectives that bolstered empire in the colonial era and consolidates Euro-American neocolonial hegemony in the present. Moreover, this expatriate history of Africa tends to define, interpret, and reimage Africa through a Eurocentric epistemology. Persistent negative representation of Africa is part of the larger colonial enterprise which survives into the postcolonial era through instruments of Euro-American cultural imperialism like literature, film, and Western media at large. This colonial representation is best described by Mammo Muchie as 'a pessimism of description as well as pessimism of prescription' which Africa has suffered for over 500 years from 'a condescending and often violent gaze from diagnosis to destiny' (2004, 315). Reproach and moral condemnation are the hallmark of much of Euro-American discourses about Africa to date. Michael Omolewa observes that 'there does not seem to have been any remorse or any genuine repentance expressed by the descendants of those who serviced and benefited from the [colonial] system' (2009, 1). Nicholas Creary characterises European relationships with Africans with the analogy of an infectious disease he calls, 'Western Syphilization', which he defines as an 'intellectual process of gross distortions and/or the effacement' of discourses on Africans (2010, 107–108). Contemporary African historians and ideological movements have vigorously protested and resisted these bigoted and myopic projections. These range from the Negritude movement that started in the

1930s, all the way to modern Pan-Africanism born of the anticolonial struggle, and in the early 2000s, Thabo Mbeki's idea of African Renaissance. But the battle is still far from over (Ahluwalia 2002, 11).

It is important to give a detailed historical overview of the status of Africans before Arab invasion of North Africa in the 7th century and European colonialism in the 19th century in order to establish why the myth of the Dark Continent was manufactured; why this ridiculous myth was invested in vigorously and why it continues to flourish in contemporary Western cultural productions. Before 'darkest' Africa was invented, the continent was hardly associated with darkness but with its beautiful sunshine and ancient civilisations. Africa and ancient Ethiopia have been used synonymously by scholars, crediting Africa with some of the most glorious precolonial civilisations the world has ever known — and I use precolonial here to mean European colonialism. Ayele Bekerie notes that 'The name Ethiopia is associated with Upper Egypt, Nubia, Meroe, Western Sudan, the Arabian Peninsula, and even India' (2004, 115). Chancellor Williams considers Egypt 'Ethiopia's oldest daughter' and that Egypt was actually the northeastern region of ancient Ethiopia (1971, 13). John G. Jackson asserts that the early Greeks and Romans for instance 'described all the black people inhabiting the lands south of the Mediterranean coast of Africa as Ethiopians' (as cited in Bekerie 2004, 115). Bernard Magubane writes that Ethiopia 'is the broad and nearly generic term for the whole universe of African people' (1987, 160). Ethiopia at one time was the quintessential African land with vast African cultures, a status it still holds in postcolonial African history as the only nation that was never colonised. It served as the headquarters of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) 1963–2002, and since 2002 has been the permanent headquarters of the African Union (AU). Although never directly colonised, European colonialists attempted to wrest Ethiopia from the continent of Africa through what Richard Moore calls 'spurious and divisive "ethnology",' by relocating Ethiopian civilisation to that of Western Asia, Semites, Orientals, and South Arabia. 'This is indeed a way to dispossess the cultural legacy of the African people.' It is a way, as Moore puts it, 'to mark people for a special condition of oppression, degradation, exploitation, and annihilation' (1960, 48). This was a land known in classical times for its wealth of culture. Scholars like William Leo Hansberry and E. Harper Johnson who authored "Africa's Golden Past" series for *Ebony Magazine* (1964–1965), and J. A. Rogers who wrote *The Real Facts about Africa* (1982) consider Ethiopia to be the 'original Eden of mankind', first of nations and cradle of civilisation. Classical Greek writers like Homer (*The Iliad*) and English writer William Shakespeare (*Romeo and Juliet*) both referred to Ethiopia in adulatory terms. This led Magubane to comment:

> ...for a people whose history had deliberately starved of all legend, Ethiopia linked the African...to the glory of ancient classical times. The fact that *Iliad*

> speaks of the gods feasting among the blameless Ethiopians and Homer's praise of the king of Ethiopia...gave a great deal of vicarious pride and satisfaction to the African people. (1987, 163)

In the 1990s, a series of highly publicised archaeological findings and genetic researches linked Ethiopia with the origin of the first woman and of the first man on earth, as well as the oldest stone tools and technology known to man, lending weight to the assertions of Hansberry, Johnson and Rogers (cited in Bekerie 2004, 118). The importance of Africa to human civilisation is summarised thus by Lapiso Dilebo: 'Ethiopia is the primordial home of primal human beings and that ancient Ethiopian civilisation ipso facto and by recent archaeological findings precedes chronologically and causally all civilizations of the ancients, especially that of pharaonic and Greco-Roman civilizations' (cited in in Bekerie 2004, 119).

Cheik Anta Diop argues that Egyptian civilisation was undoubtedly a black civilisation. Congolese author Théophile Obenga observes that Diop being the only trained African Egyptologist in his day and a leading anthropologist and linguist at the time employs his 'acquired proficiency in rationalism, dialectics, modern scientific techniques, prehistoric archaeology, and...his encyclopaedic knowledge of his researches in African history' to tackle the terrain of Egyptology that was dominated by white historians eager to appropriate Africa's glorious civilisation for their white race (as cited in Mercer 1974, ix). Diop cited amply from sources as diverse as Greek historian Herodotus considered the father of modern history (1928), Diodorus of Sicily (1758), Greek geographer, philosopher, and historian Strabo (64 BCE–21 CE), and historian and French Egyptologist Gaston Maspero (1917) to establish the thesis that ancient Egyptian civilisation was a Negro civilisation and that ancient Egyptians were Negroes. He also illustrates his arguments with citations from the Hebrew book of *Genesis,* and uses photographs of sculptures, paintings and engravings of Egyptian pharaohs to show their Negroid features. In spite of overwhelming evidence from earlier Western scholars about ancient Egypt's Negro legacy, later Western scholars sought to rewrite Egyptian history entirely. Western scholarly obliteration of ancient black history and consequent classifications of black Africans as inferior is best decried by French nobleman, philosopher, historian, orientalist, and politician, Count Constantine de Volney who visited Egypt between 1783 and 1785:

> The ancient Egyptians were true Negroes of the same type as all native Africans [the same way the Normans still resemble the Danes 900 years after the conquest of Normandy]...But returning to Egypt, the lessons she teaches history contains many reflections for philosophy...Just think that this race of black men, today our slave and object of our scorn, is the very race to which we owe our arts, sciences, and even the use of speech! Just imagine, finally, that it is

in the midst of peoples who call themselves the greatest friends of liberty and humanity that one has approved the most barbarous slavery and questioned whether black men have the same kind of intelligence as Whites. (as cited in in Diop 1974, 27–28)

This long but necessary quote from Volney predates later 19th century European scholarship and exposes the heritage fabrications of later Western scholarship that sought to deny Africans agency and basically whitewashed a big chunk of African history, and along with it, the dignity of black people and their notable contribution to human progress. Writing in (*The New Times*, 17 April 2018), Elizabeth Buhungiro traces the origins of the name Africa from the Punic wars between the Roman Empire and the North Africa Empire of Carthage (a black civilisation) between 264 BCE and 146 BCE. She says the name 'Africa' could either have been derived from the Greek word 'aphrike' meaning 'without cold', or from the Phoenician word 'Afar' which means 'dust' or from the Latin 'Aprica' which means 'sunny'. Other sources suggest that Africa was originally called 'Alkebulan' used by Carthaginians to mean 'mother of mankind' or 'Garden of Eden'. Some are of the view that 'the name originated from a Yemenite chief named Africanus who invaded North Africa and founded a town called Afrikyah', while others suggest an Egyptian origin of the name Africa which stems from 'Afru-ika' meaning 'Motherland'. The term at first referred only to the area above the Sahara Desert. However, during the 15th century, the Portuguese at the South African Cape learnt of the Greek term 'Aethiopia' which meant 'land of the dark skinned or burnt' and applied it to people who lived south of the Sahara Desert. From the 16th century, the name Africa was applied to the entire continent. Another theory suggests that it has to do with the use of Latin as the lingua franca of international communication, scholarship and science until the late 18th century. In this case, North Africans would have been referred to as 'Afri'. If this thesis is true, then combined with 'Ica' as the Latin suffix for 'Land', the compounded Latin word would be 'Afri-Ica' or 'Afriland'. It is important to note, however, that at no point did any of these references to Africa connote or imply any suggestion that Africa is the Dark Continent, a mythos invented in the 19th century which gave birth to the most disparaging allusions to Africa as the epitome of darkness. Descriptions of Africa as 'without cold', 'dust', 'sunny', 'Motherland', 'mother of mankind' or 'Garden of Eden', 'land of the 'Afri', or 'land of the dark skinned or burnt' for that matter, celebrate the warmth, beauty and Edenic essence of Africa, which resonates with the view of most paleoanthropologists that Africa is the cradle of humanity.

Chancellor Williams observes further that the entire landmass called Africa belonged to blacks before later Arab and European invasion and was once called *Bilad as Sudan* 'the Land of Blacks' (1971, 1), not just 'sub-Saharan Africa' — itself

a racist physiographic category created by colonising Europeans aimed at wresting off ancient Egyptian civilisations from the black race. The name Egypt is itself of Greek origin, derived from 'Aigyptos', a Greek rendering of Hikuptah, the name for Memphis which was eventually used to mean entire land. Ancient Egypt was called Chem, Chemi, Kemet or Kemit, which are all variations of the name for 'black inhabitants'. Succeeding white historians who acknowledge that the terms mean black, sought to divorce black people's identity and presence from the land of Egypt by asserting that the terms meant 'black soil' not 'black people' (Williams 1971, 17). Whatever the case, it is clearly erroneous to generalise that African soil is all black since red soil can be found in many locations on the continent. My own ancestors, the Lango people of northern Uganda, who immigrated from Abyssinia [Ethiopia] in 1200 CE, call Egypt Misiri, which corroborates the biblical account of Egypt as the land of the sons of Misraim, the son of Ham (the progenitor of the black races). Ham had four sons, Cush, *Misraim*, Phut and Canaan (Genesis 10: 6). In fact, many bible translations use the name Egypt to refer to Ham's son, Misraim. The bible calls Egypt the land of Ham (Psalms, 78: 51; 105: 23, 27; 106: 22 and 1 Chronicles 4: 40). The Kalenjin people of Kenya claim through a long oral tradition that they originate from ancient pharaonic Egypt which they call concurrently, 'Tto' and 'Misiri' (Sambu 2011, xv; Chesaina 1991, 1, 29). In his book *The Misiri Legend Explored: A Linguistic Inquiry into the Kalenjiin People's Oral Tradition of Ancient Egyptian Origin* (2011), Kenyan comparative linguist and Egyptologist Kipkoeech araap Sambu did a comparative lexicostatistical analysis of Kalenjin and ancient Egyptian languages and found marked similarities (2011, 37–57). Martin Bernal, writing in *Black Athena* concedes that 'Egyptian civilization is clearly based on the rich pre-dynastic cultures of upper Egypt and Nubia, whose African origin is uncontested' (1987, 51). Egypt was invaded successively by the Assyrians starting in ca. 671 BCE, then by the Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Arabs and finally by the British who administered it as a colony from 1882 to 1956. Over the same period of British colonisation of Egypt, the rule of the black race and the presence of black people in Egypt systematically diminished, to the extent that the current inhabitants of Egypt are Arabs, and the glory of ancient black civilisation has been attributed by Western historians to the conquerors.

Consistent denial of agency to Africans in precolonial African history is best described by Achebe's satirical observation concerning Western notions that Africa's 'past was one dark night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf liberated them' (1975, 59). European historiography relocated all evidence of civilisation and culture in Africa to Europe and Asia. This is the mindset that informed colonial mapping of Africa. Eminent Euro-enlightenment philosopher David Hume summarised the triumphalist 'blackout' of African civilisations in

Western scholarship thus:

> I am apt to suspect the negroes [sic], and in general all other species of men…
> to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilization of any other
> complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or
> speculation. No ingenious manufacturers among them, no arts, no sciences. (as
> cited in Taylor 1998, 25)

By the time of the European enlightenment, the white ethnocentrism and occasional racism that began in medieval anthropology had been reinvented into 'Whiteness as a transcendent' racial category, associated with 'reason', 'culture', 'civilisation', 'progress' and eventually 'modernity' (Taylor 1998, 25), banishing all black civilisations into oblivion and firmly asserting the Dark Continent mythos.

Colonial mapping that was guided by this same mindset inscribed European imaginative geographies of desire and mythography to an Africa that became the precursor to exploration and conquest. N. Penn accurately observes that these maps 'are perhaps first and foremost, guides to the mindset which produced them'; they are far from the representation of physical geography and instead 'a representation of the system of cognitive mapping which produced them' (1993, 23). Travel writers including the explorers and even missionaries who journeyed in Africa would later see Africa through the same lens. Derek Gregory has correctly noted that 'travel writers tend to read others' books, to see the places they visit through them, and in some respects to reproduce the ideas and assumptions' (as cited in Phillips 2002, 192). These travel writers sought to justify scientific racism and the Dark Continent classification of Africa, which was the discourse in all scientific and cultural disciplines in Europe at the time, in order to prepare the way for colonial settlement of African lands. David Spurr summarised this well in his analysis of the colonial gaze:

> The gaze is never innocent or pure, never free of mediation by motives which
> may be judged noble or otherwise. The writer's eye is always in some sense
> colonizing the landscape. Mastering the portioning, fixing zones and poles,
> arranging and deepening the scene as the object of desire. (1993, 27)

In turn, the travel accounts influenced creative works which successively recycled the same lies until the Dark Continent image of Africa and its permanent tropes of ignorance, cannibalism, savagery, sexual perversion, poverty and diseases — to name but a few, became the mastertext that influenced all Western cultural productions about Africa. This 'external influence myth' as Chancellor Williams calls it (1971, 17) can be seen in the now famous myth of 'King Solomon's Mines' that was used to explain away evidence of technology in precolonial south and central Africa. It is the foundational myth behind Rider Haggard's novel *King Solomon's Mines*, and its many film adaptations which are examined in Chapter 3.

Publishers were also complicit in consolidating this Dark Continent image of Africa. In his article, "Unraveling Speke: The Unknown Revision of an African Exploration Classic" (2003), David Finkelstein provides evidence that even the famous first-hand explorer travelogues of Speke, Burton, Stanley and Paul du Cahillu were doctored by publishers to make their accounts fit into the established stereotypes of Africans (2003, 132). He stumbled on the original hand-written manuscript of Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (which gave birth to the racist Hamitic theory) and found it had been radically revised by eminent publisher William Blackwell & Sons to fit negative colonial mythography about Africa more sharply. He argues that these 19th century authors were mere masks hiding Victorian culture, attitudes and expectations, and further asserts that Speke was not an exception: 'Speke was hardly the only African explorer to have his work re-written to fit generalised British notions of Africa. There is evidence to suggest that works by David Livingstone, Henry Stanley, and Paul du Chaillu were similarly revised during the same period.' Finkelstein goes on to say:

> That such influential texts of African exploration were routinely revised in such fashion tells us a great deal about Victorian manipulations of text and author to serve ideological and commercial purposes. Speke's story offers us a cautionary tale of authorial intention and textual veracity that historians would do well to reflect on. *The next time you read one of these nineteenth-century narratives, consider who might really be speaking to you from its pages.* (2003, 132; my emphasis)

These 19th century writings were the engine of negative mythmaking about Africans and, conversely, positive mythmaking for European civilisations. Louise Henderson has examined ways in which 'a host of Victorian myth-makers' constructed the image of individual explorers as heroes or villains in the media. These explorers were themselves celebrity personas and cultural texts through which national heritage construction happened. Investments in the explorer and missionary-celebrity-industrial-complex of the day meant the National Geographic Society of Britain, for instance, and the government could profit from the 'eye-witness' expeditionary narratives from Africa which in turn were revised meticulously to fit long-held stereotypes about Africa. Texts were manipulated by publishers, editors, illustrators, cartographers and other experts to fit prescribed narrative templates. Livingstone, for instance, decried the way his manuscript *Missionary Travels and Adventures* was being revised, 'diluted' and 'emasculated' and accompanied by 'glaringly inaccurate' illustrations (Henderson n.d.). Fabrication of information about Africa as well as doctoring of already culturally biased travelogues and exaggeration to create mythical effect is the hallmark of colonial accounts of Africa. These explorer-writers functioned as colonial promoters whose accounts interpret and consolidate the myth of the Dark

Continent. Henderson (n.d.) says further that by

> …acting as intermediates between authors and the reading public, members of the book trade played a significant role in shaping the myths that developed around individual explorers. Moreover, their influence reached beyond their contemporary settings with future generations of readers, and biographers in particular, often relying heavily upon such volumes for knowledge of those who dominated European accounts of nineteenth-century exploration.

The methodology and content of colonialist historiography and literature about Africa is therefore determined by imperial expediency. As Mudimbe correctly asserts, 'Theories of colonial expansion and discourses on African primitiveness emphasise a historicity and the promotion of a particular model of history.' These explorers, plus others like Mungo Park, V. L. Cameron and Lord F. D. Lugard address the same issues using the same template of 'civilisation' and 'Christianity' versus 'primitiveness' and 'paganism' (1988, 20). Edward Said observes in his book *Orientalism,* that 'cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures *not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be*' (2003, 67; my emphasis). The imperial culture becomes the authorial voice and sees only what it wants to see in the 'other' presumably backward culture in relation to the greatness of the imperial metropolis. The same Western epistemological framework that influenced much of Western history about Africa also feeds novelistic and cinematic media, and other such cultural foundries that reproduce the recurrent mythology of the Dark Continent. Hayden White reminds us that history is not immune to manipulation due to emplotment which fictionalises facts (2010, 280–281). W. B. Carnochan underscores this point best when he says, 'History itself is a battle of competing stories, dependent on inference and intuition, not on the bedrock of some supposedly plain facts' (2006, 2). He further elaborates on the deceptive nature of history by saying that history doesn't show us things '"as they really were" but, instead, an imaginative reconstruction of things as they might coherently claim to have been' (2006, 112). No doubt, racial imperialism impacted on colonial historiography about Africa and Western cultural productions in general to date.

Africa in colonial novels

The focus of this book is on Hollywood films rather than Euro-American novels about Africa; however, a theoretical overview of the relations between colonial novels and colonialism is provided here as a foundation for the analysis of Hollywood's appropriation of this colonialist mode of representing Africa on screen. Many of the films discussed are adaptations of colonial or recent colonialist novels, but only Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) is discussed in detail in Chapter 3

as the representative colonial hypotext. Reading Haggard's novel alongside its 1950 screen realisation demonstrates the adaptation nexus between literary and cinematic representations of Africa according to Kamilla Elliott's ventriloquist theoretical model that shows how the neocolonial cinematic apparatus parroted or ventriloquised the novel's Dark Continent colonial mastertext on screen. This theory and its manifestations in the literary and cinematic texts are discussed extensively in Chapter 3.

European colonialists did not rely solely on superior military technology and political astuteness to establish their imperialist agendas in Africa. They also deployed cultural weaponry such as literature and film to advance imperialism. These colonial novels created an image of Africa that was dark, outlandish and bizarre, in part, to satisfy the curiosity of the Western audiences who had heard all kinds of pernicious reports about the backwardness of people in newfound lands, in part to justify European intervention in Africa under the pretext of bringing the light of European civilisation into the Dark Continent. From the early 20th century onwards, Western film consolidated this colonial image of Africa by adapting novels like *King Solomon's Mines* and their stereotypical representations of Africa to the screen. Cinema, whose portrayal of Africa was felt most during the post-independence era of neocolonialism, outdid the novel in ideological impact because of its capacity for mass production and distribution as well as its greater technical advantage in portraying reality. Western cinema in turn influenced Western media representations of Africa and consequently political, economic and military policy interventions in Africa for decades.

Notable colonialist novels about Africa include Henry Rider Haggard's novels *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), *She* (1887), and *Allan Quatermain* (1887); Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (1899); John Buchan's *Prester John* (1910); Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912 [1914]), Joyce Arthur Cary's *The African Witch* (1936) and *Mister Johnson* (1939); Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa* (1937); Elspeth Huxley's *The Red Strangers* (1939), *A Thing to Love* (1954) and *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1959); Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948); Robert Ruark's *Something of Value* (1955) and Nicholas Monsarrat's *The Tribe That Lost Its Head* (1956). All these authors were involved in colonial institutions politically or economically and promoted colonial agendas either directly or indirectly. For instance, Rider Haggard served as Assistant to the Secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Natal (Haggard 2002, vi), and worked under Sir Theophilus Shepstone, Special Commissioner for the Transvaal. He even raised the union flag that announced British annexation of the Transvaal and read out the proclamation (Katz 1987, 9). He also served as Master and Registrar of the High Court in Transvaal (1987, 10). Joyce Cary joined the colonial service in 1914. During World War I he served with a Nigerian regiment fighting in the German colony of Cameroon

(Steinbrecher 1957, 387–395; Foster 1968, 95–106). In 1917 he returned to civil duties in the Nigerian colonial government service as a District Commissioner (Foster 1968, 82–93; "Joyce Cary British Author," 2019). Elspeth Huxley, referred to as 'Chronicler of Colonial Kenya' by the *New York Times* (Lyall 1997), was a fervent advocate of colonialism. Raised in the Kenyan settler colony, her writings, especially *The Flame Trees of Thika* — just like Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and Burrough's *Tarzan of the Apes* — became the official guide to Africa for many in Europe and America who would never set foot on the continent. She notably served on the Monckton Commission, an advisory body set up to review the constitution of then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi) (Nicholls 2002, 304–318). Graham Greene, whom Papa Doc Duvalier once called a 'negrophobic benzedrine addict' (Thomson 1994), worked for the British intelligence MI-6 in Sierra Leone during World War II (Hawtree 1999). Lieutenant Commander Nicholas Monsarrat served in the British Navy during World War I. He published his recollections of his naval experience in his autobiography, *Monsarrat at Sea* (1975). He later served in diplomatic service as an Information Officer in apartheid South Africa (Weddell, n.d.). John Buchan, author of the South African novel *Prester John* (1910), who also wrote a colonial treatise *The African Colony* (1903) among many other titles, served in high-profile positions in the colonial period. He was Political Private Secretary to the South African High Commission from 1901–1903, Governor of the Cape Colony and colonial administrator of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State; he also wrote for the British War Propaganda Bureau during World War I, and served as Canada's Governor General (Smith 1965, 106–145, 375–419). Celebrity missionary-explorer and best-selling author of the memoir *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, Dr David Livingstone whose discoveries set the stage for the 'Scramble for Africa' was Her Majesty's Consul for the East Coast of Africa.

Some of these authors took liberal positions that were critical of various colonial practices but were nevertheless loyal to the broader agenda of colonialism, whereas others were critical of colonialism but emotionally detached from the plight of Africans, revealing their inherent pride and racism. For such liberal authors, the subjective and private evaluation of African reality is clouded by the objective mission of serving the empire. Referring to writers like Haggard who were on active duty as colonial officers, Gerald Monsman says, 'The propagandization and contestation of the ideology of empire is complicated by autobiographical involvement' (2006, 14). The literary vehicle of contemplation becomes an instrument of imperialist advancement. Patrick Brantlinger argues that

> Empire involved military conquest and rapacious economic exploitation, but it also involved the enactment of often idealistic although nonetheless authoritative schemes of cultural domination. The goal of imperialist discourse

> is always to weld these seeming opposites together or to disguise their contradiction. (1988, 34)

These writers, in spite of their good intentions, were deeply involved in establishing colonialism and its economic exploitation as well as the racism necessary to justify such exploitation. The writings, however liberal by the standards of their day, still served the same purpose.

This chapter sought to establish the origins of the Dark Continent myth, its development and deployment in European intellectual discourses and especially in European, and specifically British cultural productions. The scholarly obliteration of black civilisations gave way to European novels like *King Solomon's Mines* and *Tarzan of the Apes* which fictionalised and consolidated the perceived inferiority of Africans and the savagery and mortal darkness of black souls. The 19th century novel then provided the raw material for colonial and Hollywood films about Africa that reloaded the myth and its familiar tropes onto fascinating imagescapes. They then mass produced them, further propagating and consolidating the Dark Continent myth. Having set the foundation for Euro-American Darkest Africa cultural discourse and literary productions, it is to Hollywood that I now turn.

2

Manifestations of Hollywood's Africas

> By now, none can deny the might of Hollywood in its mediation of knowledge, its capitalistic lure, and its powers of dissemination, so that we have to acknowledge that whether Hollywood tells a story well or not, the very fact that it tells a story on Africa, any story at all, has a lasting impact. (Osagie 2012, 225)

Hollywood, home of the commercial American film industry, was the most formidable cultural industry of the 20th century and its unabated global power, reach and influence — whether for good or bad — in the 21st century is undisputable. Although based in California, Hollywood has been mutating owing to a proliferation in transnational funding sources, the array of nationalities that perform in Hollywood films and the increasing permeability of national boundaries. Thus, while there is still a physical place called Hollywood, the name has become a cultural space that includes many producers, directors, actors and audiences within and beyond America. Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden assert that 'Hollywood, which for many critics has become a synecdoche for popular film as such, has both influenced and been influenced by the flows of cultural exchange that are transforming the ways people the world over are making and watching films' (2010, 2). While Hollywood is American in its origin and location, it is very much international across the Western world in its production and marketing. Ezra and Rowden note that 'although mainstream Hollywood's key role is US cultural imperialism cannot be ignored, it is also important to recognize the impossibility of maintaining a strict dichotomy between Hollywood cinema and its "others"' (2010, 2). In this book I use the term Hollywood broadly to refer to US and British film productions that project British colonial and US neocolonial cultural hegemony and other Western films about Africa that adhere to the various Euro-American templates of representing Africa in the classical Hollywood narrative tradition. Classical Hollywood went through a major transformation in the mid-1980s, beginning specifically in 1985 when media mogul Rupert Murdoch purchased 20th Century Fox followed by 25 years of takeovers and mergers by major

media conglemorates: the Warners merger with Time Inc.; the purchase of MGM/
UA by Italian magnate Giancario Parretti; and the Japanese companies Sony and
Matsushita's purchase of Columbia and Tri-Star and takeover of MCA and Universal,
respectively. These mergers and takeovers affected the cultural and production
landscape of old Hollywood leading to the idea of New Hollywood (Finler 2003, 2–3).
These transnational investments in Hollywood productions and the constellation of
international superstars that constitute every single New Hollywood production have
in many ways led to a degree of hybridity in Hollywood productions. Ezra and Rowden
argue that cinema has always been transnational and that Hollywood's 'exoticizing
representational practices' notwithstanding, the rise of transnational productions in
Hollywood is characteristic of New Hollywood (2010, 2).

The Hollywood film industry is a massive assembly of business conglomerates
that horizontally integrates media like movies, television, radio, publishing and the
internet, and vertically operates through cinema theatres and web-based distribution
chains like Netflix and Amazon. A good example is Disney, the leading box office
earner in 2019 well ahead of Warner Bros, Universal, Sony, Paramount and Fox
(Brandon Katz in *The Observer*, July 31, 2019). Disney is a successful multibillion-
dollar mass media and entertainment conglomerate that produces Hollywood
films but also makes equally huge profits from theme parks and resorts, studio
entertainment and media networks. Disney Media Distribution (DMD) distributes
movies from Disney subsidiaries like Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone Pictures,
Hollywood Pictures, 20th Century Fox Film, Fox Animation, 20th Century Fox
Television, Marvel Studios, ABC Studios, ABC Entertainment, Lucasfilm,
Lucasfilm Animation, Pixar Animation Studios, Walt Disney Animation Studios,
Disneytoon Studios and ESPN Films. The radio and television arms of Disney are
Radio Disney and Walt Disney Television (Disney–ABC International Television,
Inc.), which includes ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNEWS, ESPN Deportes, ESPNU, SEC
Network, ACC Network, National Geographic and Nat Geo Wild, Disneynature,
WABC, Freeform, Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney Junior, FX Productions,
FX, FXX, FXM, the WATCH and HDTV. Disney is able to make money through
video-on-demand, interactive television and retransmission rights. In July 2019, the
Walt Disney Company announced that it would combine 'all its media, affiliate,
content and syndication sales, and distribution efforts' into a formidable new
organisation it called the Direct-to-Consumer & International (DTCI) which will
realign distribution of film and TV programming on digital platforms, broadcasting
platforms, home entertainment and pay networks among others (Hobson, 2019).
Disney runs six theme parks and resorts around the world. Reporting in the *New York
Times* (November 16, 2018) Brookes Barnes observes that the Walt Disney World
in Lake Buena Vista in Florida, part of the global Disney vacation empire, sits on

25 000 acres of land and receives over 56 million visitors a year. He notes that at Epcot Lake Buena Vista, Florida, you can enjoy, among others: 'Guardians of the Galaxy' roller coaster, Space restaurant and 'Ratatouille' ride. At Hollywood Studios Lake Buena Vista, you can experience 'Mickey Mouse' ride, 'Toy Story' land and 'Star Wars' resort; while at the Disney Studios Park at Disneyland Paris Marne-la-Vallée, France, you can experience 'Frozen' land, Marvel superhero land and 'Iron Man' roller coaster. At the Hong Kong Disneyland Lantau Island, you can encounter 'Avengers' ride, 'Ant-Man' attraction, 'Moana' stage show and Castle and amphitheater (Barnes, 2016). These imaginative afterlives of Disney films are making even more profits than the films themselves. Disney Plus livestreaming was launched in November 2019.

The major multinational conglomerates behind Hollywood are Sony, Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, Comcast/General Electric, News Corporation, Viacom, Lions Gate Entertainment, The Weinstein Company, MGM and DreamWorks. These in turn work through subsidiary mega-companies around the globe.

Although the US was a former colony of Britain, it has become the embodiment of imperialism in the age of hegemony. In his book, *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965), Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, coined the term 'neo-colonialism' to describe a new subtler progeny of colonialism operating in the newly independent states through political, economic and cultural pressures from former colonial masters. He sees US monopoly capital as the successor to British imperialism in the age of hegemony (Nkrumah 1965). Nkrumah sees the role of Hollywood and the US media at large in perpetuating a uniform message about Africa:

> Even the cinema stories of fabulous Hollywood are loaded. One has only to listen to the cheers of an African audience as Hollywood's heroes slaughter Red Indians or Asiatics to understand the effectiveness of this weapon. For, in the developing continents, where the colonialist heritage has left a vast majority still illiterate, even the smallest child gets the message contained in the blood and thunder stories emanating from California…While Hollywood takes care of fiction, the enormous monopoly press, together with the outflow of slick, clever, expensive magazines, attends to what it chooses to call 'news.' Within separate countries, one or two news agencies control the news handouts, so that a deadly uniformity is achieved, regardless of the number of separate newspapers or magazines. ("Neo-colonialism" 1965)

While European powers have continued to exert enormous influence on Africa through their languages and economic control, the post-World War II era saw the United States emerge as the dominant cultural force of the 20th century, with Hollywood becoming its linchpin. Some of America's cultural impact has been perceived as detrimental to even European cultures. No wonder France attempted to impose limitations on American products, at one point even attempting to block the

release of the American film *Jurassic Park* (1993) in France ("Imperialism…"). In the late 1930s, the British film industry decried US penetration into its Empire markets, feeling victimised by Hollywood, illustrated in the 1937 assertion by Britain's *World Film News* that 'The Americans, with impressive supply of Hollywood pictures, have the necessary tank power to put native [British] exhibitors to their mercy. They are using it remorselessly…*So far as films go, we are now a colonial people*' (cited in Abravanel 2012, 181; my emphasis). This somewhat ironic outcry represented the clash between late British imperialism and US hegemony in the business of mythmaking during the postcolonial era, although the two were teammates in the relay race of cultural imperialism.

Since Hollywood's focus is maximising profit, fidelity in the rendition of stories, histories, biographies and places they deal with in the films is not a given. Because of this profit drive, it can generally be said that audience expectation and the consequent box office returns are what drive Hollywood. Even when a Hollywood director promises to tell the 'true' story as is the case with Terry George's promise to tell the world the whole truth about the Rwandan genocide, the promise is in aspiration; in practice, profit considerations mediate the storytelling. The audiences who pay the piper call the tunes. Hollywood is an amorphous cultural production empire that is hard to hold accountable for its derogatory depictions of Africa. As the expressive wing of Euro-American cultures, Hollywood's negative stereotypes of Africans are manifestations of wider racist cultural projections of Euro-enlightenment repackaged in the age of hegemony.

At the heart of the Hollywood production system is the consolidation of 'whiteness' as the standard mechanism of 'othering' which is conterminous with the birth of classical Hollywood cinema itself. In his introduction to the volume of essays, *Classic Hollywood, Classic Whiteness* (2001), Daniel Bernardi postulates that in Hollywood, whiteness remained the 'norm by which all "Others" fail by comparison' (2001, xiv). He goes on to say, while the meaning of race might have shifted or maintained a certain degree of mobility, whiteness remained supreme, and 'the pale formation maintained its hegemony in Hollywood from the birth of cinema to the contemporary era' (2001, xiv). This means that whiteness controls directly and indirectly all aspects of Hollywood production including *mise en scène*, cinematography, lighting, casting (and acting) and editing. The iconography of whiteness mediates all aspects of 'classical' Hollywood film style, as well as genre, the star persona and narrative. This white iconography of representation is in turn a reflection of the national racial barometer, as well as institutionalised policies that consolidate whiteness. Bernardi gives examples of how Hollywood helps to consolidate institutionalised racism:

Studios like Warner Brothers, and Paramount Pictures literally run show business, and a number of the racial representations and stories found in their products can be traced to institutional policies and practices. Stretching from the enforcement of blackface into the Production Code Administration and beyond, the studios systematized the popularization of American Whiteness. (2001, xv)

The myth of 'whiteness'

To understand the construction and consolidation of the myth of the Dark Continent in Hollywood, we have to understand the construction of the myth of 'whiteness'. In his book, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (1998), George Lipsitz posits that 'Whiteness has a cash value' and creates immense profit for its club members in various ways. Whiteness as a system of racism (which should be separated from white people, many of whom abhor white racism) demands conscious investment as a means of continued economic and social–cultural dominance. He further says:

This Whiteness is of course a delusion, a scientific and cultural fiction that like all racial identities has no valid foundation in biology or anthropology. Whiteness is, however, a social fact, an identity created and continued with all-too-real consequences for the distribution of wealth, prestige and opportunity. (1998, vii)

The emergence of whiteness — especially in the US — is tied directly to racism on US soil. As Lipsitz further observes, '"Whiteness" emerged as a relevant category in US life and culture largely as a result of slavery, segregation, native American policy and immigration restrictions, conquest and colonialism' (1998, 99). This resonates with the views of Brantlinger cited in Chapter 1. Since the early 20th century, Hollywood has been pivotall in reinforcing official policy and propagating the myth of 'whiteness'. In fact, the myth of the Dark Continent and the myth of 'whiteness' are the two sides of the same coin. As the US whiteness-industrial-entertainment-complex, classical Hollywood in particular, and mainstream Hollywood in general, continue to stereotype other people and groups, with Africa remaining the ultimate continent for measuring Otherness. Bernardi puts it bluntly: 'there is extant evidence in Hollywood of a possessive investment in the pale formation' (2001, xvi). Whiteness therefore asserts itself in Hollywood production directly as is the case with the visual iconography of the White Hunter for instance or the Jungle Queen, or indirectly through puppeteering in the case of non-white actors performing, or in cinematography, point of view and the entire array of aesthetic choices as are analysed at length in the succeeding chapters about Hollywood-Africa films. Bernardi

makes an interesting observation that whiteness (or blackness for that matter) is itself a performance since 'there are no white people per se, only those who pass as white. And passing as white, at least in the United States, has almost always had something to do with "acting" and "looking" — making — white' (2001, xv). This performance of race is consolidated in Hollywood where the celebrity star persona crystallises the essence of whiteness in relation to 'Others' as a white scale of grading where Africans are made to exist at the very bottom. Bernardi asserts that Hollywood's propagation and consolidation of the myth of the Dark Continent is part of 'its diligent efforts to appease the thin white line' (2001, xxii). Furthermore, according to Bernardi, '"Whiteness" and indeed the category of races' is itself a 19th century concoction aimed at classifying the so-called races and always ends up in a 'determinism that validates and promotes sociopolitical hierarchies' (1996a, 1). Race is illusionary and has no biological basis, and although useful for statistical purposes, it only ends up reinforcing systems of thought that consolidate prejudice. Robert Lee Hotz (*Los Angeles Times,* February 20, 1995) observes that 'race — the source of abiding cultural and political divisions in American society — simply has no basis in fundamental human biology.' In a ground breaking article in a special Race Issue of the *National Geographic* (April 2018), titled, "There's No Scientific Basis for Race — It's a Made-Up Label," Elizabeth Kolbert debunks the testament of Dr Samuel Morton, one of the most prominent American scientist of the 19th century considered the father of scientific racism, who developed the idea that race is genetically coded. She says what modern science has to tell us about Morton's division of humans into five races allegedly based on genetic differences is actually the total opposite because all human beings have 'the same collection of genes.' She cites a group of scientists who set out to assemble the first complete human genome from a composite of different so-called races. They concluded that 'the whole category of race is misconceived.' Their dramatic findings were announced in the year 2000 at a White House ceremony by Craig Venter, 'a pioneer of DNA sequencing.' Interestingly, the scientist came up with what they called 'two deep truths' about human beings: (1) that all human beings are very closely related and have the same number of genes, save for identical twins; and (2) that 'in a very real sense, all people alive today are Africans.' They attribute difference in skin colour — from the darker original to lighter shades — to genetic mutations over time and space in different latitudes. Emerging articles about the misconceptions about race and its application in the subjugation of darker races deemed inferior has laid bare the lies of scientific racism.

Alongside history, anthropology and philosophy, science — which is supposedly the most objective of academic disciplines — was manipulated for centuries to try to ratify the inherent superiority of the European man. One case of such

preconceived bias in the realm of science is that of Sarah Baartman, popularly known as the Hottentot Venus, a South African Khoisan woman who was shipped to Europe in 1810 and paraded as a freak show in England and in France because of her steatopygic buttocks. Professor Georges Cuvier, the legendary French father of comparative anatomy who together with Etienne Geoffrey St. Haillaire (founder of teratology, the study of animal malformation) and professor of Zoology at the University of Paris, and Henri de Blainville, the leading French taxonomist of the day observed Sarah Baartman and after her death, Cuvier dissected her dead body. Their general conclusions were that Baartman's facial movements, lips, breasts, thigh bones and big buttocks and presumably 'elongated labia minora' proved that she was much closer to the orangutan, apes, dogs and other carnivores' (*The Life and Times of Sara Baartman* 1998). As opposed to the European man, she was 'near human' or 'sub-human' and the possible 'missing link' between humans and apes. This is the kind of scientific conclusion that prompted Louis Gates Jr. to remark that 'Race, in these (scientific) usages, pretends to be an objective term of classification, when in fact it is a dangerous trope' (as cited in Bernardi 1996a, 1). The Hollywood cinematic apparatus as the engine of America popular culture does not only represent and narrate race, but 'also names a hegemonic way of knowing and seeing' (Bernardi 1996a, 3). The dangerous tropology of race is played out in Hollywood where fantasies of the perfect European man are enacted by diminishing the Other. It is here that the perfect white female body, or white scale of the perfect female body is demonstrated — also the stage for celebrating, preserving and problematising white masculinity while black masculinity is caricatured, paternalised, monsterised or destroyed on screen. It is here that white moral uprightness is staged against the immorality of Africans. As Lipsitz correctly notes, 'The sinister social consequences of cultural expression continue today. Cultural categories frame our understanding of social issues; they arbitrate the things we can imagine and perceive' (1998, 100). It is, therefore, not possible to analyse how Hollywood-Africa films recycle the Dark Continent trope without deconstructing 'whiteness' and its puppeteering hand in Hollywood's Africa depictions. While the viewer may not be party to the manipulation of images that perpetually project Africa as the Dark Continent, these images affect the viewer's perception of Africans negatively.

Dark Continent narrative methodology

Dark Continent narrative methodology collapses the walls between fact and fiction and plays fast and loose with African reality in order to fit colonialist perceptions of Africa. Dark Continent tropes and themes in Hollywood-Africa films enumerated in Chapter 1 fit into two major characteristics of Western cultural productions

about Africa: marginalisation of Africa at large, especially underrepresentation of or complete obliteration of Africa's progress and achievements on the one hand, and, on the other, over-representation of what Danielle Mezzana (2003) calls 'brute data… that are then used by Western experts to be interpreted by them as they deem fit.' The myth of the Dark Continent is a product of this double jeopardy on Africa's image that has influenced over 100 years of Western scholarship and cultural productions about Africa. Hollywood representations of Africa may not overtly invoke the Dark Continent tropes, but sometimes whitewash African history or in some cases 'steal' Africa's heroes and achievements. An example is representations of Mandela who was on the terrorist list of many Western nations during the anti-apartheid struggle (he was on the US terrorism watchlist till 2008) but who is now appropriated and 'whitened' by Hollywood as a universal symbol of goodness, forgiveness and reconciliation (see Chapter 7). In the same vein, Hollywood glosses over the evils of the apartheid system and those of the Western governments that propped the system up during the Cold War and thus, by association, punished Mandela with dehumanising incarceration for 27 years. It can also manifest in the form of projecting a Western heroic template on an African story and creating a fake hero with the view of satisfying generic expectations of the Western audience at the expense of African history as is the case with *Hotel Rwanda* (see Chapter 6).

Hollywood productions about Africa fall into four groups:

1. Classical Hollywood-Africa films

These films contain what I consider the original cinematic template and establishment shot of 'Darkest Africa'. They are mostly filmed in game parks in Africa, and in some cases extra animals, often species that do not even exist in Africa, are flown in to further exoticise the continent (Vaughan 1960, 90). The Africans in these films are portrayed as emotionally and socially stunted, infantile, cannibalistic and generally stupid. This classical template has been routinely recycled in Hollywood in different forms over the years.

2. Neoclassical Hollywood-Africa films

These films are a revival of classical Dark Continent Hollywood films, especially in the 1990s. They have more developed African characters and some of the films even problematise colonialism through self-reflectivity, and explore complex subjectivities, yet they nevertheless reproduce the template of the earlier colonialist films and reinforce the Dark Continent image of Africa.

3. New Wave Hollywood-Africa films

These films recycle the Dark Continent tropes of Africa in more sophisticated ways through colonial nostalgia and the humanitarian/human rights genre. The films have highly developed African characters and are decidedly critical of colonialist

discourses. Moreover, they claim greater historical veracity and a purpose beyond entertainment. Some of these films claim to be the 'true story' or 'based on a true story'. Some are products of multicontinental Afro-Euro-American collaboration.

4. Africa-rising films

These films manifest as Afro-optimism and Afrofuturism that depict Africa in a great light, emphasising African agency, hope and a glorious future for the continent, yet they still contain residual Dark Continent pathogens due to the ideology of form that influences these productions.

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The list of Hollywood films about Africa that illustrates these four groups is prohibitively large for detailed analysis. The strategy of this book is to provide and a general overview of all Hollywood films from 1908 to 2020, and in the subsequent chapters, to examine in detail nine films that best represent different models of Hollywood's Africa representation which fit into the four categories/ waves. The distribution of the nine films in the different chapters is as follows:

Chapter 3.   Classical and neoclassical films, or the colonial establishing shot represented by *King Solomon's Mines* (1950).

Chapter 4.   Colonial nostalgia represented by *Blood Diamond* (2006).

Chapter 5.   The conceit of 'based on a true story' and the genre of 'militainment', both represented by *Tears of the Sun* (2003).

Chapter 6.   'This is a 'true story' illustrated by *Hotel Rwanda* (2005).

Chapter 7.   Heroic self-transcendence represented by *Invictus* (2010).

Chapter 8.   Metatextuality found in *The Last King of Scotland* (2006) shows the complex negotiations that happen when Africans get involved in Hollywood production as cast and crew.

Chapter 9.   *Exodus: Gods and Kings* is a racist film that is used to illustrate spectator cyberactivism against the dominant Hollywood misrepresentation of Africa.

Chapter 10.   Africa rising films that convey an Afro-optimist vision of Africa represented by *Queen of Katwe*.

Chapter 11.   The Afrofuturist vision of Africa represented by *Black Panther*.

The last two films are unique in that they mostly affirm Africa in ways no Hollywood movies have done over 100 years of Hollywood-Africa filmmaking. All the films are chosen to illustrate the major waves and changing patterns of Hollywood films about Africa to show that while these narrative representations have changed in form and sophistication, the Dark Continent mastertext remains subtly embedded. Significantly, some of these models overlap in many ways. Most of these films

are literary and extraliterary adaptations of novels or autobiographies or drawn from history; as such, film adaptation theory helps to illuminate the ideological underpinnings of these films. The formal and cultural context of these four periods/waves of Hollywood production constitutes a rich historical background for the analyses. The nine films are discussed in detail with the aim of providing a focused argument/illustration of just what the Dark Continent myth is, what ideological values its deploys, what cultural work it performs, what each film or groups of films adds to our understanding of how the Dark Continent mythos is used and why it is important to Hollywood production. Moreover, the sheer number of these films produced indicates the continuing fascination of Hollywood with Africa as a field for the projection and construction of Western values.

Classical Hollywood films about Africa

Classical Hollywood genres are jungle comedy, jungle romance, adventure/lost world variety, praise of empire and earlier biblical or North African epics. Classical Hollywood-Africa films follow what Clyde Taylor has accurately called the 'rigidly despotic regime of darky stereotypes' (1998, 198). These movies, mostly shot in game parks, have recurring obsessions with showing wild-life, savages, cannibals and witchcraft, marked by the display of skulls, bizarre rituals and customs, and chanting, singing and dancing Africans. Africa's landscape is romanticised through beautiful environmental shots to underscore its Edenic nature and appropriateness for colonial settlement. The protagonist is always a white hunter who falls in love with a white jungle queen, while Africans are constructed usually in the background as a mass without developed subjectivities. The Africans are stunted and projected as fearful, superstitions, infantile, violent and dirty. These films seek to objectify, exoticise and frame Africans as the ultimate Other. Treatment of African American characters is equally problematic even though they are referred to as 'civilised'. African American characters are made to treat Africans the same way the white characters do, thus identifying them with the West in this chain of being. The first recorded Hollywood-Africa film is a rather short seven-minute production, *The Zulu's Heart* (1908) by legendary Hollywood director and father of classical Hollywood cinema, D. W. Griffith, famous for the iconic but controversial film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1919). Produced the same year Griffith signed up with Biograph, the film was shot in New Jersey with white actors wearing blackface makeup playing black roles (Davis 1996, 8–9). The film is about a wagon of white trekkers who are attacked by a fierce group of Zulu warriors. Everyone in the wagon is killed except a mother who is dragged away to be slaughtered, and a little girl, whose throat was about to be slit by the Zulu chief and commander when the chief decides to spare her precisely because the little girl reminds him of his dead child. The chief eventually fights his own warriors in order

to save the mother of the child. This film, one of Griffith's many biograph mini films, established a classic unilateral colonialist template of exhibiting the Zulu as savages. According to the script, after the white man is killed, 'the Zulu Chief exalts, in savage triumph, with his men' (Davis 1996, 8). A New York *Dramatic Mirror* describes the lonely shot of the Zulu mother [performing the funeral ritual] in the vast picturesque landscape as 'a pathetic touch of *savagery*' (Gunning 1991, 18; my emphasis). The *Biograph Bulletin* calls the Zulu warriors 'Merciless black brutes' and describes them as 'prancing, jibbing, gibbering barbarians' (Bernardi 1996b, 120). The *Biograph Bulletin* reads the Zulu warriors as a swarm in one scene and likens them to Indians in *The Call of the Wild* (Bernardi 1996b, 121). In this representational template, Africans are all savages. Occasionally, noble savages emerge in characters the like chief when they serve whiteness but have no virtue in their own right outside the white scale of value. Davis notes that 'These stereotypes, which block the perception of Africans as existing in their own right – obstinately and harmfully persist to the present day' (1996, 9). Although celebrated for his cinematic ingenuity in 'inventing' the classical Hollywood narrative style, many scholars, foremost among them Sergei Eisenstein, have accused Griffith of celebrating and consolidating racism in films where 'racism has overt representational and narrative functions' (Bernardi 1996b, 103–105).

Some of the Hollywood-Africa films that reproduce Griffith's classical Hollywood template and its representation and narration of racism are:

- the Tarzan films adapted from Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan book series written from 1912 to 1965 — *Tarzan of the Apes* (1918), *The Romance of Tarzan* (1918), *Tarzan the Apeman* (1932), *Tarzan, the Apeman* (1959) and *Greystock: The Legend of Tarzan Lord of the Apes* (1984); animal films — *Congorilla* (1932) and *African Lion* (1955);
- the *King Solomon's Mines* enterprise — *King Solomon's Mines* 1919, 1937, 1950, 1984, 1986 (animation), 2004, 2005, *King Solomon's Treasure* (1979), *The Librarian — Return to King Solomon's Mines* (2006) and *Watusi* (1959); the Rider Haggard adaptations — from the novel *She: A History of Adventure* (1886); *She* (1925, 1935, 1965), *The Vengeance of She* (1968); from the novel *Allan Quatermain* (1887); *Allan Quatermain* (1919), *Allan Quatermain and the Lost City of Gold* (1965);
- Comedies — *Law of the Jungle* (1942), and *Africa Screams* (1949); jungle romance — *The African Queen* (1951) — adapted from C. S. Forester's 1935 novel of the same title, and *Mogambo* (1953) — *adapted* by John Lee Mahin from the play *Red Dust* (1932); Celebrating the virtues of colonialism — *Sanders of the River* (1935) and *Mister Johnson* (1990);
- white queens ruling in Africa — *Trader Horn* (1931), *Sheena: Queen of the Jungle* (1984);
- and literally dozens of other similar works, notably — *Men of Two Worlds* (1946),

> *White Witch Doctor* (1953), *Safari* (1956), *The Naked Prey* (1965), *Cowboy in Africa* (1967) *King of Africa* (1968) aka '*One Step to Hell*' and *Heart of Darkness* (1993).

A brief overview of some of the above titles illustrates this classical template that later Hollywood-Africa films inherited. This section provides plot summaries and a brief discussion of selected movies to illustrate the overt racism in the classical Hollywood-Africa film category as a foundation for future Hollywood-Africa films. Rider Haggard's novel *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) has had several cinematic adaptations, from Horace Lisle Lucoque's 1919 adaptation up to the 2008 direct-to-DVD adaptation, *Allan Quartermain and the Temple of Skulls* directed by Mark Atkins. These movies are examined briefly in Chapter 3, and the 1950 adaptation by Compton Bennett and Andrew Marton in particular will be analysed at length as the perfection of the classical colonialist mode of Hollywood-Africa films. A number of other films reveal the parameters and the extent of the Dark Continent mythos. *Law of the Jungle* (1942) and *Africa Screams* (1949) are classic Dark Continent comedies that deserve brief mention here. Law of the Jungle has a different kind of white hunter among other white hunters. American explorer Larry Mason (John 'Dusty' King) with his 'loyal servant' African American Jefferson Jones 'Jeff' (Mantan Moreland) are hunting for the skeleton of someone called 'The Missing Link' — an overt reference to a pre-human hominid. Mr Larry is seen measuring human skulls using a calliper, a scene that is reminiscent of 19th century European obsessions with the size of African skulls as they sought to establish the missing link between humans and apes. The African American 'Jeff' is distinguished from the Africans as civilised (even though he himself is surprised to be considered so!). He is, however, portrayed as corrupt and exploitative of the natives and as fearful and superstitious compared to his brave, rational and scientific white master. The big fat African woman, contrasted with the slim American singer Nona Brooks (Arline Judge), is referred to as 'This Jungle Female'. The film is full of overt references to cannibalism, complete with a huge iron cooking pot above which are mounted several human skulls. Human skulls also adorn the gate of the chief's court and the chief's throne. Mockery of Africa's elite is seen in the representation of Chief Mojabo, Jeff's African brother (who survived the Transatlantic Slave Trade perhaps?). He has several certificates from Oxford University including a PhD and LLD, wears an English jacket, smokes a long cigar, on his neck hangs a grotesque ornament and he sits on a chair adorned with human skulls. The African American Jeff as a domestic(ated) servant approximates a civilised man (read noble savage) while his African brother — with all his nobility and education — is a downright savage.

Africa Screams stars two major comedians of the 1940s, Bud Abbott (Buzz Johnson) and Lou Costello (Stanley Livington) who pose as experienced hunters,

with a cameo appearance by famous lion tamer Clyde Beatty who plays himself, and Hillary Brooke (Diana Emerson) as the jungle queen. The play on the names of Stanley and Livingstone invokes the daring legacy of two famous British explorers of the 19th century as it *follows* the Haggardesque template of exploration, treasure maps, search for diamonds, confrontation with wild animals and cannibals. Lured by diamonds, Livington and Johnson are captured by cannibals and survive being cooked in giant pots when they are rescued by an Orangutan. Later, the native chief makes a deal to offer Brooke kilos of diamonds in exchange for Livington as a delicious meal and Stanley is saved by the Orangutan who also delivers to him the diamonds and makes him a business partner! While the joke concerns the hype and exaggerations related to expeditions to Africa, the film's comedy rests solidly on the conventions of the Dark Continent image of Africans as cannibals.

A more serious film indicates other ideological commitments. *Sanders of the River* (1935) by Hungarian-British director Zoltán Korda, starring American singer and actor Paul Leroy Robeson as African King Bosambo, is set in colonial Nigeria. The movie consolidates British imperialism in Africa in line with the notion that colonialism is the only hope for Africa. The film depicts a tough British District Commissioner R. G. Sanders (Leslie Banks) who rules his district with fairness and fights illegal gunrunners and slave traders. Native Chief Bosambo saves the life of Sanders and he and his people are rewarded with the continuity of British colonial subjugation! In this highly patronising film, Robeson sings the praises of Sanders, and consequently the praises of Britain and the colonial system at large: 'Sandy the strong/ Sandy the Wise/ Righter of Wrongs/ Hater of lies.' The irony of Robeson's superb performance is reflected in a *London Daily Herald* review which said if 'we could only give every *subject race* a native king with Robeson's superb physique, dominant personality, infectious smile and noble voice, problems of native self-government might be largely solved' (cited in Vaughan 1960, 91; my emphasis). The *London Times* called it, 'a grand insight into our special English difficulties in the governing of the savage races' (as cited in Herzberg 2011, 53). Robeson later regretted his participation in the film that showed him as a 'paid-for-helper for the British' and which was used to justify colonial exploitation (as cited in Herzberg, 52–53). I was surprised to see a familiar song and dance performance by the Acholi of northern Uganda in a scene supposedly set in Nigeria in *Sanders of the River*. As it turns out, this was ethnographic footage from Uganda stitched into the movie and made to look seamless with the representation of Nigeria. This phenomenon is best explained by Francis Harding's comments on the film, that: 'The thrust of the narrative and image foreground the ruling "whiteman" and relegated other people to a collective role as an undifferentiated backdrop' (2003, 70). Earlier in the scene, the map of Nigeria is invoked to create this imaginary cultural universe of

Nigerian people, yet Ugandan dancers are grafted in without any thought given to the cultural specificity of homogeneous people groups in West and East Africa.

As a major work of classical Hollywood, *The African Queen* is an extraordinary jungle romance adventure that deserves serious mention. The film's title might evoke expectations of the stereotypical African content, but the 'queen' is both a boat and the only female on board, an unlikely white spinster missionary. Beyond landscape, the film hardly depicts Africans. The natives sing discordantly in the opening sequence at the Methodist mission. Later, African recruits with the German army on the Shona Fortress act with childish excitement as they fire at *The African Queen* and the Louisa. Africa then emerges as a backdrop in the treacherous rapids of the Ulanga River; deadly crocodiles, mosquitoes or lake flies, hippos and leeches. Africa is the dangerous primitive space that tests the endurance of the white English characters, especially Charlie Allnut (Humphrey Bogart), and Rose Sayer (Katharine Hepburn) in their dual struggle against the deadly Germans and the treacherous African continent; a combination that advances their love affair. The film is the ultimate African jungle romance whose Dark Continent premise is built on the Haggardesque template. Lesley Brill calls it the 'romantic adventure unadulterated…' comparing it to the kind of 'Hollywood adventure film typified by *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, *King Solomon's Mines* or *King Kong*' (1997, 55). The Africans sing discordant sounds because, in the first place, as Hepburn noted in her account of the making of the film, the African extras had no clue what the film crew were doing in the Belgian Congo precisely because they did not understand English. 'They couldn't understand our language. Nor could we theirs. I am sure it seemed to them utterly idiotic' (Hepburn 1987, 53– 54). While the film critiques missionary zeal and cultural disconnectedness, its portrayal of Africans chasing each other and fighting over the cigarette stub thrown down by Charlie is off-handedly demeaning. The burlesque remains a mere backdrop to the serious drama between Allnut, Sawyer and the Protestant missionary (Robert Morley). Both Africa and the Germans constitute the challenge whose diminishment in the plot allows love to triumph.

Bruce Beresford's film *Mister Johnson* (1990), adapted from Joyce Cary's (in)famous novel of the same title also extols the virtues of British colonialism. It stars British actor Maynard Eziashi as Mr Johnson, an ambitious colonial subject who considers himself English and England his country by virtue of his association with the colonial administration as a clerk. He has no African name. He wears full khaki colonial attire in hot weather, a brimmed hat and a pair of shoes which he hangs around his neck while he walks barefoot! These are his status symbols as a servant of empire. Notably, Johnson is portrayed as an evil genius, a lazy clown who is perpetually late for work. He is a pathological liar, rabble rouser, utterly corrupt, heavily indebted, and a serial thief. Johnson is the one who teaches the District Commissioner (DC) Harry

Rudbeck (Pierce Brosnan) how to misappropriate colonial funds. Johnson hatches the corruption plot to move money for uniforms and from the native fund for use in road construction, because the road funds are already spent. Johnson also hatches a plot to bribe the local chief to mobilise forced labour for completing the road project. Jonson collects illegal taxes, steals documents, steals money from Sargy Gollup's safe and in the process commits murder. Johnson's feverish identification with England is a serious delusion because he will never be accepted by empire because of the colour of his skin, even if his corrupt behaviour mirrors theirs. He is forever Other. Sargy Gollup (Edward Woodward) who patronises Johnson reveals this dilemma: 'I tell you Johnson, you are too good for a Nigger. It is a pity you are a Nigger… You should have been born one of the higher races.' The film tries to humanise the Whitemen in colonial Nigeria by giving Johnson the illusion of equality, even as it in turn gives the white characters moral superiority. In the macabre closing sequence where Johnson is tried and executed for murdering Gollup, the DC Rudbeck, who is Johnson's 'friend' and judge, tries to save Johnson from the gallows by asking him to plead innocent. Johnson insists that he be tried for murder and executed forthwith because he has caused too much trouble for his 'friend' Rudbeck. 'Oh Lord, thank you for my friend Rudbeck. Biggest heart in the world…', he prays as Rudbeck blows Johnson's brain off with a rifle. While the film critiques colonial bureaucracy and questions the morality of the DC and of Sargy Gollup who has 'gone native', to use Conrad's famous term, it firmly retains the demeaning depiction of native Africans found in Joyce Cary's progenitor text.

Director Cornel Wilde's film, *Naked Prey* (1965) starring the producer Cornel Wilde as the allegorical character (Man) and Ken Gampu and the leader of the African warriors philosophises about man's inhumanity to man. The film's plot is built on tests of endurance, to see how long a man can survive the toughest physical and psychological challenges of life in the wildest possible terrain. Africa is naturally the setting for this kind of test, and pythons, rattle snakes, crocodiles, hyenas, lions, fierce warriors, exotic tribal songs and performances provide the familiar challenging and dangerous backdrop. Typically, a group of safari hunters refuse to pay tribute to an African chief and the white hunter and safari guide with their team find themselves facing a bunch of fierce Zulu warriors who delight in killing for sport. Set in Kruger National Park in South Africa, montage sequences of animals preying on animals become the allegory of human beings preying on each other: 'And man, lacking the will to understand the other men became like the beasts. And their way of life was his', one intertitle reads. As usual, the African porters and safari guards are slaughtered rapidly in battle and the few captured ones clubbed to death in a gruesome execution sequence to the delight of the Zulu chief and his subjects, while the white characters survive the battle but are killed later. The Tarzanist protagonist

is made to prove himself by running ahead, unarmed and naked with soldiers in pursuit. In this ludicrous game, he manages to kill the utterly stupid elite guards sent to kill him in a long-drawn-out manhunt. He takes on slave raiders single-handedly and later sets the forest on fire screaming, 'Burn! Burn! Burn you devils', as he mocks his pursuers. Although hotly pursued, he reaches his base and is rescued.

Much of this book's focus is on sub-Saharan Africa, yet a number of Hollywood films shot in North Africa also fit this category of classical Hollywood-Africa films. Present-day North Africa is mostly settled by Arabs, many of whom culturally identify with the Middle East, yet within the colonising dichotomy of the West versus the rest, North Africans are represented in the same derogatory way as sub-Saharan Africans. This phenomenon is the subject of Edward Said famous treatise, *Orientalism* (1978), a term which he defines as 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"' (1978, 2). It is an epistemological command post from which Europe and America view, classify, name and interpret other cultures relative to their position as the yardstick of civilisation and progress. Although orientalism emanated from Western codification of the orient in history and cultural productions, Said later expanded this colonialist codification to include all other 'darker skinned' cultures. According to this colonialist logic, North African Arabs are doubly 'Other' as they are both Arabs and Africans. Hollywood films set in North Africa used to illustrate this Dark Continent mode of representing Africa and Africans include *Casablanca* (1942), *Sahara* (1943), *Nefertite, Regina del Nilo/Queen of the Nile* (1961), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Khartoum* (1966), *Four Feathers* (2002) and numerous biblical Moses themed films.

In *Nefertite, Regina del Nilo/ Queen of the Nile* (1961), and numerous Moses films including Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1956), blacks are simply absent, even though the stories are set in ancient Egypt. The only coloured Pharaoh and tan Moses is in *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) by DreamWorks animation, directed by Brenda Chapman and Steve Hickner. This phenomenon will be discussed in Chapter 9 with reference to Ridley Scott's biblical epic, *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014). Zoltán Korda's epic film *Four Feathers* (1939) is the fourth screen adaptation of a 1902 novel of the same name by A. E. W. Mason about Harry Faversham (John Clements), a British army officer who resigns his commission hours before the Egyptian mission to retake Sudan after the death of General Gordon. His aim was to focus on his newly married wife Ethne Burroughs (June Duprez). Unfortunately for him, in this Victorian era, he is considered a coward and a traitor for betraying his country and the warrior tradition of his family. He receives four feathers from his friends as a symbol of his cowardice. Anxious to prove his masculinity, Faversham travels to the Sudan disguised as a despised and insane Shangali Arab. He manages not only to

save his friends, but also leads a mutiny and seizes a major fort to help Britain retake Khartoum. The film uses Africa as the wild ground for proving Victorian manhood. Arabs are portrayed as filthy and dishonest people through the ungrateful treatment of the disguised Faversham who actually saved the life of his friend Captain John Durrance (Ralph Richardson). The well-staged epic battle scenes show Africans being mowed down in sequences similar to the massacre of Africans in *Zulu* (1964) and *Shaka Zulu* (2001). Another Zoltán Korda film *Sahara* (1943), features Humphrey Bogart as Sergeant Joe Gunn, an American tank commander and a motley crew of some British soldiers including one Sudanese soldier, Sergeant Tambul (Rex Ingram) member of the British Sudanese battalion who comes on board with an Italian POW. They shoot down a Nazi plane and capture the pilot, finally fight and defeat an entire Nazi brigade desperate to take over the water well. While the film portrays the racism of the captured German pilot who prefers not to be checked by the Sudanese soldier, Gunn's reply, 'an inferior race…Tell him not to worry about it being black. It won't come off on his pretty uniform', although meant to be sarcastic, consolidates this racist worldview. The Sudanese soldier is made to do all the difficult and menial tasks. Brian Edwards argues that Tambul is 'both a member of the detachment and detached from it' (Edwards 2005, 63). Although some critics considered the portrayal of the Sudanese soldier in Sahara as positive (Herzberg 2011, 53), it is the Sudanese soldier who sacrifices himself to chase down and capture the fleeing German POW, taking several bullets and dying in the process, following in the long line of self-sacrificing darkies from Kheva in *King Solomon's Mines* (1950) to Dr Junju in *The Last King of Scotland* (2006).

Michael Curtiz's iconic film *Casablanca* (1942) starring Humphrey Bogart as Rick Blaine and Ingrid Bergman as Ilsa Lund, is a famous Hollywood-Africa film that really has nothing to do with Africa except as a backdrop for the World War II romance tale. The only black character portrayed in the film, the pianist Sam (Dooley Wilson), is no more than a commodity, even though his employer whom he calls 'Boss'[1] — with all its subordinating apartheid South African connotations — tells black marketeer Signor Ferrari (Sydney Greenstreet) who wants to 'buy' Sam, 'I don't buy or sell human beings.' Although there are few Moroccan characters in the film, the cinematography largely marginalises them. As Edwards rightly observes, 'To wonder where the Moroccans are in *Casablanca* may seem beside the point to an American audience' (2005, 70). Unoccupied Africa is just the exotic stage décor for this Western drama.

Neoclassical Hollywood films about Africa

Hollywood's neoclassical Africa film categories include blaxploitation films, hit comedies, action, adventure, mystery, science fiction, anti-apartheid films, colonial

nostalgia and romance thrillers. Neoclassical revival of colonialist Hollywood representations of Africa in films retains the Haggardesque and Tarzanist templates of the earlier films but recycle the Dark Continent stereotypes in a more covert manner than the earlier jungle films. Clint Eastwood films reflect this neoclassical model. As Luis Garcia Mainar notes of some Clint Eastwood films, the narratives of such films tend to 'subvert classical structure through enhanced subjectivity or startling endings, and whose points of view do not amount to an unthinkable defence of ideological positions but suggest a complex reality' (Mainar 2007, 32). These films tend to interrogate and even condemn colonialism and celebrate difference, yet Africa remains a backdrop for defining Western masculinity through 'white' hunters. These movies may not directly endorse colonialism, yet they consolidate colonialist representations of Africa. As Ruth Mayer observes of Hollywood-Africa films of the 1990s, while they 'take great pains to disavow colonial practices of subjugation and domination, such practices are nevertheless just as clearly demarcated as the sad side effects of a markedly bygone past…[These American films]…introduce a global context in order to deflect from a far from glorious national [US] history' (2002, 4). Such history includes the genocide of the Native Americans and the brutal and protracted exploitation of African slaves in America. In these films, the hunter or safari guide may be black in the colour of his skin but is cast in a role carefully crafted to re-enact white colonial power structures of the earlier films that treat Africans as Other. In any case, these roles are reserved for African American or black British actors who are themselves Westerners acting Africans. These films also pay deeper attention to the complexity of African characters and subjectivities in line with contemporary fractures in the notion of masculinity in the age of postmodernism and thus portray African characters who are more developed and rounded. Nevertheless, they continue to reinforce colonial stereotypes of Africans as savage and cowardly. Some films in this category that deserve brief analysis include *Congo* (1995), *Shaft in Africa* (1973), *Out of Africa* (1985), *Coming to America* (1988), *White Hunter Black Heart* (1990), *A Good Man in Africa* (1994), *The Lion King* (1994), *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996), *Amistad* (1997), *I Dreamed of Africa* (2000) and *Nowhere in Africa* (2001).

John Guillermin's film *Shaft in Africa* is a blaxploitation film; a genre that emerged in the United Sates in the 1970s (itself a subgenre of exploitation films) about the exploitation of blacks by film producers, featuring African American characters in leading roles. The film stars Richard Roundtree as John Shaft, a private detective and sharpshooter recruited by Emir Ramila of Ethiopia (Cy Grant) to break a modern-day slavery ring where young Africans are lured to Paris to work on chain-gangs. Shaft is recruited in Ethiopia into voluntary slavery as Jowi of the Manta tribe and manages to identify and destroy Amafi (Frank Finlay), the mastermind of the slavery

syndicate. This film is both Haggardesque as an African adventure yarn, and James Bondish in its spy plot and emphasis on private justice. The Africans are weak and timid, and die like flies, while Shaft survives extreme physical and mental challenges. Even Kopo (Thomas Baptiste) Shaft's chosen *zabana* 'bodyguard' is shot earlier on, yet Shaft kills all his adversaries. He even manages to save his 'fellow' Africans who have absolutely no agency. This is most evident in the last sequences where many African hostel dwellers are burnt to death, and a few more survive a scheme to blow them up to erase all evidence of the slave trade. The film attempts to affirm Africa, especially with reference to the glory of ancient Ethiopia relative to later European civilisation, yet ironically, African characters are presented as weak, cowardly, confused, backward and helpless.

Congo is a multi-genre film that combines action, adventure, suspense, science fiction, mystery and fantasy. Apart from recent *King Solomon's Mines* adaptations, this film best reproduces the Haggardesque template of the Africa-based treasure-seeking white adventurer in the 1990s. The film, directed by Frank Marshall, is loosely based on Michael Crichton's historical metafiction novel of the same title (1980). An expedition is sent by Texas-electronics mogul R. B. Travis (Joe Don Baker) to establish the whereabouts of his son and the team he led to search for a lost diamond mine, presumably King Solomon's mines. Captain Monroe Kelly (Ernie Hudson), the African American safari guide (who is modelled on the white hunter Kruger in Crichton's novel) leads the expedition to Virunga, the dangerous, unexplored darkest heart of Africa (Haggard's Kukuana). The team, made up of former CIA agent Karen Ross (Laura Linney), primatologist Dr Peter Elliott (Dylan Walsh), Amy (the gorilla he plans to return to its natural habitat) and treasure hunter Herkermer Homolka (Tim Curry), contend with lawless African rebels, a military coup, wild hippos, mudslides, rain, leeches, bizarrely painted savages and rituals, an active volcano, and killer apes. Captain Kelly introduces himself to the expedition thus: 'I am your great white hunter for this trip even though I happen to be black.' This statement is meant to be ironical but can actually be read as a statement of fact according to the iconography and script construction of the great white hunter who represents Western masculinity. In this case, Kelly whose accent is American, represents this ideological Whiteness. Africa is belittled, as the narrative site of corruption, coups, counter-coups and revenge killings. The Haggardesque intertext is overt: 'You are not looking for King Solomon's Mines, are you?' asks Kelly, in one of four references to the legendary mines and the lost city of Zin in the film. To emphasise the impending danger, Kelly tells his team, 'This is a damned dangerous place and people die here very easily.' While Kelly is the black 'white hunter', he is more of a buffoon than the hunter portrayed by his 'predecessors' in the role. Kelly runs away when the gorillas attack, and leaves command of the expedition to Karen Ross, a white female who

also single-handedly shoots down anti-aircraft missiles from attacking African rebels with a simple gun, — that same smoking stick that made Captain Good and Quartermain gods in the novel, *King Solomon's Mines*. Satellite phone technology also provides her with expansive visual knowledge that gives her power over the environment. Kelly is ultimately constructed as the oxymoronic black 'white hunter' only to be demasculinised and projected as a coward and clown in line with classical Hollywood representation of African males.

Stephen Hopkins' film, *The Ghost and the Darkness*, adapted from John Henry Patterson's book, *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* (1907), is set in East Africa and is an excellent illustration of neoclassical Hollywood-African films. The film narrates the story of two man-eating lions that disrupt the construction of the Uganda Railways when they began killing the workers, and their eventual elimination by Colonel Patterson. The film begins by claiming historical veracity in two ways: one, it employs an African narrator, Samuel (John Kani), the major-domo and overseer of the railway construction project, who states, 'This is the most famous true African adventure.' He then claims to have witnessed everything we see occur in the film. 'Remember this', Samuel tells us, 'even the most impossible parts of this story *really happened*' (my emphasis). The film uses an African narrator to provide 'true story' citationality. The film also takes great care in repeatedly crafting Patterson's love for Africa. By avoiding the colonially patronising and sometimes overtly derogatory tone of classical Hollywood-Africa films, *The Ghosts and the Darkness* sets a new tone; however, once the action begins, the Dark Continent premise of the film comes to light. Patterson's boss Robert Beaumont (Tom Wilkinson) is cast as the patronising old colonial type, while Patterson is constructed in the context of globalisation and international connectedness: 'What better job in all the world than build a bridge? Bring land over water. Bring worlds together.' While Samuel laments tribalism, racism and religious bigotry among the African and Indian workers, Patterson thinks he can reconcile them having worked with both Muslims and Indians in India. Patterson is also the faithful monogamous Christian husband and while he loves his one wife Helena Patterson (Emily Mortimer) dearly, Samuel does not love any of his four wives. Patterson is both intellectual as the bridge engineer and courageous as the killer of the lions. His catchword becomes, 'I'll sort this out. I'll kill the lions and I'll build the bridge', to which Abdullah (Om Puri), the Indian foreman replies, 'Of course you will…You are white. You can do anything.' While Abdullah's words underscore colonial self-reflexivity in the film, it is countered by Patterson's response, 'It would be a mistake not to work on this thing together, Abdullah.' This statement underscores Patterson's metaphorical role as the builder of racial bridges, yet it is a paternalistic role that cast him as the saviour of Tsavo. While Patterson is full of confidence and courage as the great white hunter, Samuel confesses his cowardice

openly, 'I am afraid of lions.' Patterson believes he will kill the lions but Samuel sees this as an impossible task. Mahina (Henry Cele), the African foreman — the bravest African character who is said to have killed a lion barehanded — is the first to be eaten by the lions without a single fight, thus eliminating any possibility of African agency and leaving only the hard-bodied white heroes in action. Indeed, all the Africans call the two lions 'the Ghost' and 'the Darkness' from which the film's title is derived. To Samuel, the devil himself has come to Tsavo, which reflects the belief of other Africans that the lions were 'the spirits of dead medicine men come back to life to spread madness', or 'the devil come to stop the Whiteman from owning the world.' This superstition comes straight from the Dark Continent colonial library of stereotypes about Africa. The lions pose the extreme challenge typical of other Dark Continent representations, and Patterson's eventual victory over them after many defeats and his completion of the bridge consolidates both the great white hunter and Wild West heroic narratives, while the cowardly and ineffectual Africans only return after the danger is eliminated.

White Hunter Black Heart (1990) is another good illustration of neoclassical Hollywood-Africa films. It is a fictional account of film director John Wilson which is actually a thinly disguised representation of flamboyant Hollywood director John Huston. It focuses on novelist Peter Viertel's experience with the director during the making of the *The African Queen* (1951) in Britain, Congo and Uganda which he captures in his book, *White Hunter Black Heart* (1953). Viertel rewrote the screenplay for *The African Queen* that was originally written by James Agee, John Huston and John Collier, as well as the screen play for *White Hunter Black Heart*. The experience Viertel fictionalised is also captured by Katharine Hepburn in her autobiography, *The Making of The African Queen: Or How I Went to Africa with Bogart, Bacall and Huston and Almost Lost My Mind* (1987). In Viertel's novel and Eastwood's film adaptation, John Wilson is a violent, difficult, unpredictable, recalcitrant genius of a filmmaker who terrifies the actors, cast and crew around him. His stubborn insistence on hunting a male tusker elephant in central Africa at enormous costs to the production because of the delays this causes, in total disregard to the script, and lack of care for the actors is highlighted in the novel and film. Africa brings out the worst and most daring in Mr Wilson as the filmmaker becomes another white hunter both physically and metaphorically. As the author notes, 'John Wilson was a cinematic genius sent dangerously out of control by the madness of Africa itself' (Viertel 1953, blurb). The film's Dark Continent premise is evident in the derogatory way Africans are portrayed, but even more in the ending where Kivu (Boy Mathias Chuma), the African guide, ends up being killed by an elephant in a scene that pays direct homage to the classic sacrificial death of Khiva in the 1950 adaptation of *King Solomon's Mines*, discussed in the next chapter. According to the account

of Katharine Hepburn who was present during this hunting episode, the African guide wasn't killed; the elephants even charged away from Huston's hunting party (Hepburn 1987, 96–97). Eastwood's film, in which he stars as John Wilson, becomes an examination of the legacy of director Eastwood himself and his legacy, as 'an actor-director engaged in the revision of his cultural image' (Mainar 2007, 30). Africa functions again as a mere backdrop for this film that critiques the fictional director John Wilson in the imitation of John Huston, who in turn is incarnated in Clint Eastwood. Africa becomes the playground for these stars. The film problematises Hollywood's idea of masculinity but eventually endorses the imperfect and flawed white hunter-filmmaker who returns to the directorial process at the end of the film with little remorse, while the Africans are left to mourn their dead.

Coming to America (1988) is a hit comedy directed by John Landis, starring Eddie Murphy — who also co-wrote the screenplay with David Sheffield — as Prince Akeem, and in four other roles as Clarence, Randy, Watson and Saul. The film is an escapist romance thriller about an African prince from the imaginary Kingdom of Zamunda who defies the tradition of arranged marriage and goes to Queens in New York to find a bride for himself. The film also stars James Earl Jones as King Jaffe Joffer, the rich and flamboyant father of Akeem. Although the film's central thrust is American, it re-inscribes the Dark Continent mode of viewing Africa through the external gaze. This is one of those 'Uplift the race!' films (a submodel of neoclassical Hollywood-Africa films) where Eddie Murphy as social commentator and activist sets out to present to us rich and sophisticated Africans, only to use Africa as a primitive backdrop for an American Cinderella-like fairytale. As Tejumola Olaniyan has brilliantly observed, the title concept of '"Coming to America"…is inscribed from a position in America' as opposed to 'Going to America' which would have situated the gaze from Africa (1996, 95). Eddie Murphy's Africa is without African languages (or even African accents) and no African culture or context to talk of. Thankfully, Eddie Murphy's Africa has no witchdoctors, cannibals or savages, yet it is still an exotic Other. Although King Joffer is extremely rich and *speaks American English*, he is not recognised in America and is ridiculed in various ways, especially through the character of Cleo McDowell (John Amos), Akeem's father-in-law. As an 'Uplift the race!' film, *Coming to America* appropriates the 'White man's burden' as the black Westerner takes on himself the burden of uplifting the image of 'primitive' Africa and ends up recycling the Dark Continent template. The film's gaze, in spite of Murphy's good intentions, is 'the classical anthropological gaze par excellence' (Olaniyan 1996, 96). The *Coming to America* sequel is set to be released in 2020, to be directed by Craig Brewer and again casting Eddie Murphy in the lead role (Melas 2019). It will be interesting to observe how far it departs from the colonial template after the more affirming *Queen of Katwe* and *Black Panther* films.

Two romance thrillers about two European ladies who settle in colonial and neocolonial Kenya respectively deserve mention here. One is Sydney Pollock's acclaimed film *Out of Africa* (1985) adapted from the memoir of Danish Baroness Karen von Blixen-Finecke also known as Karen Christenze Dinesen (Isak Dinesen) published in 1937. The other is Hugh Hudson's film *I Dreamed of Africa* (2000), an adaptation of Kuki Gallman's memoir of the same title published in 1991. The two films star Meryl Streep as Karen Blixen and Kim Basinger as Kuki Gallman, two sophisticated European ladies who acquire a 500-acre coffee farm at the foot of the Ngong Hills and a 100 000-acre Ol Ari Nyiro Ranch on Laikipia Hills in Kenya, respectively. Both women are left home alone by their husbands for long periods and suffer terrible tragedies in Africa. Blixen's uninsured coffee factory is gutted by fire and she goes broke. Then her lover Denys dies in a tragic air crash and she is forced to return to Denmark empty-handed. Gallman, suffers a similar tragedy when she loses her husband in a car crash, and her only son to a fatal snake bite. Blixen is passionate about the empowerment of the native Kikuyu, reduced to squatters by the colonial appropriation of their land into British crown land. Against local and settler opposition, she establishes a school for the natives to learn to read and write. Gallman on the other hand is passionate about animal and environmental conservation. However, Africa is personified in these films as an abstract character that is separated from the African natives; a visually eroticised landscape and place of thrills. It is a backdrop for steaming romance that also exacts extraordinary prices from its foreign lovers. Africa's land, water, sky, mountains, valleys, animals, and indeed, human beings — especially the Maasai, Pokot and Kikuyu — are laid bare for colonial inspection by land and by air. The HBO documentary about the making of *I Dreamed of Africa* summarises this logic best by calling the film, 'a passionate love story against the magnificent backdrop of Africa's mythical beauty and unsolvable mystery' ("HBO Making-of Special" 2000). There are no developed African characters, nor is there an attempt to show the point of view of the African. Both films display an endless parade of wild animals, with *I Dreamed of Africa* excelling in its obsession with snakes of all kinds, some of which might have been shipped in just to make Africa more outlandish. As one reviewer put it, 'You may go out of the theatre hating Africa' (FlickJunkie-2, 2000). These films may look 'innocent' and tell great romance stories, and even function as significant tourist advertisements for those interested in seeing African animals and exotic cultures, but, as Alik Shahadah (2009) notes, 'There is nothing called an "innocent image," images are either controlled by us, or they are not. Whites' role in narrating the African story is always to identify themselves, exaggerate their role, credit their genius, set agendas…'. These Dark Continent films do tremendous damage to the image of Africans by cultivating a demeaning, patronising, backward and subservient image of the natives.

A closely related film is *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1981), a British TV miniseries adaptation of Elspeth Huxley's colonial novel of the same title (1959), also set in Kenya. It is the author's childhood memories of colonial Kenya adapted for TV by Roy Ward Baker where Africa and Africans provide a backdrop and an escape for an Edwardian Scottish family from the boredom of 'the dreary house parties in London.' Their attempt to tame the wild east Promised Land and establish a coffee farm is full of illicit romance, absentee husbands, endlessly singing natives with grotesque facial painting and headgear, performing exotic dances. We are told by different characters in the film that Africans are savages, they are lazy, Africans don't think — they are 'thick headed'; Africans are amazed by and scared of lamps, they don't understand money and are consequently not paid anything for building Tilly and Robin Grant's house. Remarkably, in all three screen adaptations discussed here, the brutality of colonialism in the era of conquest is completely trumped by the directors in order to project a positive account of colonialism that makes the white settlers look more humane and the Africans all the worse, directly serving colonialist propaganda efforts.

A large number of Hollywood-Africa films tackles the racial subjectivities of the South Africa's anti-apartheid history. The representative films reviewed here are *Jim Comes to Jo'Burg* aka '*African Jim*' (1949), *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951), *Come Back Africa* (1959) and *Cry Freedom* (1987). Hollywood functioned in South Africa as the cultural arm of apartheid during the Cold War — in projecting an agreeable image of the apartheid regime abroad, while restricting film access to the black population of mostly violent Hollywood films. Especially after the Sharpeville massacres, Lewis Nkosi reports that the South African government tried to salvage its image globally by enlisting the help of Hollywood filmmakers, 'to refurbish the image of apartheid and to sell apartheid policies' (*In Darkest Hollywood… Part II*, 1993). South African scholars acknowledge that Hollywood played a big role in exposing apartheid to the Western world when it discovered the profitability of anti-apartheid stories, and that even some of the questionable liberal films were useful in this regard in spite of their obvious white focalisation. *Jim Comes to Jo'Burg* aka '*African Jim*' (1949) written and directed by David Swanson and produced by Eric Rutherford is considered the first film to explore black subjectivity and culture even though it relied heavily on Hollywood formulas of primitive Africa and film noir. It transplanted this template into the South African township and Africanised it to celebrate exclusively traditional and modern black entertainment in its fictitious nightclub setting (Davis 1996, 24). It was Zoltán Korda's film, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951), an adaptation of Alan Paton's novel of the same name (1948) which first showed the world the inequalities of apartheid. Ironically, the novel described by white liberals as 'the "great"/ "big" South African novel' (Schalkwyk 2006, 116) because of its treatment of the themes of justice, reconciliation and the corruption

of city life is equally resented by black intellectuals for its paternalistic treatment of blacks. It is also criticised for glorifying the apartheid justice system and sweeping the brutality and injustice of the apartheid system — that is the real breeding ground for crime — under the carpet. This resentment is best captured by leftist intellectual Can Themba in his description of the main character, Reverend Stephen Kumalo, whose only son Absalom Kumalo kills Arthur Jarvis, a prominent white man, and ends up being sentenced to death and hanged, though not before Absalom asks for forgiveness and reconciles with his victim's family. Themba says of the protagonist, 'That slimy, stinkiest Reverend Khumalo came to town and said "Yes Baas" to every Whiteman, Yes Baas…' To which novelist Lewis Nkosi adds, 'The chap never grew up. He is still the old Reverend gentlemen who thinks the world of the whites' (*Come Back Africa*, 1959). Zoltán Korda himself was an apologist and praise singer for empire as seen in some of his films like *Sanders of the River* (1935), *The Four Feathers* (1939), and *Sahara* (1943), yet even black intellectuals like Arthur Maimane admit that Korda's *Cry the Beloved Country* was the first professionally serious film about what it was like to be black in South Africa (*In Darkest Hollywood… Part I*, 1993). While it neither problematised the evils of apartheid nor confronted the system, it did show the plight of black people. Sydney Poitier's performance as Reverend Msimangu also helped to galvanise black identification with the film. White South Africa celebrated the film. Prime Minister Dr Malan, the chief architect of apartheid, graced the South African premier. Interestingly, no black member of the cast was allowed at the premier!

Cry Freedom (1987) is a biopic of slain Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko, directed by Richard Attenborough. It was adapted from Donald Woods' books *Biko — Cry Freedom* (1987), and *Asking for Trouble: Autobiography of a Banned Journalist* (1980). It tells the story of Biko's life from the development of his intellectual and ideological consciousness, to his brutal death in an apartheid police cell. Donald Woods, a personal friend of Biko's, was himself a banned person who'd had several run-ins with state security apparatus. He escaped from South Africa and published the account of Biko's life and death as a tribute to the anti-apartheid struggle. Denzel Washington plays Steve Biko and Kevin Kline plays Donald Woods. Although the film makes a serious attempt at reconstructing the moments, places and historical events around Biko's life and the larger anti-apartheid struggle, especially the powerful re-creation of the 1976 Soweto student uprising, Biko and the black anti-apartheid struggle are used as mere backdrops to tell the story of Donald Woods and his family. Biko's screen presence is limited by the fact that he dies in the early sequences of the film, leaving the Woods' family to dominate the screen till the end, with Biko resurrected only sporadically through flashbacks to punctuate Woods' thoughts. This white focalisation was decried by black South African intellectuals like Mbulelo

Mazamane who saw the film falling into the same trap of white liberals' tendency 'to appropriate the struggle of black people and enunciate it in terms that are palatable to them', a phenomenon Biko had ironically warned these intellectuals about! There was a clash of perspectives between black activists and the white filmmakers. The suggestion that Donald Woods initiated black journalism in South Africa was especially seen as false and highly paternalistic. The brutality of the apartheid police is also much downplayed in the film. Biko's torture sequence is diminished and the white prison doctor who treats him is very empathetic, contrary to historical accounts (*In Darkest Hollywood… Part II*, 1993). Donald Woods and his wife Wendy Woods served as principal consultants to the production and stayed on the set throughout the filming. In the end, Biko's life and the struggle are whitewashed and credit given to the white Woods as the heroes of the struggle.

New Wave Hollywood-Africa films

Genres of the New Wave Hollywood-Africa films discussed in this book include celebrity humanitarianism/celebrity colonialism, militainment, medical conspiracy/contraband charity, colonial nostalgia/'buddy' film, 'great lives' biopics/ grand national narratives and anti-apartheid/white focalisation films. New Wave Hollywood-Africa films are not to be confused with the American New Wave films (New Hollywood), also referred to as post-classical Hollywood of the late 1960s and early 1970s which saw a new generation of film makers and actors produce films that were anti-establishment, morally ambiguous and counter culture in direct response to disillusionment with the Vietnam War. Rather, the classification New Wave Hollywood-Africa films describes a new generation of films of the mid-1990s characterised by highly developed African characters and dealing with serious African issues as opposed to the stunted African characters and the 'safari' narratives of earlier films. In her introduction to the volume of essays, *Hollywood's Africa After 1994*, MaryEllen Higgins says she chose 1994 because it was the year of the Rwandan genocide — which pricked the conscience of the world, and the historic inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa — that announced the beginning of the end of classical colonialism in Africa; these two events have inspired many Hollywood films about Africa. She considers 1994 also to be the marker for new humanitarian films about Africa: 'Hollywood films set after 1994 present us with images of humanitarian crisis and questions of Western intervention' (2012, 5). Also in this period, a new humanitarian agenda appeared in the West with the birth of numerous humanitarian NGOs as Western nations pursued 'a rights-based "humanitarian" consensus' (Chandler 2001, 687). Manthia Diawara refers to the genre as 'Humanitarian "Tarzanism"' (2010, 76) or 'Afropessimist films from Hollywood' (2010, 77). These films mostly focus on human rights as they attempt

to articulate the voices and concerns of ordinary Africans. The assumption that a foreign global business and entertainment entity like Hollywood can give voice to Africans or that a for-profit film can articulate human rights is itself a contradiction best articulated by Joyce Ashuntantang: 'The appellation "human rights film" is itself debatable, since Hollywood movies have to negotiate between advocacy for global human rights, presumed audience preference, and box office figures, *which may in turn trump the very rights the films are meant to uphold*' (2012, 54; my emphasis). This contradiction is discussed at length, especially in films like *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) and *Tears of the Sun* (2003) — both marketed as 'true stories'; — in celebrity humanitarianism/ celebrity colonialism as seen in *Beyond Borders* (2003) — where the star persona acts as 'philanthrocapitalists' (Fridell and Konings 2013, 19) and as an instrument of 'philanthropic imperialism' (de Waal 1997, 179); and in military humanitarianism which has been variously labelled as 'Cowboy humanitarianism' (Higgins 2012, 68) or 'National security cinema' (Valantin 2005, 1). The military intervention is packaged as militainment, a product of the US military industrial-media-entertainment-complex. This is the genre of films like *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *Lord of War* (2005) and *Tears of the Sun* (2003). Treatment of medical conspiracy, contraband charity and multinational corporate imperialism in the age of new liberal globalisation is seen in *Outbreak* (1995), *Sahara* (2005) and *The Constant Gardener* (2005).

Colonial nostalgia is manifested in a 'buddy' film like *Blood Diamond*, for instance, which claims to empower a Mende fisherman but denies him all agency, even though 'Buddy' films propose a relationship that is supposed to go beyond paternalism towards a new relationship between black and white (Diawara 2010, 80). 'Great lives' biopics/ grand national narratives, in this case, in regard to films about Nelson Mandela celebrate him as a universal symbol of endurance, forgiveness and reconciliation while evading Western implication in propping up the apartheid regime. The small lives biopics are about anti-apartheid heroes; they are mostly narrated through white focalisation. Wild-life conservation is illustrated by *Duma* (2004). In his book *The Mask of Art* (1998), Clyde Taylor coined the term 'Ethiopicism' to describe liberal Western representations of Africans and blacks at large that avoid the overt racist and negative stereotypes of classical Hollywood. These New Wave Hollywood-Africa films still fall short of achieving 'radical, unexploitative Ethiopicism' (1998, 198). Consequently, Africa remains the remote and exotic Dark Continent full of poverty, violence and disease. These negative stereotypes are hidden in the dialogue of characters, in the allocation of acting roles, in the *mise en scène* and in the cinematography. The films reinscribe the 'White man's burden' in postcolonial Africa in the age of US hegemony and advocate a new 'civilising' humanitarian mission in the age of secular humanism as the colonial master narrative; the old formulas are

repackaged in new containers. A number of illustrative films set the context for the detailed analyses of *Blood Diamond* (2005), *Tears of the Sun* (2003), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Invictus* (2010), *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), *Queen of Katwe* (2016), and *Black Panther* (2018) that follow in succeeding chapters.

Medical conspiracy films represent what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin call the 'neocolonialism of multinational companies and global monetary institutions' (2000, 54). The medical conspiracy films reviewed here are: *Sahara* (2005), *Outbreak* (1995) and *The Constant Gardener* (2005). *Lorenzo's Oil* (2012) is also briefly discussed as a positive medical innovation film. The novel *Sahara* (1992) by American action adventure writer Clive Cussler is a neoclassical Western novel set in Africa that appropriates all the stereotypes of classical 19th century colonial novels set in Africa. The film adaptation of the same title (2005) by Breck Eisner stars Matthew McConaughey as famous explorer and former US Navy SEAL Dirk Pitt on an adventurous mission to recover a lost US Civil War ironclad battleship known as the 'Ship of Death' and in the process, rescue a UN Doctor Eva Rogers (Penélope Cruz) being pursued by an African dictator, General Zateb Kazim (Lennie James). The film deals with the colonialist themes of exploration, archaeological mapping, disease outbreak, dictatorship and civil war. The film's focus on the outbreak of a mysterious virus in Mali underscores what Ruth Mayer calls the new 'virus' trope for representing a continuingly threatening Africa, a globalisation trope which simply says, 'Africa, this dangerous and chaotic ground, is better enjoyed from a distance. Once you get too close you might be attacked. Or sick' (Mayer 2002, 260). The film's humanitarian concerns and liberation posture might look positive, but in essence, it is one long action thriller that merely uses Africa as a backdrop where the action hero outmanoeuvres and beats African forces on land, at sea and in the air, and walks away with the girl.

Director Wolfgang Petersen's film *Outbreak* (1995), a loose adaptation of Richard Preston's non-fiction book, *The Hot Zone* (1994), is a medical detective and military conspiracy film that plays out the anxieties of America in relation to an Africa long constructed in the West as the source of deadly viruses. Preston's book is about attempts to contain the Ebola and Marburg viruses considered Biosafety Level 4 Agents that were contracted from a cave in Mount Elgon in Kenya. The cinematic adaptation heightens the stakes by inventing a new far more deadly bug called the Motaba virus. Contracted from monkeys in the Motaba River Valley in Zaire, this virus kills within three days and has a 100% mortality rate. The virus nearly wipes out the inhabitants of Motaba valley, including a contingent of US soldiers. The village witchdoctor — Ju-ju man (Douglas Hebron) — says, 'It is not good to kill the trees', attributing the tragedy to deforestation (another stereotype of Africans as simplistic and superstitious). Renegade General Donald McClintock (Donald Sutherland)

decides to bomb the army camp at Motaba River Valley in order to contain the virus from spreading to the US. Twenty-seven years later, in 1994, the virus resurfaces again at Motaba Valley in Zaire and enters a small town in California through a pet monkey brought from Zaire. The virus that first spread through physical contact later gets airborne and infections spread rapidly. Although a cure for the virus is being sought at the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) Fort Detrick in Maryland and at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, General Donald McClintock tries to hinder the research on the cure and instead orders the extreme measure of bombing the entire town to contain the spread of the virus nationally. The cure is found, and the General's conspiracy is exposed. This film, however, fits into Ruth Mayer's 'new virus' trope of representing Africa as the source of incurable diseases, to the point where Africans, even those living in the US, are all feared to be carriers. Infact, in the film, Army Surgeon General Ford (Morgan Freeman) underscores Mayer's point when he calls the Motaba virus, 'Our African friend.'

The 2014 panic and xenophobia against Africans in American cities, especially in New York following the unfortunate Ebola outbreak in West Africa is an example of how fact and fiction can quickly merge in the Western understanding of Africa. There were strong rumours in the US that the deadly Zaire strain of Ebola in West Africa had gone airborne, *like the fictional Motaba virus!* Top officials, including President Obama, had to reassure the nation several times that it wasn't airborne (Greenfieldboyce 2014). Although the virus manifested largely in three West African countries, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, all West Africans — indeed all Africans — were suspected by many to be carriers. Americans cancelled trips to far-flung places in East Africa — over 5 400 kilometres and South Africa — more than 5 700 kilometres away from the affected countries in West Africa, respectively because, for most Americans, Africa is a country! Even within the affected countries, not all regions were hit by Ebola. Todd Kincannon, controversial former General Counsel and Executive Director of the South Carolina Republican Party, advocated bombing the entire city of Dallas and nuking of entire villages in Africa to contain the Ebola virus. He tweeted, 'The people of Africa are to blame for why it's so shitty… They could stop eating each other and learn calculus at any time…We need to be napalming villages from the air right now. No reason not to start with Dallas' (Neilsen 2014). Shoana Solomon, a US-based Liberian photographer and TV presenter whose daughter — like many African children — was stigmatised in schools, launched a famous hashtag campaign, 'I am a Liberian, not a virus' (Rebecca Davis, *The Guardian* [Online], October 22, 2014). Her response and that of many others who picked up her battle cry underscores the frustrations of most Africans with the reaction of some Americans to the Ebola crisis in Africa — a longstanding distrust of Africans

established over years of stereotyping the continent in Western literature, media and film as the hotbed of strange diseases. While the film aims at problematising viral threats to humanity at large, and to the American public in particular, it nevertheless damages the image of the entire continent of Africa as a grove of apocalyptic viruses, thus overshadowing the numerous positive developments happening in Africa.

The Constant Gardener (2005), adapted by Fernando Meirelles from John le Carre's novel of the same title (2001), stars Ralph Fiennes as Justin Quayle and Rachel Weisz as Tessa Quayle, and underscores the sophisticated imperialism of a globalised multinational pharmaceutical company, KVH (Karel Vita Hudson) that uses Africans as guinea pigs to test their AIDS drugs. The drugs cause serious side-effects and strengthen drug resistant tuberculosis. As Kenny K, a character in the novel, tells a servant of the Queen of England, 'You're history…It's "God save our multinational" they're singing these days' (le Carre 2001, 416). The multinational conspiracy involves Africans, Germans and the British. Apart from an earlier establishment shot of modern Nairobi's city skyline, in keeping with the Haggardesque and Tarzanistic formulae, the film is mostly set in the slums of Nairobi and the arid parts of Western Kenya to keep it as exotic as possible. David Monaghan observes that Le Carre borrows heavily in style and content from two colonial novelists, Joseph Conrad and Graham Greene (1985, 73–78). Although the film attempts to expose the evils of globalisation, its familiar treatment of Africa and Africans is quite demeaning. It romanticises poverty and frames Africans as either utterly corrupt or objects of pity.

Militainment is illustrated in detail in Chapter 5, using *Tears of the Sun* (2003). Here I briefly review two other militainment films, *Black Hawk Down* (2001), adapted from Mark Bowden's war classic *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (1999), and *Lord of War* (2005), written and directed by Andrew Niccol featuring Nicolas Cage as Yuri Orlov. Ridley Scott's film *Black Hawk Down* (2001) reinscribes the wild West trope on Somalia and rewrites the botched and humiliating attempt to 'extract' General Farrah Aidid and, instead, celebrates the heroism, patriotism and honour of the US military even as it covers up the many US military blunders that led to the unfortunate incident. The US military was quick to declare that *Black Hawk Down* is 'authentic'. The Army Vice Chief of Staff, General John M. Keane who sanctioned producer Jerry Bruckheimer's film project at the Pentagon, called the film an 'authentic and "graphic" portrayal of war' (Kozaryn 2002). A host of military bigwigs viewed the film's debut screening, including General Eric Shinseki, Chief of Staff of the Army; Marine Corps General Peter Pace, who was also the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Vice President Dick Cheney; Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld; and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz (Kozaryn 2001). A special screening at the White House was arranged for President George W. Bush Jnr which underscores its massive endorsement by the US government. The movie, however, thrives on binary opposition, pitting

good, innocent, young American soldiers against evil, black Muslim insurgents who, moreover, are in need of US aid! The film focuses on the battle of Mogadishu between a combination of US troops that included the US Army Rangers, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, Delta Force and Navy SEALs, as well as UN troops, and General Mohammad Farrah Aidid's forces on the fateful day of 3 October 1993. Like all Hollywood-Africa films, the movie avoids dealing with the complex history behind the Somalia crisis. This history includes decades-long US support for Somali Despot President Mohamed Siad Barre, and how General Mohammed Farrah Aidid, who overthrew Said Barre was seen by the US as a hindrance to its oil investments in Somalia, as well as the larger strategic interest of the US in the coast of the Arabian Sea. In fact, according to Larry Chin, the Somalia operation was all planned by outgoing President George Herbert Walker Bush under the command of Deputy National Security Adviser Jonathan Howe. Clinton merely operationalised the plan (Chin n.d.).

Black Hawk Down also silences the arrogance and blunders of the US military that antagonised their relations with the people of Somalia, especially the deadly helicopter missile attack on a meeting of Aidid supporters in Habr Gidr on 12 July 1993, which killed between 50–60 Somali elders, professors, judges and poet Moallim Soyan, mostly moderates who were looking for a peaceful settlement with the UN (Bowden 1999, 71–76; Chin n.d.); or how the US Black Hawk helicopters damaged Somali houses, blew up a hospital, and shot into crowds, slaying between six to ten thousand Somalis in the summer of 1993 alone (Chin n.d.); or about the arrogance of the 'unyielding' US Navy Admiral, Jonathan Howe, the Special Representative to the UN in Mogadishu who underrated the Somalis and used coercive tactics that even 'Many old Africa hands regarded…as ill-suited to this part of the world' (Bowden 1999, 92–97). When Howe put a paltry US$25 000 bounty on Aidid's head, for instance, Aidid's Habr Gidr clan, who felt insulted by the amount, decided to counter it with 'a defiant $million reward for the capture of "Animal" Howe' (Bowden 1999, 92). In his book, *Operation Hollywood: How Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies* (2004), David Robb reveals that the producer of *Black Hawk Down*, Jerry Bruckheimer, 'has caved to Pentagon demands more often than any other producer in Hollywood' (2004, 362). The film is the producer's fifth compromise production with the help of the Pentagon (2004, 93). Roger Stahl calls it the 'new patriotism narrative' in which the Pentagon supports an 'anti-war gory realism' where the audience are allowed to see the US military shot and killed, but making the purpose of war 'the rescue of one's own soldiers' (2010, 80). Shown to President George Bush Jnr before its release, this film demonises Somalis by distorting and concealing historical accounts and facts which would have exposed the dark side of the US military and questioned military interventions at large.

Lord of War (2005) tackles the arms deals behind the Sierra Leonean Civil War. It especially caricatures Liberian President Charles Taylor in the character of Andre Baptiste Senior (Eamonn Walker), — now incarcerated in Britain after standing trial at the ICC in The Hague. Much as the critique of Taylor is welcome, the representation of this African leader is so simplistic that it demeans Africa at large. He is shown as a half-wit, incapable of articulating 'War Lord'; hence, the more literal and linear inversion 'Lord of War' of the title. The Africans in *Lord of War* kill each other without any reason at all. This incomplete treatment of civil wars in Africa fails to problematise the complex historical roots of the armed conflicts that goes deep into Cold War politics, and even further to the European partitioning of Africa and the establishment of the colonial economy. The most remarkable sequence in *Lord of War* is when the Africans loot an Antanov *cargo* plane of its consignment of weapons and ammunitions, and they go on to steal every scrap, nut and bolt, including the tyres. This sequence is played in fast motion to underscore the speed of the looting. Once again, by treating the symptoms of armed conflict in Africa in light of the global arms traffic and avoiding correct diagnosis of Africa's problems, this film recycles the Dark Continent mythos.

Many other contemporary Hollywood films about Africa indicate the continuing fascination with the continent and the recurrent projection of Dark Continent characteristics onto the narrative contours of the films directly or indirectly in the form of celebrity colonialism, product advertisement and medical innovation. Three movies are especially significant for illustration: *Beyond Borders* (2003), *Critical Assignment* (2004) and *Lorenzo's Oil* (2012). Celebrity colonialism is best illustrated by *Beyond Borders*, a message movie that exposes the plight of refugees in famine-stricken Ethiopia in the 1980s, with extended action in Cambodia and Chechnya. The film features academy award winning celebrity actor and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie — who according to Forbes, became the most powerful celebrity on earth in 2009, having dethroned Oprah (*The Telegraph*, June 3, 2009). —. Although the disclaimer at the end says the film is 'not based on a true story', it is actually a metatheatrical film based on her philanthropic and political engagement with issues of poverty in Africa and beyond. It was released together with her travelogue, *Notes from My Travels: Visits with Refugees in Africa, Cambodia, Pakistan and Ecuador* (Jolie 2003) which chronicles her humanitarian work abroad. The film recycles the Dark Continent trope of jungle romance through the love between the white hero Dr Nicholas Callahan (Clive Owen) and the heroine, journalist Sarah Jordan (Angelina Jolie) in the midst of famine, war and death. The film also romanticises poverty as material for entertainment, economic and moral capital, especially for Angelina Jolie, the celebrity humanitarian persona. Aneel Karnani has called it 'poortainment'; a phenomenon where poverty and entertainment converge

and where poverty is used 'as just another prop, a colourful backdrop for marketing to the rich' (2011, 86–87). The film is a form of 'Dark Tourism' with its strong attraction towards extreme human suffering and disaster (Sharpley 2009, 3).

Product advertisement, best illustrated by *Critical Assignment* (2004), sponsored by Guinness and co-produced by MPTM (South Africa) and Moonlighting Films (UK), is in many ways a unique film. It centres on Michael Power, a popular advertising character for Guinness beer played by Cleveland Mitchell, a Jamaican-born British actor. Michael Powers has an elaborate public persona designed by Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide to create a consumer base for Guinness in Africa through radio, television and the film. If Hollywood films about Africa marginalise African characters and show lack of agency by Africans, *Critical Assignment* displays an exclusively African cast (except for the lead actor) and sophisticated and well-rounded African characters, including two favourite actors of mine: Richard Mofe-Damijo (the President), and Hakeem Kae-Kazim (Jomo). The film celebrates modern Africa's beauty and strengths and focuses on the theme of African empowerment. 'We made a conscious effort at points in the script to get back out there and show Africa,' said Bob Mahoney the British producer; and indeed, the film shows an Africa that Hollywood viewers may not be familiar with because of its emphasis on only the good side of Africa. As one Western journalist, Jo Foster (2003), notes, '*their* Africa has wonderful architecture but no roadside rubbish dumps, lively streets but no beggars, plush New York-style apartments but no shanty towns.' Foster's reference to *their* Africa indicates that he and his constituency also have *their* own Africa, the popular colonialist Africa of the Western imaginary which is the direct opposite of the modern Africa portrayed in the film. *Critical Assignment* focuses more on the 'ideal' Africa rather than 'real' Africa which has both ancient and ultra-modern dimensions to it with both positive and negative elements. However, there is a lot of focus on mansions, corporate and embassy buildings, sleek cars, polished conversations, and the good elite African life which makes the film a little escapist. The safari scene where Power visits the community affected by diseases from unclean water, however, recreates Dark Continent scenes reminiscent of *Congo* (1995) and *Sahara* (2005). Apart from drudgery of the conscious advertisement of Guinness beer and of African city life, this estimated US$3 500 000 budget film provides an alternative perspective to Hollywood's darkest Africa which the West needs to see, although it in turns shuts out the reality of African poverty and struggles. It is in many ways an escapist reverse Dark Continent film which uses the 'uplift the race' template of representing Africa as a backdrop for marketing Guinness.

Lorenzo's Oil is a beautiful film by George Miller based on the real-life story of Lorenzo Michael Murphy Odone (acted at different times by Noah Banks, Elizabeth Daily (voice) (credited as E. G. Daily), Michael Haider, Billy Amman, Cristin

Woodworth and Zack O'Malley Greenburg) who at the age of six was diagnosed with an inherited degenerative disease called adrenoleukodystrophy (ALD). Born to Italian father Augusto Odone (Nick Nolte) and American mother Michaela Odone (Susan Sarandon), Lorenzo's childhood was spent in the Comoros Islands in East Africa where his father worked as a World Bank economist. This period would be the only normal and most memorable part of his life given the tragedy that eventually debilitates him. Lorenzo plays at the beach with African children, attends class with them and develops a very close friendship with a young Comorian man, Omouri. A special wooden sword carved for Lorenzo by Omouri later becomes a symbol of his warrior spirit as he battles with adrenoleukodystrophy. The significance of the Comoros to Lorenzo is seen in the fact that his friend Omouri was flown to the US to look after him. With no information about, let alone treatment for the rare disease, and the indifference of the medical institutions, the parents embark on the studious work of educating themselves about the disease. Augusto Odone eventually invents 'Lorenzo's Oil', a chemical compound that extends his son's life significantly, even though Lorenzo never recovered his senses beyond blinking and moving his index finger. Lorenzo's dad was hesitant to bring Omouri to the US citing the prevalence of racism which he didn't want Oumori exposed to, but the film paints a positive picture of Africa and of Comorans in particular by focusing on the beauty and memory of Lorenzo's childhood in the Comoros. The film attempts transcendence of Dark Continent stereotypes.

It's important to review some Hollywood films about South Africa that present the grand narrative of South African anti-apartheid history because South African history is a big part of African history generally, and South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle in particular, is a major source material for Hollywood-Africa films. Most of these Hollywood films use white focalisation to interpret South African history on screen which in turn hijacks and whitewashes South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle history altogether. The life of Nelson Mandela is a favourite subject of these films. Indeed, it is not possible to discuss Hollywood-Africa films without examining films about Nelson Mandela, the leading African statesman of his time and the African character most represented by Hollywood. Mandela films set in the apartheid era depict him as the hero of the struggle, while post-apartheid narratives of Mandela project the theme of forgiveness, reconciliation and national unity. Nelson Mandela has been the subject of many films, among which are: *Rivonia Trial (Der Rivonia-Prozeß* (1966), *Mandela* (1987), *Sarafina* (1992), *Mandela and de Klerk* (1997), *Drum* (2004) *Goodbye Bafana* (2007), *Endgame* (2009), *Invictus* (2010), *Winnie* (2011), *Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013) and *Mandela's Gun* (2016). Controversial British Director, Peter Kosminsky, announced in 2011 that he would be making a film about 'Terrorist Mandela' which attracted a lot of criticism. The project yet to get

underway has a working title, 'Young Mandela'. As earlier noted, Hollywood played a role in bringing to the world's attention the atrocities of the apartheid system and in making visible an exceptional African hero. Some of the Mandela films attempt to reconstruct South African apartheid history, some lay emphasis on reconciliation by crafting a messianic image of Mandela as the father of the rainbow nation, while others are just a scramble by Hollywood studios for profits from the Mandela celebrity product. Clint Eastwood's biopic *Invictus* (2010) stands out as the most reverential production about Nelson Mandela and of any African character, and the most successful incarnation of Mandela on screen to date. However, the process of this reverential incarnation compromises South African anti-apartheid history. These Mandela films are reviewed briefly in Chapter 6 where *Invictus* in particular will be discussed at length as an example of 'heroic self-transcendence,' a phenomenon in which Mandela is extracted from the history that produced him and elevated to a universal symbol of goodness.

Other than Mandela, apartheid-themed Hollywood-Africa films also explore the narrative of the struggle through metanarratives of other less prominent black and white anti-apartheid activists. Five of these less prominent individual biopics are: *Come Back Africa* (1959), *A World Apart* (1988), *A Dry White Season* (1989), *In My Country* (2004) and *Catch a Fire* (2006). Lionel Rogosin's leftist film *Come Back, Africa* (1959), written in collaboration with South African writers Lewis Nkosi and William 'Bloke' Modisane, stands in a class of its own as the first film to catalogue the brutality of apartheid. It is a classical resistance film that does not fit into the three major categories of Hollywood films in this book. Director Martin Scorsese, who restored the film, says the picture 'Opened the eyes of many people to apartheid, myself including' ("Introduction" *Come Back Africa*). It was filmed secretly in Johannesburg, with a cast of nonprofessional actors. Shot in Italian neorealist style, the film is a portrait of Zachariah Mgabi who fled poverty and famine in the native reserve in KwaZulu-Natal to work in Johannesburg. He ends up slaving away in the gold mines where he earns less than he needs to survive through the month and writes to his wife to sell some cows and send him some money for upkeep. He cannot quit the job either because he is tied to a long contract. He eventually holds brief jobs as cook and mechanic. His wife and children join him in Johannesburg, but the wife is strangled to death by Marumo, a gang leader dehumanised by apartheid. The film showcases the squalid living conditions of black mineworkers in Johannesburg, the humiliating prohibitions of work and resident permits, family breakdown, drunkenness, prostitution and violent crimes. Although some moments in the film portray Africans as childish and incompetent, the film nevertheless problematises the treatment of Africans as 'only' natives and uncivilised. There is a long sequence in which a group of African intellectuals, including Lewis Nkosi,

'Bloke' Modisane and Can Themba, who act themselves in the film, discourse about racism and the pretensions of white liberalism. A young Miriam Makeba, veteran South African anti-Apartheid singer, later referred to as 'Mama Africa', also makes a cameo appearance. In spite of the pain and frustrations that the film highlights, it also captures the tremendous beauty, rhythm and ambience of township life, like flute playing, the gumboot dance, church choir and wedding march, and children's games and fights. Referred to as the 'Unrepentant Marxist', with this film director 'Rogosin became a guerrilla fighter using a Bolex camera rather than a machine gun' (Louis Proyect 2012).

A World Apart (1988) is a cinematic adaptation of a memoir of the same title by Shawn Slovo that was published in 1989, a year after the film's release (1989). The film was directed by Chris Menges, with the screenplay by the author Shawn Slovo, daughter of prominent white anti-apartheid activist and lawyer, Joe Slovo, and ANC activist and later director of ANC External Operations in exile, and journalist, Ruth First. The film shows the toll of apartheid through the eyes of 13-year-old Molly Roth (Jodhi May) whose father flees into exile to evade arrest and whose mother attends various clandestine meetings and goes through police harassment and eventually imprisonment, causing Molly to pay the heavy emotional price of living without both parents and the taunts of schoolmates who call her the daughter of a communist. The film shows the perspective of the price white anti-apartheid activists paid in the struggle for liberating South Africa. Although the film is about Shawn Slovo and her relationship with her mother, Ruth First, Shawn revealed in an interview that she had to change the name of her communist mother to Diana Roth not just to evade censorship (read lack of funding) but also to attract the audience through the star persona of the Princess of Wales (Dovey 2009, 282). The dedication shows that the film is a celebration of Ruth's life: 'Ruth First (Diana Roth) was assassinated on 17 August 1982. This film is for her and for the thousands who have died in the struggle for a free South Africa.' This film about an iconic white South African family has been criticised by some for its white focalisation and its logic of the 'White man's burden' which invokes sympathy for the white person who suffers to save black people. Vincent Canby (1998) says in the film, 'the political tragedy often appears to be used as a somewhat exotic background for everything happening in the foreground.' Moreover, 'it soothes the consciences of white, liberal, middle-class audiences.' Although I think the film does well to focus on the historical contribution and tragedy of the Slovo family, and the suffering Ruth First and her children experienced as one thread of the narrative, it overreaches in what Davis has called its 'legitimization of a black story through a white hero' (1996, 97) or what Dovey has called a 'white intermediary' (2009, 281).

Martiniquean director Euzhan Palcy's film, *A Dry White Season* (1989) adapted

from André Brink's novel of the same title (1979), is built around the events of the 1976 Soweto Uprising and both expose the brutality of the notorious apartheid South African Special Branch police. Brink's novel, which expresses the rage of an Afrikaner over the callous murder of Soweto school children in police custody, was considered as backstabbing by the apartheid regime and exposed him to tremendous police surveillance and harassment. The film adaptation is about a gardener, Gordon Ngubene (Winston Ntshona) whose son Jonathan (Bekhithemba Mpofu) is killed in a police cell after he was arrested while trying to help another student shot by the police during the student riots. Gordon Ngubane sets out to retrieve the body of Jonathan and ends up being arrested and tortured to death in a police cell. His wife, Emily Ngubane (Thoko Ntshinga), is bludgeoned to death by police when she is evicted but refuses to be deported to the poverty stricken South African countryside (areas known as the Bantustans/Black Homeland set aside for blacks), or to let her children be taken by the police. Gordon's white employer, Ben du Toit (Donald Sutherland), a privilegedAfrikaner schoolteacher, does not want to get involved. However, after Gordon's brutal murder, he finds himself pitted against the apartheid system and its justice machinery, and when justice is denied, with the help of taxi driver Stanley Makhaya (Zakes Mokae), and British journalist Melanie Bruwer (Susan Sarandon), he learns more about the shocking degradation of blacks and leads a push to collect affidavits from high witnesses of the double murder, in order to hold the security apparatus responsible for the murder of Ngubane and his son. Du Toit ends up with a broken family and eventually pays with his own life when the callous police officer, Captain Stolz (Jürgen Prochnow), runs him over with a car. The film adaptation empowers the black characters. Gordon Ngubane and his wife die fighting, and Makhaya in particular has great strength of character. The film also shows a multiracial effort at various levels as blacks labelled 'kaffirs' (derogatory equivalent of the American term 'niggers') and Afrikaner sympathisers of the black cause (traitors) pay the ultimate price for challenging the oppressive system. Although in the final analysis, this is another 'middle-class whites' mediated film, it is unique as the first Hollywood-Africa film about apartheid by a black director. Through its financiers, Hollywood's 'whiteness' consortium dictated that any film Palcy decided to make must have a white character as the lead. She had to bypass powerful stories by black writers and instead look for a white story that she could restructure to tell the South African story in a way that is empowering to blacks. 'When she came to adapt the novel to the screen, Palcy rejected the black-as-victim image, and built up one of the African characters the taxi-driver Stanley, into the embodiment of the resistance' (Davis 1996, 111). The cold-blooded shooting of Captain Stolz by Stanley at the end of the film is an expression of the director's rage, 'the rage of a black person' calling for 'primitive justice out of the barrel of a gun' (Davis 1996, 111).

Although Palcy knew revenge is not necessarily the road to black empowerment, she trumped Brink's ending order to create a character who confronts the murderous system and still lives. As Peter Davis comments about the film's ending: 'It is the familiar Hollywood ending' where the good guy wins and the bad guy is taken out (1996, 111). Palcy's adaptation shows the constraints black directors have in making films about Africa. Black stories and voices are naturally silenced in Hollywood. Any sense of redemption must come through white mediation which in turn obliterates black agency.

The problem of white focalisation is evident in John Boorman's film *In My Country* (2004), a British-Irish production adapted from Antjie Krog's landmark novel, *Country of My Skull* (1998). Krog worked for the South African Broadcasting Corporation and for two years led a team of journalists who covered the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in which thousands of victims and victims' families, and perpetrators confessed their pain and atrocities respectively through harrowing revelations of imprisonment, torture, murders and all kinds of violence during apartheid. Krog's book is a fictionalised account of this process, sometimes with live transcription of confessions. In the film adaptation, SBC journalist Anna Malan (Juliette Binoche) represents Krog. She is joined by an African American reporter on the *Washington Post*, Langston Whitfield (Samuel Jackson), whose not-so-flattering opinion of Afrikaners dissipates as he gets to know Malan, an Afrikaner who identifies with black suffering and believes in 'traditional African justice', summarised in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. This film, structured around the grand narrative of forgiveness and reconciliation, makes a chilling re-creation of the confessions, especially the clinical testimony of the state killers. It interrogates the essence of truth and justice, problematises racism and the question of what it means to be African. However, the pain of the victims is used here as a mere backdrop for Malan's emotional roller-coaster as a journalist seeking catharsis. In the film, Malan, made famous through her radio broadcast, becomes the embodiment of truth and reconciliation as she takes up the 'White woman's burden', this time of bringing healing to the victims of a racist system that privileged her. As a romantic subtext, when they get stuck in the countryside, Malan shares a hotel bed with Whitefield and her sound man, Dumi Mkhalipi (Menzi Ngubane). Remembering the Immorality Act of the apartheid era, Whitefield muses about how the law would have punished him as a black man for sleeping with Malan in the same bed. On asking Malan what she would have got for breaking the law, she replies, 'probably a lot of satisfaction!' This classical Hollywood 'fantastic' black male sexuality is unleashed later during the steamy sex they have right after a long day of the most harrowing murder confessions. After her brother's suicide due to the guilt of torturing and killing ANC activists, Malan's mother confesses that she committed adultery and would like to tell the truth so

that she may be free, prompting Malan to confess to her husband that she slept with the American journalist, Langston Whitefield. These adulterous confessions are meant to parallel the murder confessions at the TRC. Instead, however, they trivialise the pain of the victims of apartheid era police violence and elevate Malan's pain of marital infidelity to their level of agony. It is basically a whitewashing of South African history in the tradition of many Hollywood productions about the South African anti-apartheid struggle. This view is reinforced by Lindiwe Dovey's observation that, in the context of there being many books about South Africa's TRC, some South African filmmakers have questioned why only literary texts by whites are being adapted to the screen, even when South Africa's own National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) has set aside funds for adapting South African literary text into film, in collaboration with foreign production companies (2009, 55). South African director Tedda Mattera, for instance, asserts that films that attempt to explore residual black anger and the limits of reconciliation aren't being funded because 'investors do not want to support *such topics*' (2009, 56; my emphasis). Once again, black stories and black points of view are being suppressed in the collaboration between those who wield real economic power in the new South Africa (read whites) and Hollywood, as well as the mostly European film producers.

Phillip Noyce's film *Catch a Fire* (2006) is another film whose screenplay was written by Shawn Slovo. It is based on the true story of Patrick Chamusso (Derek Luke), an ambitious young man whose career and life are destroyed by the South African police and is forced to join the ANC's Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) guerrillas in Mozambique. It follows his training in Mozambique under Joe Slovo and an account of the deadly 1981 raid of the ANC base in Mozambique by South Africa's commandos which led to the death of 12 ANC soldiers and a Portuguese national, Jose Ramos, presumed to be Joe Slovo (who at the time was considered by the apartheid regime to be the brains behind the ANC resistance since he was white!). The film shows Chamusso's further training in Swaziland, and his daring raid on Secunda fuel plant in Johannesburg, arrest, imprisonment on Robben Island and eventual release. While *A World Apart* is dedicated to Ruth First, Joe Slovo's wife, *Catch a Fire* is dedicated to Joe Slovo and features Slovo (Malcolm Purkey) prominently in the Mozambique sequence as Chief of Staff of MK monitoring the training of recruits. Joe Slovo's daughter Robyn Slovo played her mother Ruth First in the film. In spite of its strong homage to the Slovo family, this film relied on black focalisation through Chamusso's character, performed powerfully by Derek Luke who met with Chamusso and even took dialogue coaching lessons to perfect his accent. The film also has a metatheatrical cameo appearance by Chamusso, the real man, who explains how he forgave those who tortured and imprisoned him. The freedom songs led by David Mbata, considered an expert on freedom songs, lent additional historical

weight to the film. Chamusso himself endorsed the film during a cameo appearance in the film by saying, 'The whole film is the truth…and I can't stand watching it because those are the things that happened to me.' Although it is a personal story, the film tries to fit the grand narrative of forgiveness and reconciliation evident in most Hollywood productions about post-apartheid South Africa without examining the impact of his imprisonment on his former wife who is dropped at the end of the story, or the long-term economic impact and injustices of apartheid. This is evident in Chamusso's direct humanitarian appeal in the film: 'I hope people can help me with the orphanage', a clear sign that he is marketing both the film which he found very therapeutic and his orphanage project in light of the failure of the government to provide educational services and social amenities to the orphans.

There are three lesser-known Hollywood films set in South Africa that are not biopics but illustrate the Dark Continent mythos of Hollywood-Africa films. They are: *The Power of One* (1999), *Duma* (2004), *Safe House* (2012). *The Power of One*, adapted from Bryce Courtney's part-biographical novel of the same title (1996), elevates the white protagonist K (acted by three different people; below age 12, Guy Witcher/ after age 12, Simon Fenton/ age 18, Stephen Dorff) to the position of a god. He is referred to adoringly as the mythic rainmaker who was prophesied to come and was destined to unite all the black tribes. He becomes the 'Great White Saviour' for black Africans, reproducing the white salvation discourse of Darkest Africa narratology.

Duma is the story of a white boy Xan (Alexander Michaeletos) who falls in love with Duma, a cheetah his family rescued and adopted earlier in the film. But Duma grows too big to be a member of the human family; he can hardly fit in Xan's bed. The film narrates how Xan embarks on a journey to return Duma to its natural home in the South African wild and the challenges Xan goes through to accomplish this difficult task. Although it received rave reviews for its captivating animal adventure and stunning cinematography of the South African wild, the movie nevertheless presents the major black character Ripkuna (Eammon Walker) negatively as he suggests that they eat the cheetah to save themselves from dying of starvation in the desert. He even tries to steal the cheetah in order to sell it to poachers. Towards the end, the film brings out the favourite Dark Continent themes of witchcraft and divination practised on Ripkuna to save him from insect bites.

Daniel Espinosa's film *Safe House* (2012), set in post-apartheid South Africa, features Denzel Washington as Tobin Frost, a rogue CIA superagent hunted down in Cape Town for an Israeli Intelligence device he has that contains incriminating information about corrupt practices in British, American and Israeli intelligence agencies. Although all the action takes place in Cape Town, the city is merely used as a staging post for the Hollywood action thriller. We see the locals doing the apartheid

era revolutionary *toyi-toyi* dance on the streets, only this time the placards read, WE NEED JOBS and STRENGTHEN OUR ECONOMY. This political subtext is not pursued beyond the street protest. As usual, Africa is a mere backdrop for the thriller.

The negative stereotypes in the films discussed in this book have been carefully constructed over time to feed what Oliver Barlet has termed 'European audience's appetite for fantasy, escape and exoticism with picturesque, sensational material' (1996, 5). V. Y. Mudimbe has dealt at length with this topic in his seminal work *The Invention of Africa* (1994) where he says Victorian craving for Darkest Africa narratives was part of the wider 'logic of the chain of being and the stages of progress and social development' (1994, 13) which put Africans outside the border line of civilisation. Richard Maynard has remarked that 'They used to say that imperialism followed the flag, but in the face of American economic penetration into Africa and other colonies, Hollywood can perform better than anybody's flag' (1974, 71). Indeed, Hollywood is the imperial arm of Western/US hegemony, and the most powerful instrument for consolidating perceptions about Africa that reinscribe the Dark Continent regime of knowledge about Africa. All of these films show that the West is still recycling the classical Dark Continent template found in *King Solomon's Mines* 100 years on and still counting in new guises through neoclassical Hollywood films about Africa and the morally charged New Wave human rights films. Despite their moral tone, the human rights/humanitarian genre and anti-apartheid white liberal films still serve Hollywood's imperialist agenda because they reproduce colonial power structures. The novels and even more, their film adaptations as well as original screenplays all uphold the old Haggardesque template. The quest narrative format continues to be used, and Africa remains a backdrop for Western productions. Western ideology continues to find its Other in the themes of cannibalism, savagery, sexual perversity, superstition and witchcraft, violence and chaos, with African lives treated as expendable in relation to white lives. The films reviewed in this chapter straddle over 100 years of Hollywood depictions of Africa and their continuing commitment to a colonialist ideological representation of the continent. Detailed analyses of the different models of Hollywood-Africa film productions now follow in Chapters 3 to 11, using specific films and adaptation theories for in-depth analysis and illustration.

ADAPTATION MODELS

3

Ventriloquising the Dark Continent myth

Of the colonial novels set in Africa, *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), stands out as one of the most influential. In *King Solomon's Mines,* the first colonial novel set in Africa, Rider Haggard developed what can be called the original template for all colonial novels set on the continent. It has also become the template for the *King Solomon's Mines* film adaptations as well as original screenplays the Haggard's book and film adaptations inspired. Most subsequent novels and films developed further Haggard's idea of primitive Africa and far outdid the author in their racist representations. Analysing *King Solomon's Mines* establishes a perspective for understanding how contemporary Western novels and movies — 100 years after *King Solomon's Mines* first appeared — still employ the Haggardesque template of Africa. Even the most well-intentioned contemporary Western novelists and filmmakers representing Africa and Africans are ideologically handicapped by deeply persistent colonial stereotypes reflected in the writings of Speke, Stanley and Livingstone referenced in Chapter 1, and in Haggard's own work which is the subject of this chapter.

Alongside maxim guns and religious rhetoric, colonial novels like Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) helped the cause of imperialism in Africa. The novels created an exoticised image of Africa as romantic, yet inhabited by every wild thing conceivable, from the treacherous terrain, to insects, animals and savages. This mythical construction of Africa was designed as infotainment to feed 'European audience's appetite for fantasy, escape and exoticism with picturesque, sensational material' (Barlet 1996, 5); This appetite was itself a product of Victorian mythology about Africa and the wider 'logic of the chain of being and the stages of progress and social development' (Mudimbe 1988, 13) which put Africans outside the border line of civilisation. There was a high demand for the supply of missionary and explorer travelogues, and fictional accounts like Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* which provided 'evidence' of African savagery. The novels in turn updated and recontextualised the myth for its audience with hyperbolic precision. Victorian mis(re)presentation of Africa can be summarised in one myth: the Dark Continent.

Tracing the genealogy of this myth, Brantlinger references Marlow's observation in *Heart of Darkness* that the blank space [Africa] of his boyhood dreams had become a place of darkness due to European intervention: 'Africa grew dark as Victorian explorers, missionaries, and scientists flooded it with light, because the light was refracted through an imperialist ideology' (1988, 166). He observes further that the interventionist mindset justified imperialisation and needed scientific, religious and moral anchors to make this unquestionable: 'It is this view I call the myth of the Dark Continent.' Paraphrasing Roland Barthes, he calls this phenomenon the 'discourse that treats its subject as universally understood, scientifically established, and therefore no longer open to criticism by a political or theoretical opposition' (1988, 174).[1] From the early 20th century onwards, Western film began adapting such novels to the screen and, in turn, recycled this colonial image of Africa in various ways. These film adaptations were distorted, 'exoticised and "primitive" celluloid stereotypes of Africa which had been conterminous with the birth of the medium of film' (Wynter 2000, 43). Thus, although film was a new representational medium, its invention escalated the negatively stereotypical representation of Africa and Africans, especially in its adaptation of colonial novels. This is owing to the fact that film adaptation creates an opportunity for revisiting and remodelling of the old colonial stereotypes to suit changing times and audiences. Against this backdrop, the current chapter examines how Kamilla Elliott's 'ventriloquist' concept of adaptation can be applied in analysing Bennett and Marton's 1950 film adaptation of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines.* Ventriloquism can be defined as the art of speaking with the voice of another, and this chapter undertakes a ventriloquist analysis of the literature–film interchange between Haggard's novel and its 1950 adaptation by Bennett and Marton in order to identify the voice that speaks the Dark Continent mythology and the forms it takes to communicate across time and a range of media.

In her book, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2003), Kamilla Elliott discerns six 'mostly unofficial' concepts that have shaped the critical discourse about cinematic adaptations of fiction in the following order: the Psychic, Ventriloquist, Genetic, De(Re)composing, Incarnational and Trumping concepts of adaptations. They are Elliott's own original distillations of the professional approaches to literature/film analysis and are by no means sufficient to contain all the complexities of adaptation, although they offer useful lenses for the analysis of adaptation. Despite their relatively porous boundaries, Elliott's models attempt to summarise the general theory of 'transtextuality', an inclusive term coined by Gérard Genette in his book *Palimpsests* (1997) and propagated by film critics like James Neramore (2000), André Bazin (2000), Dudley Andrew (2000), Robert Ray (2000) and Robert Stam (2000) who view narrative transmutability in different ways.

The ventriloquist model is the approach in which the film adaptation 'empties

the body of the novel of its spiritual content and gives it a new voice' (Elliott 2003, 198–199). Thomas Leitch calls this way of perceiving the adaptation relationship, 'colonisation', which sees 'progenitor texts as vessels filled with new meanings' (2009, 109). Leitch's colonisation metaphor in light of Elliott's coinage of the ventriloquist concept provides a rich metaphor for understanding the symbiotic relationship between Haggard's Victorian novel and its Hollywood adaptation as part of a relationship between aesthetic production and larger cultural issues and contexts. In this case, the culture of Victorian England speaks the ideology of empire that ventriloquises Haggard's novel. Hollywood in turn projects its voice into the film text, imbuing the form of Haggard's novel with the mid-20th century American ideology of racial supremacy and exotic acquisitiveness. However, no single concept of adaptation can suffice to analyse an adaptation and, as Marie-Laure Ryan argues in considering Elliott's elaborate categorisation of adaptation concepts, 'the theory that enables us to understand all dimensions of a film adaptation must engage all of Elliott's concepts of adaptation' (2004, 199). Although this chapter focuses majorly on the 'ventriloquist' concept, all five of Elliott's adaptation models are referred to in the analysis of *King Solomon's Mines*.

The psychic concept of adaptation sees what passes from the book to the film as the 'spirit of the text [which] is commonly equated with the spirit or personality of the author' (Elliott 2003, 136). In this sense, the psychic concept of adaptation also underpins Bennett and Marton's *King Solomon's Mines* (1950) in that the spirit of the novel as 'hypertext' and the spirit of its author, himself a 'subtext', are sustained. Furthermore, the rhetoric of the 'incarnational' model of adaptation 'suggests that the characters of the novel were not quite alive until their incarnation in film' (Elliott 2003, 161). Thus, it is through incarnation that the characters in Haggard's novel materialise on the screen and what was 'word' becomes 'flesh'. This model is related to the genetic adaptation model which sees the passing of the DNA of the progenitor text of *King Solomon's Mines* to the film text. Moreover, in line with De(Re) composition, it describes the phenomenon where 'novel and film decompose, merge and form a new composition' which is further reorganised by audience consciousness and 'other cultural narratives' (Elliott 2003, 157). As a model of De(Re)composition, the 1950 *King Solomon's Mines* adaptation weaves, among others, literary texts, subtexts, intertexts, history and film aesthetic codes to (re)present the myth of the Dark Continent. Finally, the trumping model of adaptation, the most radical of Elliott's five models, attempts to correct the author's fault lines and claims that it has 'represented the signified better' (2003, 174). In this sense, the film; for instance; presents the grotesque Gagool of Haggard's narrative into a more humane being in Bennett and Marton's screen rendition.

As can be seen from the above discussion, adaptation works at both the formal and

thematic levels. At the formal level, film — by its nature — introduces new narrative and formal structures which enable a film to reinforce the ideological impact of the novel on which it is based. This is because watching a film, as a visual medium, is easier than reading a book and less time-consuming too. Besides, film is packaged with extra visual, sound and narrative techniques that enhance the vividness of the story. Further, the consumption of film is generally a social event, unlike reading which is primarily private. In short, as Elliott observes, 'While film adaptations do cut and condense novels, they also add the semiotic richness of moving images, music, props, architecture, costumes, audible dialogue, and more' (2003, 144).

At the thematic level, the narrative and stylistic elements of the adaptation convey recycled thematic concerns that are repackaged according to the demands of the cinematic apparatus to fit the time and cultural context of its release. The novel engages the audiences' expectation through the adaptation, consequently recycling the old subject matter in the form of a complex new product that is both British and American, and simultaneously colonial and neocolonial. This confirms Elliott's observation that 'Often adaptations engage in mutual projections, mutual hauntings, creating strange ideological combinations' (2003, 148). In the case of Bennett and Marton's *King Solomon's Mines*, for example, the screenplay changes and drops some of Haggard's characters, making significant adjustments to the plot, yet we still see the puppet-master hand of Victorian ideology at work in sustaining the Dark Continent mythology that feeds the film's narrative. The film in certain instances consequently outdoes the novel in its treatment of formulaic themes like racial inferiority (the idea of the hierarchy of races), cannibalism, witchcraft, superstition, sensuality, violence, chaos and the alluring dangerous. The Africans in the film are primitive, fearful, lazy, savage, docile and highly expendable. The white characters, conversely, are generally portrayed as brave, adventurous, intelligent, romantic, civilised, morally upright and almost omnipotent. These elements are ventriloquised from the racial mythography of Victorian England, and from the quest literary tradition that influenced Haggard, who in turn influenced the film adaptation. The film reinscribes the negative colonial stereotypes with new cinematic novelty by recontextualising them nostalgically within the parameters of American cultural imperialism.

As earlier mentioned, *King Solomon's Mines* is the first colonial novel set in Africa, and in it Rider Haggard developed what can be called the original template for all colonial novels set on the continent of Africa. *King Solomon's Mines* can also be considered the ideological and generic template for the film adaptations as well as other 'original' screenplays they have inspired in terms of thematic focus and form. The film adaptations develop further Haggard's idea of primitive Africans and far exceeds the author in their racist representations. Analysing *King Solomon's Mines* also establishes a perspective for understanding how contemporary Western films,

a hundred years on after *King Solomon's Mines* first appeared, still employ the 'Haggardesque' template of Africa which forms the thematic and formal strands of the Lost World genre (an off-shoot of the adventure genre) that Haggard is credited with establishing. According to Bradley Deane, the Lost World genre emerged during the new Imperialism era (1871–1914) when the Victorians began vigorously 'charting vectors of convergence between Britain and those they regarded as primitive' (2008, 205). The tales are set on every continent and postulate that remnants of ancient civilising forces exist in primitive societies the world over and are responsible for traces of civilisation and progress around the globe. These include Greeks, Romans, Vikings and Celts, Egyptians, Israelis, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Aztecs, Mayans, and Incas (2008, 206). This theory is reflected in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* as he grapples with evidence of art, ancient technology and beauty in Africa. Lindy Stiebel observes that 'The discovery of ancient stone-walled sites and gold mines in Africa posed a problem since these were unknown in comparable European Iron Age sites' (2001, 29). A description of the inside of 'Solomon's Diamond Mines' in Chapter 16 of Haggard's novel is full of biblical allusions and Egyptian mythography. There are sculptures of 'Asteroth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon' (Haggard 1994, 189), and drawings and sculptures of a mummy that 'appeared to be one of the Egyptian gods' (Haggard 1994, 192). Contemporary Western filmmakers representing Africa are ideologically influenced by deeply embedded colonial stereotypes that can be traced back to Haggard and his Victorian source. The characters, themes and attitudes in the novel are reborn in the film through Elliott's incarnation concept of adaptation. These Victorian attitudes and philosophies 'incarnate' in Haggard's novel and 'reincarnate' in Bennett and Marton's film adaptation.

Stiebel says it was Haggard who imagined and created the 'perfect' picture of Africa, not just for Victorian England but for the entire West for ages to come, developing what she calls the 'Haggardesque "Africa"' (2001, 53). Considered a liberal writer in his day, Haggard, who was a proud colonial officer wrote fiction and autobiographies which contested yet consolidated the Empire. As Gerald Monsman observes, for Haggard, 'The propagandization and contestation of the ideology of empire is complicated by autobiographical involvement' (2006, 14). Haggard's literary vehicle of contemplation becomes an instrument of imperialist advancement as well. His work is influenced by Victorian perceptions of Africa which were mostly negative. Thus, Haggard the writer and colonial officer became the mouthpiece of his Victorian culture, a product of the mythical ideological foundries of Victorian England where the hierarchy of races and racial inferiority theories were manufactured — especially the Hamitic myth hypothesis which states that 'everything of value ever found in Africa was brought there by the Hamites, allegedly a branch of the Caucasian race' (Sanders 1969, 521).

The idea of the Negro-Hamite as the accursed descendant of biblical Ham — the son of Noah who peeped at his drunk and naked father — emerged in 1600, although the term Hamite was also used to denote 'a sinner of some sort' (Sanders 1969, 523). This theory is transposed into the post-World War II temporal setting of the 1950 *King Solomon's Mines* film adaptation, the age of US hegemony, to show the role of Hollywood in consolidating the myths that defined darkest Africa.

The film adaptation and colonial nostalgia

Hollywood films about Africa romanticise the colonial experience in the age of US hegemony. As Renato Rosaldo has noted, these films portray white colonial societies as 'decorous and orderly, as if constructed with norms of classic ethnography' (1989, 68). Although the films valorise colonialism, they at the same time mourn the disappearance of the traditional way of life that colonialism destroyed. These films, therefore, exhibit nostalgia for the 'vanishing primitive' or the 'vanishing savage' by freezing permanently on the Hollywood screen what they consider Darkest Africa. This colonial nostalgia is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. The relationship between the novel *King Solomon's Mines* and its 1950 film adaptation parallels the relationship between British colonialism/imperialism and American neocolonial hegemony. The film as an adaptation with all the related cinematic apparatus and the safari-style movement of location-shooting in Africa is an instrument of colonial incarnation. Peter Davis gives an apt analogy that the invention of the camera is synonymous with the beginning of 'the second conquest of Africa', which was not just about images but also 'the way these images were presented.' He likens the filmmakers to the 'freebooting imperialist' who plundered Africa's wealth. With the invention of film, 'motion picture photographers scurried all over the globe, frenetically gathering images — exotic, arcane, bizarre, sensational, revelatory — which became the "reality" about…[Africa]…for millions' (1996, 2). The movie camera was a major instrument of colonial expansion in new guises and a tool for further economic exploitation of Africa, especially since all colonised countries were considered properties of the metropolitan colonial authorities. Africa's topography, wildlife, beauty, flora and fauna, and its cultural diversity were exploited because they provided the perfect background canvas for the outlandish and exoticist fetishism of colonial representation. In her book, *Artificial Africas*, Ruth Mayer highlights colonial nostalgia in Hollywood and the significance of Rider Haggard as a major source in positing that 'exotic cultures and colonial settings have always been popular in Hollywood…countless versions of Haggard's work would in itself present an interesting reflection of the varying colonialist imageries…' (2002, 34). The Hollywood movie camera, therefore, perfected the distortion of the image of Africa that the colonial novel had begun.

The 1950 Hollywood adaptation of Haggard's novel is also informed by what was happening in the movies in America at the time. This was the last decade of the golden age in American film history which stretched from 1920 to 1963; the age of the big hero, big romance, technicolour, the big screen and big audiences. While colonial nostalgia in the film is evident, Hollywood employs new ways of treating the colonial themes. The film thus treats the novel as a dummy, but the dummy is given new life through the film's formal codes and the American culture of the film's production. The fact that the two main actors, Stewart Granger (Allan Quatermain) and Deborah Kerr (Elizabeth Curtis) are both major British actors of their time working in Hollywood in 1950s combines post-colonial British and American cultural references. This conforms to Kamilla Elliott's ventriloquist formula which can be paraphrased as: The dummy + the film codes + the (1950s British and American) culture = the adaptation. The adaptation is, therefore, not just film, but a composite of the total contexts of the novel's and the film's productions (2003, 144).

Because film creates the illusion of reality, Bennett and Marton's *King Solomon's Mines,* therefore, serves to visually recycle and even consolidate Haggard's myths about Africa. This is because, in spite of the difference in time or even exact physical setting, plotline, character representation, and many other cultural, formal and artistic embellishments that come with the film medium, the ghost of Haggard the puppet-master still lingers on in the film adaptation as though the entire spirit of the text (spirit of the author) is sustained in the adaptation. Kamilla Elliott explains this phenomenon as follows:

> …while the ventriloquist concept of adaptation at first appears diametrically opposed to the psychic view, its idea of residual meaning lingering in so-called empty forms does not differ essentially from the idea that a spirit passes from a novel to a film in adaptation…the two concepts thus emerge as inseparable sides of the same coin. (2003, 149–150)

The film adaptation thus becomes the unveiling of Haggard's spirit as well as a regrafting of Haggard into America's cultural mainstream through the dominant Hollywood cinematic apparatus. The reviews that greeted Bennett and Marton's 1950 adaptation of *King Solomon's Mines* attest to this. *New York Times* reviewer Bosley Crowther hailed the production as 'A vast panorama of Africa, its wild beasts and primitive native tribes, along with a hot adventure that is loaded in standard perils and thrills.' The reviewer celebrates the exotic backdrop that Africa's wilderness and supposedly primitive people provide for the Western adventure film (*New York Times*, November 10, 1950, N10). Brog, another reviewer, counted among the thrills 'myriad varieties of Dark Continent inhabitants, human, animal and insect' and particularly stressed that 'there is high excitement in meetings with wild savages, and beasts' (*Weekly Variety*, September 27, 1950, 8). Their views seem to play into the

audience's cultural expectations based on colonial novels they've read and the huge media machine that feeds the same colonial mythography. The desire for good box office returns also determines the thematic and formal treatment of Africa in the adaptation as filmmakers respond to the audiences' curiosity by recycling familiar tropes about Africa through established genres. Whereas the film adaptation is the product of a different medium, form, and time of production, it still maintains Elliott's idea of the deep 'genetic' structures as well as the 'spirit' of Haggard's novel, only this time the negative imaging of Africa is magnified in the screenplay owing to film's superior realist visual representation. The film, therefore, has American flesh, the blood of Haggard and the skeleton of Victorian mythography.

Although Haggard is the 'spirit' of the film adaptation screenplay, Haggard himself is an intertextual confluence of other writers like Louis Stevenson — *Treasure Island* (1883) and Daniel Defoe — *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). In the novel *King Solomon's Mines*, the rescued George Curtis says, 'We have lived for nearly two years, like a second Robinson Crusoe and his Man Friday, hoping against hope that some natives might come here and help us, but none came' (Haggard 2002, 232–233). This shows the colonial self-reflexivity of the novel and its homage to Defoe. Haggard is also influenced by the travel accounts of explorers such as John Hanning Speke — *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1863), Henry Morton Stanley — *Through the Dark Continent* (1885) and David Livingstone — *Missionary Travels and Adventures* (1857). Commenting about Stanley's impact, Curtis Keim says, 'throughout the white world, red-blooded men and boys read and talked about Stanley well into the twentieth century' and that Stanley did not only influence other explorers but also 'inspired the stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs…and H. Rider Haggard, authors read widely in America' (2009, 47). The Haggard-Burroughs's nexus underscores the representational alliance in Euro-American imaginaries of Africa which operates in their fiction and the film adaptations. Hunters like Teddy Roosevelt and Fredrick Selous were also widely read, but according to Barlet, none came close to the impact of Stanley and Haggard because 'the Image-Africa of Stanley and Haggard was at once part of Europe's glorious past and the antithesis of Europe's refined present' (1996, 4). Stiebel argues that Haggard's 'image of Africa drew on earlier explorers' accounts' yet his picture of Africa 'struck the reading public with a curious nostalgic yet contemporary clarity…' (2001, 54). There is, therefore, a relatively consistent image of Africa that was established before Haggard wrote his novel, but each author and each film director introduces novelty in repackaging the same image of Africa. Commenting on the derogatory representation of Africans in the film, Phillip Gourevitch remarks that 'this formulaic way of depicting Africans "was all strictly run-on-the-mill Victorian patter" and at best, "wild fantasy"' (as cited in Haggard 2002, xx). Haggard is thus a product as well as a propagator of Victorian values.

As a direct champion and agent of British Colonial rule in South Africa, he is also influenced by the colonial policies of his day as earlier noted of the nexus between these colonial writers and their duty towards empire. The same colonial mythography in *King Solomon's Mines* still informs Bennett's and Morton's understanding of Africa in the 1950 film adaptation.

Genre and narrative

Bennett and Marton's *King Solomon's Mines* is a safari adventure tale, a genre that treats its audience to exciting stories and new hair-raising experiences of exotic locales and cultures. As Amy Staples observes, 'The journey (or safari) frames the overall narrative structure' (2006, 394). The adventure film borrows this narrative trope from the 19th century European novel, and Haggard is a major contributor to the establishment of this genre. Staples notes earlier that 'Many early twentieth-century expeditionary filmmakers were deeply influenced by the popular adventure books of Paul du Chaillu and Rider Haggard' (2006, 393). The films are characterised by encounters with African animals and natives, dangerous crossings like wading through swamps, climbing steep cliffs, and trudging through deserts. There is constant danger from wild animals, 'unfriendly natives' (as Quatermain puts it) and tropical diseases. Staples notes further of this colonialist filmmaking that there is the cinematographic 'preoccupation with panoramic vistas of panning and frequent panning of animals and indigenous people as if revealed for the first time,' and indeed, emphasis on 'first contact' with people, geographical locations, animals, flora and fauna (2006, 394). Kukuanaland is said to be an 'unknown' and unexplored territory; the darkest part of the Dark Continent yet unconquered by a white man. Kukuanaland also represents all that is wild and untamed in Africa because Quatermain says it is inhabited by a tribe so fierce that even neighbouring natives dare not venture there; a kind of challenge that Western presence will conquer and subdue with superior knowledge, courage and guns — the new technology of conquest. The search for lost Henry Curtis, the husband of Mrs Curtis, also fits the film into the safari adventure/Lost world genre, a search for a white man who got lost searching for King Solomon's diamond mines.

Bennett and Marton do not only adapt the story from Haggard's novel; they also adapt the narrative trope and its colonial baggage, and magnify the negatively stereotypical representation of Africa further through new technologies of seeing. As Staples states, 'despite new technologies, exploration narratives from the 19th century were continuously recycled through new forms of mobility and visuality' (2006, 395). In adapting the novel to film, the narrative framework and thematic focus of the novel are sustained. The only notable difference is in the plot strategy of the adaptation which transforms the adventure tale into a romance tale. The narratological framework

allows the novel and film to share the same basic story and narrative style but 'different plot strategies' (Elliott 2003, 150). The safari adventure genre provides the thematic and structural boundaries of the film which in turn uphold the tropes of the adventure novel. In adapting Haggard's novel, the film inherits the 'spirit of Victorian mythology kept alive through explorers' and missionary tales as well as novels that Haggard read as a boy that resurface in the novel, *King Solomon's Mines*. It is recorded that Haggard decided to write the novel as a 'five-shillings bet with one of his brothers' when he bragged that he could write a better adventure novel than Robert Louis Stevenson's 1883 romance adventure novel, *Treasure Island*. He subsequently wrote *King Solomon's Mines* in six weeks to win the bet (Fuller 2002, vii). *Treasure Island* itself was a crucial book in influencing later colonial novels and stimulated Haggard's desire to fulfil an imperial childhood dream, 'an inheritance of patriarchy and empire' (Low 1996, 45). It is important to note that Haggard, Stevenson and Conrad were all fascinated by maps and had dreams of adventure and conquest based on their admiration of the power of empire. Low says *Treasure Island* 'opened the mythic space for Haggard's romances' because it was 'part of the tradition of adventure tales that specialized in the recreation of "romantic boyhood"' (1996, 45). Low's analysis is supported by Haggard's dedication of *King Solomon's Mines*: 'To all the big and little boys who read it' (2002, xxx). Haggard thus filled his blank map of Africa with that masculine imperial vision of expanding the British Empire and conquering newfound lands. Subsequent screen adaptations of Haggard's novel ventriloquise this imperial vision and reinscribe modern visions of empire and hegemony. The role of mapping in *King Solomon's Mines* is discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

Haggard's novel and its film adaptations have multiple layers of intertexts and subtexts. James Neramore argues that the study of adaptation 'needs to be joined with the study of recycling, remaking and every other form of retelling' (2000, 15). Understanding the Victorian influences of Rider Haggard helps to establish the larger activity of 'transtextuality' at work in the novel and the film. *King Solomon's Mines* is primarily an embodiment of the dream and masculinity of imperialist Victorian England. Further evidence of the Victorian influences in the book is provided by Haggard biographer, Morton N. Cohen, who says as a little boy, Haggard heard the story about a burial cave with stalactites from a retired captain in his neighbourhood in England. In the film, this cave becomes the Watussi royal burial site in the belly of the two breasts of Sheba where Quatermain's team finds lots of diamond. Cohen also asserts that Haggard wrote in the tradition of the Victorian adventure story, which was very popular at that time, having been made famous during the Regency era by Sir Walter Scott. He calls it 'the Scott formula' (1960, 89). *King Solomon's Mines,* more than any other novel, established Victorian England's establishment shot of Africa. Critics admit that it isn't the greatest novel in terms of its structure and style,

and indeed Haggard has been 'slammed or neglected by literary critics for not being literary enough' (Haggard 1994, xii). There is, however, something alluring about the novel's content that has kept it a bestseller for 100 years. Lewis is paraphrased as saying, 'In spite of the imperfections in the style, Haggard's rough, simple, impetuous manner still carries the reader with him like a flood' and the force that captivates the reader is in 'the hushing spell, the truth of the thing' (Cohen 1960, 285). Lewis also wonders why 'obstinately, scandalously Rider Haggard continues to be read and re-read', and discovered that it has everything to do with the 'great myth' Haggard developed about Africa, which has become the image of Africa for many of his readers (1984, 128). Writing earlier, William Minter asserted that 'For millions of readers and moviegoers, before the advent of Tarzan, Africa was *King Solomon's Mines*' (1960, 3). Haggard's Africa was the most accurate textual replica of what his readers had been programmed to imagine over several years of colonialist cultural productions about Africa. Haggard's novel, therefore, employs not just the form of the Victorian myth of the Dark Continent or dark worlds out there; it also redefines and reshapes that myth into a more concrete and realistic form for both colonial and neocolonial Western audiences. This is the same for the screen adaptations of Haggard's novel that show varying degrees of fidelity to Haggard's novelistic text because, according to Elliott's analogy, the Victorian mythology of the Dark Continent awaits manifestation in the novel and the film adaptations 'the same way that genetic material awaits manifesting substance in cells and tissues of the body' (2003, 150).

Style and ideology

Some elements of film style including lighting, *mis en scène*, acting and cinematography will be discussed here to illustrate how the filming ideology reinscribes the myth of the Dark Continent in Bennett and Marton's adaptation of Haggard's novel. In Hollywood films, the white heroine is not just a romance jewel but a symbol of all that is beautiful in Western civilisation. The lighting used in the scenes where Mrs Curtis appears, project her beauty, charm and iridescence. This mode of lighting is most accomplished in the scene where the Africans sing about her beauty, calling her 'the lady with the flaming hair'. They say Quatermain is blessed to have such a beautiful woman. Soft lighting causes her hair to glow halo-like. Mrs Curtis wears a white top that contrasts sharply with the dull colours of the African cast. Even when you see her in a high-angle deep-focus shot, she is still easy to spot. All the white characters have costumes that contrast with the standard brown and grey of the Africans. Quatermain and Good wear kaki shirts and pants which give them prominence as well, but Mrs Curtis's white blouse marks her out. To create a contrast, the Africans are given dull lighting. They wear brown clothes and brown animal skins — standard costumes for Africans in classical Hollywood-Africa films.

The only African with a striking costume is Khiva who has a white shirt, and a colourful loin wrapper which marks him out as the servant of Quatermain — his reason for significance. The chief of the village where the boats are mobilised to cross into Kaliwana territory also wears a blue wrapper to signify his higher status, yet his grotesque headgear undermines his attire. The dark colours of their costumes blend with their dark skins to diminish their individuality significantly on the screen.

The *mis en scène* gives Mrs Curtis prominence throughout the film. She is always framed at the centre, and has more close-ups and medium shots than any other character in the film while the Africans are framed as a mass and in the background, diminishing their individuality. The bizarre paintings and tattoos on the African faces also enhance their grotesqueness and create a sharp dichotomy between black and white, causing Mrs Curtis to shine. The most amazing shot of the 'white goddess' is by the river where she lies sunbathing on a rock, displaying her new short-cropped jungle friendly haircut. Her blond hair looks golden because of natural lighting by the sun's rays. An extreme low angle shot of her that fills the entire frame with the blue sky as background emphasises her beauty and dominance over Africa and over Quatermain the 'conquered' white hunter, who in contrast is diminished by the high angle shot as he admires her from below. The cinematic apparatus is used to show the white belle with Africa's exotic topography as a backdrop.

Acting in the movie also consolidates the myth of the Dark Continent. The difference is made starker since the white characters are played by some of Hollywood's best actors, but the African actors are basically non-professionals. This technical disadvantage works well for the negative portrayal of Africans in the movie. There is a big gap in acting between the unprofessional African actors and the seasoned Euro-American professional actors, especially six times Academy award nominee Deborah Kerr who eventually won the 1994 Academy Honorary Award. The African actors are also stuck with subordinate roles which are further restricted by the script's ideological construction and directorial blocking to emphasise the Dark Continent mythology. The white actors are methodical, but the African characters move clumsily and appear reduced to a dark mass. Khiva, the only African character who speaks most in the movie — because he is the white man's servant — is constructed as a clown and does a lot of stupid things. For instance, he takes changing clothes for Mrs Curtis behind the bushes and stands there stupidly as she prepares to undress. She dismisses him with an irritable wave of her hand while muttering, 'Unbearable behaviour!' Photographs, cinema and television are not innocent of ideological bias: 'technologies are embedded in the social sphere and are themselves an ideological expression of culture' (Winston 1996, 39). Ideology influences how technology is used to represent concepts. In this case, the elements of film style are used to bring out the stereotypical dichotomy between Africa

and the West where 'The African "savage" is the inarticulate twin of overcivilised "man"' (Landau 2002, 5). The African characters in the film are also less lively than the characters in Haggard's novel. They are mostly mute, apart from muttering inaudibly, chanting and singing endlessly. Khiva talks only when asked to translate what the Africans are saying about Mrs Curtis's beauty and how lucky Quatermain is to be desired by her. Twala sits like a statue, and speaks only when he confronts Mbopa. Gagool who is described and portrayed as subhuman, mostly shrieks and screams. Nevertheless, the film projects a better image of Gagool compared to the blood thirsty Gagool in the novel whose witch hunt and executions of suspects is quite eerie and way overdone. This rather positive re-composition of the Gagool character minus the horror is part of the structural demands of the visual adventure yarn. If the Gagool in the novel was allowed unrestrained incarnation in the film, it would have transformed the Hollywood jungle romance adventure into a horror film and would need a different kind of audience.[4]

The film's cinematography also emphasises the bravery of the white characters and the cowardice of the African cast. The Africans just flee when confronted with lone or stampeding animals, snakes and perceived witchcraft fetishes, but Quatermain the hero does not tremble. The white hunter's gun is the ultimate solution to all the challenges Africa throws at him. Nwachukwu Ukadike correctly observes that there is an 'imperial philosophy' in the film adaptation which adorns the white male characters with 'intrepid heroic candor' and makes the Africans 'superstitious and backward' (1994, 43). Africa's wildlife is incarnated on the screen, mostly to make Africa appear to be very dangerous territory. Quatermain and his team face constant perils from wild animals, wild natives, insects, swamps and a waterless desert. This is a reorganised plotline from Haggard's novel where the only danger is thirst, King Twala and the deadly trap of the diamond-containing cave. The danger in the film is meant to test the hero and heroine but also heightens the tension and sets the mood for Quatermain and Mrs Curtis whose romance grows as the plot progresses. A point comes in the movie when Mrs Curtis begins to fake even additional danger in order to seduce Quatermain. She counterfeits a nightmare to get Quatermain into her tent and later trips and falls on purpose to be caught in Quatermain's embrace.

Jungle romance

Bennett and Marton dismantle and reconstruct the story and character interrelationships in Haggard's novel in order to produce a new narrative which sustains the 'spirit' of Haggard for a different generation. The film's plot closely follows that of the novel, except Henry Curtis who comes to Africa looking for his brother George Curtis is replaced by Mrs Elizabeth Curtis who arrives from England in search of her husband Henry Curtis. The change from a male to a female

Curtis is not merely a change of characters but also the introduction of the classical Hollywood storyline which keeps the quest narrative but introduces the 'big romance' subplot. The lonely hunter Quatermain (Stephen Granger) and the lonely London socialite Mrs Curtis (Deborah Kerr) are set up from the beginning for a titanic romance encounter that becomes the spine of the entire film. The introduction of a white heroine into the film's romance tale also comes at the expense of 'trumping' the multiracial love affair in Haggard's novel. In the novel, Haggard seems to challenge racism by creating the interracial love relationship between Captain Good and 'the beautiful Foulata', a native girl of supposedly 'considerable refinement of mind'. Yet Haggard acknowledges that there is no room for such star-crossed relationships in Victorian culture and that the relationship is doomed to failure. After she is stabbed by Gagool, the dying Foulata reiterates her inferior status by saying, 'I love him…I am glad to die because I know that he cannot cumber his life with such as me, for the sun cannot mate with the darkness, nor the white with the black' and there is no hope of release after death because 'perchance I should there still be black and he would — still be white' (Haggard 1994, 205). The text thus celebrates the interracial love affair between Foulata and Good while undermining it at the same time by hinting at the hierarchy of races and the white and black, light and darkness dichotomy of colonialism. Foulata might be good for Captain Good on the Dark Continent, but not good enough to go along with Good into 'civilisation'. In replacing the 'black' Foulata who is on the periphery of Haggard's adventure tale with the 'white' Mrs Curtis who is at the centre, the film adaptation 'opposes both text and author' as is often the case in adaptations that employ the 'trumping' model (Elliott 2003, 173). Haggard's liberal experiment in the read text is 'trumped' by an adaptation that attempts to correct his representational flaws and establishes the dominant white 'jungle queen' in the character of Mrs Curtis. The fact that this subtext in the novel is dropped in the adaptation is an ideological choice the screenwriter makes which eliminates the possibility of dialogue on interracial love and marriage in the film. This adaptation choice is a reflection of prevalent attitudes towards interracial marriage in 1950s American/British societies.

Romance as a genre in Hollywood is also a big component of Hollywood action and adventure films. Jungle romance furthermore is a major subtext of classical Dark Continent narratives. There is always a beautiful and delicate white belle who meets a sharpshooting white hunter in a hostile but exotic African setting which motivates the superhero to shine as he marshals all his capabilities to protect and to impress her. In the end, she admires his bravery and a combination of largely challenging factors causes them to fall in love. The white jungle belles are referred to in different ways such as 'jungle women', 'jungle heroines', 'jungle queens' or 'white goddesses', (Manchel 1990, 498). Some of the famous jungle queens are Ava

Gardner in *Mogambo* (1953), Elsa Martinelli in *Hatari* (1862), Edwina Booth 'The White Goddess' in *Trader Horn* (1931), Katharine Hepburn in *The African Queen* (1951) and, of course, Deborah Kerr in *King Solomon's Mines* (1950). These white heroines and their white heroes bring more than just their acting skills to the screen. Like actors in any national cinema, Hollywood actors as screen personas are social symbols that mediate between society and the screen and are themselves cultural texts from which narratives of identity are read and contested (May 2000, 249). The image of a delicate actress Deborah Kerr (Elizabeth Curtis) in the midst of 'darkest' Africa also provides the contrast between light and darkness. She becomes the idealised Hollywood/Euro-American symbol of beauty filmed in the idealised dark interior (unexplored territory) of 'Darkest Africa'. The film retains the English appropriation of Africa as the Dark Continent for empire where the actors and the Hollywood film crew replay the explorers and adventurous game and treasure hunters of the precolonial and colonial era. *Life Magazine* titled the trip the actors and crew made to Africa for the film shoot: "British Grit Overcomes Horrors of Savage Africa", referring to actor Deborah Kerr and her extraordinary endurance as well as the size of the film safari which was the biggest since Theodore Roosevelt's (1909–1910). The article counts a safari party of 183 people: '53 film crew, 130 Africans and "*83 servants*"' (Bull 1996, 118; my emphasis). Deborah Kerr's trip provokes memories of earlier expeditions, showing that the Hollywood safari-film-expedition is just a different side of the same colonial quest and search for King Solomon's Mines, only this time the treasure is Africa's topography, wildlife and exotic 'savages' needed as a background canvas for a multimillion dollar Hollywood adventure film that would rake in enormous profits for decades. This account shows the ventriloquising nexus between Victorian profiling of Africa, its impact on Haggard's novel and its overflow in the film adaptation in new cultural contexts. Colonial Britain speaks through the form of Haggard's novel, while Hollywood empties that form and reuses it to speak the values of American conquest as adventure in the years following World War II.

Mapping and conquest

There are two maps in the film. The first is a big map of Africa on the wall of Quatermain's living room with an area in the middle marked, 'Unexplored territory'. This map establishes the area of the impending safari and places the safari in the trope of exploration adventure with all the associative heroism, dangers and priceless discoveries. The second map is an old map of Portuguese explorer José da Silvestra which is basically a rough sketch showing the road to King Solomon's Mines with minor shadings to show Kukuana 'village'. Both maps show the mindset of its

designers; the first map is designed to help define what they call 'unknown' territory in order to necessitate exploration, conquest and eventually access to the diamond mines through the detailed second map from da Silvestera. Colonial mapping inscribes imaginative geographies of colonial mythography and is a precursor to exploration and conquest. The mapping in the film is more pronounced than in the novel. In fact, the large map of Africa in the film is absent in the novel. A medium shot of Quatermain dominates a diminished map of Africa in the background, and Quatermain and Good place their thumbs on the surface of the map in the manner of conquerors. Evident in the map of da Silvestra is a clear perpetrating of the myth of Africa as 'empty space'.[6] Only the road to the treasure cave is emphasised. This is the way colonial powers mapped Africa, ignoring the inhabitants while emphasising the wealth. Indeed, as Thomas Pakenham noted, 'Europeans pictured most of the continent as 'vacant': legally *res nullus*, a no-man's island' (1991, xxi). Once the illusion of empty space is created by the mapmakers and explorers, the rationale for settling these places is established as is the need to remove the natives or subjugate them. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o asserts that 'mapping was the imperial road to power and domination' (2009a, 7; 2009b, 4). Like the first map, the second map also says nothing about the local inhabitants except for the 'fierce' Kaliwanas who are necessary in the quest narrative as obstacles to be overcome. There is self-reflexivity in the reference to Portuguese explorer José da Silvestra's map. This establishes the nexus between the explorers, colonialist and Hollywood as the new instrument of American hegemonic acquisitiveness in Africa. In his book, *The After War Settlement and Employment of Ex-servicemen* (1916), Haggard invokes the 'myth' of empty space when he says, 'I have recently travelled around the empire. It has been to me like scene after scene drawn up before my eyes — ever new vastness, ever new possibilities, ever new riches waiting to be *seized*' (1916, 48; my emphasis). John Buchan was even more dramatic in imagining his own property in Transvaal, 'There will be wildfowl in my lake, and Lochleven trout in my waters' (1903, 91), while Dr David Livingstone for his part lamented the vast emptiness of central Africa, 'so much of this fair earth…unoccupied, and not put to benevolent purpose for which it was intended by its maker' (1865, 264). These authors did not see the Africans who were farming, hunting and stewarding the land. They saw empty space! They did not see Africans or their culture and way of life, even when they interacted with Africans chiefs, porters and guides. They saw only a vacant expanse and projected only European settlements based on colonial desires. As demonstrated by *King Solomon's Mines*, the novel and film adaptation, colonial mapping is an integral part of the colonising enterprise. The partitioning and possession of Africa was accomplished at the Berlin Conference over a map before the colonial armies ever set foot in Africa.

Cole Harris develops further the relationship between exploration, colonial

mapping and conquest. He says, 'a fuller understanding of colonial powers is achieved by explaining colonialism's basic geographical dispossessions of the colonized' (2004, 165). Although the explorers were not directly engaged in establishing colonialism in Africa, they were sponsored by business interest such as the Royal Geographical Society and others who later developed maps for their own imperial schemes. There may be little connection between the explorations of Livingstone, Speke, Grant and Stanley and the start of colonialism, but their accounts were used to develop colonial maps. As Jeffrey Stone notes, 'The maps themselves were based on instrumental observation which added a scientific dimension to the travellers' records,' and the records in turn became 'an important "civilizing" element in legitimizing the European penetration, presence and even interference in Africa' (1988, 59). The appearance of maps in Haggard's novel and its film adaptation showing vast tracks of land, a road to the treasure cove with minor sketches of human settlements, provides the cartographic apparatus needed to justify the colonisation of Africa. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o makes an important observation that 'Bourgeois memory of Africa removes all traces of human imprints on the land: it becomes untamed, part of what Hegel termed, "unconscious nature"' (2009, 22). The maps are therefore a ventriloquising of the Victorian desires about Africa which only saw Africa's minerals, and perceived exotic sights and sounds which made it a destination for fantastic experiences. Apart from the maps, the safari adventure itself is an ethnographic exercise in the cinematic mapping of Africa. The cameras follow in the footsteps of earlier explorers, bringing details of exotic 'unknown' territories, tribes, dances and animals back home to the film viewers. The crossing into imaginary Kukuanaland and confronting imaginary fierce tribes completes details of the imaginary social-cultural geography of Africa, thus consolidating the myth of the Dark Continent.

The iconography of racist representation

Much has been written about racism and race theories of the Victorian era, including the slave trade and its implications for racial classification (see, among others, Davidson 1968, 1977, 1978; Winant 2000; Depelcin 2005; Carnochan 2006). Howard Winant in particular argues that the idea of race was born with the rise of world political economy and all the evils that came with it:

> Though intimated throughout the world in different ways, racial categorization of human beings was a European invention. It was an outcome of the same world historical processes that created European nation-states and empires, built the dark satanic mills of Britain (and the even the more dark satanic sugar mills of the Brazilian Reconcavo and the Caribbean), and explained it all by means of Enlightenment rationality. (2000, 172)

There is a nexus between European economic advancement and exploitation of the colonies and the rise of racial theories to support the exploitation and dehumanisation of conquered people. In this section, I analyse how these theories incarnate in the film adaptation through racist remarks, coded references to cannibalism, and the disposability of Africans. The racial inferiority of the Negro, which the novel propagates, is not only transfused but even magnified in the film. The elephant-shooting scene in the film adaptation is overtly racist. The film makes a deliberate statement that the African is weak and even lower than some animals. Below is a transcription of the conversation:

Quatermain: There isn't a creature in the forest who is not being hunted by something else except the elephant. They are afraid of him. He is king.
Good: The elephant. Not the lion?
Quatermain: No, no, not in Africa. He is not brave enough or clever enough, Elephant is king.
Good: And man?
Quatermain: He is meek like everything else.

This conversation is not in Haggard's novel, but the film sustains, reconstructs and amplifies the racist tone of the book. Contempt for Africans is blatantly propagated in the movie as the above conversation shows. After the tragic elephant hunting trip where Pole, the native aide to Quatermain is killed by a charging elephant, Eric Masters the District Commissioner rebukes Quatermain for being sentimental: 'Don't tell me your respect for animals has turned into sentiment.' The mention of animals without any reference to the memory of Pole shows that the two elephants Quatermain killed are more valuable and missed than Pole who is not mentioned, or perhaps that the District Commissioner considered Pole as one of the animals.

Cannibalism, a favourite theme of Dark Continent narratives is overtly mentioned in the film. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin acknowledge that 'anthropophagy', the 'eating of human flesh' for various unknown reasons has been a recorded feature of many societies around the world (2000, 30–31), but the word 'cannibal' is a specific political construction of colonial discourse to 'distinguish itself from the subjects of its colonial expansion, while providing moral justification for that expansion' (2000, 29). In colonial discourse, cannibal is the antithesis of the civilised or morally upright European man. The authors assert further that 'From the time of Columbus, "Cannibal" became synonymous with the savage, the primitive, the "other" of Europe'" (2000, 31). Because of the sustained association of Africa with cannibalism in Western literature and film, many Westerners believed that cannibalism existed in Africa and there are those who believe that

cannibalism exists in Africa to this very day (Keim 2009, 105).[5] The film therefore endeavours to reflect this Western belief without any pretensions. During the long bargaining sequence with villagers before they cross the river to Kaliwana territory, Mrs Curtis remarks: 'Do they seem friendly to you? I have the oddest feeling we are going to be cooked in that pot.' Later, Smith the white chief hints that his subjects might have eaten Henry's body: 'I think we have buried him. I can't guarantee that my people didn't…We are very short of meat. We are short of game here.' This overt reference to cannibalism comports with the Western audience's expectation for a thriller set in Africa, an expectation programmed by colonial novels and the account of explorers. Cannibalism is a past and present reality around the world, even in the West. The most widely reported case of cannibalism on record is the gross and bizarre account of cannibal and killer Ivan Fedorovitch Yanukovych, a 56-year-old resident of Houston Texas who allegedly confessed to slaughtering and eating 31 people: '23 pizza delivery men, 6 Jehovah's witnesses and 2 postmen, in the past 7 years' (*World News Daily Report,* June 7, 2019). There are many other recorded accounts of cannibalism in the Western world. Yet, the account of the explorers made cannibalism predominantly African, and the badge of Africa's colonial identity as the Dark Continent for all ages, while the badge of Western identity is light, civilisation and progress, an artificial disparity that was invoked to justify colonial intervention in Africa.

Destruction of black bodies is a popular show in the colonial power theatre both in reality and in fiction. Political and cultural imperialism are supported by the physical dismemberment of black bodies. Ta-Nehisi Coates discovered 'that the larger [American] culture's erasure of black beauty was intimately connected to the destruction of black bodies' (2015a, 44). This led him to conclude that 'In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body — *it is heritage*' (2015a, 103). The myth of the Dark Continent that is perpetuated in Hollywood-Africa films cheapens black bodies and makes them breakable and disposable in life and on screen. This portrayal of disposable black bodies in Haggard's novel — especially during Gagool's witch hunt — compared to the sacrosanct white bodies, incarnates in the Hollywood adaptation with even greater force. Through the ventriloquist adaptation interchange, or what Thomas Leitch calls 'Adjustment' in the form of 'expansion' and 'correction' [of Haggard's fault lines] (2009, 98–99), Bennett and Marton add many scenes to the adaptation plot that didn't exist in the novel, to emphasise the weak, timid and disposable nature of Africans. The acting in these scenes is also ideologically ordered which makes the Africans in the film adaptation appear stupid and therefore solely responsible for their own deaths. Quatermain's guide Pole, who should know the African wildlife better than the foreigner, charges at an elephant head-on with a tiny spear and gets crushed by the beast, thereby dying to

save his master. The scene where Khiva, Quatermain's aide, is 'overpowered' and shot by Smith when he holds the gun awkwardly and literally gives it away emphasises the stupidity and dispensability of Africans. The animal stampede sequence is another ideological construct to emphasise white bravery and African fear and disposability. Although the animals managed to overpower Quatermain's crew and broke through to where they were all taking cover, the white characters survive the animal stampede without a scratch, but a score of Africans are crushed to death.

The racial inferiority theories of the 19th century, especially the hierarchy of races and its offshoot the Hamitic theory are incarnated in 1950 film adaptation. The Hamitic theory is an offshoot of scientific racism propounded by C. R. Seligman who argued in his book, *Races of Africa* (1957) that Africans south of the Sahara had remained in a state of barbarism till European and Arab conquest when civilisation came to the continent (1957, 10). According to this theory, all evidence of material progress in Africa can be attributed to Europeans and Asians. This theory was given impetus by British explorer John Hanning Speke in his book, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1863), especially Chapter 9, "The Theory of Conquest of Inferior by Superior Races". John Hanning Speke preached that the Tutsis of central Africa [read Rwanda] were descended from the biblical Ham, and were therefore Hamites as opposed to the Bantu Hutus and Twas. He argued that all civilisation and culture in central Africa was introduced by these foreigners whom he considered to be a Caucasoid tribe of Ethiopian origin, descended from the biblical King David, and therefore a superior race to the native Negroids (Gourevitch 1988, 51). The Hamitic theory which established for Africans a legacy of stolen identity and inheritance was also propagated by colonial administrators like Emin Pasha and Sir Harry Johnson (Sambu 2011, 17). This theory flourished in England during Haggard's formative years as a thinker and writer and he consolidated it in *King Solomon's Mines*.

The Hamitic theory is recycled in both the novel and the film in the description of Mbopa the exiled contender for the throne and King Twala the usurper. In the novel, Twala is 'an enormous man with the most entirely repulsive countenance we had ever beheld. The man's lips were thick as a Negro's, the nose was flat' (Haggard 2000, 103). Describing Umbopa whom they believed to be of a more noble descent than the Negro, the narrator says, 'I never saw a finer native. Standing about six foot three high he was broad in proportion, and very shapely. In that light, too, his skin looked *scarcely more than dark*' (Haggard 2000, 36; my emphasis). The suggestion made here is that the darker the skin the more savage the native; consequently, the lighter the skin the more noble the native. The biased description covers other physical features as well. According to the narrator, a Negro has a very repulsive countenance with the ugliest physical features. On the racial hierarchy scale, therefore, a Negro is also of a

lower descent than Umbopa who is presumed to be of a different descent. Bennett's film adaptation takes this even further. Mrs Curtis remarking about Mbopa's eyes (The name is written as Umbopa in the novel and Mbopa in the film) says, 'The only time I saw such eyes was in the museum. He is like the ghost of an ancient Egyptian King.' Mbopa is identified with the Egyptian civilisation whose African legacy is still hotly disputed in Western scholarship as earlier discussed in Chapter 1. It is clear from the above illustrations that Haggard was influenced by 19th century British racial mythography and that he in turn puppeteers Bennett and Marton in the film adaptation. The film's colonial nostalgia in this way consolidates the myth it inspired.

The issue of African inferiority is raised by Stiebel who observes that 'The discovery of ancient stone-walled sites and gold mines in Africa posed a problem since these were unknown in comparable European Iron Age sites' (2001, 29). Because this African reality did not rhyme with Victorian imagination of Africa, an alternative theory had to be developed to remove such civilisation from African history. Mudimbe cites other examples of such manipulations: Yoruba art becomes Egyptian, Benin art Portuguese, Zimbabwean architecture Arab technology, Buganda and Hausa statecraft a legacy of white influence (1988, 13). Subsequent film adaptations of Haggard's novel reinforce the assertion that the relics of ancient civilisation in Africa cannot be attributed to the Negro race which Europe was determined to keep on the lowest scale of civilisation in order to justify colonialism. Haggard's works and their consequent adaptations reflect the theory of the hierarchy of races and its negative imaging of Africans who were posited on the lowest scales of material, moral and spiritual advancement based on the darkness of their skin colour. Haggard's analysis of Umbopa also propagates the idea of 'the noble savage' as opposed to the 'ignoble savage', a theory propounded by English liberals that acknowledged a certain degree of nobility in some Africans but was largely rejected by mainstream Victorian society. The stories that run through the historical accounts of precolonial Africa through to Haggard's novel and its 1950 film adaptation have all been doctored to highlight the myth of the Dark Continent. Wendy Katz believes that Haggard's greatest impact was his 'ideological presence' that helped propagate British imperialism, creating for Britain 'an image of the world with the British in control' (1987, 4). But Haggard's impact lives beyond the popular culture and political institutions of his day. He contributed to consolidating Western and especially Euro-American imaginaries of Africa. The myth he propagated lives on in his works and their film adaptations, and in the works of his disciples like Robert E. Howard, Talbot Mundy, Abraham Merritt, Joseph Conrad and his greatest student of all, American author Sir Edgar Rice Burroughs, the creator of *Tarzan*. Some of these authors' works have been adapted into film. Haggard also influenced Stephen Spielberg's *Indiana Jones* series, among many other Hollywood mystery and adventure films.

It's a relay race

Although the colonial novel played a major role in advancing British cultural imperialism, the neocolonial Euro-American film industry has done even more. This has been achieved through the pictorial rendition of iconic texts like *King Solomon's Mines*. Film generally has more power to transform viewers' perceptions because, as is often said, seeing is believing. The 1950 film adaptation of *King Solomon's Mines* enriches the content of the novel and breathes new life into the old colonial themes. The adaptation is what Elliott calls 'a composite of novel and film' (2003, 144), not just film. It upholds the 'spirit' and 'genetic' materials of the progenitor novel text while it compresses, expands and updates the plotline (Leitch 2009, 99–100) in order to transpose old material into a new formal, historical and socio-cultural context. Ideology is central to all this because all aspects of film style are ideologically ordered. Bennett and Compton's *King Solomon' Mines* adaptation is puppeteered to a large extent by Victorian as well as American perceptions of Africa. The film was shot in technicolour, resulting in an incredible full-colour pictorial incarnation. The attractiveness of the new medium and the intense romance subtext of the film re-energises Haggard's 'spirit' on screen, creating something both old and new. This confirms Elliott's assertion that 'Often adaptations engage in mutual projections, mutual hauntings, creating strange ideological combinations' (2003, 148). The film retains the English appropriation of the Dark Continent for the empire while it voices the novel's story with a post-World War II ideology of the adventurous American appropriation of a cinematically opulent Africa; thus, the ventriloquist perspective of the novel and film hears a colonising voice of 19th century England speaking through Haggard's pages; it also hears the aggrandising voice of America speaking through Haggard's story with the narrative style and power of classical Hollywood conflict and resolution where the tough guy takes home the beautiful girl. As Elliott points out, the original text is never fully emptied during the ventriloquist process of cinematic adaptation because films made using the ventriloquist concept of adaptation in most cases 'form uneasy alliances of commingled desire and aversion' (2003, 149). In this case, that alliance engages the myth of the Dark Continent and the thematic strands that solidify that myth to glorify Euro-American colonial and imperialist hegemony. The relationship between the puppeteered film and the novel 'hypotext' can best be illustrated using Elliott's reciprocal looking-glass analogy which sees adaptation as 'an endless series of inversions and reversals rather than a one-sided usurpation' (2003, 212). In the process of 'colonising' the novel, the film also gets entangled with the old Victorian attributes of the novel, yielding new meanings and interpretations. The old genetic strands of Haggard's novel and its Victorian influences merge with new political, cultural, artistic and technological

contexts in repackaging the Dark Continent myth for Hollywood's contemporary audiences.

Notes

1   For an historical overview of the Myth of the Dark Continent and its origins, see (Brantlinger 1988, 173–198; Keim 2009, 40–48).

2   In their book *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin argue that the colonies were perceived primarily as providers of raw materials to the colonial powers. Subsequently, 'It also meant that the relation between the colonizer and the colonized was locked into a rigid hierarchy of difference deeply resistant to fair and equitable exchanges, whether economic, cultural or social' (2000, 46). As a colonial officer, Haggard was directly involved in promoting the interests of the empire at the political, economic and cultural levels. Through his novels and other writings, especially *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887), Haggard became a major contributor to the racist theoretical discourse about Africa for many generations of European writers. To Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, these writings contributed to the colonial ideological construction of the empire which helped to justify colonialism and imperialism while hiding its injustices behind 'a liberal smokescreen' (2000, 47).

3   For more on the Lost World genre, see (Becker 1992). Other authors of this Lost World genre are Rudyard Kipling, *Kipling's Lost World* (1893) and Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Lost World* (1912).

4   Indeed, there is a horror film adaptation of the novel, *The Librarian – Return to King Solomon's Mines* (2006). Horror films attempt to invoke horror, fear and disgust in the viewer.

5   Curtis Keim has a list of recent Western scholars who insist that cannibalism existed and still exists in Africa. They include: Stanley Burham, *America's Bimodal Crisis: Black Intelligence in White Society* (1993); David Levering Lewis, *The Race for Fashoda: European Colonialism and African Resistance in the Scramble for Africa* (1987); and Peter Forbath, *The River Congo* (1977). He, however, points out that 'The recent descriptions of historical African cannibalism rely not on careful field work in Africa but on 19th century European accounts that were deeply prejudiced by Dark Continent myths' (2009, 106).

4

Colonial nostalgia

In this chapter, I examine colonial nostalgia in *Blood Diamond* to show how Hollywood as the cultural arm of US hegemony admires and reconstructs the dominant power structure of colonialism over Africans which in turn reflects on US dominance in the postcolony. In his book *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (1979), Fred Davis says the term nostalgia originally referred to the painful condition of homesickness experienced by Swiss mercenaries fighting away from home. Swiss Physician Johannes Hofer is credited with coining the term nostalgia from the Greek, *Nostos*, 'to return home' and *algia*, 'a painful condition' (Davis 1979, 1). The term was eventually 'demilitarized', 'demedicalized' and even underwent 'depsychologization' to acquire the connotation of sweet, pleasurable longing for the past (1979, 4–5). Davies uses the effective analogy of 'small paradises lost' to describe the longing for the past in comparison to the discontents over the present (1979, 29). Colonial or imperial nostalgia deals with the reconstruction of the imperial experience, especially in the arts, in favourable ways while silencing or deodorising its evils. As Renato Rosaldo observes in his book *Culture and Truth* (1989), of fairly recent imperially nostalgic films like *Heat and Dust* (1983), *A Passage to India* (1984), *Out of Africa* (1985) and *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1980), 'The white colonial societies portrayed in these films appear decorous and orderly, as if constructed in accord with the norms of classic ethnography' (1989, 68). Moreover, as he further notes, this mood of nostalgia in the films 'makes racial domination appear innocent and pure' (68). Nearly all the movies discussed in this book exhibit colonial nostalgia in various ways, especially since nostalgia operates in tandem with the civilising mission of 'the White man's burden' and its mandate to civilise the savage Other. Such films also romanticise poverty as they seek to hold the savage image of the Other in stasis as a permanent reference point for '(the felicitous progress of) civilized identity' (Rosaldo 1989, 70). Unlike classical Hollywood-Africa films that covertly celebrate the colonial experience, neoclassical Hollywood-Africa films tend to be more sophisticated in their construction of white domination by interrogating the weakness and flaws of the white hunter character. New Wave Hollywood-Africa films like *Blood Diamond* are even more intricate in the application of colonial nostalgia. They may present

strong African characters and amoral white characters, yet the films through their point of view, structure and elements of style recreate and consolidate colonial power structures. The term colonial nostalgia as deployed in the analysis of *Blood Diamond* should not be confused with Hollywood nostalgia films of the early 1970s. These were sentimental nostalgia films that sought to recapture the past. Some of the iconic Hollywood films of the 70s that came out of the nostalgia wave include *American Graffiti* (1973), *The Way We Were* (1973), *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (1969) and *The Sting* (1973).

Blood Diamond (2006) is one of the New Wave Hollywood films that tries to move away from the old exotic representations of Africa found in earlier jungle melodramas and adventures; it even critiques Western stereotypes about Africa by exploring the negative impact of American popular culture in Africa. In many ways, this is a serious movie that transcends the parameters of entertainment to make a tremendous political and humanitarian statement. Set against the backdrop of the destructive Sierra Leone Civil War (1991–2002), *Blood Diamond* stars Danny Archer (Leonardo DiCaprio), a white South African mercenary and diamond smuggler born in Rhodesia, and Solomon Vandy (Djimon Hounsou), a Mende fisherman who is forced to work in Colonel Poison's (David Harewood) diamond mine. Archer and Solomon meet in prison where Archer discovers that Solomon Vandy has hidden a rare pink diamond worth millions of pounds. Motivated by the pink diamond, Archer manages to secure Vandy's release from prison and they embark on a journey through dangerous rebel territory to secure the rough diamond, while Vandy hopes to find his son Dia (Kagiso Kuypers) who has been abducted and recruited into rebel ranks. Archer wants the diamond, Solomon wants his son back; meanwhile an American journalist, Maddy Bowen (Jennifer Connelly) who feels a strong humanitarian commitment to Africa, needs evidence to write a story to expose the blood diamond trade. All three need each other to find what they are looking for. Finally, Solomon gets his son, Maddy Bowen gets the story she needs through Archer and publishes it, while Archer gets the diamond; however, he is wounded by a rebel bullet but, before he dies, he gives the diamond to Vandy. With the help of Bowen, Vandy sells the diamond in London for two million pounds, his family is flown to London in a private jet, and he becomes the spokesman for Global Witness at the Kimberley Process.[1] The reception of the film and its negative impact on the world diamond trade attests to its power as a tool for advocacy against trading in illegal diamonds. For instance, the world diamond fraternity, including African countries like Botswana and Sierra Leone had to launch counter campaigns to encourage people to buy their diamonds because most people in the West would not commit to buying a diamond ring deemed to have cost someone in Sierra Leone a hand or an entire arm (*Diamond-Buying-Made-Easier* n.d.). Unfortunately, when the movie

hit the cinemas in 2006 the war in Sierra Leone had been over for four years and the diamond boycott as a result of the movie hurt Africa's diamond industry, including that of Sierra Leone's which badly needed the money for post-war reconstruction. The film also condemns the plunder of Sierra Leone's natural resources by multinational corporations feeding Western consumerism. The film states that in the epilogue that 'The natural resources of a country are the sovereign property of the people. They are not ours to steal or exploit.' The movie to some extent attempts to reshape Western attitudes positively towards Africa.

In his book, *Contemporary Cinema of Africa and the Diaspora* (2014), Anjali Prabhu praises the film for its 'positive' imaging of Africa. He goes as far as placing *Blood Diamond* alongside Abderrahamane Sissako's film *Bamako* (2006) as external and internal models on how to make a film about Africa. Prabhu considers *Blood Diamond* 'a blockbuster film that aspires to be an African film' because it fits within the project of Africanisation in African cinema which he says involves 'freeing up the clichés and stereotypes that burdened Africa and Africans in the cinematic medium because of its legacies of colonial and ethnographic film' (2014, 217). Such a reading of Zwick's film ignores the colonial nostalgia and deep genetic structures that encode its Dark Continent tropology through the film's narrative, style, characterisation, acting and cinematography. Prabhu further observes that environmental shots of Africa in the film construct the beauty of Africa for African viewers that 'provokes nostalgia if one is away or perhaps pride and a remainder to notice the landscape if one is not there' (2014, 220). While this might be true, equally true is the colonial nostalgia invoked in Western audiences who are familiar with the Haggardesque and Tarzanist landscape of Africa often used as primeval backdrops for classical Hollywood adventure films where animals are treated with more respect than the natives. By inducting *Blood Diamond* into the hall of fame of African cinema while ignoring its neocolonial gaze of Africa, Prabhu has bought into the subtlety of New Wave Hollywood films about Africa that creates a few recognisable African characters but denies them agency. Despite Prabhu's valid point about fewer overt clichés and aesthetically appealing environmental shots and in spite of the film's moral force, as a Hollywood production, the film subscribes to the negative colonial mastertext discussed at length in chapters 1 and 2.

Blood Diamond is first and foremost a piece of entertainment, and its first allegiance is to the American audience who socially condition Hollywood productions and provide the money that sustains the movie industry. Siegfried Kracauer's observation nearly three-quarters of a century ago remains true today, that 'Hollywood's fiction films are commercial products designed for mass consumption at home and, if possible, abroad' (1948, 55). The overt implication for Hollywood is that it is forced to train its camera to give its consumers what they

want, invariably compromising objectivity in exchange for entertainment value. There is therefore a constant tension between objectivity and subjectivity; between providing new knowledge and understanding and upholding established cultural myths and perceptions about other people. The ratio of objectivity to subjectivity of Hollywood depiction of people groups also depends on the degree of closeness to American culture or significance to the American people. Kracauer breaks the depictions into two: 'in-groups' of related or common or brotherly cultures and 'out-groups' of those cultures that are considered distant and are not taken seriously (1948, 70). Hollywood portrayals of America itself is not free of stereotypes; there is always a tension between liberal Hollywood and conservative America. Nonetheless, American representation of itself in Hollywood is by and large primarily objective since it forms part of the 'in-group'. The same applies to the British from Hollywood's perspective. Thus, while Hollywood does stereotype the British, it is limited because of the unique and respectable place in the American psyche the British hold. The portrayal of Africans, however, who represent the ultimate extreme 'out-group' from America on the cultural scale (or to use a more familiar term, the 'absolute "Other"') is mainly subjective. Thematic and stylistic strands that inform contemporary films set in Africa and create entertainment value for American and Western audiences in general are made of deep colonial stereotypes that appeal to their domestic taste and sensibilities. *Blood Diamond* as an American production is not really about Africa but about American perceptions of Africa at the particular point and time of the film's production. The historical events portrayed are based to a large extent on reality, but beneath the surface, Africa is still just another backdrop for American adventure stories with American superheroes. This New Wave film still exhibits nostalgia for the old jungle films. These oldies were, as François Pfaff put it, 'films about Africa, made in Africa by non-Africans…basically aimed at a non-African audience and as such, with few-exceptions, condoned Western colonialism' (1986). Africa provides the raw material for *Blood Diamond* , but the Hollywood foundry largely processes the finished product with all the Hollywood genre trademarks.[2] There might seem to be more objectivity and greater knowledge generated, but deep down, Zwick's film only changes form, not its Dark Continent template. As Annie Coombes observes, representations of the African are not cast in stone but keep changing "depending on the political exigencies of any specific historical conjecture," and consequently, 'they tell us more about the nexus of European interests in African affairs and about the colonizer, than they do about Africa and the African over this period' (1994, 3).

The fascination of Western media with Africa's calamities is evident in *Blood Diamond,* and racist clichés abound in the film, although these attitudes are not as overt as in the old colonial films. In fact, in *Blood Diamond* these stereotypes are even contested in characters such as Solomon Vandy and, particularly, Maddy Bowen,

the journalist. The critical edge of the film reflects changing times, but there is still evidence of colonial nostalgia through the representation of Africa as a singular place of mystery, romance and exploitation. This accords with Ruth Mayer's assertion that Hollywood has 'always loved colonialism', although 'the filmic traditions of representing colonialism and Africa have undergone tremendous changes' (2002, 3). While we see African actors in major roles and a certain degree of historical authenticity, we still find the homogeneous map of Africa, the racist clichés, the negative generalisations about Africa based on the experience of one country, the white superhero and saviour, the beautiful and naïve white girl, and the black savage. American historian Curtis Keim postulates that Dark Continent portrayals of Africa in its crudest form collapsed with advances in anthropology and the demise of settler colonialism, and that the increasing casting of Africans in contemporary Hollywood film has greatly reduced the overtly racist statements that the colonial stories carried. But that does not mean Hollywood representation of Africa is now positive or has improved. Instead, he contends, 'Hollywood stereotyping of Africa has become veiled rather than growing less prevalent' (2009, 24–25). Colonial nostalgia is evident in *Blood Diamond* through themes, motifs, clichés, historical invocation, Hollywood trademarks and colonial self-reflexivity.

Where is Sierra Leone?

The film opens with the display of a big homogeneous orange map of Africa with Sierra Leone situated as a tiny dot on the west coast. In his commentary, director Edward Zwick even interchanges Sierra Leone with Africa because there is really no map of Sierra Leone in the film: 'It begins with that little map of Sierra Leone; Africa with Sierra Leone on it. Which was — because when the film began, I don't think any of us really, or certainly many in the audience could say where Sierra Leone was on the map' (Zwick 2005). This is a very honest comment because most Americans have no idea what countries constitute Africa; the term 'Africa' is often used to lump together all the countries on the continent. As Keim observes, 'Africa and its people are simply a marginal part of American consciousness.' Geographical and cultural Africa with all its different climates, cultures, peoples and tongues is not really a serious part of American consciousness, even though 'Africa is, however, very much a part of the American subconscious' (2009, 3). Keim says Americans know very little about Africa in factual terms, yet they have strong mental associations about the continent, and know 'certain general truths' about it. He goes on to say, 'We know for example, that Africans live in tribes. And we know that Africa is a place of famine, disease, poverty, coups, and large wild animals' (2009, 3). When Americans refer to Africa, most times they are referring to a generalised idea of Africa that fits into long-established

stereotypes, the majority of which are negative. Their ideas about Africa are based on myths, such as such as 'Africa is just one large country; Africa is all jungle; Africans share a single culture, language, and religion…' (2009, 3). Keim's research-based analysis shows how American perceptions of Africa reflect their confusion about the continent in that, on the one hand they brand it as diverse (in relation to tribes), while on the other, in their sweeping generalisations, they regard it as homogenous. Anjali Prabhu argues that by using the orange map in the opening sequence, the film does not treat Africa 'as if it were one country' (2014, 219). However, the absence of any borders makes the dot that represents Sierra Leone on the map of Africa a microcosm of the entire continent, and the war, brutality and carnage the film portrays become the reality of the entire continent of Africa. The collapsing of Africa's political, social and cultural distinctions into one amorphous entity is a familiar mode of colonial representation.

It is important to note here that the term 'Africa' itself is often used in colonial discourse to mean sub-Saharan Africa where black people live, minus the significant white, Indian and Arab populations who have deep roots on the continent. In this way, Africa becomes a racially coded reference to the Dark Continent of black people. Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow aver that 'The map of Africa itself carries enchantment. It is never merely a geographical chart' but symbolic space where writers (and now filmmakers) project their 'personal imagery expressing mystery and threat, and their fascination with both' (1970, 135). Opening the film with a map serves a geographical as well as a psychological purpose in situating the film in a certain generic tradition: the adventure tale or Rider Haggard's Lost World genre, with all their associative thematic and stylistic paradigms. As Keim astutely observes about the exploitation of Africa's image, what the movies set in Africa do to Westerners is to 'educate us about what our culture already "knows" about Africa' (2009, 32). Such movies therefore reinforce deeply entrenched stereotypes about Africa. Consequently, although the story in *Blood Diamond* is contemporary, it is told using the same colonial template that the audiences expect to see and to enjoy. This is evident in the dystopian portrayal of Sierra Leone as the 'white man's grave'; a violent, wretched and chaotic geo-political domain which all the characters wish to flee as well as in the racially coded colonial power structure of master-servant represented by Archer and Vandy, and the exaggerated humanitarian crisis and attendant endorsement of 'white salvation' represented by Archer and Bowen.

TIA: This is Africa!

The code TIA (This is Africa) summarises not just the film's representational logic, but also particular Western attitudes towards Africa. The term is used derogatorily by Archer, Maddy Bowen and Colonel Coetzee to underscore the dangers and chaos of

Africa. It is also used by M'ed, the patriotic owner of Paddy's bar, who is either plain cynical about life, or frustrated with events in his country Sierra Leone. This acronym TIA popularised by *Blood Diamond* has become the quintessential summary of Africa's danger, sluggishness, bureaucratic ineptness and lawlessness. The term, interestingly, is now in international usage to explain even flight delays, evidenced by some young Americans I overheard at Chicago O'Hare International Airport in August 2013 sighing, 'TIA' when a delayed domestic flight was announced! Perhaps they meant 'This is America!' Whatever the case, Director Zwick says, 'TIA is a phrase I heard several times in Africa.' It basically means, don't expect anything to work in Africa. Go with the flow. Other related phrases the director heard being used are MMBA — 'Miles and Miles of Bloody Africa which one feels when driving through Africa' — presumably because of the horrible roads (Zwick 2005). The acronym MMBA was used widely by colonial officers in Africa. Donald Wright observes that British colonial officers often referred to vast expanse of Africa's savannah planes using the "Miles and Miles of Bloody Africa" acronym because its vastness compared with the 'the confines of hedgerows and stonewalls in the England they knew' (Wright 2004, 40) seemed to boggle their minds. The term was recycled in *Blood Diamond* and has been further consolidated in neo-Tarzanist safari books like Dan McNickle's *Teaching and Hunting in East Africa* (2007, 140). Interestingly, the Mandinka bards referred to the same vast African savannah fondly as 'bright country' (Wright 2004, 40). It is, therefore, a matter of perspective whether one sees darkness or brightness with reference to Africa. The last acronym Zwick mentions is AWA 'Africa Wins Again'. This term is probably recycled from Kim du Toit's controversial article, "Let Africa Sink" (2002) where he argues that Africa is beyond redemption and should be left to self-destruct. Kim du Toit mentions this acronym and the context of its use thus: 'Among old Africa hands, we have a saying, *usually accompanied by a shrug*: "Africa wins again"' which supposedly accompanies news about senseless murders, mass starvation, coups and accompanying tribal slaughters among others (du Toit 2002). Zwick explains that these phrases were used by 'those old hands who spent a lifetime' working in Africa either for the UN, UNICEF or various NGOs, corroborating du Toit's statement. The three acronyms reflect negative Western stereotypes about Africa in the Dark Continent trope which are recycled in the film. The expression 'old hands' also indicates that these Westerners have lived in Africa long enough for their judgment of Africa to be taken seriously. Their testimony about Africa is thus to be taken as gospel truth. In light of this, it is important to examine the initial TIA conversation in *Blood Diamond* to establish its proper context in reading the film.

Archer: Don't tell me you are here to make a difference.
Bowen: And you are here to make a buck?

Archer: I am here for lack of a better idea…Peace Corps types only stay around long enough to realize they are not helping anyone. Government only wants to stay in power until they have stolen enough to go into exile somewhere else. The rebels, they are not sure they want to take over; otherwise they'd have to govern this mess… But, TIA, right M'Ed?

M'ed: TIA.

Bowen: What's TIA?

Archer: This is Africa, huh?

This conversation creates the impression that Africa is the same everywhere and that all African governments are corrupt and all rebels are blood hounds with no political agenda. Contrary to this analysis, African countries have produced many great, altruistic leaders. Some, like Patrice Lumumba of Zaire, paid very dearly with their lives while others, like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Milton Obote of Uganda, were overthrown with full Western involvement because they were perceived to be on the wrong side of the Cold War. In addition, much as there are brutal rebel movements in Africa, there were (and still are) genuine liberation movements seeking to establish democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These are, however, undermined by the stereotype of bad governments and rebels reinforced by views such as those of the journalist in *Blood Diamond*, Corbauld, when he says, 'Government bad, rebels worse. No one gives a toss anymore. Know what I mean?' As far as he is concerned, there is no hope for Sierra Leone and by implication, for Africa. To Curtis Keim, the abbreviation TIA is used 'to dismiss anything violent or distressing that occurs, implying that in Africa, misery is the only way of life" (2009, 24). In other words, no one cares because Africa is like that anyway; nothing new.

One of the most sustained motifs in the film is the red earth. The image of the red earth is, first and foremost, supposed to represent the uniform soil of Africa. According to Director Zwick, wherever you go in sub-Saharan Africa, you find the red soil. This is another example of blatant stereotyping because African soil is most certainly not uniform, not even within the smallest African country. But the red soil motif has a further function; it is also an image of violence. From his farm in Cape Town, Coetzee (Arnold Vosloo) grabs the red soil and pours it into Archer's hand saying, 'That's red earth. It's in our skin. The Shona[3] say the colour comes from all the blood that has been spilled fighting over the land.' This is a vivid image that works well with the thematic focus of the film, the raging war in Sierra Leone and the business of shedding blood by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, the army and the mercenaries. In fact, during the RUF induction session, the child soldiers chant: 'Shed the blood! Shed the blood! Shed the blood! Shed the blood!' The violence portrayed in *Blood Diamond* is tightly managed and does not reflect the actual horrors of RUF brutality, which is beyond comprehension. The skill of the

filmmakers in narratively and imagistically managing such violence that not even the most gruesome horror movie could replicate should be appreciated. Nonetheless, the fact that the red earth and bloodshed are yoked together and given mythical significance by association covers the entire history and identity of the African continent in blood. This is reinforced by the title of the scene that is captioned: 'Coloured by Blood'. Further reinforcement comes from the film director's admission that the 'red earth–blood' association was really just a concoction: 'Truth be told; I am not sure there is a Shona myth that says this about the blood being spilled over the land. That's a bit of a writerly fancy that I indulged in…I think we made it up!' (Zwick 2005) even though he contradicts himself by claiming that there are Africans who told him such a myth does exist in Shona oral tradition. The creation of this myth by the director is part of the bigger intertext of colonial mythography. Ben Caplan makes an interesting observation in this regard, that 'authors *make-believe* their works of fiction, whereas myth-makers do not make-believe their myths; rather, they genuinely *believe* their myths' (2004, 331–337; my emphasis). Although Zwick may have constructed this myth, it is modelled on a familiar colonial template that is viewed as truth, and the image of violence it creates blots out all traces of peace and stability in Africa's past or present. At the end of the film, a bleeding Archer grabs the red earth as his blood flows out to join the sea of bloodshed colouring Africa's earth red, re-reinforcing the image of a violent continent.

The red earth also develops an image of white appropriation of African land. When Archer talks of wanting to leave Africa, Coetzee smiles and tells him the red earth 'is in our skin.' Then he contemplates before concluding, 'This is home. You will never leave Africa.' The association of the soil to the skin is an element of appropriation through which Coetzee lays claim to African soil in a very telling way. The metaphor is even more significant in the sense that the two characters in the conversation, Danny Archer and Colonel Coetzee, act white southern African roles. Archer is Rhodesian by birth but identifies more with South Africa and does not even recognise the new nation of Zimbabwe. Besides, he speaks with an exaggerated Boer accent. Arnold Vosloo, who plays Colonel Coetzee, is actually a South African national. This is another moment of self-reflexivity in the film because, in spite of their being African, these two are privileged by reason of their colour but even more, as mercenaries, they are projected as agents of neocolonial exploitation on their continent. This conversation is also prophetically significant because both Archer and Coetzee never manage to leave Africa; they both die violently towards the end of the film. Archer dies clutching the red soil of Africa, reinforcing his identification with Africa at his death as opposed to the desire to get the pink diamond as a ticket out of Africa.

Violence is a way of life in Africa

Another violence mythos the film propagates derives from Vandy's account of the stories of war that his father told him. One of these — of how two tribes went to war when somebody stole a woman — serves yet again to reinforce the image of ludicrous violence in Africa. There is no disputing that there is violence on the African continent (on which continent is there not?), nor that the violence during the Sierra Leone was particularly cruel, but in *Blood Diamond* Sierra Leone becomes the whole of Africa, and its bloody civil war becomes a performance of Africa's entire history. Africa is thus portrayed as a self-destructing continent from which everyone is trying to escape. To Maddy's prodding about diamond smuggling, Archer tells her, 'Better watch that type of talk, Miss Bowen. In America its bling-bling but out here it's bling-bang! I wouldn't want you getting into more trouble.' 'Bling-bling', a term associated with the flashy paraphernalia of music rappers, represents American consumerism and vanity, whereas in Africa the term has morphed into 'bling-bang', connoting both wealth and the muzzle flash of a firing gun. The diamond and gun images represent two geographical and cultural imaginaries: America and Africa, respectively. When Maddy asks Archer if he didn't care how many people died because of his deals, he replies, 'People here kill each other as a way of life. Always been like that.' The statement essentialises the assumption that in Africa killing is just an everyday activity, functioning to normalise the RUF rebels' gruesome murders and mutilations. TIA, after all! Later on, Maddy counters another stereotype of Archer's, that dreamy American girls all want storybook weddings. She says, 'not all American girls want a storybook wedding just as not all Africans kill each other as a way of life…' While Maddy sounds more respectful of Africans, her statement still leaves the impression that *some* Africans actually kill as a way of life. In fact, French President François Mitterand underscored this same point when asked about the genocide in Rwanda. He replied: '…in some countries, genocide is not really important' (as cited in Keim 2009, 4).

The film makes Africa look like a hell everyone is trying to escape as a matter of agency. Even governments only stay in power solely to amass wealth so that they can end up in exile somewhere else, Archer tells us. Discussing the impending rebel assault on Freetown, Archer tells M'ed, 'Might be time to get your family out, my friend', to which M'ed sternly replies, 'And go where mahn? Jus' fire up the chopper and fly away like you people? No, mahn, dis my country. We here long 'fore you came and long after you gone.' M'ed's reply shows the film's self-reflexivity in its treatment of Africa as a place for a safari or business adventure, but not really as a place with a people and culture. The scriptwriter creates a patriotic Sierra Leonean who in spite of the political turmoil in his country still considers Sierra Leone home, simultaneously hinting at the mercenary nature of Western interest in Africa for its natural resources.

M'ed is a symbol of hope for the future. Unfortunately, M'ed is killed during the rebel assault on Freetown, underscoring Archer's warning that M'ed should have got himself and his family out. As a symbol of hope in the film, M'ed's life is snuffed out and, with it, the notion of African agency. Archer is only in Africa for as long as it takes to get Solomon's pink rough diamond. He tells Maddy, 'After I have given them the stone, I leave this continent *forever*' (my emphasis). When Maddy accuses him of wanting to steal the pink diamond, he shoots back, 'That diamond is my ticket *out* of this Godforsaken continent' (my emphasis). The narrative makes clear that he is in Africa as a treasure hunter and as soon as he gets the spoils of Africa, he will take flight from this self-destructing continent; he is certainly not leaving without the stone just as Bowen will not leave without her story: 'Your story is Van de Kaap. That stone is mine. I am not leaving here without it.' Archer saw his mother raped and his father decapitated by black freedom fighters. Later, in retaliation, he did many dirty jobs on black people for the security forces. In a rare moment of remorse, Archer remarks to Bowen: 'Sometimes I wonder; will God ever forgive us for what we have done to each other?' This statement is undermined by what he says next: 'Then I look around and I realize, *God left this place a long time ago*' (my emphasis). In the absence of a moral arbiter, therefore, the law of the jungle prevails. Guilt and forgiveness hardly matter on this 'Godforsaken' continent.

Even the rebel Commander, Captain Poison, considers Africa hell. He justifies his brutality by saying he is a product of hell. Perhaps he would have been an angel had he lived elsewhere, he reflects: 'You think I am a devil, but only because I have lived in hell. I want to get out. You will help me.' Africa is the hell that transforms normal human beings into murderers. Poison is reminiscent of Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), a product of Western civilisation who by reason of living in Africa becomes a murderer and the incarnation of evil. He wants to get out, but he too will not leave before getting the pink diamond. Commenting on Commander Poison, Director Zwick says, 'I love the idea that he too is a prisoner. His desire to get out is not unlike Leo's [Archer's] desire to get out.' This response unveils pointed contradictions in the narrative of this film. In the first place, British actor David Harewood who plays Poison is not Sierra Leonean and cannot therefore fully represent the Sierra Leonean point of view. In any case, if Poison is a prisoner, whose prisoner? Of his conscience perhaps? Why should he rain such havoc on his own countrymen just to raise money to get out? Poison is more likely a prisoner of greed and megalomania — he is trapped by his own desire for power and could only leave if he had immense wealth (the diamond?) which would give him 'power' in another country. This raises another central question: What makes Africa hell in the film? If the Danny Archers and Captain Poisons are not the creators but products of Africa's hell, then there must be something inherently wrong with Africa as a

continent — something in Africa's DNA! But there is nothing wrong with Africa's physical geography or cultural diversity or with Africans themselves. This is echoed in Solomon Vandy challenge of the hypothesis that 'there is something wrong with us inside our black skin' and the view that 'we were better off when the white man ruled'. Instead, he muses, 'But my son is good. And when he grows up and peace comes, this place will be like paradise.' Although Vandy, the fisherman, has little education, he is the voice of reason, albeit rather muted. In this context, the overwhelming tone of the film naturally is that Africans cannot handle their own affairs and would be better off under the former colonial masters — familiar colonial propaganda that Africans need help and cannot take care of their own destiny without the West. Solomon's reflection shows the complexity of Africa's postcolonial predicament which is very quickly dismissed with the cynical TIA! The educated elite who run the country, themselves products of colonial education, are part of the old colonial enterprise and are active agents of neocolonialism. The Poisons of Sierra Leone have the same mindset as the Archers and are collaborators in the looting of their own country. These are the people who started the war and triggered a massive exodus of refugees into Guinea and Liberia. They are the ones responsible for recruiting the Dia Vandys and transforming them into killing machines for the sole purpose of building their power base, looting the country, and fattening their foreign bank accounts. Analysis of the historical context of the Sierra Leone Civil War of 1991–2002 and the key players comes up later in this chapter.

If Africa is the land of 'the biggest pink diamond' ever seen, it is also a continent of extreme danger. In fact, the shootout between Archer and Coetzee summarises not just the logic of greed and murder, but also of Africa as hell. After Colonel Coetzee is shot and seriously wounded by Danny Archer, he says, 'TIA, huh, Danny?' Archer replies, 'TIA!' Then they duel and the Colonel is killed. Archer wins the duel but is shot and later dies of bleeding. Africa ends up devouring its devourers including Danny Archer, Colonel Coetzee and Captain Poison. Africa is a death-trap; a realm of lawlessness where might makes right and those who live by the gun die by the gun. Africa is fraught with danger on a daily basis just like in the old colonial films where warrior tribes and cannibals, poisonous snakes, arid deserts, lions and leopards presented grave danger. Only this time, it is a continent filled with trigger-happy rogue soldiers, indescribably brutal rebels and heartless mercenaries. The image of Africa as a death-trap invokes memories of dystopian colonial literary discourse about Sierra Leone. As Richard Phillips observes:

> A number of British authors produced dystopian accounts of West and central Africa. They were particularly harsh on Sierra Leone, which was routinely labeled 'the white man's grave', and became a quintessentially dystopian reference point in British geographical imaginations. (2002, 191)

Some of the British authors he refers to include Chamier (1832); Burton (1833, 1863); Holman (1840); Melville (1849); Banbury (1889); Falcon-Bridge (1903[1794]); Ingham (1894); Kingsley (1897); Greene (1936, 1948); and Green (1954). Citing Derek Gregory, Phillips notes, 'travel writers tend to read others' books, to see the places they visit through them, and in some respects to reproduce the ideas and assumptions' (Phillips 2002, 192). The 'white man's grave' image developed from the high death rate of whites suffering from malaria and yellow fever in early 1900s Freetown; yet, as Phillips noted, 'The image is deceptive though, with respect to gender and race, for the settlement was also the grave of white women, and many black men and women' (2002, 194). Not only is this image racist and sexist, it has also been sustained past the end of that malaria menace into the post-colonial era to consolidate the image of Africa as dangerous, treacherous, and intrinsically evil — an image of Africa that continues to be recycled in Western cultural productions. Explorer Sir Richard F. Burton, one of the greatest perpetuators of the Dark Continent image of Africa, surprisingly challenged the dystopian iconography of Sierra Leone by colonial writers when he said, 'In this section of the nineteenth century it is the custom to admit that the climate [of Sierra Leone] is bad and dangerous; but that it has often been made the scape-goat of European recklessness and that much of the sickness and death might be avoided' (Burton, 1883, 345). A colonial officer, Captain Chamier, summarised this attitude when he said, 'I never knew, nor ever heard mention of so villainous, sickly, and miserable an abode, as Sierra Leone' (as cited in Phillips 2002, 192). *Blood Diamond* follows a familiar highway of imperialist representation and fantasy projection. The dystopian Sierra Leone of generic colonial fiction and travelogues is still the same Sierra Leone under the cinematic imperialist gaze in the year 2005.

Helpless Africans

The Africans in *Blood Diamond* are helpless victims of violence. They are so helpless that even God cannot help them because in the film God, Himself has departed. In his comparison of *Tears of the Sun*, *Lord of War* and *Blood Diamond*, Curtis Keim considers *Blood Diamond* the most offensive of the three films and claims that it damages 'the image of both the continent and of the individual African' (2009, 24). Indeed, Keim asserts that 'In *Blood Diamond*, the whites are always the ones scheming, plotting, dealing, and above all, thinking' while the Africans do the running for cover without protesting against injustices (2009, 24). Given the historical fact of the critical role the South African mercenary company Executive Outcomes — comprising white mercenaries — actively played in the Sierra Leone war, this is, to some extent, to be expected. But the manner in which the film depicts Africans as devoid of authentic

agency is reinforced in the character of Solomon Vandy, who, to Keim, is motivated only by a desire to find his son but has no ability to do so, nor the capacity to fight back. Keim's views notwithstanding, and the film's overall portrayal of Africans as victims, Vandy should be given some credit since, despite his lack of education and exposure to the wider world, he is committed to finding his family and employs cunning ways to force Archer to go through rebel territory to search for and find his son, Dia; but he is certainly not one of the key strategists in the film. The film makes sure of this through the visually dominant presence of whites in the film, part of the white visual iconic that Hollywood perpetuates.

To underscore the helplessness of the Africans in both the film and the current global order generally, Archer tells Solomon Vandy he is in a position to help Vandy find his son because of his white connections: 'I know people, huh? White people. Without me, you're *just another black man* in Africa, all right?' (my emphasis). The notion that the black man is doubly doomed, first by reason of the colour of his skin and second by virtue of being marooned in Africa, is a familiar colonial stereotype that is highlighted here. It also entrenches the artificial inferiority-superiority relationship between the black and white race — a favourite theme of the old colonial films. Archer's racially charged statement can be read as both a perpetuation and a critique of this stereotype. The only problem with the white connection in the movie is its price. The real price of this connection is a bargain aimed at getting the buried pink diamond. The white man's help in this case is not really help as a humanitarian gesture but has strings attached. It is help in exchange for the pink diamond. Indeed, the prospect of finding the diamond gets Vandy out of jail, puts him on a helicopter in a search for his family across the border, and later, after the diamond is found, puts his family on a chartered Gulf Stream jet; but I'll return to the Gulf Stream later!

The exploitation of Vandy's misery is seen when Archer pleads with Bowen: 'Look at that man. His entire village was burnt down. His wife and children, they got away…All I am asking is this, that you help him, huh?' When Bowen sees through his pretensions and accuses him of using Vandy, his reply is cynically overt: 'I am using him, and you are using me, and this is how it works, isn't it?' Nobody helps anybody in the film; relationships constitute a network of leeches reinforced in the earlier dialogue between Archer, Bowen and M'ed when Archer was cynically describing 'Peace Corps types'. Certainly, not all Peace Corps Volunteers fit Archer's stereotype, but he has a point. Although Archer claims that he and Vandy are partners, there is no evidence of this apart from the desperation they share: Archer for the diamond and Vandy for his family. In fact, Archer finds Vandy's search for his son a nuisance and a hindrance in his quest for the diamond and could have cared less if Vandy and his family were never reunited. Vandy feels likewise about Archer's obsession with the diamond and his compete lack of consideration for Vandy's deep feelings for his

family. With Archer's mercenary instincts and unpredictability, there is no telling how the relationship between the two men would have ended had Archer not been stopped by a bullet.

Keim (2009) challenges his American audience to rethink their paradigms about helping Africa because all the forms of help — authoritarian, economic, conversion, gift-giving, participatory and military — have achieved very little in changing Africa. Moreover, much of this help is not really about Africa or Africans but about the helpers. Keim traces the origins of the idea of helping Africa right back to the concept of the 'White man's burden' through to protecting Africa from Communism during the Cold War to the recent IMF and World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programmes in Africa which failed miserably.[4] In fact, most multilateral assistance from the West has done more damage to Africa than good because it was never about helping Africa in the first place due to the many strings attached. In spite of all the genuinely caring people in the West who sincerely want to make a difference in Africa, Western help in the broadest terms is first and foremost about the political, economic and cultural interests of the givers. There is sizable literature on the paradoxes of Western humanitarianism in Africa. Keim earlier cited, concludes his discussion on Western humanitarian aid by saying, 'individuals, groups, or societies who exploit others cannot claim to be developed no matter how developed they feel or appear to be. The development of one must sustain the development of the others' (Keim 2009, 100). Hammond explores the scenario in which the West posits itself as potential saviour even when it is responsible for the crisis (2007, 59–61), as well as the relationship between 'the politics of humanitarian intervention' and eventual 'trivialization of politics and the news agenda' and — in Africa's case — zooming out the real issues to a backdrop canvas for celebrity 'spin and image management' (2009, 107–122). Others, like Giles Mohan and Tunde Zack-Williams see Western philanthropy in Africa as a disguised form of cultural imperialism which is aimed at the 'social engineering' of a continent, its institutions and peoples (2005, 213). The nexus between humanitarianism and contemporary celebrity colonialism has been discussed by several scholars. For example, Duvall examines the 'Christian salvation rhetoric in celebrity Colonialism' especially, the framing of Western saviours of Africa such as Bono and 'sacrificial women' such as Jolie (2009, 91–106). In his rhetorical article, "Can the West save Africa?" William Easterly (2009), considered the world's foremost macroeconomist, evaluates the impact of the 'big, big push forward' to save Africa inaugurated by then British Prime Minister Tony Blair at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2005, followed up by his predecessor Gordon Brown, endorsed with increased AID by leaders of the G8 member countries and embraced by many celebrities like Bob Geldof, Madonna, Bono, Bill Gates and even Queen Rania of Jordan. The characteristics of these interventions were top-

down planning and gross exaggerations of Africa's economic challenges. Discussing the major indices used by these agencies to highlight Africa's desperation, Easterly argues that 'there are plenty of non-African countries sharing the bottom ranks for democracy, corruption and war, highlighting again the need for balanced rather than stereotypical view of Africa' (2009, 382). He says, 'the reality of Africa contradicts the *extremely* negative stereotypes' (Easterly 2009, 382; my emphasis).

It is important to examine further journalist Maddy Bowen and her confessed humanitarian and liberated postures to demonstrate the gap between her humanitarian theory and practice, and to show how she actually is an incarnation of European explorers and journalists like Speke, Stanley, Baker and Grant. Her role as a journalist is very symbolic since she wields the pen and the camera that project the written and visual stereotypes of Africa. Maddy Bowen critiques the exploitation of Africa's misery through Western infomercials that ask viewers to give towards helping desperate Africans when she says, 'it's like one of those infomercials, you know the little black babies with swollen bellies and flies in their eyes.' Yet she trades in the same images: 'So here I have got black dead mothers, severed limbs, but it's nothing new.' She changes the tone of her voice as if searching for new approaches towards helping Africa: 'It might be enough to make people cry if they read it, maybe even write a cheque, but it's not gonna be enough to stop it. I am sick and tired of writing about victims…' Bowen's stand is noble and self-reflective of the dilemma of Western help, and yet her self-proclaimed crusade against the misery seems to be a modern version of the 'White [wo]man's burden'. Bowen's solution can never fix Africa's predicament. Africans themselves must rise up and take the lead in solving their problems. Compared to classical Hollywood jungle queens, Bowen takes a more progressive approach to the representation of Africa, but as a *Vital Affairs* journalist who is determined to be the first to get the story out at all costs, she too — unfortunately — is part of the same league of parasites feeding on Africa's wounds. The power of the Western press in mobilising intervention and assistance is real, and should be appreciated; yet, at the same time, it can be used to consolidate negative stereotypes about Africa. That is why she had earlier asked Archer the rhetorical question about Vandy's story that she was writing: 'Do you think I am exploiting his grief?' Later, she sees the sea of human beings fleeing the war to Tassin Camp Forecariah in Guinea and remarks: 'This is what a million people look like. At the moment, the second largest refugee camp in Africa.' The figure of one million is a gross exaggeration that is meant to consolidate the desperate image of Africa. It is important to provide data here to show the extent of the exaggeration. First of all, there were never a million Sierra Leone refugees in any camp in Guinea. UNHCR records show that a total of 490 000 Sierra Leoneans fled to Guinea and Liberia during the 11-year civil war, from 1991–2002 (Millimouno 2008), and a total of

600 000 in the entire sub-region (Sokpoh and Levy-Simancas 2003), comprising Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Bowen again grossly exaggerates the situation in Sierra Leone when she says: 'An entire country made homeless', as UNHCR records show that of the Sierra Leone population of six million at the start of the civil war, a total of two million were displaced. This thirty-three percent includes those who were internally displaced (IDPs); hardly the whole country's population (Millimouno 2008). In spite of the concern in Bowen's tone, she overstates the figure for dramatic effect which in turn consolidates the same kind of disaster image she is 'sick and tired of writing about'. No wonder real-life journalist Jane Stillwater, a type of Maddy Bowen, cites *Blood Diamonds*, *Lord of War* and *The Poisonwood Bible* in her moralising attack on colonialism. She quotes a friend who says, 'The whole freaking CONTINENT of Africa is one giant refugee camp and has been for the last 500 years, as far as I can tell' (Stillwater 2007). Her citing of *Blood Diamond* and other films shows how Zwick's moving picture feeds into the refugee stereotype of helpless Africa and how fictional Maddy Bowen is modelled on the Jane Stillwaters of neocolonial US hegemony. The statement Stillwaters quotes, although uttered as a critique of capitalist exploitation, actually reproduces the same stereotype of Africa by giving the impression that Africa is one big refugee camp. The helpless refugees' stereotype is tied to the fatalistic image of Vandy. This is underscored by Vandy's question to Bowen who was scribbling in her notebook: 'You are writing about what is happening here? […] So when people in your country read it, they will come help us, yes?' Maddy replies, 'Probably not.' This conversation is self-reflective of both African attitudes towards foreign interventions and the West's wariness about intervention in Africa. The African-victims-complex seen in this conversation is itself a product of colonial programming, while Bowen's answer is thankfully a sharp critique of both America and of Africa, since Western intervention in most cases is not based on humanitarian concerns but hidden economic interests.

The irony of Maddy Bowen's journalism and her humanitarian initiative is that the West is the biggest source of the arms and ammunition behind conflict in Africa. This raises serious moral questions about Western humanitarian initiatives. The clandestine activities of Executive Outcomes and affiliated Western mercenary agencies is a good example of this irony. Dambisa Moyo, in her book, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not Working and How there is a Better Way* (2009), articulates that to a large extent Western aid is responsible for fuelling a military culture and civil wars in Africa through fomenting corruption, killing economic growth by reducing savings and investments, increasing inflation, choking the export sector, weakening social capital and creating aid-dependency (2009, 59–68). Kwame Nkrumah also considered 'multilateral aid' through the World Bank (which gets the bulk of its money from the United States) as one of the traps of neocolonialism because of the various strings attached to aid,

such as forcing the borrower to surrender information about its economy, accepting supervision from the West where the country is lectured on how to use the money, agreeing to various commercial treaties and economic cooperation, granting the lender 'the right to meddle in internal finances, including currency and foreign exchange'; protecting the interest of the lender and its investments in the country, providing access to the country's raw materials, among others (Nkrumah 1965).

It is necessary to comment further that the irony of Maddy Bowen's journalistic observation is also an indictment of the violence and aberrations perpetrated by the West against Africa since the Transatlantic Slave Trade between the 15th and 19th centuries, followed by imperialism and colonialism. Western authors like Oliver Ransford, using familiar eugenicist theories of inherent African violence and 'the myth of African savagery' as well as the Western notion that 'Africans sold Africans' have placed the blame for the Transatlantic Slave Trade on Africans. While slavery existed before the Transatlantic Slave Trade, it was Europe that created what Babacar M'Baye calls 'a Darwinian universe in which the African turned into a wolf preying on other Africans' (2006, 614). It was this phenomenon that gave birth to the myth of the Dark Continent as discussed in Chapter 2. Europe's expanding demand for slave labour led to a culture of violence, inter-tribal wars, banditry and anarchy that had terrible consequences for the continent. These include depopulation and a brain drain, political disintegration, collapse of entire societies, economic stagnation, and loss of industry, skills and development opportunities:

> …the present political and social problems that confront Africa have nothing to do with any biological, psychological, behavioral, or spiritual characteristics or values of Africans. The roots of the predicament facing Africa are in the structural, economic, and political disruptions that the continent inherited from the European slavers and colonizers. (M'Baye 2006, 617–618)

There is a wilful amnesia in the West that places the entire blame for Africa's underdevelopment on Africans, censuring them too for the destructive Transatlantic Slave Trade through the dismissive notion that 'Africans sold Africans', instead of showing how the 500 years of destruction of Africa initiated by the shipping of millions of Africans to the sugar and cotton fields of Europe and America makes the West obviously culpable.

Diamonds are the problem

Reducing the military conflicts in Africa to the fight for minerals undermines wider historical, economic and sociocultural contexts of the conflicts between government and rebel forces — a context that starts with colonialism and its residual legacies in Africa. The film's opening intertitle reads: 'Sierra Leone 1999. Civil war rages

for control of the diamond fields. Thousands have died and millions have become refugees. None of whom has ever seen a diamond.' Then we are plunged right into RUF atrocities. This is a rather shallow way of looking at the Sierra Leone Civil War. It creates the impression that the civil war was just about diamonds with absolutely no long-term historical, economic and regional nexus which I examine in detail in the paragraphs ahead. The film extends this narrow focus a few scenes later at the G8 conference on diamonds in Antwerp where the speaker who introduces Solomon Vandy says, 'Throughout the history of Africa, whenever a substance of value is found the locals die in great numbers and in misery. Now, this was true of ivory, rubber, gold and oil, and is now true of diamonds.' Much as the statement is historically accurate, it is not complete without placing it in the context of colonial and neocolonial political economies that shaped Sierra Leone's fragile birth as a nation. To say people just die in great numbers because of the discovery of natural resources is to make a serious detour from the essence of capitalist economic exploitation. Norwegian scholars Lujala, Gleditsch and Gilmore contribute towards consolidating the myth of the curse of diamonds in Africa by saying although diamonds may not necessarily start civil wars, they sustain them, especially where there is 'ethnic fractionalization' (2005, 559). This agglomerates the myth of Africans as violent people, ignoring the fact that colonial powers played tribes against each other through the divide-and-rule technique such as pitting the Asante and the Fante in West Africa and the Baganda and Banyoro in Uganda against each other. They also created artificial nations with arbitrary national boundaries that did not regard sociolinguistic geographies, leading to more conflicts as unrelated people groups were forced to live together even as some tribes were split into two along the artificial national boundaries. The authors also note that 'more than half of the countries with diamond deposits and production are located in Africa' and that, interestingly, the continent is 'overrepresented when it comes to conflict' (2005, 558). This familiar trope of African natural resources being responsible for all woes on the continent validates the notion of Africa's resource curse. When confronted with the case of Botswana which produces diamonds but is one of the most politically and economically stable countries in spite of its 'ethnic factor', the authors argue that 'Sierra Leone's diamonds are secondary while Botswana has primary deposits.' Primary diamonds are concentrated in one place while secondary (alluvial) diamonds are scattered over a long stretch of land. Some scholars have argued that the difference between mineral rich but stable Botswana compared to mineral rich but unstable Sierra Leone is in Botswana's strong 'institutional capacity' unlike Sierra Leone's (Collier et al. 2003, 127), but Lujala, Gleiditsch and Gilmore call that comparison 'oversimplified' (2005, 559). To them, Sierra Leone's diamonds are more 'lootable', that's all. This therefore means if Botswana had secondary diamonds, the country would go to the dogs the way of Sierra Leone, especially

given the fact that they are just as equally fractionalised. The authors' argument is a fraudulent scholarly attempt to consolidate the Dark Continent image of Africa by harping on about a thesis that emerges from the colonial library of knowledge about Africa. The authors labour hard to confirm a series of hypotheses which they earlier called an 'African effect' in the diamonds–civil war nexus! This 'effect' is nothing but a dystopian colonial discourse that will dismiss any sign of stability and progress in Africa because the problem with Africa in Western scholarship and cultural productions is the fact of its being Africa. It is the 'African effect' that is the problem! In other words, it is not really the curse of diamond but the curse of Africa. Such analysis sees African conflicts through the Dark Continent lens just like Hollywood and related Euro-American cultural productions.

Sierra Leonean history is tragic and complex, and would overwhelm the narrative of any film were it all to be included. Besides, film as entertainment does not really care about the actual history and resolution to political conflict. But it is significant to note that actual history is trumped in *Blood Diamond* to consolidate the ideology and attitude of TIA through thematic focus, characterisation and film style, as I will illustrate. It is important to delve a little into Sierra Leone's history in order to show the root causes of the civil war captured in *Blood Diamond*. This historical backdrop illuminates the shallow way the film treats the conflict and the misrepresentations that arise and, above all, how these misrepresentations are deliberately orchestrated through the cinematic apparatus to consolidate a particularly negative way of seeing Africa that has been a selling narrative for Hollywood films from the outset. While a film cannot possibly include all historical material, what is omitted or ignored by the narrative clarifies the ideological stance of the story. Hollywood always tells its stories in dramatic terms, usually with two individual forces in conflict, perhaps with a romance subtext. Except for a few cases, like earlier Russian films or the works of Ousmane Sembene in Africa, the overt stance of a film is hardly ever political. Reading ideologically means asking what values the individual characters represent or stand for and what values the story ignores. The discarded events of Sierra Leone's history characterise Hollywood's simplistic choices for including only negative material and reveals its continuing projection of a particular view of Africa.

It is impossible to dismiss the role of institutional weakness in Sierra Leone's Civil War. In fact, the immediate cause of the civil war was the 'corruption and mismanagement in the diamond sector' which so impoverished the country that it became 'the poorest country in the world' on the UN scale (Doyle 2000). State structures broke down and widespread suppression of political dissent eventually created the perfect environment for arms, ammunition and diamond trafficking. Regional politics further complicated this environment. Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) who overthrew the government of

President Samuel Doe, began destabilising neighbouring Sierra Leone by sponsoring the Revolutionary United Front RUF rebels, partly because Sierra Leone was the base for the West African peacekeeping force, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) whose military wing, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) had intervened in Liberia. ECOMOG troops were from Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra, with Nigeria forming the bulk of its army and leading the force. Nigeria had earlier tried to hinder Taylor's bid to become president in Liberia. Taylor even brokered a deal between the RUF and Burkina Faso's government for Burkinabean mercenaries. The payment would be in Sierra Leonean diamonds (Doyle 2000). RUF initially was a serious rebel group with intellectuals such as Abu Kanu and Rashid Mansaray in its ranks. There were also many student activists as well as disgruntled university lecturers who had been sacked by the corrupt, repressive and totalitarian one-party regime of Siaka Stevens after the protests of the 1980s. They went into exile in Ghana and ended up in Libya for military training. There were also ethnic conflicts within Sierra Leone. Siaka Stevens was succeeded by his anointed successor Joseph Momoh, ensuring that the northern dominance of power continued unchecked. This led to widespread discontent over northern monopoly of power and privileges in Sierra Leone. 'Under Momoh, APC rule was increasingly marked by abuses of power,' (IBP 2011, 24), another recipe for civil war. At this point, Corporal Fodey Sankoh (Mosquito) and a group of followers launched the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to challenge Momoh's government.

Eghosa Osaghae asserts that Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's political ambition, which 'was perceived as a grand design…to destabilise the sub-region and install puppet regimes in the different countries' (1998, 268) was also a decisive factor in escalating the war. Gaddafi, according to Osaghae, made his first move by financing Charles Taylor's rebel war which used Burkina Faso as a launching pad. To Osaghae, this 'was to be only the first stage of a well-planned process' (1998, 268). Gaddafi's proxy war spread rapidly into Sierra Leone and ended up sucking in all of Liberia's neighbours: Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Nigeria had to intervene on behalf of Sierra Leone with support from Ghana, among other countries, in a war that had become sub-continental (1998, 268). To say that the Sierra Leone Civil War was just about diamonds is thus a gross oversimplification of the conflict. The essentialist approach the film takes in tackling the problem of blood diamonds denies the audience historical information that would help them contextualise the film. Moreover, the shallow analysis only works to consolidate the image of Africa as violent in the Dark Continent narrative order.

A glance at Sierra Leone's history, like the history of most African states, reveals malformation from the birth of the nation, severe rejection by Britain, its colonial

parent, and political ill-health born of neocolonial interferences and strategic multinational exploitation. It is a history of conflict. Sierra Leone was the first source of slaves taken to America in 1652. After the abolition of slavery, in 1787, the first freed slaves were settled in Sierra Leone and in 1792 it became a British colony. Rebellion by the Krio minority (freed slaves who had British cultural influences) against British rule and domination started immediately. Added to this, since its independence in 1961, Sierra Leone has undergone six military coups, endured the authoritarian rule of Siaka Stevens (1967–1985) who changed the constitution and declared a one-party state and between 1985–1992 experienced extremes of oppression and corruption under Steven's anointed successor, General Joseph Saidu Momoh. Thus, the civil war in Sierra Leone was the product of a long history of leadership failure that eventually festered into open warfare in 1991. The internal weaknesses were exploited by external forces such as Charles Taylor and Muammar Gaddafi and, later, the South African mercenaries, Executive Outcomes. These external forces sacrificed the people and wealth of Sierra Leone for their own selfish ambition. Diamonds became the fuel for the war, but they were never its sole reason.

Blood Diamond uses plenty of screen time to show the senseless slaughter of people and the exploitation of Sierra Leone's diamonds by the RUF and the mercenaries, but it does not show the complexity of international involvement in restoring peace. For instance, in the film, the warring factions are split into two: government forces and the mercenaries united against the RUF fighters. The film director says he decided to reduce the military players to avoid confusion, but by removing the other international forces, the conflict is over-simplified. It becomes merely horrific rebel and army killings and sensational mercenary adventures. In the first place, the South African mercenary group Executive Outcomes drove back RUF fighters in 1995, not in 1999 as the film portrays. Executive Outcomes had their contract cancelled due to pressure from African countries and the International community. It was also international pressure that forced junta leader, Valentine Esegragbo Strasser, to hand over power to civilians leading to the election of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in 1996. A year later, a one Johnny Paul Koroma of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) overthrew Kabbah and invited the RUF to join his government. They were pushed out in 1998 by the Nigerian led ECOMOG troops. As captured in the film, RUF rebels did try one more time to capture power and managed to reach the outskirts of Freetown, unleashing untold carnage and brutality, but they were repelled by ECOMOG forces, not Executive Outcomes as portrayed in the film. It is interesting to note that the film does not credit ECOMOG, and especially Nigerian troops with this achievement which itself points at a deliberate silencing of African agency because that kind of history doesn't fit into colonial historiography of

Africa. Other forces include Britain which also sent a small contingent of troops to help the Sierra Leone government in 2000. The UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999, sending an initial force of 6,000. The USA, Russia and France were also involved in various ways. The USA, for instance, funded ECOMOG operations in Sierra Leone. By silencing the complex history behind the Sierra Leone Civil War in *Blood Diamond*, the diplomatic efforts and the international, regional and local military manoeuvres to try and fix the problem in favour of a reductionist depiction that celebrates stylised violence, Sierra Leone's history is short-changed in the interest of projecting the familiar Dark Continent narrative.

For a film that at its outset claims historical authenticity, *Blood Diamond* ends abruptly without any clear resolution of the political conflict. Once the pink diamond is retrieved, Sierra Leone is forgotten, and the film trails off with a trite one-line intertitle: 'Sierra Leone is at peace'. That's all; absolutely nothing about how they arrived at peace. Instead, the memory that remains uppermost in one's mind is the final helicopter bombardment and slaughter of the rebels, and the deadly duel between Archer and Coetzee which eventually took the lives of both. For a film shot from 2004 to 2005, it omitted numerous positive elements, including among others: the July 1999 Lome Peace Accord that officially brought the civil war to an end, the arrest of RUF leader Fodey Sankoh in 2000, the Abuja Peace Agreements of May 2000 and May 2001, and the 2002 elections. Then there is the 2002 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) established by a year 2000 Security Council resolution. A few of these could have been captured in one or two intertitles. Instead, the final two-line intertitle simply says, 'There are still 200,000 child soldiers in Africa.' The director concludes the film on a negative note, painting a bleak picture of the entire African continent. The filmmaker creates the impression, perhaps naively but certainly politically, that boycotting Sierra Leone's diamonds is the solution to ending armed conflict in the country. Controlling the flow of conflict diamonds was just one of the ways of dealing with the Sierra Leone crisis, and not the most effective either, since blood diamonds still managed to enter the international market illegally through front countries. Given the lack of proper historicisation of the Sierra Leone Civil War in the film and especially the obvious silences on African efforts to resolve the conflict, the director implicitly supports a view of Africa that consolidates the Dark Continent mythos. MaryEllen Higgins reads the film well when she poses the rhetorical question: 'African Blood, Hollywood's Diamonds?' (2012, 1). Hollywood's extraction of Dark Continent images from Africa is not any different from the bloody extraction of Africa's minerals by mercenaries.

Hollywood trademarks

Blood Diamond is a blockbuster Hollywood movie that reflects all the trademarks of Hollywood. Some of these cinematic hallmarks discussed in this chapter are: the star cast; romance (and in this case, jungle romance); action-adventure, white salvation (as well as humanitarian intervention), and the happy-ever-after ending. Star power rules in Hollywood and *Blood Diamond* has a constellation of Hollywood star actors. Lead actor Leonardo DiCaprio (Archer) shot into fame as a teen idol for his role as Jack Dawson in *Titanic* (1997), a film now rated one of the greatest movies ever made, having won 11 Oscars. Shortly before playing the lead role in *Blood Diamond*, DiCaprio had been nominated for an Oscar for his lead role in Scorsese's *The Departed* (2006). Other stars are supporting Beninese-American actor Djimon Hounsou (Vandy), Oscar-nominee for *In America* (2003), and Jennifer Connelly (Bowen), Oscar-winner for best supporting actress in *Beautiful Mind* (2001). These are the faces the American audience look for first before they figure out what the film is about, let alone where it is set. DiCaprio's star persona brings into *Blood Diamond* all those psychological and cultural significations associated with the American star as a cultural text and, in this case, as a national symbol of white masculinity. *Blood Diamond* has also been read as an integrationist black 'buddy' film that pairs a white superhero with a black supporting actor with the white protagonist remaining its 'legitimate star' (Diawara 2010, 79–80; Prabhu 2014, 218). This situates the film in another Hollywood genre where racial hierarchy determines the colour code of the roles and consolidates the dominant white power structure of colonialism. As Diawara notes, 'the White character is the one that introduces and humanises the Black character in the eyes of the audience' (2010, 79). It is through DiCaprio that the director's point of view is crystallised, consolidating white focalisation, even though in principle, Buddy films, as Diawara notes, suggest a partnership in acting between black and white characters that transcends paternalism, yet white male centricity is evident in *Blood Diamond,* underscoring Diawara's observation that 'But by now we all know that partnership has become a buzzword for appropriating the concerns of Africans for the purpose of European and American aid workers' (2010, 80). A close reading of *Blood Diamond* shows that the entire premise of the film consolidates whiteness and denies agency to the black characters. The presence of Archer and Bowen and other white characters in lead roles reduces the African setting to an exotic scenery for staging a Western action thriller. Hollywood is America's national cinema and, as such, is the nation's vehicle of cultural expression. Although shooting the film on location brings a certain degree of authenticity to the production, it does not alter what Kracauer called the ideological structure of the production, a framework that has to do with America's understanding of

Plate 1. Danny Archer and Solomon Vandy flee a rebel onslaught on Freetown.

Africa (1948, 70). The director may do all the necessary research and even shoot the film on location, as in the case of *Blood Diamond*, but location shooting and casting of Africans in major roles does not offset the outcome because it is neither an African film nor is it about Africa. It is a Hollywood production for the Euro-American audience. Earlier on, I lauded *Blood Diamond* for being one of the recent movies that employs African actors and gives African characters serious treatment, but these facts hardly disguise its colonial nostalgia in representing Africa and Africans. The presence of Djimon Hounsou (Solomon Vandy) and Kagiso Kuypers (Dia Vandy) in the film certainly enhances plot development, and the father-son relationship is the engine of the narrative. But this portrayal, especially of Solomon Vandy in relation to Archer, re-enacts the white-black, master-servant, superiority-inferiority, intelligent-dull stereotype of colonial representation. As BBC reviewer Paul Arendt observes, 'While Leo and Jennifer have good crunchy characters to play with, the always brilliant Hounsou is stuck with an underwritten, saintly tribesman type' (2007). Indeed, most black actors generally have very few choices in Hollywood. Academy award winning African American director Roger Ross Williams (*Music by Patience,* 2010) observes that 'If you are an African American actor in Hollywood, you kind of take what you can get.' Besides, he continues, 'those roles are written by white directors. You have no choice if you want to work in that industry' (Williams 2011). Thus, the brilliant Beninese-American actor Hounsou must submit to the organising

ideology of the film production and play the victim accordingly. This underscores Kracauer's observation that 'Screen appearance of any actor results not only from his own acting but from the various cinematic devices used in building up his image on the screen.' Consequently, in the end, the film 'may well express other meanings than those conveyed by the actor himself' (Kracauer 1948, 62). This observation is borne out in *Blood Diamond* where the presence of renowned African actors, in tandem with location shooting and the humanitarian tone of the film, does not in any way offset the colonial nostalgia of the film that gives it narrative validity in the tradition of 'Dark Continent' Euro-American movies that date back to colonial films like Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1950). As a product of Hollywood, the flagship of US national cinema and cultural imperialism, the organising logic behind Hollywood's *Blood Diamond* largely emerges from Western preconceptions of Africa incarnated on screen with the African continent as a standard backdrop.

Blood Diamond is an action and adventure film, both major Hollywood genres in which the hero confronts a series of unique challenges that requires physical fitness and the ability to fight with weapons, words or fists. Typically, the hero goes on a moral quest. Danny Archer is a sophisticated kind of adventure hero — a flawed amoral hero. John Cawelti calls this kind of adventure hero, '"one of us," a figure marked…by flaws and attitudes presumably shared by the audience' (1976, 40). The trademark horse or car chases require that the hero be an expert rider or driver amidst swordplay, firefights and explosions. In *Blood Diamond* we see all these elements of the action genre at work. Narratology and genre construction in *Blood Diamond* create characters who, in line with the specific conventions of the action-adventure, behave along a plotted sequence of events located in specific geographic locales (Sierra Leone and South Africa). Action film is a popular genre with especially the male teen audience who enjoy the testosterone-charged adrenaline-raising adventure like the ones DiCaprio engages in.

At the same time, *Blood Diamond* belongs to a new genre of Euro-American films loosely referred to as 'humanitarian films'. These are films that project messages about human rights. Margaret Higonnet and Ethel Higonnet observe that these films, like documentaries, 'have appropriated older narrative structures borrowed from those of historical fiction' (2012, 35). Building on Hayden White's argument about the fiction of historical narratives, they observe that the tension between 'fact and fiction, naked truth and narrative' is blurred to create the film narrative (2012, 35).

There is an obvious tension between the action-adventure and the humanitarian genres in the film. The tension is between drawing humanitarian attention to the sufferings of Africans caught up in the political economy of civil war between greedy government soldiers, merciless rebels and cold-hearted mercenaries, and giving the audience a good action-adventure with enough gunpowder, fights, car chases and big

explosions. Samples of a few reviewers' comments about *Blood Diamond* underscore this tension. James Berardinelli (2006) says, '…the adventure story is tepid and loses momentum as the storyline bogs down', delaying Di Caprio's 'moment of recognition'. The moment of recognition referred to is the helicopter attack battle scene in which Di Caprio dominates the foreground. The reviewer's judgment, however, is generic. Jason Morgan says, '*Blood Diamond* offers enough overacting and meandering plot to convince us that we are watching a "good movie"' but in reality, 'the film suffers from multiple-personality disorder' (2006). This is perhaps the most accurate description of the tension between the action-adventure and humanitarian genres in *Blood Diamond*. He applauds the family drama but is repelled by Di Caprio's diamond quest which keeps interrupting the story and by Di Caprio's fake Afrikaans accent which trivialises the moments. He concludes, 'Perhaps *Blood Diamond* is most disappointing because it has the potential to explore events and aspects of the Sierra Leone Civil War, but just when the film seems to transcend its own melodrama, there is an explosion and Archer starts running around and gun blazing.' His conclusion is very telling: 'Perhaps Zwick, or Warner Bros., thinks that an audience wouldn't care about African hardships and need some star power and gunplay to drive up ticket sales' (2006). This is the heart of the matter; the humanitarian gesture is at best paternalistic and the desire to make profit at the expense of Africa's image hinders the supposed humanitarian mission of the film. In its desire to be a humanitarian film, *Blood Diamond* instead reinscribes the Dark Continent Haggardesque template. BBC reviewer Paul Arendt says, 'If you can ignore Zwick's colonial bombast, *Blood Diamond* is quite a ride.' In other words, if you can ignore the Dark Continent intertext and focus on the action, you will enjoy the film, because the film is 'too simplistic to function as an effective political commentary', but as 'a rootin-tootin boy's own adventure yarn it works just fine' (2007). This review trumps the humanitarian genre mode of the film and hails the adventure yarn. Rather than providing the viewer with a new humanitarian way of viewing Arica, the film consolidates the myth of the Dark Continent. Jack Mathew's review underscores this. He doesn't pretend to notice Sierra Leone's Civil War as he celebrates the generic authenticity of the film as an adventure tale: '*Blood Diamond* is, in the vernacular of Old Hollywood, a rip-roaring adventure, the kind made in the '30s with Clark Gable and the handiest leading lady on contract at MGM' (Mathew, n.d.). This is the most revealing review of all because it celebrates colonial nostalgia in the film as the film's badge of success. In spite of the interest some of these reviewers show in the Sierra Leone Civil War, the final judgment rests on the film's generic accuracy either as a drama, action and/or adventure in the 'Haggardesque' tradition. While trying to give the audience some action and their expected Dark Continent narrative, and simultaneously attempting to make a serious humanitarian statement, *Blood Diamond* ends up with dissociative identity disorder. One can argue that the

formal and generic tension within the film makes it a very multi-voiced, multifaceted, and multi-personality production that addresses a range of issues and provides a range of formal entertainment. Nevertheless, the generic tension undermines the message of the film. In any case, the 'Orientalizing human rights films' as Higonnet and Higonnet put it, problematise the whole concept of human rights interventions in Africa, which whitewashes local African initiatives and uses Africa as the backdrop for what Higgins humorously described as 'Hollywood's cowboy humanitarianism' (Higgins 2012, 68). By disempowering locals and entrenching the dominant 'white salvation' paradigm of colonial films, *Blood Diamond* recycles the colonial trope of 'darkest Africa'.

Jungle romance is one of the favourite themes of Hollywood's Dark Continent narratives. Examples include Allan Quatermain (Stewart Granger) and Elizabeth Curtis (Deborah Kerr) in *King Solomon's Mines* (1950), Charlie Allnutt (Humphrey Bogart) and Rose Sayer (Katharine Hepburn) in *The African Queen* (1951), and Victor Marswell (Clark Gable) and Eloise Kelly (Ava Gardner) in *Mogambo* (1953). In *Blood Diamond*, although the romance between Archer and Maddy Bowen is significantly scaled down, it remains a force in the narrative. The full blast romance of the *King Solomon's Mines* (1950) type would have been inappropriate given the seriousness of the film's subject matter. However, the spark of romance in their relationship gives the Hollywood audience what they expect to see in an action/ adventure movie. Another factor in the relationship is the feminist consciousness in the construction of Maddy Bowen's character as an attractive, independent, and self-motivated career woman. The film reworks 'the classical Hollywood woman's picture' refracted through what Mimi White calls 'the "new" woman's picture of the 1970s' (White 1989, 41). She is a product of new innovations by Hollywood to make room 'among its old formulas for radical new developments' (Brustein 1959, 23). Cawelti calls it the career girl romance formula, or the 'antiromantic romance formulae' (Cawelti 1976, 42). From their first meeting, although Archer takes the initiative, Bowen encourages him and her conversation with him is sexually suggestive. For instance, her remark on the Clinton sex scandal sets the tone: 'The whole world is falling apart and all we are hearing is this blowjobgate!' In spite of her freedom and her remarkably carefree dress code, as well as her job itself, Maddy's critical edge is blunted by the trivialising representation of her as a 'hot' and naive woman journalist who falls in love with the diamond smuggler. While she makes some comments that show the film's metatextuality in questioning established colonial stereotypes, she nonetheless to some extent fits into the old stock adventure tale character of the beautiful delicate white woman in the Dark Continent. When Archer calls her 'an action junkie', she replies, 'Three out of five ex-boyfriends recently polled say I prefer to be in a constant state of crisis.' Later she tells Archer, 'If…you are not going to help me and we are not really gonna screw, then why don't you get…out of my face

and let me do my work?' There is a constant mixing of her sense of duty with her sense of frivolity. The film director says she was modelled on 'extraordinary' attractive, brave and intelligent Western female journalists who worked in Africa and 'wanted to keep their femininity with them and not be one of the boys.' Connelly is what he calls, some sort of 'post-feminist model'. This term emerged in the 1990s about the same time with the New Wave Hollywood-Africa films to describe women who are supposed to be antifeminist, resistant to the women's movement which they consider archaic and irrelevant, yet the very notion of postfeminism has been considered by some to be a myth (Hall and Rodriguez 2003, 878). Connelly as Maddy Bowen is far from any description of a post-feminist.

The most pronounced romance scene takes place at Benjamin Margai's Rehabilitation Centre where Archer's demonic armour cracks a little and he gives Maddy Bowen a peep into his soul. She is moved by his pain and they touch intimately. Although we are left to presume what might have happened, the scene is very awkward given the environment of traumatised kids being rehabilitated and the equally traumatic nature of their conversation. Another romantic moment occurs before Bowen boards the evacuating plane. She gives him her business card and says, 'I am used to being pursued.' He promises to call her. Finally, before Archer's death, they have this love moment. It is the only time the nihilistic Archer comes close to saying, 'I love you.' He says, 'I am glad I met you', to which she replies, 'I am glad I met you too.' On the whole, the director finds himself adding the traditional potential of the romantic couple to meet audience expectations although it struggles to fit in with the film's tone and mood.

Racism

Hollywood representations of black Africans in relation to whites in most cases emphasise the colonial binary of master-servant relationships, and this is evident in *Blood Diamond*. Archer tells Vandy, 'Without me, you are just another black man in Africa.' Although the director could have meant this to be a critique of racist attitudes, the statement smells of racist vitriol and degrades black men all over the world and Africa as a continent. A statement like 'I don't give a f*** about you' not only helps to reveal Archer's character but also consolidates the humiliation of black people. Although Vandy is the man who is familiar with the countryside and is certainly stronger than Archer, the white man takes the lead: 'I set the pace…understand?' to which Vandy answers, 'Yes, Boss!' While Vandy's response is perhaps meant to be cynical, he nevertheless follows the instruction and begins running behind Archer. The racial superiority of Archer is made implicit in the scuffle between Archer and Vandy when Vandy decides to ignore the road towards the diamond mine and instead sets

his face toward the rebel camp where he suspects his son to be. Archer says, 'All right. You're gonna need some of that old *discipline*, huh? Now you listen here, *my boy*, and you listen well. You are not going down there. Are you clear? (my emphasis). Those words, 'discipline' and 'boy' foreground the racist background of Archer's upbringing. An enraged Vandy understands those racial apartheid codes and replies, 'You are not the Master.' To which Archer replies, 'Right now that is exactly *what I am*, and you'd better remember it *Kaffir!*' (my emphasis). This treatment of Vandy is an explicit performance of colonial power complete with all its racist epithets. The hierarchical racial code of apartheid is directly invoked with the diminutive words 'boy' and 'Kaffir'[5]. Perhaps the most disturbing scene comes after the episode where Vandy attracts rebel attention and both men escape narrowly. In the morning, Archer kicks Vandy and towers over him threateningly while he proceeds to skin the baboon and wipe the blood-stained knife on his pants. First of all, the killing of a poor baboon and its skinning are totally gratuitous. The fear induced in Vandy is stereotypical of colonial representation of blacks as fearful and of whites as strong and brave. Racial superiority is further developed when Archer announces his Shona name to Bowen: '"Mukiwa." It means white boy in Africa.' The image of the 'white boy' in Africa or white body in a sea of black bodies is something the director wanted to emphasise. Zwick was conscious of this racial dynamic. He explicitly asserts, '…as you see the white skin surrounded by a sea of black bodies, you begin to see how odd it is for them to have, you know, their dominance here when they are a minority.' The film highlights white racial dominance everywhere which, in turn, reinforces colonial power structures.

Disposable darkies and the sacrosanct white body

Alongside the exoticised display of black bodies for the Western gaze, one of the trademarks of colonialism is the disposable nature of blacks. As Coates has accurately observed, 'Americans believe in the reality of "race" as a defined indubitable feature of the natural world. Racism — the need to ascribe bone-deep features to people and then humiliate, reduce, and then *destroy them* — inevitably follows from this inalterable condition' (2015, 7; my emphasis). Hollywood-Africa films are constructed in such a way that the deaths of black characters become normal to the viewer while the deaths of white characters are made to elicit painful emotional reaction. The narrative logic underpinning the good-guys-versus-the-bad-guys plot follows a colour code in which whites play the good guys and hunt down the bad guys who are usually black. Even an evil character like Archer is constructed ambiguously to make a statement about his intrinsic goodness at the end of the film. The all-black RUF rebels are all bad guys, and the largely white Executive Outcome fighters who mow down the rebels are all good guys. Archer kills a number of black people on his way to retrieve the pink diamond.

The film makes all these killings look plausible, including the bridge scene where he shoots dead two RUF soldiers and then fires second shots into their dead bodies as though they are mere target practice dummies. Commenting on the shooting, the film director says, '…here is a great moment. The idea of adding a second shot into these guys is just a result of the time Leo and I spent with these mercenaries; just a bit of behavior.' As Archer takes his time to shoot down the third soldier who was fleeing empty-handed, Zwick says it helps us and Vandy to gain insight into the character of Archer. Although Archer's character is revealed here, the moment celebrates his marksmanship, and the black men die as excellent victims of the white hunter. The duel between Archer and Colonel Coetzee is entertaining just like in the old Westerns and we are made to side with Archer. Compare that to Colonel Poison's death. Poison is smashed to pulp by a maniacal Vandy using a shovel, as his blood spatters all over Vandy's shirt. This killing is made to look justified because, as his name implies, Poison is the ultimate bad guy, the devil. Reacting to the killings of blacks in *Blood Diamond*, African American Director Roger Williams says: 'That film really made me super angry…I don't know how much Hollywood has changed…the nameless faces of the Africans; it's like in the Western. They are wiping the Indians out and the Indians just fall down like flies' (Williams 2011).

Just like the Westerns indeed, because similar mythologies and ideologies informed British and American manifest destiny and expansionist agendas in North America. These ideologies inform both Dark Continent films and Westerns. Commenting on the traumatising violence in *Blood Diamond*, Meg Samuelson remarks, '…it seems that the black body can be dismembered on screen in ways that the "sacrosanct" white body cannot…', and she wonders how such movies can still be made in the 21st century. She goes on to marvels at '…the extraordinary resilience of the "heart of darkness" construction of "TIA"' (Meg Samuelson, "No Subject". Email, 2011, March 28). This obsession with the disposable black body is indeed the enduring legacy of colonial representation.

Archer as Christ figure

Archer is certainly not Christ; he is more like Barnabas, the cynical highway robber and murderer, but the death of Archer is the most skilfully constructed sequence in the entire film. Roger Williams (2011) agrees that there is a 'Jesus complex' in the construction of Archer's death. To fully appreciate this statement requires analysis of the cinematography. Wounded in the shoot-out with Coetzee, a profusely bleeding Archer struggles to go up the hill, and he is tracked through medium close-ups. We are made to feel his pain and groan with him as he pulls out a blood-soaked hand from his side. When he says, 'Christ. No more. No more', the camera zooms to a

tight close-up of his face and reveals his agony, then the camera pans to his side to register the large bullet wound through an extreme close-up. The camera pans from his face to Solomon Vandy's and then to Dia's as they all look deeply concerned. Archer pulls out the pink diamond and admires it before saying to Solomon, Take it, huh. […] Take it, take it!' Then he gives Vandy Maggie's card, and his pistol. Vandy is devastated and says, 'I can carry you.' He probably could have, but that would have destroyed this iconic sacrificial 'Robert Jordan' moment in the film. The camera zooms in on Archer's face to reveal the mix of disappointment, pain, and acknowledgement of Vandy as he says: 'Take your boy home, huh?' The camera lingers on Archer's face for a while before he repeats, 'You take your boy home.' At this point in the film, Archer — the diamond thief — transforms into the saviour of Vandy and his son. Not only does he give Vandy his son back; he also of his own free will gives Vandy the diamond, and he remains behind covering Vandy as the soldiers close in on him. We see him mow down government soldiers through the deep focus shot, demonstrating his marksmanship even when he is sacrificially bleeding to death. The director says of this scene, 'Even in the midst of the circumstance, he holds onto the training. Holds onto the technique' (Zwick 2005). Archer props himself against the rock and takes the time to call Maddy. It is a purely poetic moment. The scene is made more poignant by the golden twilight and fill lighting, the none-diegetic music that plays in the background, Archer's laboured breathing, his anguished yet elated face, and Bowen's concerned reaction from Conakry. He takes time to enjoy and describe the incredible view before him. Then he gives Bowen instructions about finding a safe place for Dia and helping Solomon Vandy get to London and sell the pink diamond. His instructions become his will.

Archer pulls out the saviour image again by giving Bowen permission to use his records to write about the secrets of the diamond underworld: 'I am saying it's a real story now. And you can write the hell out of it.' By giving Bowen permission to publish the story, he provides the evidence needed to advocate for a ban on illegal diamond trade. After the final instructions and the moving confessions of love with tears crawling down Bowen's cheeks, the camera cuts to Archer's face and tracks down to his hands where, in an extreme close-up shot, we see blood pouring out profusely into the red soil. Then he grabs the red soil, and as soil and blood intermingle, the camera zooms out — then he dies. The camera cuts to the plane carrying Solomon into safety and a new lease on life, exonerated by Archer's propitiatory death. It is interesting to note that Archer never gets killed by the soldiers — the bad guys — although he is within range. He dies on his own terms. Later, Solomon would look at a picture of Archer in Bowen's article and realise that this white man laid down his life for him. Hollywood's larger-than-life action heroes never die, at least not in Africa. They are bunker-buster personalities who survive against all odds. *Blood*

Diamond provides the first ever white protagonist and action hero *that I know of* to die in fictional Africa. Although at the surface level one can read Archer's death as a sign of mortality, the film develops a much more sophisticated design. Williams considers Archer's death 'a greater sort of hero complex than if he had lived…The ultimate act of martyrdom' (2011). In spite of his trafficking and murderous credentials, Archer's death amplifies his goodness to Solomon and to Africa.

The happy-ever-after ending is the familiar formulaic conclusion to classical Hollywood films. The sacrificial ending of *Blood Diamond*, where Danny Archer the hero retrieves and relinquishes the prize and redeems the lives of others occurs everywhere in classical cinema: Rick Blaine in *Casablanca* (1942), Lucas in *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), Neo in *The Matrix* (1999), Ripley in *Alien 3* (1992) and Mufasa in *The Lion King* (1994), to mention but a few. Unlike in most classical cinema endings, however, Archer doesn't get to take the girl home; nonetheless, he and Maddy Bowen have a compressed sublime phone romance. Solomon Vandy gets his entire family flown to London in an executive Gulf Stream jet! He goes on to sell the pink stone for two million pounds cash, is transformed into an English gentleman and becomes a spokesperson for Global Witness and a celebrated Ambassador of the entire Third World at the Kimberley Process convention. Interestingly, though, Vandy is not allowed to speak a word! MaryEllen Higgins raises important questions about Solomon's muteness at the Global Witness stand at the Kimberley Process that is worth quoting:

> Does the severing of Solomon's speech suggest that there is not yet an African…perspective — that there are no grassroots African authorities, no African humanitarians who can take the microphone and offer a new perspective? Or does Zwick implicate Hollywood itself, so that the framing of Solomon's silence reads as a running commentary on Hollywood's perpetual denial of African agency? Are we expected to fill in the blankness of Solomon's voice, rendering him an everlasting mute victim, unable to achieve liberation without our assistance? (2012, 1–2)

Without a voice and incapable of articulating his position and, by implication, the position of his continent, Vandy and Africa remain 'an everlasting mute victim' under the trusteeship of global powers that are permanent members of the UN Security Council. The Kimberley Process resembles the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference that regulated the partitioning of Africa and trade — or rather looting of the continent. The Global Witness conference reframes and recodes this trope in the context of the humanitarian ethic. Anjali Prabhu considers the happy ending for Vandy and his family an Africanising aspect of *Blood Diamond*, given that the film denies the white characters the classical happy ending, but this optimism is premature and the fascinating fairy-tale ending is not plausible. The metamorphosis of Vandy is too

contrived and the Solomon Vandy of the film's ending does not resemble the Vandys of Africa. Although the Kimberley Process convention at the end of the film is based on facts, with Archer's sacrifice superimposed on it, the film's ending becomes pure fantasy. Furthermore, the now transformed Solomon Vandy in a business suit is seen transfixed on a page in the *Vital Affairs Magazine* with a large photo of Archer accompanied by the caption, 'Sierra Leone is one of the biggest losers in the game of empire'. It tells Vandy that Archer alone has made all this possible, by exposing the diamond underworld and the evils of empire through the sacrifice of his life, and in the process, giving back to Vandy his family and a gift of the pink diamond which Vandy sold for 20 000 pounds sterling, thus underscoring the white salvation nexus — 'without me, you are just another black man in Africa!' It is important to note that classical and Hollywood myth presents what Aristotle called 'probable impossibilities' as opposed to 'improbable possibilities' (1923, 95–96). Plausibility really is beside the point in tales of sacrifice, but *Blood Diamond*'s ending is too good to be true in that it reveals a tension between humanitarianism and colonialism — and, in this case, an attempt to whitewash the plundering white man.

Mercenary saviours: Colonialism redux

In spite of the glamorous Hollywood portrayal of Archer and Coetzee, the film nevertheless offers a strong critique of mercenary exploitation of weak African countries. The security firm for which Danny Archer worked is modelled on South Africa's now defunct Executive Outcomes Ltd., that was a sister company to Britain's Sanderline International. The treatment of the mercenary organisation in the film provides a damning exposé of the chameleon nature of colonialism in different political climates and points to the many forces that carried out its objectives in the South African settler colony and the African postcolony. Most of the recruits employed by Executive Outcomes were former members of the South African Defence Forces (SADF), especially Koevoet,[6] 32 Battalion (the terrible ones) and the notorious Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB) that was responsible for high-profile assassinations of anti-apartheid opponents as well as for business fronts overseas used to circumvent UN sanctions. A few members of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), were also recruited into its ranks. One of the unique characteristics of this mercenary company is how it integrated security consultancy with business. For instance, it is alleged that they had contracts with, among others, 'De Beers, Chevron, JFPI Corporation, Rio Tinto Zinc and Texaco' (Bunker and Marin 1999). For some reason, EO mostly intervened in taking back diamond and oil fields overrun by rebels. They were hired by the Sierra Leone government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah to push back the rebels for a fee of 15 million dollars and diamond mining concessions

(Rubin, n.d.). Earlier they had helped the Angolan government destroy UNITA for a fee of 23 million dollars. They were thought to have clandestine operations in Uganda, Botswana, Zambia, Ethiopia, Namibia and Lesotho and, of course, South Africa. They also fought open missions in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Congo and Ivory Coast (Ben-Younes 2002). It is alleged that EO's turnover was 20 million pounds a year (Corporate Watch 1997). Because they succeeded to force the rebels to sign peace accords in both Sierra Leone and Angola, they were hailed as heroes by the local communities. In the presence of a divided UN and a weak Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/African Union (AU), Afrikaner EO commander Colonel Roelf once remarked that 'We are something like the UN of Africa, only with a smaller budget' (Rubin n.d.). But just like Colonel Coetzee in *Blood Diamond*, Roelf really had no interest in any country's peace and stability and was 'attempting to dress up his mercenary operation with the language of international peace keeping' (Rubin, n.d.).

In fact, EO was a colonial octopus spreading its tentacles wherever there was conflict and money. Robert Bunker and Steven Marin assert that EO invested in multinational holdings from mining and oil companies to security and transportation. They termed their activities, 'a post-Cold War form of "predatory capitalism" by specializing in the extraction of mineral and oil resources from troubled and failed states' (1999). Many of the fighters in EO fought the Angolan government under apartheid, something Archer hints at in *Blood Diamond*. The same men had no qualms fighting alongside the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) against the UNITA rebels they had previously armed and fought alongside. For them, it was strictly business, and double-dealing was in order. Archer tells Coetzee, 'So you sell the rebels the weapons, the government hires you when they use them? Nice, Sir. I assume you are asking for mining concessions, huh?' This statement reflects the amoral nature of EO and their self-confessed peacekeeping role in Africa. In fact, they were agents of political instability. When Archer asks Cordell Brown (Antony Coleman) how the company is doing, he answers, 'I can't complain. Eleven wars in the continent. We're keeping busy.' In spite of their contribution to pushing back the rebels, EO was just a malignant outgrowth of colonialism in disguise and, thankfully, *Blood Diamond* does not give them any credit.

Blood Diamond also reveals the exploitation of the black fighting force by a system that treated them as equals in the foxhole but inferior outside of it — a pattern that is repeated in British and French treatment of Africans who fought in the Second World War captured powerfully in Ousmane Sembene's film *Camp Thearoye* (1987). Archer tells Bowen, 'Contrary to what you might think about us, we fought with the blacks […] side by side. There was no apartheid in a foxhole…' Double standards were employed after the war and blacks were discriminated against after they had

been used to fight the apartheid system's battles. Archer also shows displeasure at the end of the old apartheid system and its racist rewards: 'Then of course since 1994, no more army. No more apartheid. Truth and reconciliation, and all that rubbish you know. Kumbaya.' The film too depicts the role of the apartheid government during the Cold War. The so-called fighting communism and the brutality that went with it was yet another disguise for looting natural resources of neighbouring countries: 'We thought we were fighting communism, but in the end it was all about who gets what, you know. Ivory, oil, gold, diamonds.' *Blood Diamond* should be credited here for this strong critique of the double-dealings of the apartheid regime and EO.

A missed opportunity

Zwick's *Blood Diamond* is a film that challenges the viewer to reflect on the nature of good and evil in post-colonial Africa. It succeeds to some extent in dealing with civil war violence that is hard to incarnate on screen and in exposing the empty sloganeering of the RUF. Although it exposes and critiques the exploitation of Africa and embedded colonial misrepresentations, it nonetheless consolidates the same negative stereotypes summarised so aptly in TIA (This is Africa!). This is because, as earlier noted, Hollywood is America's national cinema which expresses the dominant attitudes of American society towards Africa. These attitudes have in turn been shaped by deeply embedded 19th century negative Western stereotypes of Africa that have been reinvented, remodelled and reinforced over 100 years of cultural productions. The institutionalised stereotypes are constantly standardised, repackaged and redeployed in an endless cycle of colonial misrepresentation. The film's imaging of Africa is also constrained by the stylistic and heroic demands of the action/adventure genre as they are culturally coded for Hollywood's primary audience. In attempting to treat a serious humanitarian issue while at the same time providing its audience with generic entertainment, the movie trivialises the issues of postcolonial exploitation; at the same time, it creates awkward action and romance sequences for its central white characters. The generic dissonance in *Blood Diamond* creates an infotainment that fails to satisfy the viewer who is looking either for a proper treatment of the Sierra Leone Civil War or for the old-style action thriller and romance. What is beautiful in *Blood Diamond* emerges in small kernels, mostly in the family drama of Solomon Vandy's search for his son. As Director Zwick observes, Vandy's search for his son Dia juxtaposed with Archer's search for the diamond (and Bowen's search for news about the dirty diamonds syndicate) raises the question of what we consider valuable. 'The child is the jewel,' he says (Director's Commentary *Blood Diamond* 2006). He is right in saying that. The film can also be credited for raising awareness about the illegal diamond trade that fuelled the Sierra Leone Civil

War, even though it came too late to shape any policy since the Kimberley Process had already happened by the time the film was shot. In attempting to tell a family story and treat a social problem while simultaneously offering its primary audience hair-raising action and a Cinderella ending, *Blood Diamond* fails to challenge the systematised misrepresentation of Africa in Hollywood in any meaningful or significant manner and, instead, as reflected in this analysis, displays marked colonial nostalgia.

Notes

1 The Kimberley Process (KP) is an international system of certifying rough diamonds that is intended to stem the flow of conflict diamonds into the world market in order to eliminate the financing of armed conflict among member states using illegally trafficked diamonds. The process was set up in December 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly by adopting Resolution A/RES/55/56. The United Nations Security Council lent its support to the process by adopting Resolution 1459 which was eventually passed in January 2003 with the UN General Assembly renewing its support for the Process yearly.

2 This is reminiscent of the extractive model of colonial economies which did not foster economic development in Africa but restructured Africa's economy as a source of raw materials for feeding the industrial revolution of the metropolis.

3 The Shona tribe, also known as the Mashona, are a Bantu-speaking people group found in southern Africa but mostly in Zimbabwe. They include the Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Tonga-Korekore, and Ndau. Shona is the predominant language in Zimbabwe spoken by 71% of the population (*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*).

4 The World Bank/International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Programme, which was prescribed for ailing Third World economies, has been largely declared a failure due to its policy design and implementation. It was designed to benefit foreign investors at the expense of African economies. See Nana Yaw Oppong (2014).

5 'Kaffir' is an apartheid era racial slur that was used to refer to black Africans. The word was considered highly offensive, derogatory and dehumanising. According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary Online*, 'Kaffir' is 'a profoundly offensive and inflammatory expression of contemptuous racism that is sufficient grounds for legal action.' It goes on to say, 'its offensiveness has only increased over time. It now ranks as perhaps the most offensive term in South African English.'

6 Koevoet was the counter-insurgency branch of the South West African Police (SWAPOL). Its formations included white South African police officers, usually seconded from the South African Security Branch or Special Task Force, and black volunteers from Ovamboland.

5

Militainment and historical distortion

This chapter looks at the Hollywood phenomenon of revising and distorting Africa's history through militainment — a new genre of military themed films that exhibit a high degree of collaboration between the entertainment industry and the US military-industrial-entertainment-complex mediated by the Pentagon. The films seek to glorify the United States military at the expense of Others. This phenomenon is best illustrated by African American director Antoine Fuqua's film, *Tears of the Sun* (2003). Alongside militainment is the 'based on a true story' narrative premise of the film that claims historical authenticity in its reconstruction of the Biafran War but in actual fact results in a massive distortion of Nigerian history and misrepresentation of Africans at large. There are at least three kinds of distortions of the 'true story': one that falls back on the Dark Continent rubric based on colonial presuppositions, a second that relies on the mythic sense of American exceptionalism and messianic heroism, and a third that relies on the American party line — that is, the political sense of good guys–bad guys as shaped by American foreign policy of the presidential administration at the time of the film's production.

Tears of the Sun is about a team of elite US Navy SEALs sent to Nigeria under strict orders to 'extract' Dr Lena Kendricks (an American by marriage), working for International Relief Services, and three missionaries from St. Michaels' Mission behind enemy lines in Yolingo. Dr Kendricks refuses to leave without the natives in her care. Lieutenant A.K. Walters (Bruce Willis) tricks the doctor by promising to save her and her 'natives' and marches them all to the helicopter evacuation point with rebel soldiers in hot pursuit. But once she is in one of the helicopters, he shuts the doors and the helicopters take off, abandoning the evacuated villagers in a classic act of betrayal. Lt. Walters undergoes a crisis of conscience when he observes while flying over St. Michaels' mission station that the sick African patients who could not be evacuated, and the white missionaries who chose to stick with them were already brutally massacred by the rebel soldiers. Lt. Walters orders the chopper to turn around

and, in defiance of his superior's orders, locates the African refugees he had earlier abandoned at the helicopter landing and gets bogged down in a confrontation with Yakubu's (rebel) troops as he tries to protect and move the mission refugees to the Cameroonian border. Along the way, they halt a genocide in progress and also save the Ibo tribal monarchy from extinction. He pays a heavy price in the loss of men and is only saved in the end by the United States Air Force. The rescued Africans rejoice and invoke God's blessings on Walters and Kendricks as they fly away.

Fuqua claims that the events depicted in his film were triggered by the 1966 'Ibo military coup' and that the film is *a true account* of events of the Biafran Civil War (also known as the Nigerian Civil War or the Nigerian-Biafran War). By locating his film in the 'based on a true story' cinematic trope, Fuqua makes a strategic claim that his film is a reliable historical account, but this is a claim made to boost the film's entertainment and commercial value at the expense of Nigeria's image. As Dudley Andrew (cited in Stam and Raengo 2004, 191) and Hayden White (2010, 280–281) have argued about historically based texts, *Tears of the Sun* is actually an adaptation of a progenitor historical text that is selectively invoked by screenwriters Lasker and Cirillo; a specific story is extracted from the larger story and overlapping stories of the Biafran Civil War and of African history in general and textualised through the neocolonial Hollywood gaze. That specific story is the negative tropology of Africa in Euro-American cultural productions premised on biased interpretations of Africa's political and sociocultural challenges that use Africa's problems as raw material for weaving the Dark Continent narrative. The premise of *Tears of the Sun* reflects the intransigent Dark Continent mastertext of Hollywood-Africa narratives inherited from 19th century colonial travelogues and fiction which, over the years, has become the 'definitive story' of Africa. Although Fuqua's 'true story' is inaccurate as far as its account of the Nigerian Civil War is concerned, it is quite a familiar case of Hollywood production and management of African history. This 'true story' is not originally Hollywood's creation but a remodelling of the story told by 19th century British (colonial) novels set in Africa beginning with Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1887). The colonial narrative is adapted to the postcolonial African setting and casts contemporary African historiography in the tropology of the Dark Continent as a counterpoint to Western civilisation. By ignoring the colonial legacies behind the conflicts in post-independence Africa as well as the achievements of precolonial and modern Africa at large, the film chooses to tell the story of destruction and carnage without comprehensive historical contexts. The film also speaks with a colonially nostalgic voice of American expansionism, creating an image of a world with America in charge as it lives out its 'Manifest Destiny'. Furthermore, in the film, Nigeria becomes a synecdoche for the entire African continent in typical Hollywood generalisation.

This chapter raises a number of questions about *Tears of the Sun*. What story is Fuqua telling? Whose story, and for what purpose? The colonial narrative is nostalgically reinvented as the neocolonial discourse of intervention in Africa, while the immediate purpose is tied to the strategic interest of the Pentagon in Iraq in 2003. The subtlety of the colonial narrative is hidden in what is presented as a 'true story', transformed with only minor additions for dramatic effect. As already noted, we cannot expect historical accounts in cinema to be infallible because of the inevitable process of fictionalised re-enactment which Hayden White calls *emplotment*. The 'true story' tag on the other hand makes a loftier claim of authoritative representation, a claim that transcends both history and reality:

> The claim to be *based on a true story* appeals to the mastertext of the story — a secularised, authorless Book of Life not to be confused with reality or history or the truth — for specific kinds of textual authority, all of them having only an incidental relation to historical accuracy (Leitch 2007, 285; my emphasis).

The 'true story' sanctuary establishes the film's moral authority and also determines its high 'infotainment' value. *Tears of the Sun* is a subtle recreation of colonial Africa, this time for the glorification of the US military and for asserting American superiority and self-appointed 'neo-Messianic' tutelage over Africa. Moreover, the 'based on a true story' claim requires that we exercise wilful suspension of disbelief, because, as Matthew Mulka observes, 'a film's intent is always opaque and we cannot absolutely know the themes discussed just by observing the actions and words and pictures' (Mulka 2011). In this chapter, I use Fuqua's own 'Director's Commentary' about *Tears of the Sun* extensively to establish his point of view and intentions at the intersection between colonial and neocolonial discourses about Africa.

Which Nigeria and whose Nigeria?

Rather than focusing on the 1967 Nigerian Civil War, Fuqua's account is a cut and paste of selected elements of that War — and other African wars — imposed like an uneasy montage on contemporary Nigerian geopolitics. It does however contain incidents that ground it in the actual Nigerian Civil War: the military coup, which relates to the 1966 Nigerian coup and follow-up counter coups that precipitated the Biafran Civil War, and the role of General Yakubu Gowon who led Nigeria in defeating the Biafran rebels during the civil war. The film makes a veiled reference to Gowon as General Mustafa Yakubu. It further references regional tensions, especially the Hausa Fulani/Igbo fallout, and the massacres that preceded the war. But that's the sum total of the historical facts in the film; the rest is a hodgepodge of current African affairs and exploitation of current regional and religious strife in Nigeria to create the perfect recipe for a Dark Continent production. For instance,

in the film, the estimated population of Nigeria at the time of the separatist Biafran War is 120 million which is close to the 2003 UN estimate of Nigeria's population at 124 million, some 40 years after the civil war (Sierra Leone, n.d.). In reality, the Nigerian population during the civil war was between 55 and 60 million, given that the 1963 census put the population at 50.6 million (Osaghae 1998, 41). The map of Nigeria that Captain Bill Rhodes (Tom Skerritt) uses to brief the Navy SEALs is a 1996 map of Nigeria showing 36 states, but during the civil war, Nigeria comprised only four administrative regions (Osaghae 1998, xxii). The contemporaneous nature of the map is also confirmed by the highlighting of the city of Abuja which only came into existence in 1991.

The film also claims that the civil war was actually about control of the country's oil wealth — another familiar trope of the blanket curse of Africa's natural resources — although oil features only remotely in the causes of the 1967 Nigerian Civil War. In reality, oil revenue contributed only 18.26 per cent of total Federal Government revenue at the time, unlike 1989–1990 when oil revenue contributed 97.24 percent (Osaghae 1998, 21). Although, the Willink Commission proposed as early as 1956 that a special commission be set up to address the 'peculiar environmental problems of the Niger Delta minorities' (Osaghae 1998, 10), mismanagement of the oil sector, poverty and environmental degradation only became serious causes of political unrest in the 1990s. This resulted in the Ogoni unrests in Nigeria's Delta region and the executions of 1995, including that of its leader Ken Saro-Wiwa, and the emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) which took up arms in the Niger Delta. Condensing nearly 50 years of the most negative periods of Nigerian history into a single film shows that there is an unstated law of attraction to African calamities that informs the film. As if the conflicts in Nigeria were not enough for one film, Fuqua accompanies his motion picture with a rambling commentary on all forms of civil wars and rebel activities in Africa. Conflicts integrated in the film include mega wars like the Sierra Leonean civil war, the Sudanese civil war and the 1994 Rwandan genocide. All these continental disasters are condensed into what is made to look like an exclusively Nigerian experience in *Tears of the Sun*. Fuqua's film is, consequently, far removed from the true story of the Biafran War.

One of the characteristics of colonial representations of Africa is the generalisation of Africa as one homogeneous entity without any political, economic, cultural or racial diversity. The DVD is accompanied by a great deal of information on every conceivable conflict in Africa. Its special features section includes the Director's Commentary, the Interactive Map of Nigeria, Africa Fact File and Voices of Africa (interviews with African refugees who acted on the set). These overload the film with information about civil wars but provide very little treatment of Nigeria itself for a clear story that can give us insight into an individual Nigerian life, or community, or

the country as a whole. This kind of representation results in both historical distortion and a very negative portrayal of Nigeria and Africa. The film itself is a patchwork of fiction and documentaries. The director admits that he used graphic footage from Sorious Samura's documentary *Cry Freetown* (2000) for his opening sequence which gives us an extremely violent establishment shot of the 'real' Africa. He too used *Delta Force* (1995), a documentary about the struggles of the Ogoni people of Nigeria's Delta region and the life and death of its leader Ken Saro-Wiwa, documentaries about human rights abuses in Mobutu's Zaire (DR Congo), and *The Lost Boys of Sudan* (2003), a documentary by Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk about two orphaned Sudanese boys whose lives were upended by civil war in their country. In addition, he used bits of news footage about Africa from America's Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and the discourse of 'celebrity colonialism' from musician Bono's crusade against AIDS in Africa.

Although contemporary wars, famine and corruption in some African countries tend to validate catastrophic and alarmist narratives about Africa, these disasters are not representative of the entire continent, nor are they permanent features of individual countries. The narrative Fuqua adopts reproduces a colonial reading of Africa which follows in the footsteps of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. This colonial reflexivity is evident for instance in the director's explanation of the 'dark and empty' non-diegetic music that plays as Lt. Walters and his team land on the USS Harry S Truman aircraft carrier after evacuating the US ambassador. Fuqua says the music was meant to provide insight into Bruce Willis's character: 'This is not the Bruce Willis you are used to. We didn't want the action hero…this is a darker character; this is Colonel Kurtz.' He goes on to say, 'This is the guy that you think you know, but you don't…the abyss, you know' (Fuqua 2003). The action hero is corrupted by Africa and degenerates into a Colonel Kurtz as he journeys into the abysmal heart of darkness.

Hollywood's idea of Africa

It is important to note that Antoine Fuqua — like Edgar Rice Boroughs, the author of the iconic *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914) — never set foot in Africa and therefore relied on reels of Hollywood make-believe and media stereotypes of Africa, most of which are negative, for his knowledge of Africa. The director does not, therefore, understand the geographical, cultural, demographic and racial complexity of modern Africa. Besides, wars are just one storyline in a web of overlapping stories that include, among others, stories of decolonisation, development, progress, hope and courage. Yet Fuqua says very tellingly about his film, 'I wanted it to be authentic. I couldn't go to Africa, so I wanted to bring Africa here.' This is quite a preposterous statement that a film director can bring Africa to himself in order to tell an authentic story

about Africa. The film does not therefore benefit from location shooting like *The Last King of Scotland* or *Queen of Katwe*, adding to the already poor research. Fuqua did not shoot the film in Africa, allegedly because it was too dangerous to travel to Africa as an American film crew after '9/11', a production decision which is itself a familiar narrative of Africa as a dangerous place, as if Africa had anything to do with 9/11. The film is instead shot in Hawaii. The director, however, insists that his researchers confirmed that the Hawaiian Island of Oahu resembles the foliage of Equatorial Africa where the Biafran War was fought. This renders quite ludicrous Fuqua's assertion that he wanted his film 'to be authentic' when not even the location is authentic! Fuqua's absurd claim underscores Leitch's observation about the 'based on a true story' claim that it 'turns the represented people and situation into a series of setup lines whose punch line is that everything the film is showing, or at least a tantalizing unrefined part of it actually happened' (Leitch 2009, 285). Below the surface of what is being shown in the film is an organising logic of 'TIA' (This is Africa!), to borrow the formulaic explanation of violence in Edward Zwick's *Blood Diamond* (2005).

In a now-famous TED Talk presentation titled, "The danger of a single story", Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie discusses the pitfalls of the single story as opposed to the overlapping stories of our common existence. She says single stories [read stereotypes] 'robs people of dignity' and 'makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult' because 'it emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar' (2011). Nothing underscores this point better than Fuqua's decision to bring real African actors on the set instead of using African American actors. Although using African actors is very commendable as far as the representation of Africans is concerned, Fuqua hires the Africans to emphasise a certain exotic difference from African Americans. He says, 'You got to have the real people. You ought to be able to look into their eyes and know they are from a different place.' The first stereotype here is that you can look into the eyes of any black man and know if he is African. 'We look different,' Fuqua says, emphasising a marked physical difference between black Africans and African Americans. 'Black people, African Americans, whatever we have been called, we look different from the Africans, they look different.' And what makes Africans different? 'They have scars, marks — there is something in their eyes about what they have seen' (Fuqua 2003). This conforms to Adichie's observation that 'The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make *one* story become the *only* story' (Adichie 2011; my emphasis). Fuqua's casting of African actors looks affirmative, yet it underscores Curtis Keim's argument that 'While it is no longer acceptable to create a film set in Africa that does not feature Africans…Hollywood stereotyping of Africa has become veiled rather than less prevalent' (2009, 25). The irony here of course lies

in the fact that while Fuqua claims these African eyes to be windows into an authentic Africa, they really represent mirrors that reflect his own projection of a stereotyped Africa.

Tears of the Sun follows in the footsteps of colonial travelogues and films which treated Africa's landscape, its animals and insects as well as human beings as objects for the gaze of the colonial camera. As Namrata Joshi (2003) accurately observes, the film 'unfolds like a National Geographic documentary showing Africa in all its natural, primeval, wild glory. But the ostensible authenticity of images doesn't really ring true.'

Wiping the tears of Africa

Why the title *Tears of the Sun*? Fuqua says, 'When people think of Africa they think of the Serengeti, the heat and the sun [tropical paradise?]. I see it more like it's rainy and cloudy and wet; sort of like the tears of God…that's why the title fits so well for me.' The statement underscores the fact that the director's Africa is an imagined Africa which in turn shows both his ignorance and his lack of interest in the actual geographical Africa. This is a simplistic casting of Africa into one climatic mould. But even if Africa were wet and cloudy, what has it got to do with *Tears of the Sun*? Perhaps the other reason for the choice of *Tears of the Sun*, although Fuqua doesn't state this, is because the sun, half of it, to be specific, was the national symbol of Biafra which reminds one of Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) about the Nigerian Civil War, adapted into a film of the same title (2014). The relationship between the tears of God and tears of the sun is not clear in the film, but there are certainly lots of tears of desperate Africans. The film is one big pity project through the shuttle construction of African characters as helpless victims, while the US missionaries, doctors and Navy SEALs are constructed as saviours who do everything in their power to try and save the natives. Fuqua says he was inspired to make the film and release it to provoke the 'Trustees of Africa' to try to get involved, 'Maybe by putting it out there…I might be able to save [Africa] if people get involved and try to help' (Fuqua 2003). As if Africa were a rich underage child who needs guardianship. This evokes the colonial arrangement where decisions about Africa were made from colonial metropolises by Europeans who appointed themselves as legal guardians of Africa. The stock pity for Africa comes from that transcendent colonial narrative which by default makes the Westerner feel sorry for the African. Adichie calls it, 'a kind of patronizing, well-meaning, pity' born of 'a single story of catastrophe' in which there is no possibility of the African being similar to the Westerner, 'no possibility of a connection as human equals' (Adichie 2011). Fuqua assumes this lofty patronizing responsibility of trying to 'save' Africa. This kind of discourse is sustained by what Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard call America's 'long-held myth of Manifest

Destiny — a sense of imperial entitlement…' as well as 'messianic nationalism' (2007, 7). In the film, that salvation comes in the form of Lt. A. K. Walters and his men. The 'real' African refugee characters in the movie are ideologically constructed to invoke need and pity at every level. One of the actors is maimed (a real victim of the Sudan Civil War) and the camera focuses squarely on his prosthetic leg to evoke our pity. The African characters have blank eyes, are afraid and weep helplessly. The other set of African characters, the Yakubu 'rebels' under the command of Colonel Idris Sadick (Malick Bowens) are constructed as the villains who kill, rape, maim and mutilate with extreme brutality. Messianic heroes in Hollywood movies reflect the myth that, 'US forces are innately driven by noble ends…' and therefore, 'evil demons must be vanquished by American troops' (Boggs and Pollard 2007, 13).

Plate 2. Dr Lena Fiore Kendricks flees with members of the Ibo royal family.

There are no strong or good Africans in the film. The Africans are either victims or killers, while the Western characters are either missionaries who lay down their lives for their flock, a doctor like Lena Kendricks who saves lives, or the Navy SEALs, unknown heroes who sacrifice everything to fight and kill the so-called 'bad guys'. Dr Kendricks calls the Africans, 'my people'. The significance of her role as saviour is magnified by the fact that she provides Arthur Azuka, the supposed heir apparent to the fictitious Ibo throne, sanctuary and protection. She is protective of the Africans in her charge to the point that she even attempts to defend the rebel spy. Willis

plays the Christ figure whose ability to save the Yolingo villagers from genocide with limited men and equipment shows what Jean-Michel Valantin refers to as 'the potential capacity of [the US government and military]…of attaining sanctity' (2005, 135). The American salvation discourse in *Tears of the Sun* is a product of the colonial civilising discourse which has matured into a 'neo-Messianism' that not only asserts America's historically sacred mandate, but 'which makes the US a power with divine attributes' (2005, 139). In wiping the tears of Africa, the director's attitude is not different from the classical colonial attitude towards Africa as irredeemable; a continent so forlorn that even God has abandoned it. Father Gianni (Pierrino Mascarino) tells Lt. Walters, 'Go with God.' To which he replies: 'God already left Africa.' Another Navy SEAL 'Red' (Cole Hauser) agrees with a 'Yeah!' Every reference to God in the film — 'God bless you', 'Go with God', 'God will never forget you' — are all veiled references to Africans' inability to shape their destiny, or the hopelessness of Africa's situation.

Genre dissonance

Although there is a love relationship between Walters and Kendricks in the film, Fuqua argues that he *did not allow* the two to fall in love because it would be inappropriate for his heavy subject matter. He wanted to be 'real, gritty and as truthful as possible.' In bringing to his audience the raw traumas and atrocities of Africa, he would not dilute his message with a silly love affair:

> I started getting notes from all places about, *The African Queen*, love stories, and all that other kind of shit that didn't fit into this movie…Who do you fall in love with in the middle of all these atrocities? That is old Hollywood thinking, thinking that the audience needs that, they don't need that. (Fuqua 2003)

What Fuqua calls 'old Hollywood thinking' is, ironically, the very same colonial discourse that informs his narrative. In spite of his desire to produce a different kind of movie from the old jungle melodrama, Fuqua does not realise that his film is as much a product of his directorial choices as it is of the demands of the genre, of the actors' discourse, the ideological demands of the Pentagon's patronage, audience expectations, and the box office factor. Even his personal choices are socially and ideologically conditioned by the total context of his artistic programming. *Tears of the Sun* fits into the formulaic action hero/adventure/warfare genre in which the male action hero falls in love with a beautiful woman, or they at least stay engaged enough to interest the audience as in recent movies where feminist consciousness is being emphasised. There is an unspoken love-thing between Walters and Kendricks which is resolved at the end of the film when he successfully rescues her. In fact, some critics argue that Dr Kendricks brings nothing to the film except her 'sexy' look which

clashes with the serious tone and mood of the film. For example, Joshi (2003) asserts:

> The phoniness of *Tears*…is completely exposed in the figure of Dr Lena Fiore
> Kendricks [Monica Bellucci]. She manages to look incredibly sexy in the thick
> of the turmoil — she sports a Penelope Cruz accent, a gym-toned body, a
> perfect pout and an oft-seen cleavage, but hardly any depth of character.

This sexiness is accompanied by her intense lustful looks at Lt. Walters which are
allowed to play out fully in the shot-reverse-shots. Christopher Geary observes that
'Ms Belluci always looks exquisitely lovely even after she is supposed to have been
dragged through a zillion hedges backwards.' He concludes: 'Well, that's *Hollywood
jungle chic* for you. Glamour wins over grunge every time' (Geary 2011; my emphasis).
Fuqua argues that the 'love story is about Lena and the Africans.' Yet the connection
between Lena and the Africans in the film is more like a relationship between a
benefactor or a jungle queen and her subjects. But to Fuqua, 'Bruce and Monica's
relationship is simply about respect. Two people who have a duty. Bruce has a duty,
she has to follow' (Fuqua 2003). Because the two do not kiss or make love in the
film, the director thinks he left romance out altogether saying, 'it would have been
wrong to make this film with all those things in it when you are dealing with this
subject matter' (Fuqua 2003). In his overzealousness to depict Africa's atrocities,
Fuqua fails to see the narrative tension in his film. Thus, the generic dissonance
undermines the strong humanitarian statement he is trying to make. At one level,
the film tries to squeeze itself into the humanitarian genre; at another, it is nothing
more than a typical light-hearted action-hero flick with all the fun stuff: romance,
technofetishism, hyper-masculinity heroes and villains — all the elements audiences
of this genre lap up.

Trivialising African history

The management and deployment of Africa's story by the West is an act of power
that requires inequality and sustains the idea among Westerners of the inferiority
of Africans. Chimamanda Adichie asserts that 'Power is the ability not just to tell
the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.' The
incomplete story of Africa becomes the definitive story, and that story with all its
attendant negative economic, political and cultural legacies ends up framing and
freezing the continent in a state of permanent retardation in order to provide the
perfect narrative contrast to the allegedly ever-advancing Western civilisation. As
Adichie observes, the choice of 'who' gets to tell the story is 'dependent on power.'
As she rightly observes, 'Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not
with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different
story' (Adichie 2011). Indeed, the Western story of Africa which focuses on

tribalism, ethnic cleansing, regionalism, military coups and every atrocity associated with Africa's post-independence plight never attempts to address the colonial and Cold War legacies largely responsible for Africa's problems. In the transcendent colonial narrative of Africa, Africa is evil, retarded and violent by the mere fact of being Africa. *Tears of the Sun* reproduces the same narrative in its treatment of the Nigerian Civil War and the continuous ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria. The film opens with a live newscast grounding the narrative in violence, amplifying historical ethnic and religious tensions by saying, 'In the land with 120 million people and *over 250 ethnic groups* there had been a long history of *ethnic enmity*… particularly between the *northern Fulani Moslems* and *southern Christian Ibo*' (my emphasis). Even the African names ground the much older East-West — and in the Nigerian case here, North-South — conflict of Christians and Muslims. The news telecast is structured to make the 'over 250 ethnic groups' sound like the problem even though the diversity should be celebrated. The alarmist newscast glorifies the violence as the perfect backdrop to elite US Navy SEAL intervention.

The history of Nigeria does not begin with Africans; it begins with the British because Nigeria did not exist as a country or nation before the British created it and would have never existed in its current form. The history of Nigeria's ethnic unrest, regional strife, religious conflicts and the accompanying coups and counter coups can be traced back to what historians call 'the mistake of 1914'. This was the forceful amalgamation of northern and southern people groups encompassing the present-day Nigeria into one artificial nation because it was administratively and economically expedient for Britain (Osaghae 1998, 1). Up until 1900, the current landmass of Nigeria constituted many independent 'and sometimes hostile nation states' that had little in common (Obasanjo 1981, 1). Sir Hugh Clifford, the British Governor of Nigeria (1920–1931), wrote that Nigeria was 'a collection of independent Native States, separated from one another…by great distances, by differences of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers' (as cited in Obasanjo 1981, 1). A. H. M. Kirk-Greene observes that 'The tragedy of 1967 is that many of its seeds were sown…in the 1950s or, as some see it, in 1914 or maybe in 1900 itself' (cited in Ajose-Adeogun 2018). Olusegun Obasanjo, who was the General Officer Commanding 3rd Marine Commando Division of the Nigerian Army which crushed the Biafran Resistance, attributes the causes of the war to an 'uneasy peace and stability' that had plagued Nigeria since independence and that 'had their genesis in the geography, history and demography of Nigeria' (1981, xii). It's important to emphasise that without British interference in West Africa, Nigeria — with all its internal contradictions — would not have existed in the first place. British colonial policy was selfishly pro-British and did not favour the colonised. As such, the British used manipulation and divisionism

to conquer, subdue and control their colonial territories, including the polarising deployment of religious differences. In anycase, it is not true that all Fulanis are Muslim and all Ibos Christian. The British considered the northern Muslim Sokoto Caliphate and its Emirates 'hallmarks of African civilization' and actually imposed appointees as colonial administrators over non-Muslim people groups (Osaghae 1998, 2–3). The British, by inheriting the internal colonial structure of a radically jihadist Islamic caliphate and consolidating the caliphate's violent push southwards, helped water the seeds of religious conflict in Nigeria. While southern and western Nigeria were open to Western influences, the north stayed closed to Christianity and Western education due to a 'pact' Lugard is said to have signed with the Emir (Osaghae 1998, 5). The result of this pact is that the north and south continued as perfect cultural strangers. Lord Lugard, the British Governor General pursued a policy of indirect rule and *separate development* in the north and the south which in effect 'produced two Nigerias, each with different social, political, economic and cultural backgrounds and developments within the country' (Obasanjo 1981, 2). Obasanjo says Lugard's separateness was further 'strengthened and deepened by Sir Arthur Richard's Constitution of 1946 which inaugurated Nigeria's regionalism.' This essentially set the foundation for tribal, ethnic and regional politics and competition in Nigeria. This madness was further pursued by the British when the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 emphasised a high degree of 'non-interference… by the increased regional autonomy and stronger regional legislatures.' The central government became a weak entity and Obasanjo says, 'Nigeria politically took a turn for the worse, and there was a possibility of three countries emerging out of Nigeria' (1981, 2). Even before Nigeria was granted independence in October 1960, the separate regional development emphasis was already producing fruits of violence and hatred. Obasanjo observes that 'the ugly embers of tribalism and sectionalism had been fanned into a deadly flame by all political leaders' who 'rode on the crest of this cancerous tribalism and the ignorance of the people…at the expense of national unity and the nation' (1981, 3). The only thing the regional leaders agreed on was that Nigeria be granted political independence, although the country lacked a foundation for political stability, national unity and prosperity. The tribalism, regionalism and sectarianism born of Nigeria's malformation plagued the nation into its post-colonial era leading to the January 1966 coup in which many northern and western military officers were executed by Easterners. The 1966 coup in turn precipitated the collapse of Nigeria. 'The Federation was sick at birth', says Kirk-Greene, 'and by January 1966, the sick, bedridden babe collapsed' (Obasanjo 1981, 210). A counter coup led by Northerners in July 1966 reversed the gains of the Easterners and led to their large-scale persecution. A flurry of diplomatic activities failed to stop the war breaking out. Nigerian novelist, Elechi Amadi, who

was a retired army Captain at the start of the war, says, 'Nigeria was like a spaceship geared for a journey to hell. The switch had been turned on in January 1966 and now nothing could stop her headlong rush along the appointed course' (Obasanjo 1981, 20). Although it was initially mostly a Northern (Hausa-Fulani) versus the Easterners (Ibos) war, it eventually became the Federal Nigerian government versus the self-declared Ibo Biafran Republic since most minority Eastern and Western tribes preferred to remain inside a united Nigeria than to be dominated by the Ibos in an independent Biafra. Given this historical context, Fuqua's film sends the wrong message by letting the colonial authors of Nigeria's post-independence chaos go scot-free.

The film trivialises Nigerian history and distorts the 1967 civil war by developing a thin plot line in which we see a small but sophisticated American Navy SEAL unit led by a no-nonsense Lt. A. K. Walters locked in an unequal confrontation with a demonised brigade of poorly armed Nigerian rebels. Divergence between history and fiction is also seen in the film's silence concerning external interferences that fuelled the Nigerian Civil War. In a conversation with Captain Amadi, Colonel Benjamin Adekunle, who commanded the Third Infantry Division in the South during the civil war, scoffs at the international community for feeding the fire of division. 'And those so-called international observers!' he says, 'How can anyone fight a war with such meddlesome referees?' To which Amadi replies, 'Sometimes I get the feeling we are playing a football match' (Amadi 1973, 148). The football match analogy works well when you consider that the Western and especially the American audience enjoys watching catastrophic representation of Africa that celebrates 'imperial expansion and military intervention' (Boggs and Pollard 2007, 9). Without fully understanding the complexity of Nigeria's regional and religious conflicts, countries around the world took sides in the Nigerian Civil War, providing moral and even military support. The United States, Britain and the Soviet Union, for instance, backed the Federal Military Government, while France supported Biafra. It was the only Cold War conflict in which the US and USSR were on the same side. France and Israel provided weapons to both sides in the conflict (Amadi 1973, 127). There were no US rescue missions of any sort conducted by the US Navy SEALs or any department of the US military. In Hollywood's essentialist film, there are only four forces in two camps; the good US Navy SEAL and citizens versus the bad Nigerian military and rebels. The story is now told through the barrel of Lt. A. K. Walter's gun. The natives who were the major players in the real conflict are reduced to a backdrop as villains or objects of pity for another Hollywood action movie, and a test ground for US Navy SEAL amour and tactics.

Demonising the Nigerian military

One of the most disappointing aspects of *Tears of the Sun* is the way it demonises Nigerian soldiers while glorifying the American military. In the first place, it changes historical facts by making Yakubu's men 'rebels' although General Yakubu Gowon that this name alludes to was the military leader of Nigeria at the time of the war and his troops were Federal Nigerian government soldiers. Accounts of the war by two eye-witnesses, Elechi Amadi (1973) and Olusegun Obasanjo (1981), show that in spite of disciplinary problems and lack of proper training and equipment, they were a very professional army. Biafran soldiers were the rebels, but they saw themselves as secessionist, not the type of murderers Fuqua tries to re-create here. In the film, the Nigerian soldiers, both Federal and rebel, are nothing but brutal savages who have no particular reason for their callousness. While the search for Prince Arthur Azuka might make sense in a tribal war, it is not even true. What is true is that some Ibo groups developed monarchies which have survived since the 19th century. These are Riverine Ibo groups such as Asaba, Onitsha, Osomari and other Ika Ibos but the idea of a unified Ibo monarchy or centralised traditional government is a falsity the film perpetuates. Opone argues that the existence of a monarchy among the Enuani Ibos is 'primordial and free from external imposition' (2002, 57), underscoring the existence of monarchical structures in precolonial Ibo society. Nevertheless, the idea of a centralised and unified Ibo monarchy as portrayed in *Tears of the Sun* is Fuqua's fabrication. In spite of the historically monarchical Ibo governments, the majority Ibos remain egalitarian and traditional democrats, or what Davidson calls, 'segmentary governments' or democratic 'village governments' (1977, 116–117). The pursuit of Arthur Azuka for ultimate destruction is just one of those narrative indulgences intended to entrench the theme of tribalism and ethnic cleansing in the film. The kinds of change the film makes to historical fact has serious political implications in constructing a false and rather savage account of the civil war and a largely violent and retarded sense of Nigerian history that undermines the country's achievements since independence from Britain, especially tribal unity forged after the civil war.

The St. Michaels' Mission massacre in the film is another misrepresentation of the Nigerian Civil War. There is no evidence that either Biafran secessionists or Federal Nigerian soldiers attacked places of worship. Elechi Amadi, who sought refuge at a Catholic mission and witnessed the advance of Nigerian Federal soldiers on Port Harcourt, gives a very different account compared to the film's regarding the behaviour of Nigerian soldiers around church premises. He says in spite of the hail of bullets very few stray bullets landed in their mission hideout, which to him meant, 'The Federal boys were obviously sticking to their code of conduct in the matter

of shrines and holy places' (1973, 135). Not only did the soldiers steer their gun muzzles away from the holy place, but 'throughout our stay in St. Cyprian's Church compound, not a single soldier stepped into the premises' (1973, 135). The mission massacre we see in the film could be suggestive of the Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda where some of the worst massacres occurred in holy places. But even the Rwandan genocide needs to be placed in its correct historical context from the precolonial era up till the 1994 genocide in order to discern the method in the massacre. In the film, after overstating the ethnic violence to the Navy SEALs, Captain Bill Rhodes (Tom Skerritt) cynically remarks, 'The local militia are killing anyone who goes to a different church.' Although clashes between Muslims and Christians are a Nigerian reality, especially in the context of recent heightened Boko Haram bombings of churches, there is no recorded conflict between Christian communities. Without putting the Nigerian Civil War in its proper historical context, violence becomes merely a useful pornographic resource for feeding the colonial mythology of the Dark Continent.

Fuqua's *Tears of the Sun* is a fantastic product of Hollywood, 'the linchpin of ideological hegemony in the United States' (Boggs and Pollard 2007, 6–7). Hollywood is a jingoistic cultural institution that celebrates US imperial power in Africa. The film diminishes Africa's image in order to project America's image. The Nigerian Civil War was by no means a battle of savages. As Obasanjo observes, it was:

> …the story of brother rising against brother in a family feud, aggravated by outside intervention which led to brother despising brother, brother killing brother and finally brother seeking out brother, binding his wounds and both settling their feud by themselves in a spirit of understanding, mutual respect, love and comradeship. (1981, 1)

In fact, at the beginning of the fallout, the Nigerian Federal government intended to carry out what they call a 'police action' against the Biafran secessionists hoping that things would calm down, but when the secessionists showed a resolve to break away, the government was compelled to take firmer action, including use of the air force (Amadi 1973, 47). Interestingly, Amadi recounts that at some point in the war, Federal soldiers even exchanged gifts and drank with the Biafran fighters (1973, 48). General Gowon, Nigeria's Federal president, also sought reconciliation, a strategy that helped to eliminate a protracted guerrilla war.

Not only is the tribal factor overplayed in the film, the essentialist religious factor is also overdone. The civil war was not necessarily a Christians-versus-Muslims war. General Gowon clarified this misconception in his 1967 Christmas address to the nation:

> Some of them have suggested that we are fighting a religious war — a war of 'Federal Moslems' against 'Christian rebels.' This is nonsense. All the world

should know by now that more than sixty per cent of the officers and men of the Nigerian Armed Forces are Christians and non-Moslems. (Obasanjo 1981, 56)

Gowon himself was a Christian (Hughes 2004, 841). A lot of the civilian population that identified with the Federal Army was Christian, encompassing the bulk of ethnicities from Western Nigeria, including the Yoruba who are mostly Christian, and minorities from Eastern Nigeria who were afraid of Ibo domination. Emphasising religious differences fits into the 'divide and rule' technique the British used to weaken Africa for colonial expediency.

Militainment and historical revisionism

Tears of the Sun is also one of those combat films made with Pentagon collaboration. The collaboration between the entertainment industry and the US military-industrial-entertainment-complex is called 'militainment'. The term was coined in the 1990s to describe the longstanding, historic and increasing cooperation between Hollywood and the Pentagon in the entertainment industry. Roger Stahl traces the official application of the word militainment in his book *Militainment Inc.* (2010), saying the word 'militainment' 'entered the public lexicon' in 2003 and was first defined by Princeton's Online Dictionary WordNet as: 'entertainment with military themes in which the Department of Defense is celebrated', a predominantly American experience (2010, 6). The term was also used by CNN for 'war-themed' reality TV shows that mushroomed around the time, and immediately after the 'shock and awe blitz of Baghdad'. It was applied to news coverage that 'seems to revel in the suspense and excitement, and inevitably, the violence and suffering of combat' (2010, 6). In his book, Stahl defines militainment as 'state violence translated into an object of pleasurable consumption' (2010, 6). It is the aestheticization of war that makes war a product for consumption leading to 'voyeuristic complacency' on the one hand while also desensitising the citizen to the horrors of war (2010, 6). This definition elaborates on the merging between fact and fiction, and tragedy and entertainment and how this genre of film contributes to the dehumanisation of the viewer. In *The Essential Fankfurt School Reader* (1982), Adorno takes this point further, observing that, 'the aesthetic principle of stylization…makes an unthinkable fate appear to have had some meaning; it is transfigured, something of its horror is removed' and to him, 'this does an injustice to the victims' (1992, 313). These films use the generic framework of war, action and adventure to hook the audience while making violence more acceptable and entertaining.

Although the term 'militainment' was coined in the 1900s, the phenomenon has been in existence for over a century. Stahl dates military entertainment as far back as 1894 when Thomas Edison showcased his film *Barroom Scene* which Stahl believes

contained the first fight on screen, followed by Stuart Blackton's short film, *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag* (1896), considered by Stahl as the first war film (Stahl 2010, 8). The phenomenon has only become increasingly prominent since the invention of television and, from the 1990s, embedded war journalism. Valantin traces the alliance between Hollywood and the military to the 1960s and points at the production of *The Longest Day* (1962) directed by Ken Annakin, Andrew Marton Bernhard Wicki, Gerd Oswald and Darryl Zanuck, which benefitted from a massive 'logistical deployment' from the US navy and military. It was this film — he argues — that led to the creation of 'a military cinema unit' that paved the way for later blockbusters like *Battle of Bulge* (1965), *Where Eagles Dare* (1969), *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970), *Patton* (1970) and *The Battle of Midway* (1976) (2005, 11). David Robb argues that the Pentagon has been shaping Hollywood movies and TV shows generally for over 50 years and that children have been targeted for recruitment through these movies. Congress has been targeted as well, to approve military spending and wars, while American public opinion has been manipulated in favour of war (2004, 25–27). Over the years, the US military has provided troops, military hardware including fighter aircraft, nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers, entire military bases, real soldiers and support staff to help make movies that paint the military in a positive light and help to 'rehabilitate' its image, especially after the Vietnam War. The result is ideological manipulation of cinematic art, historical revisionism, and distortion of what passes for historical and 'true story' films. As Nick Turse observes, some Hollywood producers go overboard to please the Pentagon and 'turn villains into heroes, remove central characters, change politically sensitive settings, or add military rescues to movies that require none' (Turse 2011). The filmmaker's point of view is further compromised by the changes made to history to support the US position politically in the conflict represented. This is the kind of concocted rescue mission we find in *Tears of the Sun*. Fuqua himself says, in order for him to get the nuclear carrier and the aircraft which came at the end of the shoot, the military 'always had this carrot and stick that they could wield.' Fuqua was 'forced to adopt only one political view which was…right wing.' As a consolation, he argues that 'the Navy SEALs seemed to share the same viewpoint', so he didn't mind since being limited politically in what he could say in order to get military support for making the film 'made the movie in some way *more truthful*' (*Tears of the Sun*, 2003; my emphasis). That is why, Jeff Fleischer notes that in *Tears of the Sun*, just like in all Pentagon supervised films, the military do not commit atrocities or crimes against humanity, even though he claims that these crimes are properly documented (Fleischer 2011). The result of this Big Brother role of Pentagon in Hollywood is that the screenwriters and directors end up being just instruments of Pentagon propaganda and the audience do not realise there is a 'master story' within the story. The Pentagon may not demand that

directors change history openly as this would be too obvious, but as David Robb observes, their strategy is to revise history through a covert mode of fictionalisation that creates a new history which is more favourable to the image of the Pentagon and the US military. Any director who refuses to produce 'films that only romanticize and present the US military in 100 percent favourable light' and insists on 'artistic responsibility' is shunned (2004, 53–56). The Pentagon's narrow interest agenda for Hollywood results in the (re)construction of historical fact which, in turn, creates its own narrative structure that produces supposedly innocent entertainment, yet, in fact project to the viewer a revised history and a military advertisement. The combination of these results in militainment.

Tears of the Sun was produced with full Pentagon support. Director Fuqua had access to the nuclear carrier *Harry S. Truman* for four days. Fuqua was given access to choppers and jets and real Navy SEAL paratroopers who participated in the sky dive in the film. There was a cost to this help, however: positive representation of the US navy. No wonder, Fuqua uses nearly half of his commentary to sing the praises of the US Navy SEALs. *Tears of the Sun* also had Hurry Humphreys, a former Navy SEAL, as the Technical Advisor. A viewing of *Tears of the Sun* alongside the special features 'Africa Fact Track' unfolds like an introductory course to US Navy SEAL lingo, weaponry, tactics, clothing and endurance with very little narrative to keep one's dramatic attention. Thus, at one level, the film celebrates the demonstrable power of the US military and technowar read against the backdrop of Africa's political turmoil and humanitarian crisis.

This chapter does not focus on the aesthetic merits of *Tears of the Sun* but rather on the colonialist mode of Dark Continent narratology, the heroic mythology of the US Navy SEALs, and the larger interest of militainment. It also elaborates on the nonexistent US military intervention in the historical Biafran War in order to expose the deliberate insertion of the US Navy SEAL intervention whose purpose was to project the US military in positive light, and drumming support for US military recruitment and foreign intervention. However, reference to a couple of reviews helps illustrate how the aestheticisation of militainment comes through as propaganda. A number of critics decry the lack of dramatic tension, the lacklustre performances and overt propaganda in the film, but they agree that the military display is impressive. For example, the film is an accurate manual of Navy SEAL attire, in spite of any weaknesses as a creative work, echoed in the words of a blogger: 'For many of you, *Tears of the Sun* is a great movie about Navy SEALs. *Whatever you may think of the story*, the costume design is spot on and can serve as a pretty accurate guide for a Navy SEAL jungle loadout' (Jake 2011; my emphasis). Furthermore, according to Christopher Geary, the deployment of military hardware is quite impressive, showing the close involvement of professional 'technical advisors'. However, he finds that

'other scenes in this weakly-gripping drama are puzzling.' Among the weaknesses he cites are poor character development, few surprises, and the old-fashioned Western adventure-style narrative that undermines the film's humanitarian sentiments. He also comments on the 'general inadequacy of the screenplay' which could be responsible for the 'robotic performance of Bruce Willis (Geary 2011). Mari Davis makes a sharp critique of the film: '…if you're expecting something new in the military genre movie, you'll be disappointed. The military hardware as in guns and equipment had been shown and done before.' However, she does see something authentic: 'The costume designer really did the research. And as "military" movies go, there probably was a military consultant and the Pentagon Public Affairs was probably around too' (Davis 2004), underscoring the role of the US military in shaping the film. Indian film critic Namrata Joshi sees the manipulative hand of Pentagon in *Tears of the Sun* which she calls 'blatant US propaganda which isn't even marginally veiled by any good story-telling, sensitive acting or a remote sense of celluloid aesthetic' (Joshi 2003). Mike McHone (2011) says, 'If you judged *Tears of the Sun* [as] just another meandering, thoughtless action brouhaha with more emphasis on bombs and bullets than on dialogue and plot…. you'd be right.' To Matthew Mulka (2011), *Tears of the Sun* is 'all that is wrong with Hollywood and its glorification of military intervention and African portrayals,' concluding that 'the characters in this movie…[are]…gross prevarications and distortions on any real events or people that impacted this part of Nigeria's history.' Some of these critics acknowledge the impressive marketing of the US military and show awareness of Pentagon involvement. They generally find the film impressive as a military exhibition and combat manual, but all of them find the film unimpressive and even false as a work of art.

Do(ing) the right thing!

Fuqua's film ends with a misquotation from Edmund Burke: 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing.' This misquote is actually a rallying cry for war that has been used in America by, among others, Ronald Reagan to validate the invasion of Grenada and to mobilise a military response against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Gen. Richard Myers, the Joint Chiefs chairman, also used the quote as a rallying cry for war in a speech at the Pentagon during the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks (McHone 2011). Critics believe that *Tears of the Sun* is one of the movies the Pentagon funded to boost morale and raise consensus about the invasion of Iraq by making war entertaining and spectacular. The Burke quote exposes the propaganda of the 'clean war, technofetishism, and support-the-troops rhetoric' of the militainment discourse (Stahl 2010, 25). *Tears of the Sun* is a piece of militainment that helps to 'ideologically bolster empire and

the war system' since 'movies could be even more effective instruments than outright propaganda' (Boggs and Pollard 2007, 17). For all his good intentions, Fuqua's film simply uses Africa to craft a piece of militainment which, because of its timing of release, can be seen as a metaphor for the US Desert Storm assault against 'demonic Arabs and Moslems', who are 'fanatical, semicivilized, and violent' (Boggs and Pollard 2007, 17). Africa also provides another unique case scenario of darkness in the tradition of colonial narratives in order to offer film viewers unique Dark Continent infotainment. This serves to glorify America's global empire, especially 'technical fundamentalism' in which military superiority 'negotiates legitimacy, righteousness' (Stahl 2010, 28) and all manner of justifications for America's global hegemony. Africa's image is not only trumped by the director's adaptation choices in the process, but the film also reinforces in African viewers of Hollywood's images a stunted programming, resulting in self-hatred, and political, economic and cultural regression.

6

This *is* 'a true story!'

This chapter builds on the 'based on a true story' adaptation model of the previous chapter to examine the film *Hotel Rwanda* marketed by the producers as 'a true story' in order to establish the complex aesthetic and political afterlives of this film as a New Wave Hollywood-Africa film that recycles the Dark Continent image of Africa through its claim to historical veracity. The chapter examines the implication of the film's 'true story' claim for Rwandan genocide memory (re)construction, for Rwandan history, and the complex search for peace and reconciliation. *Hotel Rwanda* is among the greatest Hollywood-Africa film of all times, ranked by the American Film Institute (AFI) in 2006 at number 90 among the most inspirational films ever. It is rare for some of us today to think of the 1994 Tutsi genocide, or, indeed, of the Republic of Rwanda without thinking about director Terry George's film *Hotel Rwanda* (2004). The film brought the story of the 1994 Rwandan genocide into the limelight ten years after the grisly event and exposed the betrayal of Rwanda by the international community who were bickering about classifying the killings as anything but genocide. Although it's not shown in the movie, even the OAU continued to fraternise with the perpetrators of the killings while these murderers were hacking away at their innocent victims (Mushemeza 2007, 144). Based on the life and testimony of hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina about how he saved the lives of 1 268 Tutsis and moderate Hutus during the genocide, *Hotel Rwanda* gripped the imagination of the world and was lauded for publicising the 1994 Tutsi genocide, which was seriously underreported at the time. The film has, however, been heavily criticised by film and history scholars, as well as many survivors of Hôtel des Mille Collines for exaggerating Rusesabagina's heroism, for ignoring the history behind the genocide and for trivialising the violence. The Rwandan genocide had long-term causes that stretch back to the precolonial era, through to the colonial entrenchment of tribal hatred. The absence of any historical context for the Rwandan genocide in George's *Hotel Rwanda* makes the violence meaningless and reproduces the Dark Continent narrative trope of Africa where violence is portrayed as a way of life. This dehistoricised treatment of the complex history behind the Rwandan genocide by Westerners is also articulated by authors like Peter Erlinder, *The Accidental…Genocide*

(2013), Barrie Collins's *Rwanda 1994: The Myth of the Akazu Genocide Conspiracy and its Consequences* (2014), and Edward Herman and David Peterson in *Enduring Lies: The Rwandan Genocide in the Propaganda System, 20 Years* (2014). The authors dismiss all allegations that the genocide was elaborately planned and executed by the Mouvement Démocratique Republicain (MDR) government as well as historical preludes to the mega-genocide. They argue that the Rwandan genocide was spontaneous violence, triggered by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) recklessness and, in particular, the death of President Habyarimana. These authors share the film's shallow premise that reduces the genocide to a form of Dark Continent occurrence without any deep historical roots. The history of the Rwandan genocide falls beyond the scope of this chapter but, in brief, the 1994 killings were the grand finale of several precursor Tutsi genocides which led to many massacres and a steady flow of Rwandan refugees into neighbouring countries, especially Uganda (see Mamdani 2002; Kinzer 2004; Dallaire and Beardsley 2004; Melvern 2006, 2009, 2011; Mushemeza 2007; Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008; Kayihura and Zukus 2014).

The film is also criticised for undermining the role of other key players, local and international, in protecting the lives of the hotel refugees. Above all, it is criticised for tampering with the reality of events at Hôtel des Mille Collines in order to inflate Rusesabagina's heroic image to fit into the discourse of dramatic heroes. The complex contribution of *Hotel Rwanda* to the search for justice, peace, and reconciliation challenges the concept of artistic responsibility, which in the case of the Rwandan genocide should balance aesthetic finesse and a reverential treading over the mass graves. The film is resented in equal measure by Hutu sympathisers and Western sceptics who see the binary good-and-evil, happy-ever-after Hollywood plot as a Western fabrication that hypes the role of the RPF in ending the genocide while glossing over RPF atrocities. Critics like Keith Harmon Snow, fault *Hotel Rwanda* for presenting Tutsis as 'innocent saintly victims', while the Hutus are presented as 'demonic, blood thirsty Interahamwe'; this representation is seen as part of the longstanding Western complicity in supporting the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) rebels and the Kagame regime. The US military-industrial-entertainment-complex is implicated for creating what Snow (2007) calls, 'the myth of the Rwandan genocide.' However, Snow's imperial and rather essentialist outlook ignores the local complexity of the Rwandan holocaust and reduces Rwanda to a mere guinea pig for Western military and ideological experiments. Another narrative thread by Snow examines the Rwandan genocide from a purely economic point of view that also ignores its historical roots, choosing instead to highlight the structural economic adjustment cauldron of the World Bank and IMF that was allegedly responsible for the collapse of President Juvenal Habyarimana's regime; this, they say, in turn consolidated the military might of the RPA and consequently led to the genocide. Snow argues that

the IMF's structural adjustments programme synchronised with RPF assault to produce the structural violence that led to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. There is also the Hamitic theory strand which hypothesises that Tutsis are the Jews of Central Africa and the Tutsi genocide is a replay of the Jewish Holocaust (Snow 2007). Given the complexity of Rwandan genocide history and the controversial position of *Hotel Rwanda* in representing some of this reality, how does Terry George's film reflect, refract and distort these realities? How does the film collate, mediate and complicate the search for peace and reconciliation, given the competing narratives and metanarratives on the grisly 100 days of 1994, and the search for lasting peace and reconciliation?

This chapter evaluates Rusesabagina's memory, which both Rusesabagina and the film director rely on to provide an accurate and truthful representation of the events at Hôtel des Mille Collines, its contestation by some Mille Collines survivors and witnesses, as well as its impact on the search for lasting peace and reconciliation in the country. This time we have a contemporary Hollywood film about Africa that does not acknowledge itself as 'based on a true story' but is packaged and defended by the moviemakers and the main character, Rusesabagina, as the 'Absolutely true story'. This raises the question of personal memory and social reality as it develops an intertextual collage of Rusesabagina's autobiography, the film and the film's impact on reality and truth. This chapter also addresses the problem of cultural hybridity of authorship — of the autobiography that is both Western and African. This chapter argues that the film exposes a conflicting concept of heroism — between Hollywood's sense of the individualist 'self-transcendent' fictional hero — modelled on imaginary saviours like Batman, Spiderman and Ironman, and Rwanda's communal heroes who saved hundreds of people. The debate over the nature of Rusesabagina's heroism illuminates the impact of the classical Hollywood narrative form on Rusesabagina's imagination as well as the enthusiastically positive response of Western critics and audiences, which reveal implications of the film's impact locally and internationally on post-genocide efforts for peace and reconciliation.

Contesting memory re-construction in *Hotel Rwanda*

Hotel Rwanda is a great humanitarian film in its own right, the most successful of all films about the Tutsi genocide, and one of the most successful Hollywood-Africa films of all time. Its success is quite a phenomenon considering the fact that the film is about Africa and about violence so horrendous that one can hardly imagine it as a subject for (especially Western) entertainment. Part of this success derives from the director's psychological treatment of the genocide that curtailed violence on screen and instead challenged humanity through the noble actions of Paul Rusesabagina.

The violence we see in *Hotel Rwanda* is minimised and only shown indirectly through video news footage, the blood on Rusesabagina's son — suggesting the massacre of the neighbours, and the miles of dead bodies scattered on River Road whose impact on the audience is diminished by the '…the softening effect of pre-dawn darkness and swirling fog' (Adhikari 2007, 291). As Catherine Billey notes, 'Mr. George had sought to communicate the psychological terror of the experience rather than the blood bath' (*New York Times*, December 19, 2004). In choosing to avoid dealing with the violence directly or the political and historical context of the genocide that would explain the reason for its occurrence, and in creating instead a heroic and romantic drama, the film reinforces stereotypes of Africa as a place of senseless violence (Adhikari 2007, 281). The film is, therefore, much easier to watch compared with *100 Days* (2001), *Sometimes in April* (2005), *Shooting Dogs* (2005), *Shake Hands with the Devil* (2007) and *Iseta: Behind the Roadblock* (2008) — the only film that contains documented segments of footage of actual killing during the Rwandan genocide. These films attempt to show more of the violence in varying degrees compared with *Hotel Rwanda which* limits the demonstration of violence and takes a psychological approach. Don Cheadle's portrayal of Paul Rusesabagina that won him an Oscar nomination for best actor contributes significantly to the film's psychological appeal. As an entertainment piece, therefore, *Hotel Rwanda* is quite impressive.

The problem with *Hotel Rwanda* starts with its claim that the viewer is being presented with '*the* true story' or in other cases, 'the inspirational *true* story' of Paul Rusesabagina. This claim is displayed boldly on the cover of *Hotel Rwanda* DVDs. Some state immediately underneath the title *Hotel Rwanda*, 'A True Story' while other DVD jackets say: 'The true story of a man who fought impossible odds to save everyone he could'. What this tells the viewer is that this is the story of an Oskar Schindler, Charles Coward, Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, or any such genocide hero. These claims are not just DVD marketing ploys, but actual claims by the film director in other forums that he represented the story of Rusesabagina accurately and that Rusesabagina's testimony is true based on his corroborative research in Rwanda and in Brussels. In essence, Terry George claims that Rusesabagina's testimony is authentic and that he is in real life what the film portrays. This serious claim has far-reaching consequences for genocide memory, the healing of the survivors of Hôtel des Mille Collines and post-genocide reconciliation. In the first place, it is neither possible for the director to reproduce Rusesbagina's recollections perfectly, nor for Rusesabagina's memory to be fully accurate. As John Dean (2009) observes, there is a big distinction between history and memory: 'History is then, memory is now. Memory is the past remembered and reconstructed through the lens of the present and its building blocks.' Even if Rusesabagina were honest in his

account, historical movies are mediated by the present context of their production including the political and cultural economy of production and consumption and must 'entertain the sensibilities of the present' (2009). Memory repackages history in containers of the present, but memory itself is not foolproof because it relies on individual recollection selectively invoked by the narrator, leading to silences, compressions and elaborations depending on the narrator's own interests. As Dean (2009) rightly puts it, 'history inevitably gets short-changed.' Dean further argues that the relation between movies and history are 'more a connection rather than a similarity, an association rather than nearness', leading him to ask: 'The viewer can expect a movie to be like literature. But can you expect a movie to be history?' (2009). This question is relevant to our analysis of *Hotel Rwanda* and questions our faith in its version of what happened at Hôtel des Mille Collines and in Rusesabagina's testimony which became the screenplay. It also challenges our belief in Rusesabagina's testimony after the film chose for him a new career path of international celebrity and speaker, humanitarian activist, philanthropist and opposition politician.

Plate 3. Paul Rusesabagina, his wife Tatiana and their children.

Although movies have a connection to and association with fact, they are — by the nature of their narrative construction — fictional. This is in line with film adaptation scholar Thomas Leitch's view that movies can be useful records of history, but 'they can no more be accurate records of the historical events they purport to represent' (2009, 282). Indeed, film textualises history and memory through authorial/auteurial mediation, fictionalised restaging into contemporary contexts, actors' star discourses, and the overall political economy of film production. Films about the past become in many ways films about the present or even about distant places codified within historical locations. This shows the 'ahistorical nature of historical films' (Saab 2001, 715), especially since as David Lubin bluntly asserts, 'the past…does not buy tickets' (as cited in Saab 2001, 715). Thus, despite all the good intentions and humanitarian contributions of directors like Terry George, history is hostage to film's potential for profitable screenplays.

The maker of *Hotel Rwanda* has been drawn into the political controversies surrounding Rusesabagina by his insistence on the absolute truthfulness of his account of Rusesabagina's heroic role at Hôtel des Mille Collines. George has termed contestations of Rusesabagina's heroism, 'Smearing a Hero' and 'Sad Revisionism' as he upheld the absolute veracity of his account:

> To make a film of a true story you must compress timelines, create composite characters and dramatize emotions. When it came to making "Hotel Rwanda" — the story of how Paul Rusesabagina *saved* the lives of hundreds of people who took shelter from the 1994 genocide in the hotel he managed — I was obsessed with *getting it right*. (*The Washington Post*, May 10, 2006; my emphasis)

The director claims that he 'grilled Rusesabagina', and read extensively to evaluate Rusesabagina's testimony, and even met survivors from Hôtel de Mille Collins, and 'No one contradicted his story' (*The Washington Post*, May 10, 2006). Terry George insists that in the case of *Hotel Rwanda*, he actually got it all 'right' even though he acknowledges that dramatic licence is essential to creating infectious screenplays. The latest book to challenge *Hotel Rwanda*'s account of reality is Edouard Kayihura and Kerry Zukus's *Inside Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story…and Why It Matters Today* (2014). The book brings first-hand survivor account and previously unseen email correspondences between the director of *Hotel Rwanda* and Senator Odette Nyiramilimo, a Rwandan physician who took refuge in Mille Collines and credits Rusesabagina for saving her life. Nyiramilimo, whom the director acknowledges as one of the inspirations for the film, read the screenplay before the film shoot and told the director, 'This is *not* what happened.' His response was, 'It's a film; it's not a documentary. It is *supposed to be fiction*' (2014, 152; my emphasis). But once the film was made, for some reason, this fiction was marketed as reality. Two years after the film's release, Nyiramilimo was shocked to hear Rusesabagina on radio corroborating

the wild claims of his magnanimous role in saving the refugees. This led Nyiramilimo to appeal to the director saying, 'I am so scared to see our friend turn to a different way from what I expected him to do, just because of the film [sic] success! Please Terry, can't you help him put his feet on earth again?' (2014, 171). The next day Nyiramilimo appealed to the director to restrain Rusesabagina from profiteering from the 'fiction', getting undue praise for kind acts he never gave, and using the platform to create political discord in Rwanda:

> Now the big issue is that Paul has profited off the success of the film, *which is a fiction as you always said it was*, to try destroying politics going on in the country, while we all hoped it would help building! *People thank him on how he was taking care of orphans in the hotel, and he agrees!* Terry, there has never been orphans! Who would have brought them? Some people even call me or send nice messages to me thanking me to [for] taking care of the orphans at the tragic period. Of course I explain it did not happen like that…People cannot understand the difference between fiction and reality! But Paul does. So he should not maintain the confusion. (as cited in Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 172; my emphases)

This email message shows that George initially told his interviewees that the film was a work of fiction, but for economic expediency perhaps, the tag 'true story' was slapped on it. In his email reply to Nyiramilimo, George did not refute the fact that *Hotel Rwanda* was fiction, and yet he did not chastise Rusesabagina for claiming that it is a 'true' story in line with the marketing code on the DVD jacket. His demand was that the attacks on Rusesabagina should cease because they would be exploited by Rusesabagina's publishers and by the man himself who would be seen as a martyr. He told her bluntly, that a media showdown between IBUKA, the umbrella association for Rwandan genocide survivors and Rusesabagina would be a showdown between the local daily *Kigali Times* (the only newspaper that gave voice to their version of truth) and Western media powerhouses like the *New York Times*, the BBC and CNN, 'the world of media who just love *these stories*' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 173; my emphasis). In short, George's message was: leave the film and its perfect Western hero alone and if you dare challenge him, the entire weight of Western media will obliterate you completely. Although the director agreed in the email to Nyiramilimo that Rusesabagina was using the platform of *Hotel Rwanda* and the publicity around the autobiography *An Ordinary Man* to say things about Kagame that he does not necessarily agree with, he nevertheless warns Nyiramilimo and other critiques of the movie against 'attacking his [Rusesabagina's] memory of what happened at the hotel.' This is a no-go area for George,

> …because it forces me and many like me — Samantha Power, Gourevitch, Richard Holbrooke — *to step in* and say that what he said was basically right.

> He should be challenged on the *facts as they exist today*, on how much Rwanda has progressed, on the peace in the country and not on the *small details of the past*. (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 172–173; my emphases)

It is clear from this email that the director refuses to address the issue of Rusesabagina's distortion of the facts of what happened at the hotel and instead wants Rusesabagina challenged on facts about contemporary Rwanda. To George, the director, Rusesabagina's memory (and by implication, the foundational 'true story' myth of *Hotel Rwanda*) should never be questioned. If it is challenged by Rwandan survivors of the hotel, the director and all his Western associates in this myth-making will back up Rusesabagina whether he is right or not. Moreover, the staggering memory of the genocide as seen through former refugees of Mille Collines is now just 'small details of the past' compared to the glory and accolades of *Hotel Rwanda* and its hero and the separate and diversionary discourse on peace and progress in Kagame's Rwanda. The 'true story' claim of George's *Hotel Rwanda* is therefore not up for verification, because this is a strategic claim that enhances the film's moral, commercial and entertainment profile. This strategy would not have mattered if the film had remained a film, but in raising Rusesabagina from obscurity to the international stage, the film has created a hegemonic Western discourse of the genocide that complicates the search for the truth of what happened at Hôtel des Mille Collines and in Rwanda at the time. By insisting on the fidelity of the film to truth, the film and its makers are participating in a clash of discourses that have led to accusations, on the one hand, of genocide denial by Rusesabagina, and, on the other, that he is collaborating with rebels planning to overthrow Kagame's regime by force of arms.

Survivors speak out

Survivors from the hotel as well as United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) troops and international journalists who were in Kigali at the time of the Rwandan genocide have seriously contested Rusesabagina's heroism. In their book *Hotel Rwanda: Or the Tutsi Genocide as Seen by Hollywood* (2008), Alfred Ndahiro and Privat Rutazibwa reproduce interviews with some of the 74 survivors of Hôtel de Mille Collins and additionally other high witnesses of the drama of survival at the hotel. The majority of their sources conclude that film director George relied less on objective research and more on Rusesabagina's subjective testimony. Edouard Kayihura calls *Hotel Rwanda* 'a fox-hole movie' and establishes his authority to critique the movie as 'one of the very few who have been in the real-life-foxhole' of Mille Collines during the genocide. After stating his frustration with the movie while admitting that historical non-fiction is bound to tinker with facts, he asks

the big question: 'How was Rusesabagina selected from among all who were in the hotel, and all who helped protect those of us who were in the hotel, for deification in a Hollywood film?' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 145). Ndahiro and Rutazibwa allege that the filmmakers worked with a single story and ignored other competing stories about what really happened at Mile Collines in those fateful months of April, May, and June of 1994. 'It is he [Rusesabagina], at the end of the day, who created the screenplay based on his memories,' they say. 'It is he, at the end of the day, who told his story, at the same time erecting his own statue' (2008, 10). General Romeo Dallaire, who was UNMAIR force commander during the genocide, who is portrayed as Colonel Oliver North (Nick Nolte), has no kind words for the film either: 'I think the only value of "Hotel Rwanda" is that it keeps the Rwandan genocide alive, but as far as content, it's Hollywood,' he remarks. 'When people use the term Hollywood in a pejorative way, "it's because they produce junk like that."' He goes on to say that 'The story is skewed and we didn't need that…the facts were not necessarily well-researched' (as cited in Ostroff, 2011). Although Rusesabagina did not write the screenplay, he provided the story that was adapted to the screenplay, and as the Special Consultant to United Artists and Lion Gate Films — the film producers — he held a critical position that gave him leverage in shaping what we see in the film.

This leads to the question: whose account of reality is correct? Either Terry George is deceived, or the survivors of Hôtel des Mille Collines that Ndahiro and Rutazibwa and Kayihura and Zukus interviewed lied, or we are dealing here with the phenomenon of 'historical pluralism' which, according to Hayden White, 'presupposes either a number of equally plausible accounts of the historical past or, alternatively, a number of different but equally meaningful constructions' of the same historical event (White 2010, 226). White asserts that all narrative history, oral, written [and visual], have elements of fiction embedded in them just by the nature of their textualised production through what he calls 'emplotment' (White 2010, 280–281). Emplotment is the act of cutting and sewing the pieces of reality into a coherent narrative. The screenplay transforms the story from the raw material of reality, history and memory into a literary/cinematic product through the plot. Reality is refracted through the literary process of scripting before cinematic realisation, and the entire process involves fictionalisation. The process of 'emplotment' transforms the Hôtel des Mille Collines episode into the 'memory' of Rusesabagina, which becomes the story that becomes the screenplay. The screenplay is in turn influenced by the rules of the historical film genre, the cultural influence of Hollywood, and multiple mediations by American and South African actors and producers' interpretations, as well as the South African location of the film's shoot. Every step away from life as experienced in Hôtel de Mille Collines during the genocide distances the narrative from reality.

This is 'a true story', or is it?

It is important to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the term 'True Story' as it is deployed in *Hotel Rwanda*. What does it mean for the film to have the stature of a *true story*, and what are the theoretical, moral, philosophical and economic implications of such a claim? With all due respect to the filmmaker, to Rusesabagina and to all the fans of the film and its hero, the question then arises, is *Hotel Rwanda* really a true story? As Thomas Leitch observes, such a claim implies that 'even before the film was made, a story was circulating that was not just about actual events but was a true story account of them, as if *extracting* a story from actual events or *imposing* a story on them was not unproblematic (Leitch 2009, 285; my emphases). A story is a narrative composition, oral or written — and composition involves imagination and creativity. To say *Hotel Rwanda* is 'a true story' means the film was already a *complete* story woven from the actual events as they unfolded, which indicates evidence of tampering with facts in order to 'extract' what the narrator needed or to 'impose' a story on top of the actual events. The conclusion is that the film *Hotel Rwanda* is naturally and aesthetically removed from the reality of what happened at Hôtel des Mille Collines just by the fact of its being an imitation of reality even though it bears resemblance to reality. Hayden White explains that historical facts in themselves cannot constitute a story but, at best, can only provide 'story *elements*'. For historical facts to become a 'story' it has to be *made* by 'the suppression or subordination of certain…[elements] and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone, and point of view…' (1985, 84). While some aspects of historical actuality about the Rwandan genocide are invoked in *Hotel Rwanda*, other aspects are inverted whereas yet others are concealed altogether.

John Dean (2009) asserts that 'In the movie business, as opposed to the history business, authentic does not mean factually erudite. It means coherence. It means history recast in fresh dramatic form.' That coherence and dramatic effect in film must be achieved at all costs if the movie is to be a worthy financial investment. This goal calls for 'tinkering and alterations, additions and subtractions, individual efforts and collaborative' (Dean 2009). At the end of the production process is the audience. Although the film was a South African-British coproduction financed by the Industrial Development Cooperation of South Africa and the British Government's Ingenious Films, it was shot by an American filmmaker and distributed by United Artist (George 2005, 26, 28). The film's main audience was the American and wider Western audience. This international coproduction raises concerns about cultural translation and 'fidelity' to history, and to the memory of genocide victims which has a bearing on contemporary Rwandan politics. How reliable is the memory of Paul Rusesabagina? How faithful are the screenplay writers to Rusesabagina's testimony

and to Rwandan history, and how are these deployed in the film text? Ndahiro and Rutazibwa acknowledge the inevitable dramatic licence needed in the reconstruction of historical films but maintain that the makers of *Hotel Rwanda* are guilty of misrepresenting the genocide and promoting genocide negationism by creating a false hero out of someone who aligns himself openly with the genocidaires (2008, 39). The authors pose important questions: 'Did the film's producer intentionally distort reality? Or is the lie only the doing of his technical consultant [Rusesabagina]?' In any case, if Rusesabagina lied, was he seeking 'fame and glory' or was he merely an opportunist trying to survive? (2008, 40). These questions and remarks indicate the disappointment and even anger some people feel about the truth claims of *Hotel Rwanda*, especially when that film has been used as a platform by Rusesbagina to establish himself as the spokesperson and interpreter of Rwanda's destiny and guarantor of its future and stability.

Hotel Rwanda and *An Ordinary Man*: The narrative interchange

Rusesabagina's autobiography, *An Ordinary Man: The True Story Behind Hotel Rwanda* (2006) also wears the 'true story' badge, only this time it appears more 'authentic' than the film because it *is* the progenitor text behind the film — the title proclaims it. The Author's Note states: 'All of the people and events described herein are *true as I remember* them' (Rusesabagina and Zoellner 2006, viii; my emphasis). How did the author *remember* the events from his childhood to the height of the Tutsi genocide? What are the elaborations and what are the silences? Or, to put it another way, 'How much of what happened in the Rwandan genocide in 1994 was *Hotel Rwanda authorized to tell and not to tell?*' (Vambe and Rwafa 2009, 5; my emphasis). How is the memory constructed in relation to the story recollected in the film *Hotel Rwanda?* Given the fact that the autobiography — the presumed progenitor text to the film — was published two years after the film's release (an irony in itself), narrative interchange between the film and the autobiography is inevitable. The opening paragraph of *An Ordinary Man* attests to this intertextual collage: 'My name is Paul Rusesabagina. I am a Hotel Manager. In April 1994, when a wave of mass murder broke out in my country, I was able to hide 1,268 people inside the hotel where I worked' (Rusesabagina and Zoellner 2006, viii). Would the autobiography have begun like this if the film *Hotel Rwanda* had not been produced earlier, let alone been written at all as a screenplay?

The autobiography opens with the heroic construct of Rusesabagina in *Hotel Rwanda*. It is worth noting again that Rusesabagina published the autobiography after the genocide, and probably wrote it all (with Tom Zoellner) after the film's

release, yet the heroic acts he performed during the genocide greet us from the first paragraph. He identifies with the character Rusesabagina in the film — not to be confused with Rusesabagina the man. In fact, the author acknowledges above all other sources, Keir Pearson and Terry George's 'masterful screenplay of the movie *Hotel Rwanda.*' By acknowledging the published screenplay *Hotel Rwanda: Bringing the True Story of an African Hero to Film* (2005) as one of his sources, Rusesabagina provides evidence of the intertextual 'contamination' from memory to film, then to written autobiography. In fact, Terry George weighed in to support the truth claims of the book in an email to Odette Nyiramilimo: 'Paul, as you know, has a very *good memory*. The details he has in the book are *I think*, accurate' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 173; my emphases). All other important players in the survival of the hotel refugees are eliminated or downplayed in the autobiography, just like in the film. Although the autobiography covers comprehensively Rusesabagina's life from childhood until the events of the Rwandan genocide, the flashback and reminiscences are constructed to underscore his preparations for heroic exploits at Hôtel des Mille Collines. These include how he first learnt the art of negotiation as a child (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 47); how he sharpened his negotiating skills as a hotel manager (62–63) which would prove significant in negotiating with the killers for the lives of refugees at Mille Collines; how his father chose for him the surname Rusesabagina, which means 'Warrior that disperses the enemies' (47–48) to accentuate his future humanitarian and political role; and how he chose for himself the Christian name Paul 'after the great communicator of the New Testament', pointing towards his power of rhetoric which was manifested in charming the killers. Nothing highlights this point like his statement in the introduction: 'Today I am convinced that the *only thing* that saved those 1,268 people in my hotel was words. Not liquor, not money, not the UN. *Just ordinary words* directed against the darkness' (Rusesabagina and Zoellner 2006, xvii; my emphases). This statement is rather presumptuous and even naïve given the multilayered local and international efforts that contributed to saving the lives of the refugees. Rusesabagina describes his namesake Paul as 'the man who described himself in one of his letters as being "all things to all people"' (Rusesabagina and Zoellner 2006, 48); again the perfect image of the Paul Rusesabagina of *Hotel Rwanda* who became all things to all people that he may save some. In short, the autobiography that is supposed to have influenced the film actually adapts the 'true story' of the film and enlarges it within one of the Western heroic templates of legendary characters like Prometheus, Achilles, Beowulf, Robin Hood and King Arthur, to name just a few. Kayihura and Zukus think Kerry Pearson did not interview other survivors of the hotel first in constructing the screenplay because a film about the Mille Collines Hotel with alternative narratives from survivors would contradict Rusesabagina's 'self-aggrandizing tale' of what they termed, 'Die Hard in

the sub-Sahara', the natural Hollywood tale of 'one brave and selfless saviour, saving 1,200 people all by himself. Unarmed. The whole world against him' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 150–151). Ironically, this Africanised Western heroic narrative template reconstructed in the autobiography is the true story behind the film. This makes the subtitle of the autobiography "The True Story Behind 'Hotel Rwanda'" fraudulent.

San Francisco freelance journalist Tom Zoellner contributed to writing the autobiography, which adds further to this intertextual collage. Zoellner brings his Western cultural signifiers into the autobiography making the truth claims of the book problematic. The film, the book, together with the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation which the hotelier started, and the global speaking engagements around Western capitals, become part of a larger business empire that might be called Rusesabagina Celebrity Image Production Enterprise under the brand name of *Hotel Rwanda*. Rusesabagina the man, the character and the myth eventually coagulate through a literature/film adaptation phenomenon film scholar Kamilla Elliott describes as De(Re)composition. In this adaptation model, the progenitor text and the hypertext merge, decompose and recompose into 'a new composition at "underground" levels of reading' (2003, 157). The adaptation becomes 'a composite of textual and filmic signs merging in audience consciousness together with other cultural narratives and often leads to confusion as to which is the novel and which is film' (2003, 157). In the present case:

> It is hard to differentiate which is Rusesabagina's original memory, which is the Hollywood film, which is Rusesabagina and which is Don Cheadle, or the Rusesabagina imitation of Cheadle as the multiple stories generated from Rusesabagina's memory are revised endlessly through oral, written and visual mediums. Genocide history is inevitably revised and the image Paul Rusesabagina and the person are rebranded. (Dokotum 2012, 13)

In the final analysis, the historiography in both the film and the autobiography is best explained by Emberto Eco's hypothesis that 'In order to transform a work into a cult object one must be able to break, dislocate, unhinge it so that one can remember only parts of it, irrespective of their original relationship with the whole (1988, 447).

Contesting heroic mythography and celebrity discourse in *Hotel Rwanda*

Most survivors of Hôtel des Mille Collines say the superhero in *Hotel Rwanda* is pretty much a myth. *Hotel Rwanda* is one of those narratives that celebrate larger-than-life heroes created by society to challenge us to greater heights of goodness. Fernand Braudel observes that to the narrative historian, 'the life of men is dominated by *dramatic accidents*, by the actions of those *exceptional beings* who occasionally emerge,

and who often are the master of their own *fate* and even more of ours' (as cited in White 2010, 274–275; author's emphasis). Rusesabagina the exemplary fictional hero should be celebrated as the embodiment of aspirations we all desire to achieve, and should be separated from Rusesabagina the *ordinary* man, but the filmmaker and Rusesabagina himself fall into the trap Braudel elaborates. Rusesabagina becomes the living legend whose act of mercy atones for the inaction of the entire international community. His self-sacrifice provides a beacon of hope for humanity, but as Braudel further observes, such hero-worship is a '*delusive fallacy*' (cited in White 2010, 275; my emphasis). Besides, it harms the memory of the genocide victims since it trivialises their suffering while heaping undue glory on a fictional hero who gains moral and financial capital out of the film's success and, by association, out of the genocide. White concludes that 'Myths provide imaginative justifications of our desires and at the same time hold up before us images of the cosmic forces that preclude the possibility of any perfect gratification of them' (White 1985, 175). If the genocide in Rwanda was 'The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda' as Dallaire and Beardsley assert in their title (2004), humanity gets to win in *Hotel Rwanda* as the superhero provides propitiatory vindication for us all. Jean Pierre Rucogoza, a genocide survivor who lost 11 relatives in the genocide, said *Hotel Rwanda* and the flurry of films about the genocide 'represented the West's conscience rearing its head too late' (cited in Asiimwe 2006).

Speaking during the April 2006 commemoration of the 1994 genocide, President Paul Kagame stressed that *Hotel Rwanda*'s celebration of Rusesabagina propagates a 'falsehood.' To Kagame, even the things that Rusesabagina did right 'do not merit the highlight' (cited in Asiimwe 2006). The Kagame regime has branded Rusesabagina an 'imposter' who faked his story (Crown 2011). Rusesabagina's benevolent treatment of his hotel 'guests' is the first hotly contested portrayal in *Hotel Rwanda*. On the whole, survivors allege that contrary to the saviour in *Hotel Rwanda*, Rusesabagina not only made life very hard for them but put some of their lives in danger. Copies of memos, the SOS they put out and other documents allegedly written by the Crisis Committee of Representatives of Displaced Persons of the Hôtel des Mille Collines circulated to governments, human rights organisations, international organisations and the media, show that the hotel refugees suffered greatly at the hands of Rusesabagina who turned the poor away and demanded payments for rooms, contrary to what the film and autobiography show (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 137). They claim that he charged for phone calls and made profits out of the refugees' plight. They say Rusesabagina was selling the hotel food to the occupants (even though he offered Georges Rutaganda from whom he received the food items — as the movie depicts — 'only excuses, not money' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 157). Thus, contrary to the claims in the film and

his autobiography, he did not dish out food for free, despite the fact that he even received money from abroad meant to help feed the refugees (see Rusesabagina and Zoellner 2006; Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 71). They even claim that Rusesabagina was not happy with the Red Cross for bringing free food. Contrary to the movie version of reality which shows Rusesabagina receiving dry rations from the Red Cross and distributing them for free, these witnesses say he actually sold the Red Cross rations (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 59; Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 165). In the film, Rusesabagina issues bills as a ploy to deceive the genocidaires that everyone in the hotel is a paying guest but, in reality, these were '*demands* to be paid' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 157). Investigative journalist Linda Melvern who has written extensively about the Rwandan genocide alleges that 'The cheques he accepted for rent were cashed in Gitarama, where the interim government had established its premises' (Melvern 2011). There are even those like Jean de Dieu Mucyo who argue that Rusesabagina was a close ally of the genocidal regime and could have colluded with army headquarters (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 61). Two prominent genociders now jailed in Kigali Central Prison — Valérie Bemeriki, who worked for the notorious Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) radio, and Georges Rutaganda — also dismiss Rusesabagina's heroism. Bemeriki says not only did Rusesabagina do nothing to save the refugees; he was also informing the genociders about 'cockroaches', Interahamwe code for Tutsis (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 64; Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 163).

Odette Nyiramilimo, who admits that Rusesabagina saved her life, claims that the film gives Rusesabagina too much credit. For instance, she says, 'I know he didn't go out to get us food, because he was scared as well' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 152). Kayihura himself refutes the film's version of events where Rusesabagina purchased food from Georges Rutaganda to feed the refuges at Mille Collines saying, 'maybe he brought food for himself or for his friends, but he brought back none for the refugees' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 156). Survivors of Hôtel des Mille Collines say the true hero of Mille Collines is not Rusesabagina but one Victor Munyarugerero. They say he is the man who risked his life by ferrying in refugees, searching for food for them and even pledging to pay for the accommodation of some people who were being thrown out by Rusesabagina (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 77–78). This evidence shows that *Hotel Rwanda* celebrated Rusesabagina at the expense of many sincere heroes of the genocide, including Paul Kagame himself who commanded the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels that put an end to the genocide. Terry George admitted in another email correspondence with Odette Nyiramilimo that Rusesabagina was not the only or even the greatest inspiration for the film, 'You and Jean Baptiste are among the most honourable, wonderful people I and my family have ever met. You as much, *even more, than Paul* were the inspiration for "Hotel Rwanda"'

(Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 173; my emphasis). In an interesting ironical twist, the then incarcerated (now deceased) Georges Rutaganda, second Vice President of the Interahamwe, on watching *Hotel Rwanda*, claimed that if anyone saved lives it was he, not Rusesabagina, because he stopped a massacre that would have happened at a roadblock by pleading with the genocidaires at Amadou's behest. This scene was 'whitewashed' in the film to show Colonel Oliver North using the handgun to restore order. Apparently, there was no commander there on the day of the incident and General Dellaire, the supposed Colonel in the film, was not even in Kigali. Rutaganda was even eulogised by Senegalese UNAMIR Commander Amadou Dembe who testified in court during Rutaganda's court appeal (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 156; Deme 2006). These facts challenge Rusesabagina's claim in the DVD documentary section of *Hotel Rwanda* that 'the Hotel Mille Collines Story was *my* story'. These contestations of Rusesabagina's benevolent image in *Hotel Rwanda* cannot be ignored and create challenges for genocide memory. There are survivors of the hotel I was able to meet in Kigali and chat with during my research on the film who were unwilling to talk about the traumatic Mille Collines episode saying they were tired of talking about it. Retired Senator Wellars Gasamagera, who was a refugee in Mille Collines from April 12th to May 28th, explained to me the real reason survivors are tired of interviews:

> I may warn you though, that people have been so much disappointed by Rusesabagina's movie and book and the subsequent undue interest the man met from the Western world, that many were disappointed to the point of no longer accepting to give interviews. (Gasamagera 2012)

Not only were they disappointed by the international acclaim for the exploits of the *Hotel Rwanda* hero; the survivors have also been 'ridiculed for opposing patterns that have been created and imposed to the world' (Gasamagera 2012). This imposed pattern is nothing but the hegemonic Western discourse; the 'great lives' heroic construction of Rusesabagina lifted straight from Hollywood's fictional template of superhero mythography.

The second contestation concerns Rusesabagina's claim that his negotiation and appeasement skills and high-level connections are what saved the refugees. In his autobiography, Rusesabagina says the first reason Hôtel des Mille Collines was not raided by the militia was 'initial confusion — and even timidity — of the militias' and the status of the hotel which 'was viewed as something not to be tampered with' (Rusesabagina and Zoellner 2006, 131). The second reason was that five policemen guarded the hotel thanks to his connections to a young military chief called commander Habyarimana (2006, 127, 131), protection which was 'much better than what we got from the UN which amounted to *nothing* [and was] *worse* than

useless' (2006, 131, 133; my emphases). Furthermore, he had managed to get the roadblock mounted by the Interahamwe dismantled by appealing to the Commander of the National Police, General Augustine Ndindiliyimana (2006, 127). However, evidence from several sources shows that Rusesabagina greatly downplayed the role of other stakeholders in saving the refugees. Hôtel des Mille Collines was, in fact, a secure refuge for nine reasons:

1. It was a UN protected zone along with Amahoro Stadium, the Méridian Hotel and King Faisal Hospital (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 167). Before Rusesabagina arrived at the hotel, several sources confirm that UNAMIR troops were stationed there 'at all times…under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Moigny, whose mission was to protect the refugees' (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 25; Dallaire and Beardsley 2004, 269; Melvern 2006, 12). Tunisian UN troops actually repelled an Interahamwe attack on the hotel and in a desperate move, Dallaire even ordered 'unarmed military observers to sleep in orphanages to deter the killers' (Melvern 2006, 13). Kayihura and Zukus also confirm that Rusesabagina downplayed the role of UNAMIR. For instance, he omits the fact that the UN actually had an office in the hotel and flew a flag above the hotel. 'They were there to protect us and to inform Dallaire if anyone came inside the hotel and threatened the refugees' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 162). The UNAMIR force commander during the genocide, General Dallaire, whose character has a sizeable role in the film, was not even consulted by the filmmakers. Dallaire has openly expressed deep disappointment with the way Rusesabagina has projected himself in the film, and the way UNAMIR and himself have been portrayed: 'No general or force commander would ever sit in bars chatting with barkeeps, and I certainly do not refer to Africans as "niggers" — ever! The force commander never personally led any convoys as depicted in the movie, either, and so on and so on' (as cited in Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 161).

2. There was instruction from the United States government demanding that the refugees in de Mille Collins not be harmed and the Rwandan government promised to protect the refugees and informed the RPF and the Interahamwe accordingly (Melvern 2006, 14).

3. There were a number of expatriates and top MDR officials at the hotel awaiting evacuation. Melvern considers unfortunate *Hotel Rwanda*'s harsh critique of the UNAMIR troops because they actually saved many lives. She recounts that a Polish officer, Major Stec, who was a volunteer with UNAMIR, went into post-traumatic stress after watching *Hotel Rwanda* at The Hague, yet it was he who protected the refugees at Mille Collines against the Interahamwe during evacuation (Melvern 2006, 12). General Romeo Dallaire expressed disappointment with *Hotel Rwanda*'s portrayal of Rusesabagina saying, 'it seems the filmmakers downplayed the eight

UN observers who protected people in the hotel. The Manager was there, I was aware of him, but that's it' (as cited in Adhikari 2007, 298).

4. The Tutsi refugees were being used as hostages by the government to show the international community that they were not killing all Tutsis as alleged. The government forces were also using them as a bargaining chip for a ceasefire in order to slow down the advance of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The French government also used the refugees to get a UN mandate for Operation Turquoise, although they used it to protect the genocidaires instead (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 27).

5. The visit of three prominent persons, Jose Ayalla Lasso — the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Iqbal Riza — Kofi Annan's deputy, and Bernard Kouchner — former Minister of Health and Humanitarian Action of France in May 1994 to meet the Hôtel des Mille Collines refugees played a key role in their survival (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 27).

6. The RPA made the safety of the hotel refugees a key demand for any ceasefire negotiations. They were eventually used for prisoner exchange between government forces and RPA, which is the reason the refugees, including Rusesabagina, were evacuated to safety behind RPF lines (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 118).

7. The genocidaires needed the quietness of Mille Collines for relaxation and to plan their murderous activities. Besides, there was brisk business between Georges Rutaganda and Rusesabagina that also helped keep the hotel from attack for a while (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 27).

8. The management of Sabena put pressure on the Belgian government to save the hotel building and its occupants, and the Belgian government in turn prevailed on the Rwandan government.

9. According to the testimony of a Belgian liaison officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Loup Deblyadden, the French actually had a secret communications unit on the fifth floor of Hôtel des Mille Collines, which he considers the biggest reason the hotel survived attack. Lt. Col. Deblydden 'was surprised to hear later that if the hotel was not attacked by the RAF and the Interahamwe militia, it was thanks to the manager's bravery' (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 27).

These accounts show that the 1 268 survivors of Hôtel des Mille Collines could not have possibly escaped because of Rusesabagina's 'mere words', 'cognac' and cash bribery, even though he did save some. As Kayihura and Zukus postulate, 'We are alive today because of the UN peacekeepers, the RPF, well-connectedness and generous fellow refugees and the international community' (2014, 168). According to Kayihura, if Rusesabagina had never lived, they would still have survived anyway.

Hotel Rwanda and the search for justice, peace and reconciliation

It must be emphasised here that there is no problem in recognising *Hotel Rwanda* as a work of art and a fictionalisation of genocide history. The film impacted the world and raised awareness about the tragedy and influenced post-genocide interventions. Some tour packages to Rwanda are labelled trips to 'Hotel Rwanda'. It is common to see tourists taking photographs at the iconic gates of Hôtel des Mille Collines. Many investors, humanitarian agencies and researchers on genocide, peace and conflict resolution, and memory conferences have come to Rwanda because of the film. The hotel itself has become a genocide memorial in its own right — a sort of world heritage centre. The problem comes from reading the film as an accurate visual history and from the opportunism of Rusesabagina who rode on the waves of the film, appropriating for himself the mostly fictional exploits of the protagonist. Paul Rusesabagina 'was declared a hero by the *international community*' (Laing 2010; my emphasis) but not by the people of Rwanda, at least not unanimously. The declaration of Rusesabagina's heroism came with the release of the film *Hotel Rwanda* showing that the world evaluated Rusesabagina's heroism through the fictional film and most people have never bothered to research the plausibility of the cinematic narrative. The former hotel manager and Brussels taxi driver shot to fame with the film's success, winning many awards including the Immortal Chaplains Prize for Humanity 2000, the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2005), the National Civil Rights Museum Freedom Award (2005), the Humanitarian Award from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation 2005, and the Lantos Human Rights Prize 2011. The hotelier formed The Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation with the mission of helping orphans and widows of the Rwandan genocide, but even this humanitarian mission has been questioned.

Allegations that he has been raising money to fund Forces Democratiques de Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR) terrorists (exiled architects and perpetuators of the Rwandan genocide implicated in horrendous killings and mass rape in eastern Congo) culminated in his arrest, questioning and release without charges in Brussels in June 2011. The Rwandan Prosecutor General, Martin Ngoga, claimed to have irrefutable evidence that Rusesabagina repeatedly wired large sums of money to the FDLR through Western Union (IPP Media 2011). Rusesabagina was implicated alongside Victor Ingabire of the unregistered FDU-Inkingi party in a 'plot to destabilise the country', for 'threatening national security and public order' and for 'buying and distributing arms and ammunitions to the [FDLR] terrorist organization' (Warner 2012). Ingabire who was jailed in 2012 for 15 years received a presidential pardon in 2018 (Uwiringiyimana 2018). Rusesabagina has long been accused of plotting with

the FDLR fugitives to overthrow the Kagame regime (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 89). 'Those who want to continue considering him as a hero can go on,' Mr Ngoga scoffed. 'We consider him a serious criminal suspect…' (Laing 2010). It's alleged that in 2018 Rusesabagina formed a new rebel movement, National Liberation Forces (NLF), the military wing of Rwandan Movement for Democratic Change (RMDC) whose mission is 'to put an immediate end to the dictatorial power of the RPF Kagame' (Ndushabandi 2019). James Opio reports that Rusesabagina's deputy and spokesperson of the rebel group, Major Calixte Sankara, was captured and arrested by Rwandan authorities in the Comoros in April 2019 (*Trumpet News*, April 15, 2019), an arrest that was widely reported internationally and confirmed by the Rwanda Investigation Bureau. Claver Ndushabandi claims that the rebels have been responsible for a series of attacks in Nyarugururu, 100 miles south west of Kigali. Rusesabagina's supposed third in command is Wilson Irategeka, leader of a splinter group of the FDLR rebels, a designated terrorist organisation largely blamed for executing the Rwandan genocide (*Chimpreports*, July 16, 2018). These allegations if true would cast the role of *Hotel Rwanda* in building up the profile of Paul Rusesabagina in a new light as the film would then appear to be a platform for promoting dissent and alleged clandestine activities that threaten the peace and security of Rwanda, and the wider project of justice, peace and reconciliation. Ndahiro and Rutazibwa record that during a 2006 visit to Zambia, Rusesabagina formed his own political party, PDR-Imuhure with a view to contesting the Rwandan presidency, but also to design a military action plan using the FDLR rebel exiles in Zambia. His critics say Rusesabagina has a right to contest the presidency, but 'should not, and should never, use our dead to achieve this end' (2008, 90).

The official message from Rusesabagina on his foundation's website reads, 'For those whose lives have been ruled by injustice and hatred, the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation brings you a message of peace and hope for a brighter tomorrow' (Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation). If allegations against him prove true, then the dramatic irony of Rusesabagina's heroism would be immense, especially since the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation also claims to work to 'Prevent future genocides and raise awareness of the need for a new truth and reconciliation process' (Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation). Even more disturbing, Rusesabagina has been accused of genocide negationism for dismissing the Tutsi genocide altogether and redefining it as 'massacres or killings' (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 90). He is said to have postulated in many interviews and public lectures a new theory about the reverse 'genocide of Hutu intellectuals' perpetuated by the Kagame regime, thereby introducing 'the idea of a double genocide' (2008, 87). Ndahiro and Rutazibwa observe that Rusesabagina's rhetoric sounds more and more like the Parmehutu ideology of HUTU power which gave birth to the mini-

genocides of 1956, 1962, 1966, 1973, 1990, 1992, and eventually to the holocaust of 1994 (2008, 87). While it is easy to dismiss these accusations as malicious slander, they are nonetheless disturbing.

In the final analysis, Edouard Kayihura's only wish is that the film should have carried a disclaimer such as 'Based on a true story' or 'Inspired by a true story' which would not have affected the audience's enjoyment of the film at all. 'Why couldn't they have added such a simple disclaimer in the spirit of truthfulness? It would have changed so much' (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 153). It's unlikely this question will ever be answered by the filmmaker because for him to accept that *Hotel Rwanda* is not a 'true story' would be to destroy his legacy and that of both the film and of Rusesabagina whose international profile feeds into the profile of the film and of its director in turn. As Leitch observes:

> The point of claiming that a film is based on a true story [and even much more, that it's a *true story*] is not to establish truth or fidelity to the truth as a predicate for discourse but to use the category of the true story as a privileged mastertext that justifies the film's claims to certain kinds of authority — ideally by placing them beyond question. (2009, 286; my emphasis)

The film then uses this external authority that has nothing to do with the validity of the facts to make emotional appeals like, 'Isn't this sad?', 'Isn't this inspiring?', 'Isn't this heroic?' or that 'truth-is-stranger-than-fiction' (Leitch 2009, 292–293). These emotional hooks are intended to lure the audience with the explicit aim of good box office returns. In the case of *Hotel Rwanda*, the tripartite beneficiaries of the genocide narrative are: (1) the film (in terms of recouping financial investments and making-much needed profit); (2) the director (in terms of making his money and building his artistic profile as an Academy Award winning director); and (3) Rusesabagina (as the mobile-performer-character and publicity machine) whose international celebrity status feeds back into the films ratings and profits and, consequently, the director's dividends and artistic profile. This Hollywood phenomenon may not be unique to films about Africa since Hollywood directors like Oliver Stone, Sydney Lumet, Martin Scorsese and Stephen Spielberg use the 'true story' film models widely for the same commercial reasons. However, there is a noteworthy peculiarity in the treatment of African reality in Western cultural productions. As Garuba and Himmelman observe, concerning claims of historical veracity made by Kevin Macdonald in regard to his 'based on a true story' film, *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), the director invokes the standard time-tested Western mode of representing Africa that weaves historical fact with fiction. They conclude that 'articulation of history with fiction within the same domain of textuality is central to representations of Africa' (2012, 23). Why would such a powerful, extremely useful and artistic

masterpiece of a film in its own right cling to the false claim that it is a 'true story' and give Rusesabagina such a platform to lie, raise funds fraudulently in the name of genocide survivors and orphans, and participate in political sabotage? It is precisely because the film, like many Hollywood-Africa productions, is not about Africa. In fact, Africans in the film are represented either as brutal savages or wannabe whites like Paul Rusesabagina, the lead character whose amplified materialist fetishism and excitement about hobnobbing with Westerners establish his naivety and the badge of mental slavery.

While I do not dispute the brutality of the architects of the Rwandan genocide, General Bizimungu is represented as an idiot who is scared of American satellites, while Rutaganda is the demonised cynical villain, although Amadou's testimony gives us another perspective of Rutaganda as level-headed and even compassionate. The rest are helpless victims like the masses, with no agency. The treatment of RPF intervention is given little attention in the film. The theme of senseless violence is played out without proper historicisation of the causes. Africans' perceived laziness and drunkenness are portrayed through the Gregoire character who commandeers an entire presidential suit to chill with his girlfriend. This representation has also been disputed by survivors who say Pasa Mwenenganuke, who is fictionalised as Gregoire, shared his room with many relatives and was a very responsible person. He possibly was badly represented because he actually stood up to Rusesabagina at the hotel (Kayihura and Zukus 2014, 165; Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 41–44). The dominant white iconography of Hollywood films plays out in *Hotel Rwanda*, especially with the role of Colonel Oliver North (Nick Nolte) who is constantly seen pulling out his handgun in cowboy fashion and operating from the bar section of the hotel. General Dellaire has openly protested this cowboy portrayal of his role during the Rwandan genocide.

Although Terry George wanted to tell the story of the genocide for the world to hear, the *truth* claim of the film has little to do with adherence to the facts, but rather the invocation of moral authority which in turn increases the film's economic value. It also creates a lasting legacy for the film as a historical treatise and humanitarian document with relevance to Rwandan genocide memory construction for perpetuity. It is noticeable from a blog "How a Film Could Get You 25 Years in Jail!" (*Huffington Post*, April 4, 2014) that Terry George is starting to sound more and more like Paul Rusesabagina, lashing out at Kagame's record on human rights and democracy and viciously defending the 'truth' claims of Rusesabagina and of the film while lamely acknowledging that Kagame has positively transformed Rwanda. George accuses Paul Kagame of attempting to silence all narratives other than the *true* story [read *Hotel Rwanda*], but he himself does the same thing when he tries to silence all other narratives except the film's and supports Rusesabagina's attacks on Kagame.

George's deepest contempt is reserved for two books that have most debunked the film's truth claims using first-hand survivor accounts and well-researched evidence. These are Ndahiro and Rutazibwa's *Hotel Rwanda: Or the Tutsi Genocide as Seen by Hollywood* (2008) which transcribes many survivor interviews and photocopies of receipts, letters, intelligence document and SOSs. The other is Kayihura and Zukus's well-researched book *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story and Why it Matters Today* (2014) which has been endorsed by university professors, statesmen, international journalists and eminent personalities like Retired Lieutenant General Romeo Dallaire himself, who called the book, 'a privileged opportunity to put reality to the Hollywood dramatization' ("Praise for Inside the Hotel Rwanda"; Kayihura and Zukus 2014). The claims of these two authors are corroborated by other writers cited in this chapter, including Dallaire and Beardsley 2004; Kinzer 2004; Adhikari 2007 and Melvern 2006, 2009, 2011). George dismisses these two books as 'accusations of "lies"' and part of Kagame's PR campaign and is particularly worried that Kayihura and Zukus's book has been 'noted in *Newsweek*' and 'lauded in a *Huffington Post* blog' — (a blogging site he himself used to attack the authors of the two books!) (George 2014). Furthermore, he says 'with the power of Google, these attacks will fester on the search page like a Sharpie mustache scribbled on a portrait.' He goes on a vicious attack calling the '"veracity" debate' of the book 'pathetic' and would have loved to just ignore had it not been for the 'accusation of "Genocide Revisionism"' (George 2014). So, what's wrong with a book about *Hotel Rwanda* being published and getting critical acclaim, if the film is authentic? Why this panic and desperate rush to '*set the facts straight*' [George's emphasis] as George put it, simply because a book by a Mille Collines survivor has appeared that queries the authenticity of the narrative of *Hotel Rwanda* that the director claims he made with the obsession of 'getting it right!' What I glean from this tirade is that the director feels that he 'owns' the Mille Collines story — just like his cinematic subject Rusesabagina — (especially with the powerful endorsement of the academy award), and that his version of the hotel story is irrefutable through the celebrity endorsements of Rusesabagina and powerful Western cultural institutions.

Romeo Dallaire argues that the *Hotel Rwanda* controversy is useful for teaching the world about the dangers we face from historical revisionists who seek to confuse the facts:

> to realize that some people may want to be revisionist; some people may want to change what was written…I think it's absolutely essential that people realize that some people are *fiddling with the books* and *passing themselves on as an authority*. So it's all the more (important) that we are aware and that we study and that we *comprehend what's happening*. (Ostroff 2011; my emphases)

That *Hotel Rwanda* has acquired the unquestionable status of a timeless truth in the West considered unshakable by any counter-narratives — especially from a little country like Rwanda — can be read from the director's concluding remarks: 'I don't think I'll be back in Rwanda in the near future to sit and chat once more with President Kagame' (Rusesabagina's political enemy number one). In open triumphalism bordering on contempt, the director brags: 'I'll just let *Hotel Rwanda*, named as one of 100 most inspirational Films of All Time by the American Film Institute, speak for itself. (George 2014).

Here is a Western film, by a Western director, that extracts an African story and refits it to a Western heroic template for a Western audience, and is now ranked among the greatest inspirational films of all time by a Western cultural institution. All this in spite of the controversies surrounding its truth claims, just as Rusesabagina has continued to amass Western medals in spite of loud protests and sometimes demonstrations in Western capitals from Rwandan genocide survivors who find it all very insulting. Once again, Africa is just another backdrop for a Western heroic flick and jungle romance. Africa is this boundless reservoir of raw Dark Continent images to be excavated by cultural pundits of the West and shipped to the metropolis — just like the minerals, rubber and cocoa of the colonial days — for feeding the huge Euro-American cultural industry in their age of hegemony. What Africans think about how they are represented doesn't really matter here; in any case, Africans are expected to dance, not think! What counts for the film director is the film's appeal to the genre expectations of the Western audience, and the endorsement of the Western media and institutions like the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the American Film Institute, based on the relevance of the film to the West. The opinions of survivors — including members of IBUKA — who are simply refuting the truth claims of the film because it does not accurately tell their painful and traumatic survival stories count for nothing; the director finds it offensive to his Western sensibilities. 'This is a true story,' so says Hollywood. Take it or leave it. Case closed!

Hollywood's Frankenstein

Hotel Rwanda excels as blockbuster entertainment and has pricked the conscience of the world, focusing attention on Rwanda, but it scores badly in its commitment to genocide memory and to African history. One might say, why should the director care about Rwandan history anyway; it is just a film, after all. But not when the film claims to tell the truth about what happened in Hôtel des Mille Collines. Films shape public opinion as is evidenced by the controversy surrounding *Hotel Rwanda's* hero, with political consequences that affect post-genocide peace and reconciliation

initiatives. The controversy emanates from *Hotel Rwanda*'s appropriation of the 'True Story' code. The fact-based assumptions of the film and in turn Rusesabagina's film-influenced autobiography blur the boundaries between history and fiction, and by asserting the film's heroic elevation of Rusesabagina as reality, it betrays the victims of the Tutsi genocide. The superficial treatment of the cause of the genocide, which is attributed to hatred without even a minimal historicisation of the conflict, projects senseless violence and situates *Hotel Rwanda* within the Dark Continent school of Hollywood-Africa films. The controversy surrounding the film reflects the inability of and, indeed, the lack of interest in the West to understand Africans beyond Western stereotypes and Dark Continent tropes or, in this case, the superimposition of the Western heroic template on Africans without taking into account who the people consider heroes of the Rwandan genocide.

When it comes to Rwanda, the West never seemed to get it right: Colonial Belgium sowed the seeds of ethnic hatred and set a foundation for future genocide; France armed the Hutu extremists and participated in halting the RPA's advance which lengthened the genocide; the Belgians and French also betrayed Tutsis who sought refuge with them by abandoning them to the killers in broad daylight; the French used the UN mandated Operation Turquoise meant to help victims of the genocide to provide instead an escape route for the genocidaires who entered Congo with their weapons intact and this armed group, which calls themselves FDLR rebels, continue to pose a serious threat to the entire Great Lakes Region; the American government at first resisted defining the slaughter in Rwanda as genocide to avoid responsibility for military intervention to stop the horrific killings as demanded by international law. In a telling betrayal of the victims of the Rwandan genocide, the US later responded to the plight of the genocidaire Interahamwe refugees instead by sending hundreds of millions of dollars to refugee camps in the Congo while the victims of the genocide in Rwanda starved and rotted away. The heroic celebration of Rusesabagina in spite of the protests from a majority of Mille Collines survivors is the zenith of this betrayal. Jean de la Croix Ibambasi, one of the survivors of the genocide, puts the irony of *Hotel Rwanda* in a wider context when he says:

> There is a similarity between the way the international community abandoned Rwanda and the way it refused to acknowledge France's role in the genocide. In the same way it neglects the impact the massacres had on the survivors and backs Rusesabagina by giving him a platform to say any nonsense. (Ndahiro and Rutazibwa 2008, 98)

The major challenge of course is once again the superimposition of a Western concept of heroism over a tragic African experience. This misrepresentation of history is responsible for silencing competing heroic discourses about the Rwandan

genocide and, in particular, the Mille Collines episode, and for promoting the 'heroic self-transcendence' of a single individual for dramatic effect. The magnifying of Rusesabagina's role is also part of the broader business of the celebrity manufacturing industry because, as Eric Louw observes, 'manufacturing successful celebrity is profitable' (2009, 293). Here is a win-win situation: the Post-Colonial-West finds propitiatory vindication for culpability in the genocide through Rusesabagina's heroism, and Rusesabagina wins by building his international and political profile and through his fattening wallet, spin doctors and image managers get paid, the film sells in perpetuity, hero-worshippers find an idol to bow to, and the rest of the world could not care less. But all is not well. Any reader of blogs containing Rwandan political discourse can see them getting nastier by the day with pro-Kagame and pro-Rusesabagina camps hurling abuse, vitriol and venom at each other. The 1994 genocide might be long past, but the anger and sentiments that led to it are still very much alive and even growing. In spite of the limitations of the Kagame regime and calls for freedom of expression, respect for human rights and genuine justice, truth and reconciliation, *Hotel Rwanda* has created a mythological hero around whom antigovernment rhetoric gravitates. By insisting absurdly that *Hotel Rwanda* is a 'true story', in spite of the theoretical and historical impossibility of this claim, as well as published evidence, Terry George has unfortunately taken a political stand in the interest of promoting his film in the paying West and set himself against the survivors of Hôtel des Mille Collines. In ignoring the pain, frustrations and voices of Mille Collines survivors who feel betrayed, and the history behind the genocide, George not only creates a Frankenstein in the name of Paul Rusesabagina from the illusion foundries of Hollywood, but also participates in recycling the Dark Continent tropology of Africa and has in some ways caused darkness to loom over Rwanda.

7

Ideological effacement and heroic self-transcendence

This chapter focuses on *Invictus* as the most accomplished Mandela biopic to date in terms of its content and style. The film's timeline centres on Mandela the statesman, his personality and his politics, but it also imports the reciprocal cultural intertexts of Hollywood as well as the style and cultural referents of Morgan Freeman, Matt Damon and the other Hollywood actors. Robert Stam observes of adaptation generally that 'The text feeds on and is fed into infinitely permutating intertexts, which is seen through ever-shifting grids of interpretation' (2000, 57). This statement holds true for all Mandela's biopics. For a man whose life is shrouded in deep mythology, every attempt at interpreting his life and times is significant and that includes the movies, especially as he has become a symbol of Africa's triumph over racial oppression. As Litheko Modisane notes, 'Without an appreciation of the cinematic Mandela, any attempt to understand the cultural and political impact of his persona remains incomplete' (2014, 226). The movies provide international and transnational grids of interpretations of Mandela's life and legacy that can help us understand the man, the myth, and the celebrity product in an age of transnational cultural production, consumption, critique and interpretation. This Western mediation of South African voices points toward the internationalisation of Mandela's image as constructed by Euro-American film producers with negative implications for historical veracity as well as global appreciation of Mandela's sacrifice. Transnational collaboration in making Mandela's biopics certainly shows how his name reflects not just South Africa's national heritage but that the man has become a world heritage. However, to what extent do these cinematic productions give us authentic encounters with Mr Nelson Mandela, and how much of the man is lost in the illusion foundries of the West? Moreover, what kind of fidelity do these reproductions reveal about South African history? Postcolonial ideological effacement uproots Mandela from his historical context and makes him what Thomas Leitch calls, 'a free-floating wonder' whose story celebrates 'the triumph of the human spirit' (2009, 297). I use Kamilla Elliott's theoretical concept of 'incarnation' (2003, 261) to show the transformation

of Mandela the man and star persona to Mandela the myth in *Invictus*. Elliott's incarnation model also helps us to see another facet of the Dark Continent narrative model which, in this case, universalises a great African hero, while decontextualising him from the history that produced him through a process of commodification and whitewashing that continues to use Africa as a mere backdrop for a Western tale about the triumph of good over evil. What is actually incarnated in the screen narrative of Mandela's life in *Invictus* — in the casting, in the performances and in the representations of space — is a delineation of Mandela's portrait as a Westernised African Superman.

The world's most famous political prisoner from the 1960s through to the time of his release from prison in 1990, Nelson Mandela is one of those iconic political figures who have straddled the 20th and 21st centuries. Mandela's iconic status stems from his moral authority as prisoner of conscience for 27 years and as a champion for children's welfare, an advocate for people suffering from AIDS, and as a rare breed of African statesmen who willingly give up power. Mandela's personal charm and charisma are added advantages to his image. He is also rare in the reconciliatory way he treated his enemies after taking the reins of power. Mandela is a celebrity in every way, a 'postcolonial celebrity', as Jane Stadler observes, the antithesis of the contemporary celebrity colonialist infesting the continent with their humanitarian facades (2009, 311). As such, Mandela's celebrity status is not born of family inheritance, nor is he just a product of media hype and spin or 'sloppy journalism' as Eric Louw insinuates (2009, 304), but has its roots in his long struggle against racial prejudice and the fight for social justice. He is thus a global emblem of freedom and justice on a par with other 20th century icons like Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa. As the 'father' of democratic South Africa, 'He was to South Africa what George Washington had been to the United States' (Carlin 2008, 257), and a rare example to his successors in choosing to retire from politics like George Washington in order to go back to 'being a private citizen' (Stengel 2010, 202). What Washington accomplished on the battlefield, Mandela accomplished through negotiations after long years of being a living martyr in apartheid prisons. Richard Stengel, his close collaborator in the production of *Long Walk to Freedom,* finds a parallel between Mandela as the first black president of South Africa and Barack Obama, the first black president of the United States (2010, 18–19) that underscores how Mandela stands shoulder to shoulder with the greatest of the greats.

Mandela's rural background together with his participation on the global political and entertainment stage makes him what his biographer, Anthony Simpson, considers both 'premodern and postmodern' (cited in Barnard 2014, 5). Rita Barnard, however, sees him as simply *modern* in the broader sense that he embraced Euro-American modernity in the context of colonialism and anticolonialism and redeployed it in

the African context as a traditionally embedded African global citizen (2014, 5–7). Mandela's cultural impact is broad over time and cultural space. He thus offers perfect raw material for celebrity image and heritage production in an age of mass transnational cultural commodification and production. However, the task of representing Mandela on screen is complicated by legendary and allegorical signifiers associated with his name and face as the symbol of morality, selflessness and defiance against oppression. This linear narrative about the grand old man of reconciliation which sidesteps the limitations of the hero is executed with great reverence. Litheko Modisane argues that cinematic realisation of Mandela's life is challenging 'because he may seem to leave so little for the filmmaker's imagination.' This is due to 'His overwhelming "shadow" — the legendary presence that seems to always precede any creative endeavour to portray him…' (2014, 225). Actors who have taken on the role found themselves incapable of fully portraying Mandela. Morgan Freeman said in an interview that 'it took "chutzpah and arrogance" to play the statesman' (Geoghegan 2013). The UK *Telegraph*, while lamenting the lack of historical context of *Invictu*s, qualified Freeman as 'an obvious choice to play Mandela. After all, he's already played God' (Sandhu 2010). The statement underscores Freeman's ability to undertake the Herculean task of performing Mandela on screen. Bill Keller indicates that Freeman's past two roles as God mean that he has 'no trouble projecting moral authority' (Keller 2009). David Harewood said he was at first 'terrified' to perform Mandela. Clarke Peters said he was 'absolutely overawed', while Idris Elba considered performing Mandela the 'greatest challenge of his acting career' (Geoghegan 2013). Tumisho Masha, the first South African to play the role of Mandela in a feature film (*Mandela's Gun* 2016) said it was a great privilege and honour 'but it comes with a lot of pressure' (*SABC Digital News*, December 12, 2014). In spite of the challenges of acting Mandela, he remains 'one of the most portrayed global figures of the past 50 years' (Geoghegan 2013). Mandela's life is, therefore, invaluable raw material for celebrity promotion, production, circulation and consumption.

The scramble for Mandela's biopics

South African reporter Maureen Isaacson, in *The Sunday Independent* (February 2, 2010, 16) wrote, 'Nelson Mandela is in danger of being swallowed by Morgan Freeman and Hollywood.' She was alluding to Clint Eastwood's film *Invictus* and its re-enactment of 'Mandela Magic' in the 1995 Rugby World Cup. She argues that Mandela lives in the shadow of his media generated image. Indeed, the international scramble to produce Mandela biopics underscores his postcolonial celebrity status as well as the globalisation of image production in the age of industrialised culture. Mandela represents the universal fight for freedom and human dignity; the

celebration of Mandela's life is therefore a celebration of global ideals of freedom and justice for all. The apartheid system that he fought to destroy, presents a challenge of racial hatred to all humanity and was destroyed through coordinated international struggle with Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) as the lynchpin.

It is important to give a brief overview of Mandela biopics as a prelude to the discussion of *Invictus* in order to show what they are and how they work and, specifically, how the Mandela films fit the 'King Solomon's Mines' template. There are two guiding perspectives: (1) Mandela's importance and his stature in African and world history; and (2) the entertainment/media/news industry's celebrity construction of Mandela's image and how these relate to the concern of this book about the recurrence of the Dark Continent motifs. This involves an analysis of the celebrity business and how it works in: (a) an adaptation process as conceptualised by Elliott in which the original text — here the biographical man Mandela — incarnates on the screen through Hollywood lenses which reproduce the man, the literary biography, and the intertextual collage with the Hollywood star system as well as political economy of transcultural/transcontinental production; and (b) how it works as another process whereby Mandela is read through the lens of the intertexts of this book and the Dark Continent frameworks of colonialism. Here are the Mandela films:

Sarafina (1992), Anant Singh's South African production that features Leleti Kumhalo (Sarafina) in a metatheatrical performance of Mandela captures the 1976 Soweto riots when over 20 000 African schoolchildren took to the streets in defiance when Afrikaans was imposed as the medium of instruction in all black schools. The uprising was brutally crushed by the apartheid regime that shot dead hundreds of students. The iconography of that violence is captured by the famous *Drum Magazine* picture of slain schoolboy, Hector Pieterson. *Sarafina* focuses on Morris Isaacson High School, the epicentre of the uprising. Mandela, an absentee actor in the film, is serving his life sentence on Robben Island but his spirit pervades the film as he provides the youth of Soweto inspiration in their fight against apartheid. As Rita Barnard observes, 'In these years, Mandela was physically absent from the world at large, alive only in memory and in collective dreams of a transformed future' (2014, 6). The apartheid regime had thought they would consign Mandela into oblivion by removing him from physical sight but, instead, he became a legend whose name was the rallying point for the anti-apartheid struggle. As the real man became more and more unknown, he equally became an object of mythical fascination: 'Mandela became an off-camera phenomenon and his silence grew more eloquent than words' (Modisane 2014, 225). At the start of the film, with the iconic portrait of Nelson Mandela on the wall, Sarafina shares her dreams of becoming a star: 'Nelson, why can't I be a star?' she speaks to the portrait. Lize van Robbroeck observes of sacred

objects and iconicity in Byzantine and Greek orthodox Christianity that images of holy personages were differentiated from narrative art by the sacred power attached to the images (2014, 245). The portrait of Mandela on the wall acquires equal status with Mandela as an ever-present political inspiration for Sarafina and her fellow students in their resistance to oppression. The image is also infused with hope for a better future. She later tells the invisible spirit of Mandela how she was tortured by the police. The cross-gender casting of Leleti Khumalo as Mandela is not only unique in the metatheatrical sense, but also in foregrounding the feminist consciousness of the 1990s women liberation movement. Although the film was written by South African playwright, Mbongeni Ngema and directed by Darrell Roodt, also a South African, it was a multinational co-production that involved, among others, the British Broadcasting Corporation, Hollywood Pictures, Distant Horizons and Miramax. The film relied heavily on the star persona of Whoopi Goldberg (Mary Masombuka) who was featured prominently on the DVD jacket with a small image of Leleti Khumalo behind her. With a largely South African cast and location shooting, the film does some justice to the story of South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle.

Mandela (1987) stars Danny Glover as Mandela, an action hero. The film focuses on his younger years up to the climax of the anti-apartheid struggle, from the 1950s to the 1980s. The *syuzhet* of this film is historically broad, starting from the defiance campaigns of the 1950s and ending with Mandela's rejection of Botha's release offer. Mandela is portrayed as a lover, youth leader, and a charismatic and energetic freedom fighter. Played in the characteristic Danny Glover action style, it is fast, melodramatic and extremely physical. There is a detailed focus on Mandela's first meeting with Winnie. It is an account which is as Hollywood as it can get, drawn out and set in an open field. Yet, Mandela and Winnie in reality had no time for romantic frolicking owing to the pressure of work and the constant threat of arrest. Emphasis is placed on Mandela's youthfulness and physical prowess, showing him exercising and boxing, usually paired with a weak and unfit individual to underscore his fitness. Produced while Mandela was still incarcerated, there was no opportunity to see and study the 'real' Mandela, and therefore the director relied on historical records, the little available video footage and on the myth of Mandela. The simplistic performance of Winnie by American actress, Alfre Woodard shows that the producers had little understanding of the sophisticated, beautiful and enlightened Winnie Mandela; nor does the film bring out the depth of Mandela's character. Although the film is a biopic, yet action and romance, the two major strands of the Hollywood action genre, are deeply embedded in the high-energy, fast-paced acting of Danny Glover and the unpolished-innocent beauty acting of Woodard, creating a hybrid action-romance film. The film ends with the Schwarzenegger *Terminator* style quote of Mandela's

words from prison when he rejected Botha's conditional offer of release: 'I will return!' This film which was very useful in telling the story of Mandela's incarceration and the history of the struggle, projects a hyperreal image of Mandela through the star persona of Danny Glover.

Mandela and De Klerk (1997) is a HBO film directed by Joe Sergeant which picks up from where Glover ends. It focuses on Mandela's life during the United Democratic Front campaigns and mass township unrest between 1985 and 1991, which was also the period of intense behind-the-scene negotiations between Mandela and De Klerk. This is a historical docudrama featuring Sydney Poitier as Mandela, portrayed as an older man but a complex statesman and negotiator. This film is part of what Ciraj Rassool has called the 'veritable scramble' for the 'cultural production of the messianic Mandela' (Rassool 2004, 257), showing Mandela as the forgiver, peacemaker and reconciler. Poitier is however outgunned by Michael Cane's stunning performance as De Klerk. The film's construction gives equal coverage to Mandela and De Klerk which underscores their joint Nobel Peace Prize award for their shared commitment to peace. The pre-election Inkatha-ANC violence is explored and De Klerk apologises to Mandela that the security forces have been implicated as a 'third force' in the violence. There is very little insight into Mandela's character in the film, let alone a treatment of the complex socio-political undercurrents of apartheid. This movie is part of the postcolonial celebrity productions of Mandela's image that detach him from the wider social forces and historical undercurrents that shaped his resolve, confidence and temperament. Because Poitier was 70 when he acted Mandela, and with the added advantage of his long acting experience, this film is closer to a Mandela screen incarnation than precursor Mandela films. It is also shot at the locations where the negotiations took place, giving it a measure of historical credibility. This docudrama approach is evidenced by embedded live footage of real historical events. The large-scale use of South African actors brings additional authenticity to the film and makes the international collaboration worthwhile. However, Poitier's characteristic method acting style basically makes the film an impersonation of Mandela. There is no attempt made by Poitier to study the postures, mannerisms and speech habits of Mandela.

Endgame (2009) is a British film starring Clarke Peters as Nelson Mandela. It is directed by Pete Travis from a script by Paula Milne, based on the book *The Fall of Apartheid* by British journalist Robert Harvey (2003). It was filmed at locations in Reading, Berkshire England, and Cape Town, South Africa. The film focuses on the last stage of apartheid and the intense negotiations between the ANC in exile led by Thabo Mbeki (Chiwetel Ejiofor) and the apartheid government led by Willie Esterhuyse (William Hurt), professor of philosophy at Stellenbosch University. It ends with the release of Nelson Mandela from Victor Verster Prison. The film also

gives viewers a glimpse of what was happening at the ANC headquarters in exile in Lusaka. In a 2009 interview on BBC Radio's Channel 4, Michael Young mentioned how he had been asked by Thabo Mbeki to write the final chapter of *The Fall of Apartheid*, the chapter on which this film is based (Young 2009). Indeed, one could call this film Mbeki's. There are strong portrayals of Thabo Mbeki and Professor Willie Esterhuyse in the film. Conversely, the portrayal of Nelson Mandela is rather weak. Even Oliver Tambo (John Kani) is better depicted in this film. In *Endgame*, Mandela is still at the centre of the political process both in South Africa and in exile, yet this Mandela lacks charm and charisma. The impersonation is made worse by the stiff performance of Carl Peters. Mandela is slow, hesitates, lacks aura and personality; he is talked down to by security chief Dr Niel Barnard (Mark Strong) who treats him with little respect. Anyone who has seen images of Mandela and has read about Mandela and seen the real man with his contagious smile and self-confidence can tell that the Mandela of *Endgame* is a far cry from Nelson Mandela the man. It is the stiffest and least convincing portrayal of Mandela. Understandably, this film was an adaptation of a commissioned chapter of *The Fall of Apartheid* which sought to highlight Mbeki's invisible role in bringing down apartheid as well as the conversion and transformation of right-wing white ideologues symbolised by Professor Esterhuyse. The positive portrayal of Professor Esterhuyse also falls within the narrative grid of white focalisation that exaggerates the portrayal of white apartheid agents as empathetic to the ANC cause or as converts to the doctrine of peace and reconciliation.

Goodbye Bafana also titled *The Colour of Freedom* (2007) is a literary adaptation of James Gregory's book *Goodbye Bafana: Nelson Mandela My Prisoner, my Friend* (1995) — an international collaborative work with Bob Graham, which gives us the jailer's point of view. It shows the stark difference between the normal family lives of the warders on Robben Island and the restricted and virtually destroyed family life of Mandela. This is the most controversial film of all the Mandela biopics because it overstates Mandela's forgiveness for and reconciliation with his jailer, James Gregory who also claims that Mandela was his 'close friend', an assertion immortalised in his *Goodbye Bafana*. It is alleged that Mandela did not endorse the story. According to Ciraj Rassool, Mandela posed with Gregory for numerous photographs and even invited him to his inauguration as the first democratically elected president of South Africa as well as to the opening of parliament, but that these were mere gestures of reconciliation. Ciraj Rassool surmises that Mandela pulled out the political performance to show that he was indeed the 'father of the rainbow nation' (2004, 98). It is hard to read Mandela's gestures, but Richard Stengel who collaborated with Mandela in writing *Long Walk to Freedom* observes that the old man was deeply hurt by the way he was treated in prison, was

regretful that his youthful years were wasted, and hated the way his wife and family were treated. He was also pained by the sacrifice of his marriage to the liberation struggle, and did not really care for James Gregory 'whom he found limited and who he thought was exploiting their connection' (Stengel 2010, 98). Like the book, the film uses Gregory's point of view which humanises him as the warder. It is another project of white focalisation which this time lionises the jailer. It shows a high degree of empathy for Mandela in prison contrary to accounts of unimaginable brutality and indifference from Robben Island prison warders. The film exonerates Gregory and distorts the reality of what happened to Mandela on Robben Island, captured in his own account in his *Long Walk* autobiography. In both his book and the film Gregory shows a deep understanding of Africans and how his destiny is tied to that of black people. This is part of a disputed narrative, exacerbated by Dennis Haysbert's acting which is most wanting. Artificial white hair, and mechanical walks and conversations make the film problematic. Although the film provides a rare and limited glimpse into the mind of a Robben Island prison warder, and underscores the common humanity of both blacks and whites, the New Wave Hollywood mode of Dark Continent narratology is nevertheless all too evident. It whitewashes the history of the political struggle, downplays the great sacrifices made and rewrites South African history on screen to exonerate the perpetrators of white extremism and their global collaborators.

Idris Elba plays Nelson Mandela in Justin Chadwick's *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013), the officially sanctioned adaptation of Nelson Mandela's bestselling autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* with the final script of the screenplay by William Nicholson (*Gladiator* 2000). The film failed at the box office. First, the overambitious film attempted to tell the entire story of Nelson Mandela's public and private life and ended up spreading itself too thinly. The overemphasis on Mandela's family life, and the hypermasculine performance of Elba, emphasising his height and bulk, failed to bring out the charisma of Nelson Mandela. Moreover, Elba lacked resemblance to Mandela. South African critics weighed in, lamenting the continued dominance of Western actors in African roles:

> And they still refuse to pick an actual South Africa[n]. I mean it's not like they don't have enough people who can't tackle this canvas. Idris Elba a– does not look remotely like Mandela. He is a different kind of Bantu altogether; b– He is too Westernized…He tried to mimic a local accent. It failed. His body language is too Westernized; c– He has…been in Africa only once in his life. (as cited in Cummings 2012)

The comments summarise the frustrations of African actors and critics with Hollywood's star cast system that prefers to deploy celebrity Western actors to play iconic African roles however different they may look or sound from the real Africans

they portray. The reality is that Hollywood is more interested in using Africa as the treasure trove for stories that can be retold through Western focalisation for commercial success. Nelson Mandela becomes a profitable character-product that is appealing to the Western audience based on the universal ideals of forgiveness, perseverance and heroism that he champions even as the history that produced him and which shaped his political career is trumped.

Mandela is also portrayed in two films about Winnie Mandela. The first is *Mrs Mandela* (2010), with David Harewood playing Nelson Mandela. In this BBC drama about the mother of the South African struggle, Sophie Okonedo portrays Winnie Madikizela Mandela. Written and directed by Michael Samuel, the film is a romantic drama. Like most actors playing Mandela, Harewood's accent is unconvincing. In the second, *Winnie Mandela* (2011), Terrence Howard (*Hustle & Flow*) acts as Mandela. Mrs Mandela is performed by Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson (*Dreamgirls*). While Howard bears a fairly close resemblance to his subject, he fails utterly to portray Mandela's mannerisms and personality. Although directed by a South African, Darrell Roodt, some South African actors verbalised their frustrations at the continued casting of American stars to tell African stories. Winnie Madikizela Mandela herself was unhappy with the movie because she had not been consulted. This control of African heroic narratives by Hollywood, silences local voices in favour of Hollywood's colonially mediated, profit-driven narrative apparatus that exploits Africa's landscape, wildlife, people and heroes as subjects of grand Dark Continent narratives for Western audiences.

After over 20 major films and TV productions about Nelson Mandela, *Mandela's Gun* (2016) starred Tumisho Masha, the first South African actor to perform Mandela in a feature film with an all-South African cast. Directed by John Irvin and produced by Moroba Nkawe, the espionage drama thriller is a mixture of documentary footage, interviews with veteran anti-apartheid activists Tokyo Sexwale, Ronnie Kasrils, Denis Goldberg and Mac Maharaj amongst others, and a dramatization of Mandela's life. The film chronicles Mandela's journey across Africa where he received military training in Algeria and Ethiopia and received the gift of a semiautomatic Makarov pistol from Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, after which he travelled to Tanzania and then to Botswana before sneaking back into South Africa to form Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC. The acquisition of the gun carries tremendous symbolic significance and came to represent Mandela's 'revolutionary awakening and the start of the armed struggle against apartheid' (Brand South Africa 2016). It shows the more youthful, less tolerant and military side of Mandela. It also helped to highlight the enormous role the African continent played in the liberation struggle. The film focuses on military training and on the pistol, but this Cold War film genre tries to hijack Mandela's story and fit it into the classical spy narrative, an

unsuccessful imposition. 'The clinical "Cold War" element to the espionage seems a bit misplaced in the African context' ("Movie Review: Mandela's Gun"). There is obvious overdramatization and an even more fake rendering of Mandela's speech patterns than in the performance of some Western actors who played the same role; 'Mandela's unique accent and rhythm is [sic] mimicked by Masha, who does a good job, but it does seem like some of his performance is lost in trying to capture the nuances of his speech patterns' ("Movie Review: Mandela's Gun"). Moreover, Masha's performance is quite wanting. The all-South African cast and interviews from Mandela's associates gives the film some historical credibility.

Invictus: The screen incarnation of Mandela

The screen productions of Mandela's image have attracted some of the world's greatest actors but Morgan Freeman's method acting of Mandela towers above them all. Journalist Bill Keller opines that 'The role has defeated actors as varied as Danny Glover…Sydney Poitier…and Dennis Haysbert in vehicles that were reverential and mostly forgettable… But I found Freeman's performance in *Invictus* (2010)…less an impersonation than an incarnation' (Keller 2009). Other actors who have played Mandela are Simon Sabela in the West German TV docudrama *Rivonia Trial (Der Rivonia-Proze*β*)* (1966) and Lindane Nkosi (*Drum* 2004). Indeed, Eastwood's film *Invictus* stands out not just as the most convincing performance of Nelson Mandela, but also the most positive film about the South African statesman. The uniqueness of the film derives from the fact of its production at the height of Mandela's fame as the most respected African postcolonial celebrity, a man Richard Stengel called 'the last pure hero on the planet' (Stengel 2010, 3). The film's progenitor text *Playing the Enemy* (2008) is equally unique. John Carlin broached the idea of writing the book with Nelson Mandela first, clearly seeking endorsement for the project. Mandela's response was 'John, you have my blessing. You have it wholeheartedly' (2008, 4). Previous Western authors and auteurs did not consult the African subjects of their writings or productions and rarely do today. *Invictus* treats Mandela with great respect and idolises him. Even where his family failures are brought into focus, they are presented in a manner that elicits sympathy from the viewer, casting Mandela in the light of his long suffering as a prisoner of conscience. Carlin states in his introduction, 'This book seeks, *humbly*, to reflect a little of Mandela's light' (2008, 6; my emphasis). The screenplay was also written by then South African exile Anthony Peckham who had some insight into the history and Rugby story Carlin reconstructed. The film is not just the armchair researched Euro-American imaginary of Mandela and of South Africa, but a story that has a high degree of authenticity because the events actually took place, and because the narrative unfolds in real time. *Invictus* is also unique in that Nelson Mandela personally had asked African American actor Morgan Freeman

to play him in Anant Singh's proposed adaptation of *Long Walk to Freedom*. Freeman also had access to Mandela on several occasions, for he had told Singh, 'if I was going to play him [Mandela], I was going to have to have access to him…I would have to hold his hand and watch him up close and personal' (Keller 2009). Freeman also made himself Mandela's invisible understudy to understand the man, his postures, mannerisms and accent, in order to attempt a reverential performance that would at best humanise a 'saint'. It is, therefore, pertinent to ask the questions: What makes the internationally collaborative imaging of Mandela in *Invictus* so successful? Could it be because of Mandela's personality and great personal sacrifice? Or could it be because of Mandela's overlapping intersection as guardian of the underprivileged and global icon in a fight against all forms of domination, black or white? Or is this just Morgan Freeman's acting genius? The answer is all of the above. Mandela's sacrificial resistance to oppression is etched in human history with universal resonance. As such, he is a postcolonial celebrity with immense entertainment capital. The star persona of Nelson Mandela combines with the star persona of Morgan Freeman to produce double-layered celebrity intertexts that lend economic force to the film. Yet, the celebrity glitz draws attention away from South African history, Westernising and detaching Mandela from his cultural context, reducing him to a universal symbol of human goodness.

Reading South African history through Mandela's life

Historians like Eric Louw argue that Mandela is for the most part a 'Mass media construction' or a product of 'spin-doctors' (2009, 294) and he wonders if he is not even a product of 'sloppy journalism' that ignored the 'real politics' of South Africa (2009, 304). I find Louw's observation rather extreme. In many ways, the media propelled Mandela's global celebrity star status but within the context of the South African freedom struggle. From very early in his political career, Mandela understood the power of the media and he exploited every photographic opportunity; he even performed for the camera in pictures of himself boxing, burning his passbook, with his royal regalia in court and a few glimpses of him on Robben Island. Says Stengel, 'Like Lincoln who took every opportunity to have his picture taken…Mandela is aware that images have power to shape how we are perceived' (2010, 95–96). If Mandela understood the power of the press, individuals and institutions engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle understood this even better. As Ciraj Rassool observes, the depictions of Mandela as the embodiment of South Africa's heritage followed years of biographical work in which 'Mandela's narrated life came to be inscribed into South Africa's process of nation making as embodying its heritage and ensuing its prospects' (2004, 272). While this process resulted in the mythical historiography of Mandela, Rassool argues that Mandela image production became 'more than

just questions about image and myth.' To Rassool, these are 'questions about the "relations of cultural production" involved and the intervention of' several people including 'experts and assistants, promoters, publicists and image-makers' in the biographical industry 'through whom Mandela's life has been produced over time' (2004, 272). From the beginning of Mandela's life sentence, the ANC consciously inscribed his life as the ultimate narrative of South African history of struggle and victory against oppression. As Oliver Tambo explained, Mandela, 'is the symbol of the self-sacrificing leadership' for South Africans, a man who is 'unrelenting' yet at the same time 'capable of flexibility and delicate judgment.' He called Mandela 'an outstanding individual' but one who 'knows that he derives his strength from the great masses of people, who make up the freedom struggle of our country' (as cited in Maanga 2013, 97). While Tambo celebrated Mandela's personal charisma, genius and self-sacrifice, he was careful to inscribe it in the context of the people's struggle. Mac Maharaj, a long-time confidant of Mandela and fellow prison inmate observes that 'Nelson Mandela the individual cannot be separated from Umkhonto and the ANC, he is above all a product of the ANC' (as cited in Solani, 2000, 45). This is not the self-transcendent Mandela of *Invictus* or even the fairy-tale political mass seducer of *Playing the Enemy*. Mandela was the man of the people at one with them in dreams and aspirations, and the embodiment of the struggle.

Over time, Mandela's image became a useful resource that could be produced by the anti-apartheid movement to rally support for the struggle. While in prison, Mandela himself became an actor in this theatre of Mandela image production as 'the absentee performer' (Louw 2009, 296). His role was 'scripted out by anti-apartheid activists as a "virtual performance"' and the absent Mandela became what Louw calls 'pure imagery'. The power of this media construction of Mandela was evident in the Free Mandela Concert of 1988 where Mandela's pre-Robben island photos were reproduced, 'to which was grafted an [sic] heroic mystique and the notion of a hero-victim fighting tyrannical villains' (2009, 296). Louw cites four major media outlets that were responsible for creating Mandela's celebrity profile in the 1980s: the Afrikaans press together with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the anti-apartheid press, the Anglo-liberal press and, lastly, foreign news correspondents (2009, 302). Both those who demonised him and those who celebrated him contributed to Mandela's rapid rise to fame. Ciraj Rassool observes that key events in Mandela's life — like the Free Mandela Concert, his release from Victor Vester prison in 1991, his inauguration as president in 1994, and the star-studded celebration of his 80th birthday in 1997 — were also carefully choreographed as global media events. These were rituals of celebrating a great and exemplary life of heroism and sacrifice, and consequently as biographic narrations inscribed with national aspirations (Rassool 2004, 281). Mandela became the symbol, personification and rallying

point of the struggle, and his personal life turned into a confluence of discourses of struggle, heroism and freedom for South Africa. A reading of Mandela's life paralleled a reading of South African history from different angles. Mandela's life merged with 'the discourse of heroic leaders' and his biographic narratives became 'structures of political transformation and reconstruction' (Rassool 2004, 254).

Post-apartheid heritage construction entailed reimaging of South Africa as the rainbow nation built on forgiveness and reconciliation; a heritage constructed around the name and person of Mandela. Fran Buntman who did research on the history of political prisoners in South Africa, talks about the 'Mandelisation' of the history of political imprisonment in South Africa. The other prisoners on Robben Island — 'the unsung heroes', especially those in the single cell A Section also called 'the leadership section', who were treated with even less dignity were virtually ignored (2003, 39–41; 1996, 98–104). Robben Island researcher, Noel Solani, for instance, attempts to debunk a number of 'myths' that circulated about Mandela during his imprisonment on Robben Island saying Mandela's record at a micro (family) level does not show that he was a reconciler and forgiver. He cites Mandela's recourse to divorcing his wife and comrade Winnie Mandela because of allegations that she had an adulterous relationship with Dali Mpofu, her young South African lawyer (2000, 48). Solani's research led to the establishment of alternative exhibitions at Robben Island where Cell Stories of prisoners in A Section were unveiled to provide 'a pluralistic exhibition system' (2000, 54) instead of the single narrative of the sacrosanct B-Block encounter where Mandela's Cell No. 5 is situated. As Ciraj Rassool observes, this alternative exhibition told individual stories of other prisoners from different political organisations as a way of 'contestation over the historical meaning of political imprisonment for South Africa's public history' (*Mail and Guardian* [Online], November 26 to December 2). *Playing the Enemy* is part of those forums of biographic narration centred on — and in this case authorised by — Mandela, although the historical strands that feed into Mandela's biography are to a large extent highlighted. There is, therefore, a tripartite narrative strategy in *Invictus*: (1) actual history; (2) mythical/national heroic narrative; and (3) the film. Actual history provides the premise of the film as it reconstructs the events of the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the racial politics that surrounded the name, symbols and colours of the Springboks; a racialised situation that Mandela subverted in his attempt to achieve national unity. The mythical narrative involves South Africa's national heritage construction through the star persona of Nelson Mandela, largely considered the father of democratic South Africa. This process involves a high degree of mythography through which Hollywood builds on the earlier work of the South African and international press responsible for Mandela's visibility and his Promethean image construction. The film and its cinematic apparatus pays

genre allegiance to Hollywood's sports films and great lives biopics. This 'great lives' biographical and biopic mode of national historiography is problematic in that it amplifies one individual or a few, and reciprocally diminishes others. While the film contributes to the heroic national history formation of South Africa, it is also part of the international/Western/still-colonialist celebratory production that ideologically silences South African history — and with it the complicity of the West in propping up apartheid — and conveniently extracts Mandela out of the total context of the anti-apartheid struggle to create a universal symbol of peace and reconciliation.

In *Invictus* — to borrow Rassool's description of public biographic celebrations in post-apartheid South Africa — 'resistance memory and heroic biography merged with the glitz and glamour of entertainment' (2004, 256). The glamorous cinematic celebration of Mandela in *Invictus* through the tropes of forgiveness and reconciliation via Rugby lacks historical foundation in the discourse of anti-apartheid struggle ingrained in the life of Mandela. The film continues the celebratory representation of Mandela locally within South Africa and internationally. His image is 'incarnated' from *Playing the Enemy* onto the screen in *Invictus* in order to establish Mandela's life as the premise of democratic South Africa's history. Kamilla Elliott's incarnation model of literature/film adaptation is 'Predicated on the Christian theology of the word made flesh, wherein the word is only a partial expression of a more total representation that requires incarnation for its fulfillment' (2003, 161). This model of adaptation operates on the 'rhetoric of incarnation, materialization, and realization' (2003, 161). This rhetoric further suggests that 'the characters…[in the book]…were not quite alive until their incarnation in film' (161). What John Carlin wrote, Clint Eastwood made flesh in the pictorial incarnation. Carlin's desire to 'reflect a little of Mandela's light' (2008, 6) is taken further by Eastwood who causes a visual realisation of Carlin's dream in the materialisation of Mandela on screen. The adaptation process in *Invictus* works at two levels: First, Carlin textualises the real story of Mandela through sports biography; second, Eastwood then incarnates that textualisation on screen.

Carlin's book spans ten years, from 1985 to 1995, and through a series of reminiscences, flashbacks, and shifting chronology, he weaves his narrative around seven key characters across decades, and racial and social divides, to expose the injustice, oppression and raw brutality that the Springboks symbolised. These characters are François Pienaar, Justice Bekebeke, General Viljoen, Niel Barnard, Linga Moonsamy, Kobie Coetsee and Morné du Plessis. The film, however, weaves its narrative around only two major characters, Mandela and Pienaar, and engages with history in a rather shallow way, avoiding the complex issues. Several historical markers run through the film: the montage sequences of Mandela on Robben Island, real news footage of De Klerk announcing Mandela's release, the pre-election ethnic

violence, and dramatization of racial tensions through the rugby locker room. We see racism through the Pienaar family representing the fears of the white minority, through the township coaching clinics, and through the relationship between the police and the street boy outside Ellis Park Stadium. Winnie Mandela has three seconds of appearance as Mandela walks out of prison and is not mentioned later in the film except through implied conversation between Mandela and Zindzi. *Invictus* instead focuses on magnifying Mandela's image and charm and does not investigate *why* Mandela was imprisoned, *who* or what institution imprisoned him, or who fought alongside him and for him. It does not show the multiracial constituency that championed Mandela's release, the global community that shouted 'Free Mandela' around world capitals and, above all, the intense negotiations, which had many layers and players, within and outside South Africa that led to a democratic South Africa. Admittedly, a film cannot capture all these details, especially a film that focuses on how Mandela inspired South Africa to win the Rugby World Cup and its significance for national reconciliation. Still, these events could have been highlighted as a quick backdrop, but the film is largely unconcerned about South African history. By obscuring the historical background leading up to Mandela's rugby campaign, the celebrity image of Mandela is invoked in an ideological vacuum leading to the complete 'Mandelaisation' of the Rugby story. This is in line with one of the characteristics of films marketed as a 'true story', what Thomas Leitch calls 'ideological effacement' (2009, 300). This is a phenomenon where the filmmaker extracts the character from his or her historical context and makes him or her a 'free agent' whose heroism emanates from within him or herself and therefore transcends history. *Invictus* avoids dealing with the real politics and history of South Africa and only tackles universal morality epitomised by the choices and actions of individual free agents like Mandela and Pienaar. Citing the true story films of Stephen Spielberg, Leitch says, 'The films scrupulously recreate their historical setting while insisting on their heroes' essential freedom from historical imperatives, their status as agents in history who are not agents of history' (2009, 301). This shallow treatment of historical material for commercial and cultural expediency is typical of Hollywood's treatment of African history that ignores the people and larger political, economic and cultural context of conflicts and colonial looting in Africa; a mode of cultural production in the *King Solomon's Mines* template.

Invictus as spectacular history

John Carlin's *Playing the Enemy* shares with *Invictus* the narrative thread of mythography. It is a book the author approached as 'a fable, or a parable, or a fairy tale' (2008, 5). According to Carlin, the Rugby World Cup victory was all conceived,

planned and executed by Mandela's political genius, and was 'Mandela's greatest achievement' (Carlin 2008, 244). Although Mandela had formed 'an idea of the political power of sport while in prison' (2008, 4), he could not have had a premonition about South Africa's participation in the 1995 World Cup, especially since he himself had been hostile to the Springboks while in prison and the ANC had been responsible for South Africa's suspension from international sports. Mandela only happened to be a great strategist who was in the right place at the right time to take political advantage of the Rugby World Cup. Journalist Paul Ackford of the UK *Telegraph*, who claimed insider knowledge of the South Africa rugby team at the time, says, however, that 'Mandela's involvement was more spontaneous' than planned (Ackford 2009). His statement contradicts Carlin's version and the film adaptation that places Mandela at the centre of every move and every action. The film amplifies Mandela's role to the point where winning the Rugby World Cup becomes the sole business of the presidency, undermining all other state duties and pressing national issues like crime, poverty and the economy. Mandela becomes the Springboks' master strategist, poring over match fixtures with the Sports Minister, tracking the games and recording wins and losses. The noticeboard for tracking the Springboks' performance occupies a central place in his office. We see him pondering strategies and saying, 'How can we beat them?' He attends more matches in the film than he actually did during the 1995 Rugby World Cup. He sits down and watches the semi-final match between Australia and the New Zealand All Blacks, just like the coach and team, paralysing all official duties. All these engaged behaviours are cinematic embellishments. Mandela's choice of Pienaar's No. 6 green-and-gold Springbok jersey appears as a grand strategy that electrified the crowd, but the originator of the idea of wearing the jersey (unacknowledged in the film) was his bodyguard, Linga Moonsamy, who came up with the proposal as an afterthought (Carlin 2008, 205). Carlin's biographical narrative falls within the paradigm of the dramatic, spectacular history of heroes. The film adaptation tightens and intensifies the drama further by eliminating most of the major characters in *Playing the Enemy*. The eliminated characters provide reasons for the antagonism surrounding the Springboks and their insignia and colours. The neighbourhoods of these absent characters tell of the historical, economic and social polarities of apartheid.

Clint Eastwood does away with the characters in order to magnify Mandela's role as well as his charm over Pienaar as the symbolic white convert. In the film adaptation, Carlin's narrative history of South Africa's transition to democracy and the struggle to become a nation is incarnated as a single narrative of Mandela's victory over fate. The film's title *Invictus* — a Latin word which means 'invincible' — alludes to Mandela's courage and ultimate triumph over injustice; it summarises the premise of the film; Mandela is the invincible mythical hero. Commenting about

the delusions of narrative history as opposed to factual historical inquiries, Fernand Braudel observes that 'To the narrative historians, the life of men is dominated by *dramatic accidents*, by the actions of those *exceptional beings* who occasionally emerge, and who often are the master of their own *fate* and even more of ours' (as cited in White 2010, 274–275; author's emphases). As master of his own fate in *Invictus*, Mandela becomes the master of South Africa's fate, and the determiner of South Africa's 1995 Rugby World Cup victory. The title of the film comes from an English Victorian poem "Invictus" written in 1875 by William Ernest Henley at the height of the British Empire. The poem however is appropriated by Mandela to subvert settler colonialism in South Africa. It is recited non-diegetically as an inner voice in the montage sequences of Mandela at Robben Island. Mandela refers to the poem in his first meeting with Pienaar, and later inscribes the poem in his own handwriting and gives it to Pienaar who hands the precious piece of paper to his father for safe custody. Pienaar is politicised by Mandela in the film to understand Mandela's sacrifice and victory over oppression as well as his willingness to forgive his enemies. The poem infects Pienaar with the spirit of defiance, the spirit of Mandela that would intoxicate him with the desire for victory over rugby giants. Both biography and biopic are

Plate 4. President Nelson Mandela with Springbok Captain, Francois Pienaar.

charged with what White calls 'notions of "fate" and "destiny"' (2010, 275). As White further observes, in such narratives, 'Characters must be larger than life ("heroic") and more complex, more noble and more interesting ("exceptional") than ordinary people' (2010, 275; author's emphases). Mandela as master of his fate is also the man of destiny, and through him, South Africa's destiny in the World Cup is determined. He is larger than life, extraordinary and unstoppable.

The attempts by both Carlin and the film to celebrate Mandela's heroism outside the larger context of South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle creates a self-transcendent hero who becomes the master of his own fate and destiny, relegating the contributions of other people, institutions, nations and agents of history to the margins. Mandela was the champion of the anti-apartheid struggle, but his launch pad consisted of many other forces without which he would never have been master over fate or perhaps even emerged from prison alive. Within this understanding, the biggest problem with the film's exaggeration of Mandela's role in the Rugby World Cup quest is that its dramatic licence locates the film within the celebratory hagiographies of Mandela. Its silences and omissions about South African history uproot Mandela from the socio-political context of his work, releasing him like a hot-air balloon to float above history. Talking in *Long Walk* about the deep wounds apartheid left as well as the extraordinary champions of freedom it produced, Mandela left himself out of the roll call of heroes, to celebrate others: the Oliver Tambos, Walter Sisulus, Chief Albert Luthulis, Yusuf Daidoos, the Bram Fischers and the Robert Sobukwes 'of our time — men of such extraordinary courage, wisdom and generosity that their like may never be known again' (Mandela 1995, 748). He recognises not just these men as individuals but many like them across racial divides that collectively waged war against racial prejudice and injustice. He concludes by saying, 'Perhaps it requires such depths of oppression to create such heights of character' (1995, 748).

A review of *Invictus* in *Cinemarolling* captures Hollywood's by now familiar trivialisation of South African history:

> A native man named Nelson Mandela was thrown into jail thirty years before, and when released, was elected president of South Africa. Riots took place as racial tensions grew, because many white people were opposed to Mandela being the new president, while the blacks thought differently. Soon after, the riots calm, and Mandela tries to unite the land in an unexpected way: help the South African rugby team win the World Cup. (Jolls 2010)

Although the reviewer acknowledges that *Invictus* is a 'Historical drama', his summary of this narrative history abounds in gaps and unanswered questions. Why was the native man thrown in jail? Where did his jailers get the authority to throw him in jail? Why was he kept in jail for thirty years? Why were many whites opposed to his being president, and why was he elected president anyway? Did the blacks

just think differently or are there larger issues involved? And where is the coloured population in this historical drama or is South African history just black and white? The film clearly does not want to answer or even raise these questions. Mandela certainly inspired South Africa's 1995 Rugby World Cup victory which did unite the nation, at least for that period, but the film ignores the larger issues of social injustice, economic disparity and racial segregation. The film effectively shows that racial tension and economic disparity are synonymous, but the root causes are not explained. Jolls does not hide his disappointment: 'There was hardly any back-story to Mandela or Pienaar. The audience would most likely wish for a good foundation to set up the character personalities and actions' (Jolls 2010). The Hollywood film extracts the hero from the ideological murk of South African history, causing him to transcend his political, economic, historical and cultural contexts as a free agent of mythical proportions for spectacular entertainment.

The 'back-story' Jolls would have preferred is found in *Playing the Enemy* through its narrative juxtaposition of the major characters and the cities/townships from which they came. Examples are black townships like Paballelo in the shadows of rich white Upington and Sharpeville in the shadow of rich white Vereeniging. These paired locations and the characters who lived in them tell their own stories of economic disparity entrenched by apartheid and its raw brutality on the black population as opposed to the lies and indoctrinations of the system on white South Africans like Pienaar who never really knew the full extent of apartheid's evils. These historical subplots are what make Carlin's analysis of Mandela's role in uniting South Africans through sports so well situated and so convincing. Justice Bekebeke's story, for instance, tells us about life in depraved 'black' Paballelo Township, and lavish 'white' Upington. We learn of the effects of Hendrik Verwoerd's Bantu Education Act, 1953, first-hand from an angry and indignant Justice Bekebeke who could not proceed with his education in Paballelo at the age of 15 because white Upington authorities did not provide education for black pupils beyond his age. The Bantu Education Act, designed 'to stop blacks from receiving an education that might make them aspire to positions above their station' (2008, 43), affected Bekebeke directly. This unjust education system was apartheid's 'covert job-protection scheme for whites' (2008, 43). Bekebeke's father had to send him to Healdtown, a Methodist school in the Eastern Cape which Mandela also attended. Without this kind of background, *Invictus* fails to explain the reason for the extreme poverty in the shanty townships the Springboks visit during their training. No wonder one of the rugby players on the bus says cynically, 'I am glad I don't live here.' Bekebeke's story also gives us insight into the brutality of apartheid seen through the suppression of the Paballelo township uprising. It narrates the dramatic trial and highhanded conviction and sentencing of the Upington 25 to death by hanging for suspected involvement in killing Constable

Lucas Sethwala, a fanatical black collaborator. The hearing was reminiscent of the famous Rivonia Trials (1963–1964) where Mandela and other members of the MK High Command were sentenced to life imprisonment. Bekebeke was among the convicts and witnessed the gory hanging of dozens of innocent people at 'Death Row', as Pretoria Central maximum-security prison was known. Bekebeke was two cells away from the execution chamber and would routinely hear the all-night cry of the condemned, the shuffling of feet to the execution chamber, the final prayer, yells and silence as he waited for his turn. Bekebeke's analysis also shows that Upington in South Africa could be a metonym for Western privilege in general, because 'They inhabited the same general orbit as the most privileged people in the Western world' (Carlin 2008, 63). The Bekebeke narrative further helps to show that the lines were not strictly the dichotomous black and white that *Invictus* attempts to show. There was a grey area where the likes of Anton Lubowski, the white Afrikaner defence lawyer for the black Upington 25 belonged. Although they were one percent of the white population, they 'took risks' and 'made the conscious decision to swim against the fierce current of conventional *volk* wisdom' (Carlin 2008, 69). Lubowski is also reminiscent of Mandela's lifelong white lawyer George Bizos SC who made a great contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle.

Invictus dramatises black people's hatred of the Springboks through the street boy who rejects the Springbok's jersey and the vote by members of the National Sports Council to ban the Springbok name, emblem and colours, but it does not show or explain convincingly what the Springboks meant to blacks: 'a metaphor for apartheid's crushing brutality' (Carlin 2008, 42), and for white South Africans, their 'happy drug' (2008, 66). Bekebeke helps us to understand why the green jersey of the Springboks was hated to the same degree as the murderous riot police, the national flag and the national anthem, '"Die Stem" (The Call) whose words praised God and celebrated white conquest of the southern tip of Africa' (2008, 42). For Pienaar, rugby was just a game. But his own confession of the rivalry between English and Afrikaner schools and how the 'Dutchmen' dreaded being beaten by 'Englishmen' shows that rugby was not just a game, even for Pienaar; it was a metaphor for not just white but Boer power and might. These realities were also corroborated by the confessions of English-speaking rugby players who were ostracised by the Boer players. Pienaar's narrative in *Playing the Enemy*, like Bekebeke's, provides the missing historical backdrop to the Rugby drama in *Invictus*. Pienaar lived in rich and opulent Vereeniging which had a black township attached to it — Sharpeville, the scene of the worst single atrocity in South African history. Pienaar's family represents the typical average Afrikaner family, unaware of the real brutality of apartheid having 'believed a hundred percent in the propaganda of the day' (2008, 64). As such, Pienaar was greatly puzzled by the angry demonstrations that met the 1981 Springboks tour of New Zealand. He did

not understand that Rugby was 'The opium of the Boer' as anti-apartheid activist Arnold Stofile put it (2008, 65). Rugby was more than a game. Stofile's testimony against the Springboks as a team that represented the apartheid system's 'crimes against humanity' eventually led to the cancellation of the 1981 New Zealand tour; he further observed that 'We always defined sport as apartheid in tracksuits…Sports icons being de facto ambassadors for South Africa' (2008, 65). Rugby was a key drug that apartheid used to keep white youth inebriated 'and secluded from blacks' and was heavily supported by government as well as corporations that enjoyed tax rebates from government. 'So, it was the opium that kept whites [like Pienaar] in happy ignorance; the opium that numbed white South Africa' (2008, 66). This rich background to black hatred of the Springboks is missing from the film, yet it would have helped to show Mandela's risky move to support the Springboks and to defend their colours and emblem as a tactical political strategy to win over the white population. In the book, he is not just a master of his fate; he is the father of the nation, the great reconciler and visionary. We also get to know that Mandela's battle to save the Springboks was actually waged at cabinet level, especially after the 1992 game against New Zealand where white extremists decided to sing the hated old anthem "Die Stem" and to wave the old flag in clear breach of ANC instructions. As a condition for ending the international isolation of the Springboks, the ANC had stated that the game should not be used for 'promoting apartheid symbols' (2008, 112). Understanding this historical context helps to place the hatred for the Springboks in context and to see Mandela's genius more clearly than in the film whose commitment is to the incarnation of his motivation and inspiration.

Mythography in *Invictus*

A large part of Hollywood's movie enterprise is about myth-making. Myth is at the centre of science fiction, action and adventure films and romance. As Peacock observes, 'Movies have always had a way of giving us *outsized icons*' (2001, 13; author's emphasis). Without any doubt, Nelson Mandela is one of the greatest icons the world has ever seen, and his moral résumé and extraordinary courage and tenacity are beyond question. But Mandela is also a man of his times, shaped in the furnace of the political, cultural and social history of his world. He is pure gold because he was made in the intense heat of South African apartheid history and went to finishing school on Robben Island. It is thus superficial to celebrate Mandela outside the context of the popular struggle against oppression and injustice in South Africa and around the world. Yet Hollywood's Mandela is in a sense uprooted from this reality and planted onto the hothouse of hero-worship while giving minimal treatment to the circumstances that shaped him. We never get to know *why* Mandela was on Robben

Island. The montage sequences of him on the Island does not show a suffering man but a tough hero who is 'master of his own fate' unbowed, unmoved. The intense suffering he went through, the frustrations and, even more, the evils of the system that kept him there are left untreated; prison is just another arena for heroic feats — like an extreme sport. Mandela's account in *Long Walk to Freedom* shows that prison was not as stylised as it looks in *Invictus*. He was crushed by the callous treatment he received from the guards (1995, 404–410), a revelation he makes in *Conversations with Myself* (2010, 202); the brutal separation from his wife hurt him deeply (Mandela 1995, 477); the death of his mother (1995, 528–529) and of his son (1995, 530–531), and the fact that he wasn't permitted to bury them, all hurt him deeply. Although the film alludes to the pernicious unpredictability of prison life, it is not allowed to interrupt the 'feel-good', nice-old-man mood of the film. While *Playing the Enemy* organises South African history around Mandela's biography, *Invictus* deflates history and inflates Mandela's image instead.

Commenting on the scramble to tell Mandela's life story through biographies that begun in the late 1980s in different forms of media, Ciraj Rassool says it all started with the 1994 release of the autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* which led to 'The monumentalisation of Mandela's life history in the new South Africa' (2004, 259). The book, which apparently had many production collaborators, became 'the undisputed primary cultural icon of the "new South Africa"' (2004, 259). All sorts of versions and editions of *Long Walk* were made, including an abridged version for those who wanted to get a glimpse of Mandela's life in one sitting but which some saw as creating 'a sanitized history in which Mandela becomes the struggle and the struggle becomes Mandela' (2004, 260). To a large extent, *Playing the Enemy* falls within this discourse of the Mandela national biography. Carlin makes a studious effort to link the story of South Africa's unlikely quest to win the Rugby World Cup through Mandela's strategic genius to Mandela's quest for freedom for all South Africans through the conquest of key characters in the apartheid establishment. Carlin calls it seduction — Mandela's ability to seduce his enemies and to prevail over them, a strategy he also applies on Pienaar and the entire Rugby establishment. The various characters on different sides of the racial divide converge in the Rugby victory of South Africa through the mediation of Mandela. What Rassool calls 'incorporative nationalism' (2004, 261) merges into Mandela's new Rainbow Nation and takes place through reconciliation championed by Mandela.

This 'incorporative nationalism' takes place in *Invictus* as well, but Hollywood's account differs significantly because Hollywood is loyal to different representational discourses. These include box office pressures, the star cast, and dominant Euro-American institutional implications in abetting the apartheid system, which makes South African history in its raw state too murky for the political and cultural economy

of Hollywood blockbuster production. Mainstream Hollywood is fundamentally a business empire for which stories and biographies are commodities to be packaged for marketing; as such, their commitment to history is questionable. In spite of the deep respect the screenwriter, director and actors of *Invictus* had for Mandela, and the care they took to craft his image, Hollywood treated Mandela's story as raw material for creating a story that sells; the tale about a mythical giant that would satisfy the fantasies of the audience. As Richard Peacock observes, 'People want heroic fantasies', and Hollywood responds by creating *Young Guns*, *Rambo*, *Batman*, *Superman*, *Spiderman, Terminator, Robocop* and *Braveheart* (2000, 13). These characters are 'free agents' who do extraordinary feats just by reason of their superior destiny and indomitable courage. The characters in these films become glorified mythical giants and the actors who play them also share in this glory (2000, 14). Mandela took pains on the day of his release from prison to tell people that he was 'not…a prophet but a humble servant of…the people' and that he was not a messiah but 'an ordinary man who became a leader because of extraordinary circumstances' (1995, 676). He was aware of the myth surrounding his name, and he hated the idolatry it generated. Reminiscing about the announcement of his divorce to Winnie in April 1992, Mandela acknowledged that the process of mythologising him might have played a part in Winnie's frustrations: 'She married a man who soon left her; that man became a myth; and then that myth returned home and proved to be just a man after all' (1995, 719).

Richard Stengel remarks that Mandela is 'the smiling symbol of sacrifice and rectitude, revered by millions as a living saint. But this image is one dimensional' and that Mandela 'would be the first to tell you that he is far from a saint — and that is not false modesty' (Stengel 2010, 3). In countering the saintly discourse of his life, we see Mandela the man trying to fight back Mandela the mythological creature in whose shadow the global media tries to force him to live. As someone who knew Mandela closely, Stengel gives us a glimpse into the real man, not just the performer with an infectious smile that is the 'most radiant in history' (2010, 96), a smile Mandela perfected like a mask behind which he hid his pain and failures. Mandela himself projected the image of a 'happy warrior, not a vengeful warrior', and to consolidate this image he made appearances with his jailers, visited the widow of Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, and hugged General Constant Viljoen who nearly led a civil war against him. The smile became an effective mask and that smile was 'symbolic of how Mandela molded himself' (2010, 99). Behind the myth and the mask, however, was a real human being who dealt with the pain of his long detention and who after declaring 'forget the past' had to work out forgiveness of his enemies.

During a dinner hosted by the prime minister of Norway to celebrate the joint Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Mandela and De Klerk, Mandela spoke with bitterness

against his jailers and the evils of apartheid, a speech that shocked even his long-time lawyer and friend, George Bizos. Carlin says of the event, 'Clearly, Mandela retained some residue of bitterness toward his jailers contrary to his own claim in the press conference on the day after his release, and to the perception his admirers worldwide wished to have of him.' Carlin concludes by saying, 'He was human after all; he was not a saint' (2008, 143). This pain is briefly captured in *Invictus*, but there is no bitterness attached to it. One of his bodyguards, Hendrick Booyens (Matt Stern), made the mistake of inquiring about Mandela's family, and it reminded the old man of his loneliness and the pain of separation from his wife and family. The old man decided to cancel the morning jog altogether. This enraged one of his black bodyguards Linga Moonsamy (Patrick Mafokeng) who exploded saying Booyens should never ever ask the president about his family: 'He is not a saint, Okay? He is a man, with immense problems. He doesn't need us reminding him about it.' The loneliness is also captured in his estranged relationship with his daughter Zindzi, but all these scenes are constructed to make us sympathise with the old man and identify with his sorrows. While *Playing the Enemy* textualises South African struggle history through Mandela, *Invictus* makes Mandela a 'free agent' and master of his own fate. Mandela himself saw his rise to the position of leadership through the extraordinary circumstances of the struggle. Says Stengel of Mandela's view of his place in history,

> Yes, an individual has to have the right DNA and the right skills, but the moment makes the man — because only then does the man rise up to meet the moment. He would say he rose to the occasion, but he knew he did not *create* the occasion. (2010, 175; author's emphasis)

The superhuman Mandela of *Invictus* is different from the real Mandela who was shaped by South African history and rose up to meet its challenges.

What is 'rosebud?'

At the end of Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), investigative journalist Jerry Thompson, while explaining the meaning of the word 'rosebud' after a long and tedious search says, 'I don't think any word can explain a man's life.' Likewise, no one film can explain Mandela's life. It is not possible for any film, however accurate, because of the very nature of film, to give us a full encounter with Mr Nelson Mandela. As a fictional medium, film can merely re-enact reality through the cinematic apparatus which, by the nature of its codes and political economy of production is limited to retelling the story of Mandela's life from different focal points and times. Thus, while there are many impersonations of Mandela, some of the movies discussed in this chapter manage to incarnate partially Mandela the man and Mandela the idea and symbol of freedom. These movies contribute towards an understanding of

Mandela and, in varying degrees, his role in the anti-apartheid struggle, while simultaneously navigating the commercial waves of film production and consumption. Moreover, the 'myth' of Mr Mandela itself, as a solid biographical monolith, defies re-interpretation. As Rita Barnard rightly observes, 'revisiting a biography that has assumed the character of a sanctified national allegory, can hinder as much as help the discovery of new insights' (2014, 9). Interestingly, while *Long Walk* — the book — situates Mandela's political prowess in the context of South African history, the intertextual collage between Henley's poem, Carlin's book and Eastwood's film has led to the retitling of Carlin's book to *Invictus: Nelson Mandela and the Game that Changed the World* (2012). *Invictus* the book title displaces *Playing the Enemy* (2008), leading to the refocusing of the book on to the invincibility and prowess of Nelson Mandela. The book cover carries the same portrait of a larger-than-life Mandela and a smaller Pienaar on the DVD cover. Carlin's book *Invictus* now rides on the power and success of the film to sell, further consolidating the Hollywood myth of a universally transcendent Mandela. Given that all the background history to the film is omitted, the specific elements and qualities of the mythical man Mandela are those of a Westernised superhero.

The fight against the last stranglehold of colonial repression in Africa, which Mandela spearheaded, was a global fight. It therefore follows that the victory of humanity over apartheid sparked a global celebration, but so did the scramble for a piece of Mandela's profitable postcolonial celebrity image. The internationalisation of Mandela's story, and especially films prior to 11 February 1990, helped galvanise the world's resolve to fight apartheid, resulting in economic sanctions, travel and investment boycotts, the banning of South Africa from the Olympics as well as other international sporting events (FIFA World Cup, and international rugby and cricket tests), and the eventual unconditional release of Mandela. Against this backdrop, the celluloid incarnation of Mandela in *Invictus* is not so much the myth-making necessary for nation-building; instead it is actually the usual work of the neocolonial West repeating its favourite presuppositions about the Dark Continent, this time by extracting the celebrated African hero from his political and cultural context of struggle and investing him with universal significance — a form of individual heroic construction that obliterates all other political actors and histories. The internationalisation of Mandela's story and its international screen productions through the mediation of Euro-American actors are most problematic in that South African history is short-changed on the screen and other anti-apartheid activists and contemporaries of Mandela are forgotten in the total Mandelisation of South African history.

NEW APPROACHES

8

Metatextuality and transnational film production

Metatextuality is an adaptation theory that was developed by French linguist Gerard Genette who describes it as that 'relation most often labelled "commentary". It unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact, sometimes without even naming it' (Genette 1997, 4). Robert Stam distils Genette's meaning further by calling metatextuality that 'which refers to "the *critical* relationship between one text and another"' (2000, 123; my emphasis). Kevin Macdonald's 2005 cinematic adaptation of Giles Foden's novel, *The Last King of Scotland* critiques its progenitor text and reinterprets the story of Idi Amin through a transcultural context mediated by the performance of African American actor Forest Whitaker and the overall impact of location shooting. The film's adaptations both of history and of a man's life, as well as the transposition of the colonial narrative tradition in Foden's novel, engage multiple sociocultural-economic dimensions of Ugandan society. In particular, the significance of location shooting in Uganda, the role of Ugandan actors and of the Ugandan cultural advisor to the film director, and the Uganda Government that supported the production, helped to tone down the 'monster' image of Amin and of Uganda found in Foden's novel. Macdonald's film is not in any way redemptive, given its own narrative pandering to the tradition of Hollywood's Darkest Africa trope, as well as its packaging for the Euro-American audience. However, unlike the overtly racist and colonially more self-reflexive novel, the film adaptation humanises Idi Amin and diminishes Foden's Dark Continent mastertext. This critical model shows how the film adaptation critiques and 'improves' Foden's narrative by overtly disposing of characters, paragraphs, or entire chapters in the novel that portray Amin and Uganda very negatively in order to project a better image of both.

Further related to this critical approach is Kamilla Elliott's adaptation model of 'trumping'. The trumping adaptation model aims at showing 'what is wrong with the original' (2003, 174). Elliott's model is derived from the works of theorists like Neil Sinyard who argue that adaptation of books into film can be read 'as an activity

of literary criticism' or 'a critical essay' (as cited in Elliott 2003, 174–175). Citing literary adaptation deconstructionist Keith Cohen, Elliott argues that the adapted 'film critiques the novel's claim to representational prowess while asserting its own' (2003, 175).

This chapter examines how the political economy of the film's transcontinental/cultural collaboration reimages Idi Amin, Uganda's brutal past, and black Africa at large. Transnational cinema is the phenomenon of film production that involves production, financing, performers and distribution networks that are transnational. As Ezra and Rowden have written, 'The concept of transnationalism enables us to better understand the changing ways in which the contemporary world is being imagined by an increasing number of filmmakers across genres as a global system rather than as a collection of more or less autonomous states' (2010, 1). A detailed analysis of Foden's novel, especially his monster construction of Idi Amin, as well as colonial nostalgia, shows how Foden invokes narrative authority in the tradition of the British adventure novels and 'first contact' explorer tales. This background analysis is necessary to reveal how the film adaptation misreads, deconstructs and adjusts that representational premise through 'metatextuality' and 'trumping'. In their article, "The Cited and Uncited: Toward an Emancipatory Reading of Representations of Africa", Garuba and Himmelman observe that readings of representations of Africa are mostly characterised by a discourse and a counterdiscourse of colonial and subversive anticolonial scholarship respectively. The authors challenge us to go beyond the binary discursive economies of colonialism and anticolonialism to discover new alternative archives for reading films about Africa; what they call the 'unscribbled space that is still outside of discursive representation…that which is disarticulated from discourse' (2012, 16–17). In order to map out the 'uncited', we need to visit the colonial archive in Foden's novel in order to show what the film deconstructs and to evaluate the degree to which the film adaptation tones down the authorial excesses of the novel.

The 'Dark Continent' revisited

A *Washington Post Book World* review of Foden's novel *The Last King of Scotland* (1998) calls it an 'accomplished first novel' and goes on to say, 'Foden has skilfully limed *the country* that gave birth to Amin' (Foden 1998, i; my emphasis). One interviewer says to Foden, 'You grew up in Africa, which partly explains the *incredible richness and authenticity* of your novel,' and he goes on to say, 'British crincs [sic] have been awed by your convincing depiction of Idi Amin' (Type 1998 ; my emphasis) The positive reviews and literary acclaim that greeted Foden's novel and the judgment of his 'accuracy' in telling the story of Amin and his country, and interpreting the destiny of Uganda

are not surprising, given the novel's reiteration of the perennial adventure yarn that dominates English novels about Africa. The narrative is none other than the Dark Continent mastertext of the earlier colonial novels and all consequent novels premised on this reading of Africa in Western fiction. The novel relies on what Gaurav, building on V.Y. Mudimbe's (1988) now famous idea of the 'colonial library' describes as 'the set of representations and texts that have collectively "invented" Africa as a locus of difference and alterity' (Desai 2001, 4). The colonial library is an archive of cumulative 'knowledge' about Africa which, as Garuba and Himmelman observe, is iterated and reiterated through circuits of citation (2012, 16). These layers of referencing like the different works isolated by this study lend authority to each other in framing and consolidating the Dark Continent image. Foden's novel attempts to outdo earlier colonial novels in its vivid description of 'darkest' Africa. The novel's critical acclaim from the West highlights its placement in the broader cumulative narrative expectations of its target audience that dates back to the 19th century.

The novel seeks to establish the author's narrative authority as a custodian of Western representation of Africa in the footsteps of John Hanning Speke, Sir Richard Francis Burton, Sir Henry Morton Stanley, Mungo Park, V. L. Cameron, F. D. Lugard, Paul Belloni Du Chaillu, Henry Rider Haggard, and Edgar Rice Burroughs, among others. These writers, explorers and colonial officers contributed to the 'invention' of Africa's primitiveness through a discourse as Mudimbe noted, that emphasises 'a historicity and the promotion of a particular model of history' (1988, 20). The book's biographical data states that 'Giles Foden was born in England in 1967. As a child he moved with his family to Africa, where they lived in various countries until 1993' (Foden 1998, iii). This statement works to establish his status as an eyewitness, although at the time of writing, he was living in London. Narrative authority is further invoked through Foden's claim that the novel is 'a historical record (and indeed otherwise)' (1998, xi). The author consolidates the historicity of his novel by acknowledging many known living and dead interviewees, including scholars, journalists, statesmen, preachers and figures of royalty.[1] This unusual academic catalogue of acknowledgements aims at establishing the novel as a historical document and a product of rigorous and objective scholarly research. Written in the first person, the novel emphasises the eyewitness account which in turn claims plausibility: 'As for the narrative I am presenting in these pages, it is nothing but the working-up of a journal I made at the time' (Foden 1998, 20). This journalistic metanarrative by Garrigan, the novel's protagonist, reinforces Foden's real-life adventures in Africa. As such, the novel he writes is supposedly a product of recordings of his thoughts, observations, research and interviews while in Africa. 'Some of this material will already be familiar to readers of newspapers and to broadcast audiences around the world. But until now, only a fraction of the

dictator-phone tapes…have been revealed to the outside world…' (Foden 1998, 21). The 'public knowledge' claim situates the monster narrative of Amin in the broader public domain but emphasises that the novel will make fresh revelations. This claim also functions as an attempt to establish the narrative and historical authenticity of the novel. In the interview with *Boldtype*, Foden reiterated the authenticity of his claims of historical veracity:

> the *strangest things* in the book are *all factually true*, even if they seem to be the stuff of fiction. Yet in some ways this fact-fiction debate too is engulfed by Amin's charismatic effect: he thought of and presented himself as mythological, and long before I got to him [he] was 'already a novel,' so to speak. (Foden 1998; my emphases)

Talking of Macdonald's cinematic adaptation, Garuba and Himmelman observe that the director invokes the standard, time-tested Western mode of representing Africa that weaves historical fact with fiction, and that the 'articulation of history with fiction within the same domain of textuality is *central to representations of Africa*' (2012, 23; my emphasis). In spite of being a work of imagination, therefore, Foden's fiction lays claim to being a journalistic and historical document as well within the same text, consequently appropriating once again the 'based on a true story' trademark. Thomas Leitch reminds us that the invocation 'based on a true story' is a claim to narrative authority that seeks to place the creative work 'beyond question' of its truthfulness. Moreover, Leitch asserts that some of these works even attempt to improve history because, 'improving history has always been an option for fictionalization in any medium' (2009, 286). Not only does Foden reinscribe the narrative tropes of the Dark Continent for his modern readers, but he even attempts to improve the banally recycled tropes through the research model of citation.

Foden particularly reframes Idi Amin from the monster discursive narrative grid to fit the tale in the context of Victorian mythology about Africans. In the novel, Idi Amin is a monster in both his physicality and maniacal manifestations. Describing his first meeting with Amin, Garrigan says, 'I felt as if I were encountering a being from Greek myth' (Foden 1998, 14). Amin's laughter, a laughter described as 'That Prince-of-darkness, dead-of-the-night laugh', is said to have caused 'a barrage of flashbulbs' to go off (1998, 200). Garrigan takes time to create the monster image of Amin starting with his birth: that he probably spent 11 months in the womb; curses must have rained on the roof the day he was born; he must have weighed 12 pounds at birth; his mother Pepsi was a witch who sold amulets and fetishes at the market and was 'a mad old woman, possessed of a devil' (Foden 1998, 127). Through Jeffrey Cohen's theories about the metaphoric relationship between monsters and their society, we understand that fictional monsters are always symbols and representations

of a culture: 'The monster's body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read' (1996, 3). Constructing and reading Idi Amin as a monster re-establishes the Victorian narratives of miscegenation that associated monstrosity and its attendant rhetoric of especially ignorance, sexual deviance and cannibalism with the Ethiopians [read dark skinned people]. Cohen says 'Through… these monsters, the boundaries between personal and national bodies blur' (1996, 10). Amin the person becomes a representation of Amin's country, Uganda, and Amin's race, and of Africa, the continent he hails from. In fact, Foden was quite explicit in his view: 'as well as being a genuine historical individual, Idi Amin was a signifier, a persona. He came to represent "essence of dictator", perhaps *even Africa itself* in its troubled rather than romantic (Out of Africa) mode' (*The Guardian* [online] January 6, 2007; my emphasis).

It is important to note that Foden's novel was at first set in a fictional country under the dictatorship of a man called Dipsenza, but the story wasn't working and, as he struggled for months, he says, 'Eventually I realized that the kind of ur-dictator I wanted, *a figure out of quasi-primeval myth* refettled [sic] for modern fiction, was a dream. Instead, I should tackle the real thing: Idi Amin himself' (Foden 2007; my emphasis). In essence, while Foden abandoned the fictional dictator for the 'real thing — Idi Amin himself' as he put it, he also transformed Idi Amin from the real man to the 'ur-dictator' and 'figure from quasi-primeval myth' that he had fantasised about from the start. The result is a hybridised phenomenon which Kamilla Elliott calls 'De(Re)composition' (see Elliott 2003, 157–161); a process through which Foden's historical Idi Amin and his fictional Idi Amin as well as the beast from quasi-primeval myth he conjures and ventriloquises in the historical Amin decompose and a new fictional ahistorical character is then recomposed and presented as a historical character. Ugandan history, people and culture are exoticised as backdrops to this quasi-primeval mythology of Amin and the adventures of the courageous white man who dares to tame the beast and take the familiar Conradian journey into the 'heart of darkness'.

Colonial nostalgia

The overt colonial nostalgia in the novel situates it in the tradition of the classical adventure novels of writers like Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard and Joseph Conrad. The synopsis on the back cover says: '*The Last King of Scotland* blazes a new trail into the heart of darkness…As Foden awakens to his patient's baroque barbarism — and his own complicity in it — we enter a venturesome meditation on conscience, charisma, and the slow corruption of the human heart' (Foden 1998, Back cover). The Conradian intertext cannot be missed in this synopsis. The tropology of maps, the

obsession with filling blank spots on the earth and the journey motif into the heart of darkness are foregrounded in Foden's novel. These tropes are also incarnated in its cinematic adaptation by Kevin Macdonald (Garuba and Himmelman 2012, 15–16). The choice of epigraph from Alexander Trocchi's *Cain's Book* (1960) is also a very significant paratext: 'Loose ends, things unrelated, shifts, nightmare journeys, cities arrived at and left, meetings, desertions, betrayals, all manner of unions, adulteries, triumphs, defeats…these are the facts' (Foden 1998, ix). Trocchi's book was banned in England for its amoral celebration of life beyond laws, morality and order. The concluding line of the epigraph, '…these are the facts' (Foden, vii), corroborates the wild, chaotic and nightmarish adventure yarn of Foden's book, and the immoral indulgencies long associated with Africa and Africans. The novel cites an array of other colonial literary and cinematic classics, as well as referencing explorers to establish its place in the tradition of Western adventure narratives of exploration and conquest:

> So, if I was ever wild as a young boy, I was wild in my head, which was full of wondering yearnings: I was mad for maps and stamps and adventure stories. Firths and fishing villages, hills and golf courses — Fife's rich, venerable landscape bored me, and in my overheated imagination I played out stories of Hickock's Wild West, Tarzan's Africa, the Arctic of Peary and Nansen. And I, oddly, was always the Red Indian, the Zulu, the Eskimo. (Foden 1998, 19)

The role of master and servant is reframed in the above quotation within the context of neoliberal sympathies for subjects of colonial conquest. The Haggardesque idea of Africa as empty space waiting to be grabbed and filled up (Haggard 1916, 6) is captured in the 'guide book' which Nicholas Garrigan reads stating how in 1903 Joseph Chamberlain, British Secretary for the colonies, offered Uganda to the Jews as a possible Jewish state *with no consideration for the presence or the opinion of the native inhabitants* (Foden 1998, 29; my emphasis). Foden's book even conveys a kind of 'Jamesbondishness' in the thought of killing Idi Amin through drugs (Foden 1998, 215). The reference transposes the iconography of James Bond whose rough life in the service of Empire and Her Majesty was 'rewarded with a lifestyle of excess and overindulgence' to that of Garrigan (Leach 2003, 220). There is also reference to the British super-film production *Zulu* (1964) about the Anglo-Zulu battle of Rorke's Drift. Seeing a Tanzanian colonel with a spear, Garrigan says, 'I can't help myself thinking of Michael Caine in *Zulu* — "Don't throw those bloody spears at me!"'[2] (Foden 2008, 276).

The novel is also self-reflexive in its acknowledgement of the direct role Britain, America and Israel played in the overthrow of Uganda's first Executive President, Apollo Milton Obote in 1971. Amin's anti-neocolonial posturing is given comical treatment in the novel considering the fact that he was raised and put in power by Western governments to avert Uganda's move to the left during the Cold War.

Amin was part of the King's African Rifles and was deployed by the British to fight the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya from 1952–1956. The British also covered up Amin's 'Turkana massacre' on the eve of Uganda's independence, a crime for which he should have been prosecuted and that would have halted his rise in the Ugandan army. The novel exposes the hypocrisy of British colonialism and the comicality of what has come to be known as Africa's 'flag independence' (as opposed to real political and economic independence) which was designed by the British to sustain neocolonialism. Milton Obote, the nationalist, and the country paid the price for defying the British. As the character Nigel Stone, the British diplomat put it in the novel, 'Obote let us down. He started consorting with the Chinese…' (Foden 1998, 42). Amin continued to butcher Ugandans by the hundreds of thousands with the full knowledge of the British, but they only condemned him when he threatened to nationalise British economic assets. Kevin Macdonald observed in an interview that, 'Amin is a sort of Frankenstein's monster created by the British' (Jaafar 2007, 35/2). A deleted intertitle in Barbet Schroeder's *General Idi Amin Dada: A Self Portrait* (1974) summarises the ironic absurdity of Amin as a deformed product of colonialism: 'After a century of colonization, let us not forget that it is partially a deformed image of ourselves Idi Amin Dada reflects back' (as cited in Mari 2104, 31). Although Foden's iteration of these facts can be read as irony, the book does not remotely signify an act of remorse for the evils of colonialism but rather cynically admits them as part of the representational system of the empire. Garuba and Himmelman observe of the film adaptation — I would say even more so for the novel — that the irony does 'not create counterdiscourse' but is more of a caricature of colonial discourse, 'its authority, or its authorizing agency and institutions' (2012, 22).

The novel's narrative description of Amin's Uganda and its people recycles the first contact trope of earlier explorer writings that viewed Africans and wild game with the same curiosity. In Foden's case, however, the description of people, animals, food, diseases, climate and temperature paints the picture of a savage people and a savage land. Garrigan talks of 'sausage-meat slices of Amin's nipples…it aroused an intrigued disgust in me' (Foden 1998, 176). Alongside Amin, Africa's statesmen are painted ridiculously. For instance, this is how Foden describes Waswa, the Health Minister: 'He looked ridiculous, my boss — somehow he'd got hold of a dress suit, but the sleeves were too short, and his cuffs, fastened with twisted bits of fuse wire, stuck out like the broken wings of small birds' (1998, 7). This is the description of Henry Kyemba who served as Amin's Culture and Community minister in 1972 and 1973, was later appointed Health Minister, and went on to serve as minister in both the Obote II and the Museveni eras — a highly educated and sophisticated man who also wrote a book on Idi Amin titled, *State of Blood* (1977). As Joseph Ssemutoke opined, Kyemba's book turned world attention on Amin's atrocities as the

author traversed the globe to rally international opinion against Amin's murderous regime (*New Vision* [online] October 9, 2012). Art hangings are described in Foden's book as 'Loathsome tribal masks' (1998, 8). The menu at the presidential banquet consisted of among others, 'a variety platter of dud-bee larvae, large green bush crickets, cicadas and flying ants' (1998, 12). We are not told the rest of the menu but the narrator chose to highlight this bizarre list. The description of the kudu steak and the barbarity that must have accompanied its hunting, killing and transportation to town and cooking form a metaphor for Africa's barbarity (1998, 14). The crudity of Amin's dinner-table jokes about farting and the gluttonous manner of his eating all fit into the savage trope. The narrator's antithetical notion that the 'Digestive structure of zebu (African cow) is even more complicated than that of the European cow — more like buffalo or wildebeest' (1998, 15) emphasises the wildness of African cows as opposed to European cows and, by induction, the civilisation of Europe verses the barbarity of Africa. The unlikely idea that a leopard lived on the hill above the clinic repeats the trope of Africa as a dangerous place where wild animals walk on the streets, even though wild animals in Uganda are located in national game parks, far removed from cities and towns and most Ugandans can't afford a safari trip.

It is interesting to note how Garrigan feels about the encounter with Amin: 'I was quite pleased with myself when I told Sara about it' (Foden 1998, 96). The savagery of Ugandans is measured against the greater savagery of Zairians (DR Congolese). Minister Waswa says: 'But in Zaire it is too bad more…They are real *washenzi*, savages in that place…' (1998, 13). *Washenzi* is the Kiswahili word for barbarians. In this statement, the Health Minister recognises the relative barbarity of Ugandans in relation to the greater barbarity of Zairians. The conversation then turns to cannibalism with the president himself making the revelation: 'I, your president, has [sic] eaten monkey meat…And I have also eaten human meat… It is very salty…even more salty than leopard meat' (1998, 13). Then Amin goes on to describe how soldiers ate wounded soldiers in battle (1998, 13). This overt reference to cannibalism reiterates the central trope of the Dark Continent. The stereotypical trope of Africans as ignorant is underscored by the ridiculous story about the girl with an unknown condition who was brought to the clinic by her mother. As Garrigan examined her, she went into labour on the examination couch. Apparently, neither the girl nor her mother knew she was pregnant! Although such cases have been recorded in real life, even in the West, the narrator elaborates the inability of Africans to think; the absurdity 'struck me that if something as basic as pregnancy could be overlooked, then how much else?' Foden's novel therefore, follows its colonial predecessors closely and even perfects the derogatory (mis)representation of Africa.

Kevin Macdonald's adaptation: Mining for gold '*i but mitta*'

The Lango people of northern Uganda have a saying, '*i but mitta*,' (on the edge of the meter) to mean the hazy muted sound one gets when the mechanical tuning nob moves the metre to the edge of a radio frequency as opposed to the rich and clear sound wave at the centre. To be *i but mitta* is to beg for space, to be an unwanted entity, the 'other'. It means to be on the borderlines of the dominant discourse. By using this model of discourse, this chapter seeks a positive way of discussing the film from the fringes of the dominant colonialist representation in the cinematic realisation of Foden's novel by looking at the intertextual discourses in the film that make critical commentaries on the novel source through elaborations, silences and mitigating elements of transcultural production. Kevin Macdonald's adaptation, does not depart significantly from the Dark Continent mastertext of the novels premise; in fact, the two narratives ride on the same rails. Although Macdonald was open to a comprehensive treatment of the Amin subject, the director admits that he wasn't attracted to *The Last King of Scotland* because of Amin's story and character or the history of Uganda for that matter, saying Amin's story should interest African directors. Rather, he was attracted by, 'What it is like to be a young Scott going to Africa, because I have done that myself' (Jaafar 2007, 35/2). It is for this reason that the film is premised on the wild hedonistic adventures of Nicholas Garrigan in Africa. The director then says the film is about the relationship between Britain and Uganda, although he later backtracks and says, 'The film is not about Uganda, it's about a relationship between a Scott and a Ugandan' (Jaafar 2007, 35/2). So, like all Dark Continent narratives, this film is really not about Uganda. Uganda is a backdrop canvas for the Western narrative and Amin the most notorious dictator Africa has ever had becomes the perfect persona for the monster that Garrigan tames. Talking of horror stories concerning Amin's 'cannibalism, witchcraft and multiple partners', Macdonald says till the release of Nelson Mandela, Amin was the most famous African but for all the wrong reasons. He concludes that Amin 'almost represents all that is worst and savage about the Dark Continent' (as cited in *Capturing Idi Amin*, 2008). Many scholars have discussed the way Macdonald's film corresponds with colonial representations of Africa: the adventure genre, the tropes of wild animals, wanton sex, monster construction, grave danger, savagery, brutality, cannibalism, and, most significantly, the classical Conradian trope of the civilised European corrupted by the dark heart of Africa (see Higgins 2012; Garuba and Himmelman 2012; Higonnet and Higonnet 2012; Guthrie 2012; and Dokotum 2015). Lesley Marx, decries the way the film at one level trumps Ugandan history and at another mixes documentary footages of Amin with fictional representation

creating the impression of historical veracity (2011, 54–59). She also abhors the over-sexualised Garrigan who sleeps with the first Ugandan girl he meets and goes on to sleep with the wife of the president, as well as the materialistic vanity he exudes in the film (2011, 64–65). Evans and Glenn point at the continuity of white focalisation in the film and its generally 'bleak Afropessimist outlook' (2010, 14). Manthia Diawara also underscores the Afropessimism in the film saying Garrigan's journey,

> echoes the homo-erotic identification between Kurtz and Marlow in…*Heart of Darkness* which uses Africa as the theatre for playing out the European moral dilemma between good and evil, Christianity and modernity. (2000, 78).

Diawara considers the story of Amin's genocide against his people a 'deterritorialized replay of Hitler facing the Jews, or the American Frontiersmen and the Native Americans' (2000, 79). While Garrigan is allowed to escape in order to alert the world to Amin's atrocities, the film trumps the chapters of Foden's novel in which Ugandan exiles with the help of Tanzanian soldiers manage to get rid of Amin without any Western help. It is clear then that the reinscription of colonial codes and stereotypes about Africa through the elaborations and silences in the film adaptation cannot be overemphasised.

Rather than plying the same obvious path of counterdiscourse by critiquing the film's overt Dark Continent representationalism, I intend to take the middle road: Garuba and Himmelman's idea of disarticulation from the binary discourses of colonialism and anticolonialism. The aim is to show how the Dark Continent mode of portrayal in the film is tempered or rather mitigated to a lighter Dark Continent rendition by the political economy of the film's transcultural production. I examine ways in which the cinematic apparatus (especially adaptation as critique), Ugandan actors' discourses, and the film star and celebrity persona of African American actors Forest Whitaker and Kerry Washington and black British actor David Oyelowo managed to lighten the Dark Continent narrative tone of the film relative to Foden's novel. Also significant is the manner in which Ugandan audiologovisual embellishments, the endorsement and material support of the Ugandan government, and the live and active context of location shooting project a relatively positive image of Idi Amin, of Uganda and of Africa. The irony of this approach to the analysis of the *Last King* film adaptation will only become clearer as we delve into the discussion of ways in which the film tones down the excesses of the progenitor novel. In the *Last King* film, Amin is turned into a more charming individual than in the book. Foden's novel goes into excesses of transforming Amin into a monster and in the process consolidates the dark continent template. The film on the other hand largely exonerates Amin from his atrocious record as the butcher of Uganda because of the

focus on the white man Garrigan's adventures and Forest Whitaker's avoidance of bringing out Amin's darker side. Uganda is a country that has sought in the last four decades to rebrand itself after the shame and reproach it endured owing to the Idi Amin years. In the West, and indeed around the world, the name Idi Amin and his atrocities are virtually synonymous with the name Uganda. Against this backdrop, Macdonald's screen production raises a number of questions. How does the screen incarnation of a man whose legacy has branded Uganda so negatively for decades subvert the same representational logic of Dark Continent tropology to project a slightly positive image of Uganda? How does the screen embodiment of Idi Amin, the most notorious despot to ever hail from Africa, win the Academy Award for its actor, Forest Whitaker? Knowing the brutality of Idi Amin, the revulsion and bestial diminution his name invokes in parts of Uganda and abroad, how could anybody possibly render Amin on screen as entertainment?

I remember watching *The Last King of Scotland* at a Multiplex theatre in Chicago in September 2006. What struck me immediately were not the hedonistic exploits of Dr Garrigan or the implausibility of Garrigan snatching Amin's gun and using it to shoot a cow, or the fate of another disposable darkie in Dr Thomas Junju (Thomas Oyelowo) shot in order for Garrigan's sacrosanct white body to escape unbroken. It was not even the bizarre old man who ran nude and plunged into the swimming pool at the Sheraton Hotel or the semi-nude dancers. Garrigan's cowboy exploits in Africa were to be expected as part of the adventurous yarn typified by the white hunter. The disposal of black characters and the hair-raising escape of white characters is also a component of Euro-American adventure tales set in Africa. These are all par for the course. Rather, what fascinated me most about this Hollywood film was seeing the familiar streets of Kampala, its modernist architecture and Kampala's skyline rendered so beautifully on the screen in a Chicago theatre — as opposed to the familiar bush and wild animal settings so prevalent in most of these movies. I saw on the screen familiar actors from Uganda — some of whom I knew personally. Familiar Ugandan pop songs filled the soundtrack as well. As the credits rolled, I could hear the solo voice of Betty Akidi singing in Acholi saying, 'We pray for peace.' I believe very few in that theatre, if any apart from me, could understand the song. It occurred to me that a Hollywood production that had transposed the colonial stereotypes of Africa onto a 21st century American theatre screen had at the same time just riveted me and given me a totally different way of reading a Hollywood film about Africa. The formal dictates of the film as well as these elements of transcultural mediation in Macdonald's cinematic adaptation of Foden's 'colonial' novel are what make the difference in this less brutal representation of Idi Amin and of Uganda.

Cinematic trumping of novelistic content

The cinematic apparatus as a formal system may sustain the *fabula* (the chronologyical story) of the novel to varying degrees of fidelity, but the *syuzhet* (the narrative emplotment) is organised in terms of the formal narrative and stylistic structures of film. In this case, the film critiques and trumps the novel hypertext in various ways. Thomas Leitch's chapter "Between Adaptation and Allusion" (2009) enhances and extends the models of adaptation developed by Gérard Genette (1982) and Kamilla Elliott (2003). In particular, his idea of adaptation identifies *compression* — 'systematic elision and omission' — similar to Linda Hutcheon's idea of 'subtraction or contraction' (Hutcheon 2006, 19). It also involves processes of *expansion* ('expansion of narrative hints that are especially thin'), *correction* ('improving' sources) and *updating* (transposing the setting of texts to fit more immediate concerns) (Leitch 2009, 99). These critical categories show how Macdonald's film adaptation reorganises the novel's content, and compresses, expands and, ultimately, trumps entire chapters of the book and transposes the 1970s setting onto a 21st century Kampala to reimage Amin, Uganda and Africa comparatively in a relatively positive light. The trumping model of adaptation is used extensively in Macdonald's screen rendition of Foden's novel. As noted earlier, the trumping concept of adaptation developed by Kamilla Elliott is premised on the assumption that the cinematic adaptation is like a critical essay that corrects the mistakes of the progenitor literary text (2003, 174). Yet, while the film does tear down the excesses of the novel, it does not in any way dismantle the Dark Continent template of Foden's novel which, as previously noted, is itself premised on the time-tested Dark Continent mastertext of colonial novels in a tradition that spans over 100 years. The analysis of *Last King* in this chapter, however, shows how film as a formal apparatus and the mitigations of transcultural adaptation, especially local participation as cast and crew and the larger political economy of a film's production, can, to a small extent, push back the boundaries of Dark Continent representation. Director Macdonald says of *Last King's* adaptation process, 'We changed the book enormously…only two or three scenes in the film that are the same as in the book' (*BBC Collective* 2007b). The film trumps many initial events of the novel which include Garrigan's arrival at the airport with taxi touts fighting for him to hire their cabs until one wins. Also eliminated is Garrigan's account of his visit to the Embassy and to the Ministry of Health. This trumped material contains Foden's negative establishment shot of Uganda. The film begins in Scotland with the fresh graduates running half-naked to the swimming pool to establish the carefree hedonistic tone of Garrigan's adventure. Clearly, the director focuses on the immediate stimulation of the visual sense. The film adaptation also eliminates the novel's flashback and creates a chronological flow of events, freezing out the gory and redundant clinical

material about Garrigan's encounter with revulsive sickness and conditions in order to fast-forward to Garrigan's first encounter with Amin at the accident scene. Also compressed is the detailed narrative of the expulsion of 50 000 Asians by Idi Amin. The film's compression shows Amin making the announcement that the Asians should leave the country, followed by portrayal of Asians packing things, being mistreated by the soldiers, and their property being confiscated as they board buses to leave the country. Also eliminated is Garrigan's extensive tour in Western Uganda that reads like an anthropological tour of inspection of the Dark Continent. The film makes a critical comment on the novel by toning down the immoderate portrayal of Uganda as an excessively dirty country infested with mosquitoes, cockroaches and rats. For example, Garrigan' s expression of disgust in the novel at encountering mosquitoes, a very dirty mosquito net, cockroaches and rats the size of rabbits in Speke Hotel — one of the cleanest and most touristy five-star hotels in Uganda — is removed from the movie. The director explained his choice to omit such exaggerations thus: 'I didn't want clichés of Africa. It's not savanna with giraffes; it's not the slums of Soweto. It's a cool, prosperous and sexy world you're being taken to' (Kit 2006). In refusing to recycle this backward and, indeed, malicious image of Uganda, the film corrects the author's biased perception of Uganda, simultaneously challenging the misconception of Africa as a dark, dirty, diseased and dangerous continent.

The film further trumps the novel by eliminating some of the characters. It dispenses with Mrs Perkins, the British Ambassador's wife, Nathan de Seus Todd, Bosola, Lessing, Dias and Freddy Swanepoel. Others omitted include William Waziri, a black doctor responsible for field trips to take vaccinations to different inland villages in Mbarara and Billy Ssegu, a business manager who is in charge of getting medicine for Alan Merritt's hospital in Mbarara. These and other characters, although they play vital roles in Foden's narrative, are eliminated in the film. Thus, the film's narrative economy centres the story on Amin and Garrigan and on their relationship. It consequently reduces the novel's use both of Amin as a metaphor for Uganda's poverty, decadence and backwardness and of Garrigan as the white explorer observing Africa with curiosity. Additionally, Garrigan is given more roles than in the novel, which brings him closer to Amin than he is in the novel. For example, he acts as the president's adviser on both personal and government issues. He also often functions as the president's assistant and it is against this background that he stands in for the president to chair the meeting with foreign ministers, giving him tremendous power. Additionally, Garrigan acts as a spy for the president. He reports Amin Wasswa's possible connivance with British officials to harm Amin, resulting in Wasswa's elimination. Although that role is negative, Garrigan shares the blame for Wasswa's death with Amin, showing the universality of evil. The film gives some characters in the novel multiple roles to intensify the narrative focus on

Idi Amin as the main subject and Garrigan as the centre of focalisation. Sara plays several roles; she is the wife to David, the doctor in charge of Mbarara hospital as well as the woman who helps the doctor.

Moreover, in order to reinforce the film's focus on the Amin and Garrigan narrative, a number of characters not in the novel are introduced into the film. Notable among these is Masanga. As Amin's personal driver, messenger, bodyguard, hitman and sole executioner of the president's directives, Masanga is employed to unify numerous roles in a single character, which helps to keep the spotlight on Amin and Garrigan. The film saves the viewer the boring and most annoying last chapters of Foden's book about Garrigan's daredevil attempt to escape from Uganda via land, his interaction with invading Tanzanian troops marching on Kampala, bloody accounts of the 1979 liberation war and the accompanying destruction. In any case, the novel's account of the liberation war is a mockery of the combined efforts of the Ugandan and Tanzanian forces that ended Amin's murderous regime. The film further trumps accounts of Garrigan's brush with death at the hands of Amin's soldiers and from a deadly bite by a black mamba, one of Africa's deadliest poisonous snakes which in the book reproduces the trope of Africa as a dangerous place. He tells of how he is saved by primitive 'tribesmen' who sucked out the snake poison from his leg with their bare mouths and put some herbs on the wound (Foden 1998, 263–264). The novel describes his stay in an igloo-looking 'hutment' — a clear mockery of African huts — and was fed on 'half-cooked-flesh' (1998, 265). The description of the 'angels' who saved Garrigan's life situates them in the hunter-gatherer economy of pre-modern humans. They are just 'tribesmen' with no name. Garrigan wonders if they were 'pygmies…or some long-lost strand of the Bachwezi' (1998, 267) — locating them in the mythology of origin. No wonder he felt 'like a strange animal that had been captured and was being allowed to domesticate itself' (1998, 267). The 'first contact' trope of British civilisation meeting African savagery is unmistakable here. Also trumped are the last eight chapters of the book where Amin is transformed from a human being into an idea, a dream refraction. In this last sequence Amin pulls out the heads of his victims from the fridge and explains to Garrigan the origin of his cannibalism, that he was inducted into cannibalism by 'cannibals of a mau mau tribe' and how he now eats human flesh (1998, 302). In this way, cannibalism is situated beyond the individual to encompass a whole Kenyan tribe,[3] the novel thus reinscribing the popular trope of Africans in Western literature as cannibals. The film's treatment of the theme of cannibalism is presented ironically when Amin asks his guest to enjoy the state dinner announcing humorously that there is no human flesh in the menu. This joke destabilises the novel's trope of cannibalism (Garuba and Himmelman 2012, 21–22). Asked if Amin ate people, Forest Whitaker answered, 'I did meet with his brothers and sisters, his ministers, his generals, his girlfriends, and all these people in Uganda who know him,

met him, and had experiences with him, and I could not find that to be the case.' For Whitaker, the claims about Amin's cannibalism are Western propaganda (Morales 2006). In spite of the film's adherence to what Kamilla Elliott calls the 'spirit' of the text — which also equates to the spirit of Foden as the 'author', the film critiques the novel's authorial excesses in transposing the Dark Continent mastertext into a 1970s Ugandan setting and trumps entire chapters of the novel to represent Amin as less monstrous and Uganda and Africa as less barbaric than the novel does.

Location shooting

Foden's *The Last King of Scotland* (1998)*,* as adapted in 2006 by screenwriters Peter Morgan and Jeremy Brock, is billed as British drama but is in fact what I would consider a transcontinental Euro-American African production directed by Kevin Macdonald. The film was a co-production between Film 4 in the United Kingdom and Fox Searchlight Pictures from the United States. Although not credited, the Uganda Government played a role in welcoming the production to Uganda as well as offering material support in terms of military personnel and hardware. The participation of Ugandan theatre scholar and practitioner, Charles Mulekwa, as consultant to the director also impacted the production significantly. Mulekwa was especially critical in negotiating with the director to shoot the film on location in Uganda and in other production activities: 'I was hired as a consultant, but in fact I worked as a fixer in certain situations, *as well as on the script*, i.e. rendering it a little bit more *Afrocentric* — although that was possible because the director was very open to that in the first place' (Charles Mulekwa, 'Help!' (2), Email, November 11, 2014; my emphases). The fact that Mulekwa worked on Morgan and Brocks' screenplay helped to tone down the colonial image of Amin from the Foden hypertext. Although the director's word was final, Mulekwa says, 'my job included telling him things, even if he did not want to hear them. He expressly gave me this instruction' (Mulekwa 2014). Mulekwa says of his plea with the director, 'On my part, I asked him to save us from the "wretched African and the redeeming white figure" tale; I said what was fair was "the good, the bad and the ugly" option' (Mulekwa 2014). Whitaker took this approach in projecting a more well-rounded character of Idi Amin. 'He refused to demonise Amin, and insisted upon more agency for the character!' Mulekwa says, 'I remember him protesting, "I can't hate Amin. If I do, I can't play him"' (Mulekwa 2014). Mulekwa's leverage with the director certainly helped the film avoid the overt stereotypes of Foden's novel and gave the film a Ugandan texture. Moreover, Mulekwa also helped with 'translating his [the director's] intentions for the masses during crowd scenes' (Mulekwa 2014), an opportunity which greatly shaped the representation of the masses. Mulekwa also acted in the crowd scenes, projecting his own vision for the film in his role as actor.

Location shooting in Uganda enabled local realities to critique Foden's representation in many ways. In the first place, it situated the production in Uganda as opposed to the secluded writing of Foden's novel in England. Foden saw what he wanted to see based on his colonial cultural programming and interpreted his data from England for his English audience. Macdonald on the other hand brought the film to Uganda and engaged the Ugandan audience cast and crew at various levels. This interaction toned down the authorial excesses of the novel. During an interview with Moses Serugo, the director said,

> To shoot in Uganda itself was the best decision I made. The financiers assumed we would shoot in South Africa, which is easier and cheaper, but I thought it would be worth the struggle and it was. Forest Whitaker, who plays Amin, was *able to draw on Ugandan culture* 24 hours a day. People were telling him all the time *that they didn't want a caricature and there were some good things about the man. It put a lot of pressure on him and made him raise his performance.* (Serugo 2007; my emphases)

Whitaker would not have had the same pressure had the film been shot in South Africa, the favourite destination for Hollywood's African productions because of the availability of infrastructure and more seasoned actors. While Foden was free to produce his 'monster' character, Whitaker had to contend with the voices of people who had a more sympathetic view of Idi Amin as well as those who disliked Amin but knew that a caricature of Amin would translate into a caricature of Uganda. Whitaker acknowledged the contribution of the Ugandan crew in an interview: 'I don't think the film could have been the same without them because they were able to say, "That's not really real. That's not the way it would be"' (Morales 2006).

Producing the movie in Uganda also energised the political debate at the time about the legacy of Idi Amin whom many are beginning to evaluate critically in comparison to his successors. While many agree that Amin was a murderer, some people remember him as a patriot and someone who was never implicated in the kind of kleptocracy associated with Uganda's post-Amin years. This school is best represented by Rtd. Brigadier Moses Ali, Uganda's Third Deputy Prime Minister who was Finance Minister in Amin's government. Ali has argued consistently that Amin is a grossly misrepresented nationalist leader: 'Amin's rating in the country is different compared to what people think…outside. I think some people rate Amin very high [sic]. As a patriot, as a nationalist' (as cited in *Capturing Idi Amin* 2008). There is the view that he built some infrastructure and vigorously promoted sports compared with the massive plunder and decay that followed the liberalisation of the economy with implementation of the IMF's structural adjustment programme. Chris Rugaba, a youth leader who met Amin in real life says, 'For me, Amin, I think he [sic] is a hero, I look at him as a hero who tried to bring out Uganda's nationality

and tried to uplift the cultural heritage of our country' (as cited in *Capturing Idi Amin* 2008). Retired British Major Lain Grahame, Amin's former King's African Rifles Commander, also gives positive testimony of Idi Amin: 'I would say quite honestly this man is a good friend. He had this wonderful indefinable quality of leadership. He is a born leader of men. And he was a very successful soldier' (as cited in *Capturing Idi Amin* 2008). Ugandan history professor, Dixon Kamukama, praises Amin for 'ensuring the economy was in the hands of the indigenous people…It was crude. But it was the beginning of what we needed' (Gettleman 2007). Also, a new generation of Ugandan artists who were born after the Amin years and never experienced his brutality first-hand are somewhat sympathetic to Amin. This includes the Ugandan Assistant Art Director for the film, Frederick Mpuuga, who was thrilled to experience Ugandan history through the production (Grainger 2007). Ugandan theatre icon, Stephen Rwangyezi, who played Amin's Health Minister Jonah Wasswa and lived through the Amin years, was quite leery of participating in the film if it was going to project Amin as 'just another African monster.' To Rwangyezi, 'The clichés about African problems are annoying' (Grainger 2007). He liked the way the film script examined the circumstance that brought Amin to power, which involved the recognition of Britain's own blunder in grooming and putting Amin in power. This self-reproaching mode of telling Amin's story also attracted support from the government of Uganda, which encouraged the production and even provided army personnel and military hardware. Idi Amin's first son, Taban Amin, however, threatened to sue the film producers for defaming his family name and for degrading and abusing his father's image (*URN Reporter* 2006). He never followed through with legal action.

Others, like Robie Kakongay who fled Amin's regime in 1977, saw the movie as 'an important part of the healing process' (Grainger 2007). In a twist of irony, the movie was regarded as a great opportunity to showcase the new Uganda. John Nagenda, Senior Presidential Advisor for Media, who along with Mulekwa helped bring the film production to Uganda, noted that 'Uganda will get tourists, because the photography in the film is beautiful. I'm sure more films will be made here' (Grainger 2007). The Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni, met with the film crew and gave his blessing for the project and full access to the army, parliament and government ministers (Levy 2006). Uganda was fully aware of the economic and cultural advantages the film could bring to the country. Moreover, in shooting a 1970s Ugandan Idi Amin story in a modern Kampala City, the film projects beautiful environmental shots of Uganda and of Kampala in particular. Kevin Macdonald fell in love with Ugandan architecture: 'Uganda has got a very unique feel to it, with its great modernist architecture from the 1950s and the 60s, which you see in the Parliament building and the Mulago Hospital. I wanted to capture that different, more realistic

image of Africa, which I think will surprise people' (Levy 2006). Rather than project the image of Uganda as a pre-modern conglomeration of primitive tribes, the film projects a modern and impressive image of Uganda.

Acting as critique

The heavy participation of Ugandan actors in the film also mediated the retelling of Foden's story of Amin. Definitely the casting of American actor Forest Whitaker as Idi Amin has everything to do with the 'celebrity' commoditisation of screen stardom in Hollywood and its impact on box office tallies. As Paul Watson observes, stars announce films, attract financial backing for a film production, and mobilise audiences. Stars are generally commodities, texts and objects of desire (Watson 2012, 168–169). Although the casting of Ugandan actors in major roles might have been an economic decision, given the relatively low cost of hiring Uganda actors compared with European and American actors, the Ugandan cast to a certain degree framed the film in a Ugandan context. These actors brought into the film their own African and international networks of intertextuality and loci of meanings. Watching familiar Ugandan actors in a Hollywood film created the opportunity for double interpretation. Famous Ugandan actor Abbey Mukkibi (*Silent Army* [Wit Licht] (2008) and *Sometimes in April* (2005)) played Amin's 'hit man', Masanga. Stephen Rwangyezi, proprietor of Ndeere Troupe, the flagship dance company of Uganda, played Amin's Health Minister, Waswa. Other familiar Ugandan actors in the film are Sam Okello (*Silent Army* (2008), *Jamaa* (2011) and *The Thing that Happened* (2011)) who played Bonny, Joanitta Bewulira-Wandera (who portrayed Malyamu Amin) and Cleopatra Koheirwe (who played Joy) who also featured in a local Amin movie production, *State Research Bureau* (2013). Watching some of my favourite Ugandan actors in the film significantly mitigated both its violence and that of Amin. In addition, their inclusion meant the film no longer was just a British film adaptation, but a Ugandan production as well. Casting local actors, although not necessarily changing the Euro-American tone of the film, did enable critique of Foden's story as well as Peter Morgan and Jeremy Brock's screenplay by re-telling it through Ugandan actors, who were determined not to project the dreaded Dark Continent image of Uganda as far as the imaging of Africa depended on them. As an aside, because of its constellation of local talent, the movie could be appreciated by Ugandans. Many Ugandan actors and crew used the film production as a platform to launch themselves onto the world stage.

The incarnation of Idi Amin in the likeable and celebrity persona of Forest Steven Whitaker (*Bird* 1988; *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* 1999; *Black Panther* 2018) significantly sanitised the monster image of the Ugandan dictator represented in the novel hypertext. Whitaker managed to subvert the brutal notoriety of Amin by cultivating the more human side of the man:

> Initially I had only very dark images of this man. I saw him as a big, angry maniac. But as I did more research, I began to have a different understanding. When you look at old footage you can see Idi was also an extremely charming man. He was often said to be unintelligent, and yet he spoke ten different languages. The challenge was to play a really complete character, *not just a stereotyped image.* (Langley 2007; my emphasis)

The desire to deconstruct Amin the 'Godzilla' and humanise him with all his foibles and charm provided Whitaker the paradigm for his performance of Amin. Kerry Washington, who played Amin's wife, Kay, appreciated the film because it doesn't paint a black and white picture of Amin, but of a real human being with 'weaknesses and fears and insecurities and…and idiosyncrasies and neurosis like all of us' (BBC Collective 2007a). Whitaker's extraordinary performance, which won him over 23 international awards,[4] including the Academy Award for best actor (2007), moved the focus away from the historical Amin to the character Amin (Whitaker). In fact, the casting of Forest Whitaker even moved the focus away from Nicholas Garrigan, the anointed lens and interpreter of Idi Amin's life and of Ugandan history. Unlike in the novel where Garrigan dominates, in the film Amin dominates and is a far more

Plate 5. President Idi Amin Dada addresses the crowd after the 1971 military coup.

likeable character than in the novel. Casting an accomplished black Hollywood actor also challenged the dominant white screen superhero iconography, making the black role dominant and appreciable.

Forest Whitaker's own acting philosophy, which he articulated in his academy award winning speech — considered one of the greatest speeches of the award — summarises his positive attitude: 'When I first started acting, it was because of my desire to connect to everyone. To that thing inside each of us…Because *acting for me is about believing in that connection* and…through our combined belief, we can *create a new reality*' (Whitaker 2008; my emphases). That mindset helped create an image of Amin that was far more redemptive than the novel's caricature. Whitaker understood that the destiny of the nation of Uganda was in his hands; he could reaffirm the trademark Dark Continent image of Hollywood's Africa, or he could mediate a new imaging that pushes the limits of the screenplay's colonial mastertext to accommodate a new way of looking at Amin, Uganda, and Africa in general. That's why he stated, 'In this case, it was my job to try and understand what it feels like to be African' (Whitaker 2007). His intention was to 'feel' and interpret the most diabolical African character on screen. Location shooting and the presence of the Ugandan cast and crew helped immensely in shaping his acting. Thus, Whitaker honoured the people of Uganda in his Oscar winning speech: 'I want to thank the people of Uganda, who helped this film have a spirit.' That spirit was different from the spirit of Foden's novel. Whitaker also thanked his 'ancestors' for continuous guidance and for inspiration from those who have gone before him. This includes his African American ancestors and by default, his ancestors in Africa the 'home continent'. Whitaker's personal, historical and emotional investment in acting Idi Amin differs from the usual aloof and detached Western performance of African characters to fit into Western stereotypes of African leaders.[5] Whitaker's performance mode is closer to what Lindiwe Dovey has called Ardonian mimesis; a method of acting which allows for 'identification with the object/Other (an embodied mode of being) rather than identification of the object/Other through the reification of abstract thought' (Dovey 2009, 18). Through this acting model, Whitaker does not only play Amin as the film script requires but manages to identify with the character as a black man, and to undertake a more rounded representation of his character. This echoes Ezra and Rowden's arguement that transnational production is challenging the hegemonic ideological foundations of Hollywood since Hollywood films, 'in order to maintain their mainstream inoffensiveness' have to be subjected to 'forms of cultural and ideological cleansing before being released into the global cinemascape' (2010, 2). In this case, the cleansing takes place at the performance level as Whitaker translates the image of Idi Amin and by association, the image of Africa for his Western and African audience and at the cinematic level through *mise en scène*.

Music as metanarrative

Use of Ugandan songs and musicians adds to the film's Ugandan spirit.[6] There are songs in Luganda, Acholi and other African languages performed by Ugandan bands. The participation of Ndere Dance Troupe, Afrigo Band and the Nyonza singers greatly enhanced the local cultural ambience of the film by imbuing it with a distinctly Kampala feel. The performance of the Otole dance, a traditional Acholi warrior dance from northern Uganda, with Amin joining the dancers, is reminiscent of the iconic footage of Amin on state-owned and run Uganda Television in the 1970s dancing with a spear and feather headgear. It is also a signifier of Amin's warrior identity. The integration of the Lingala classic song "Kassongo" underscores the dominance of Zairean music in the 1970s Uganda and recreates the musicscape of Amin's regime and the cultural ambience of the period. The song, written by Zairean composer Kasongo wa Kenema, was one of the most famous hits by the then Nairobi-based orchestra, Super Mazembe.[7] Annabel Cohen notes that, 'Unlike other types of popular or art music, much music for film has been composed with the understanding that it will not be consciously attended to' (2001, 249). This statement holds true if we agree that the target audience of Macdonald's film is Euro-American, in the sense that the Euro-American audience would have little understanding or appreciation of the songs in African languages, but it doesn't hold true for the Ugandan audience who understand these songs in their heart languages. What these songs do, therefore, is — to a certain degree — transform *Last King* into a foreign language film for Macdonald's target audience.

In his book *Re-takes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages* (2005), John Mowitt raises a serious question: 'Are foreign pictures things one encounters through the eyes or through the ears? Or both?' Mowitt answers his rhetorical question by saying, 'a foreign picture will exhibit its foreignness not by virtue of its looks but by virtue of what it sounds like' (2005, 51). Mowitt's analysis aims at deconstructing the 'foreign language film' category developed by the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences (AMPAS). This argument resonates with the music in *Last King*. To understand the subtext of the Ugandan songs in the film and how they situate the film's narrative in Ugandan contexts, the Euro-American audience needs subtitles which do not appear in the film. At the same time, the film works partly as a local language film in the Ugandan context because of the audience's ability to understand the message of the local songs in the context of their production and consumption, and because of the ability of the music to create mood and emotional meaning beyond the intentions of the scriptwriters and director.

Mowitt argues that globalisation 'involves the transnational corporatization of the earth' (best illustrated by Hollywood's colonisation of the entire earth), yet

ironically, globalisation also involves 'the reinvigoration of national culture, precisely as a mode of resistance to transnational corporatization' (2005, xviii). While the local songs in the film can be seen in Western discourse as a metanarrative of cultural alterity or ethnographic stamps on the film, they provide cultural specificity that gives the film a degree of Ugandanness, making *Last King* (in that regard), a foreign language film for the Western audience. The African songs in *Last King* hardly constitute a counterdiscourse to Foden's negative caricature of Amin, yet they create a multilingual enunciation and challenge the monolingual English identity of the film, thereby creating multiple audiences. Discussing the value addition that music brings to a film, Michel Chion identifies two categories of film music: the first is *empathetic* music, which is music that can 'directly express its participation in the feeling of the scene.' The second is *anempathetic* music which is music that operates in 'indifference' or indirectly in that it can 'reinforce the individual emotion of the character and of the spectator, even as the music pretends not to notice them' *or even when the music may not be understood* (1994, 8; my emphasis). Cohen observes that 'music influences the interpretation of film narrative and…becomes integrated in the memory with the visual information' (2001, 267). Whether the emotional role of the music is direct or indirect, the Ugandan songs and music, as well as the spoken word in the film, together with the movements, therefore, create a new multilingual and multicultural audiologovisual aesthetic that transforms Foden's English narrative into a multidimensional transatlantic narrative with the ability to communicate different things to different audiences locally and internationally. The use of continental African songs and artists also broadens the African appeal of the film.

While one can argue that these songs merely serve as backdrop to Garrigan's bush adventures, I argue that the songs in fact contribute to the texture and tapestry of the narrative and its perception at multiple levels. Featured are Guinean saxophonist Momo Wandel Soumah [as Momo Wandel] and his song "Toko", Philemon Hou's song "Grazing in the Grass" performed by iconic South African anti-apartheid musician Hugh Masekela, the Ghanaian song "Bukom Mashie" performed by Oscar Sully & The Uhuru Dance Band, and the Nigerian song "Love Is You" written by Ifediorama, Kamson & Shotade, and performed by Ofo The Black Company. The song during the closing credits of the film, "Acholi Pot Song", aptly illustrates my point. It is played on the traditional *adungu*-harp and the xylophone to the tune of a popular Ugandan — in fact, East African — Christian worship song with different lyrics in different languages: 'Ipoore me awora [You are worthy of praise] in Lëblango, Osanide Mukama [You are worthy of praise my King] in Luganda, and Baaba Wa Mbinguni [Father in Heaven] [Swahili].' In the film, the lyrics in Acholi say, 'Wilobo ni wamito kuc' [In this country [Uganda] we need peace]. The message of this song is simple. We need peace in this world, in Uganda and specifically in Acholiland and

in Lango and we pray to Creator God for peace. The popular worship tune, a cultural icon in its own right, is loaded with a message that historicises Uganda's violent past and invokes memories of Amin's killing of the Lango middle class just because President Apollo Milton Obote, whom Amin overthrew in the 1971 military coup, hailed from Lango as did many army officers. The second tribe that suffered most during Amin's murderous regime was the Acholi.[8] The tune is also loaded with a new message of peace transposed into the context of the post-LRA (the Lord's Resistance Army) search for peace and reconciliation in Acholi and Lango — again the two sub-regions most affected by the LRA insurgency, with the Acholi region being the epicentre. It is interesting that these traumatic subtexts can be read in a language Macdonald and the screenwriters do not understand, from a British film about a young Scottish doctor's adventures in Amin's Uganda. Going by Michel Chion's categories, for some viewers like myself who lost close relatives during Amin's mass execution of Lango's elite and others who were directly affected by the violence of Uganda's history, the song is *empathetic* because it directly participates in creating feelings; for others, it is *anempathetic* in the sense that it reinforces the emotions of the characters through creating mood but may not be understood by the audience, while for some it is abstract. Even the performance of Scottish songs by Ugandan and African singers[9] are appropriated into the Ugandan and wider African production frame of reference through voicing and local context of performance. The songs are "The Bonnie Banks O' Loch Lomond" by the Nyonza Singers of Uganda, "Me and Bobby McGee" performed by Angela Kalule, "Save Me" written by Aretha Franklin [Queen of Soul] et al., and performed by E.T. Mensah & The Tempos Band. Reviewer John Merriman credits the 'musical mélange' in *Last King* saying the film 'is notable for its inclusion of African songs, which would most likely broaden anyone's musical palate.' Besides, it will 'offer something fresh and new to the *vast majority* of listeners' (Merriman 2006; my emphasis).

Will the real Amin please stand up?

The relationship between novel and film in terms of the critical model underpinning the analysis of film in this book needs careful delineation. The irony of the film's treatment of Amin for the overall argument of this book needs to be further delineated as well. Here is a film that turns Amin into a somewhat charming individual and thus runs counter to Foden's overt Dark Continent template but, in so doing, it ignores or downplays one of those moments in history where the template is largely true, given Amin's atrocious record. For all the movie's post-colonial representations of Amin, it does not necessarily replace old stereotype impressions of Africa with different ones but creates another problem of making Amin the historical figure who was Uganda's

worst nightmare, likeable on screen for entertainment expediency. Macdonald's film provides an example of how a transcultural production can give Africa a new stake in a Euro-American production which nevertheless follows the Dark Continent narrative mastertext. The film also raises interesting questions about film's relation to historiography and especially the rendering of ugly historical material on screen. Can we expect historical metafiction to provide us with historical fact? Certainly not. As Hayden White (2010) has famously observed, the act of emplotment transforms even historical fact into fiction and film fictionalises history even further. While Macdonald's film reinscribes the stereotypes of Africa, at the same time it trumps some of the colonial mythology of Africa embodied in the character of Idi Amin through the *reverential* performance of Forest Whitaker, the impact of location shooting and the host of Ugandan cast and crew involved. Transposing the 1970s Amin story to a 21st century Ugandan setting also reformats Amin's story in a new context, trumping the darker aspects of his personality in order to project his jovial and human sides. At the same time, the film was produced at a time when Amin's legacy is being reviewed a somewhat favourably in the context of his successors' records on democracy, human rights and especially corruption. Whereas Foden's novel excels in demonising Amin and reducing him to pure evil imagery to fit the monster template as the ultimate Other from the colonial library, Macdonald's film — through Whitaker's acting choices — humanises Amin and projects him as a charismatic person and an anti-imperialist champion, at least in his intentions. While it is useful to project a somewhat positive image of Amin as a way of redeeming the dark portrait of Uganda's past, it is equally dangerous to sanitise the story of Idi Amin and his role in the brutal murder of hundreds of thousands of his countrymen. Likewise, it should not be forgotten that it is his actions that turned Uganda into a pariah state and destroyed the country's economy.

No film can give the true story of Idi Amin because the cinematic apparatus is geared towards entertainment and, in the process, transforms even historical fact into fiction with film fictionalising history even further. Perhaps the contributions of Macdonald's film has been in recasting the debate about Idi Amin in the context of colonialism and neocolonialism by problematising Britain's role in putting Amin in power, in stirring debate about the different positive and negative legacies of Idi Amin, as well as sparing Uganda from the bad press surrounding the name and person of Idi Amin. Over the years Amin's name has cast a dark shadow across Uganda, even though the country has moved on and become one of the world's favourite destinations for tourism and investment. What ultimately are the consequences of humanising the historical 'monster' at the expense of the representations of Dark Continent motifs when those motifs are largely realised in Amin's character and atrocities? The reality is that Macdonald's film is not about Uganda and does not

sufficiently historicise the colonial creation of Amin or even the sufferings of Ugandans under Amin. While it exposes the betrayal and indifference of the Western nations that put Amin in power to strengthen their Cold War dominance in Africa, the film is not anticolonial. The West did nothing to help remove Idi Amin from power in spite of awareness of his atrocities. It was Ugandan exiles and the Tanzanian army that eventually removed Amin from power. As Diawara has noted, the film is not interested in this African agency and trumps out this affirmative aspect of African history entirely in the *Last King* cinematic adaptation (2010, 79). In any case, one can say *Last King* is a blockbuster Western entertainment film about a naive young white adventurer, Nicholas Garrigan. Idi Amin is only important as the 'Godzilla' in this partly hilarious drama. While Amin was butchering Ugandans in their hundreds of thousands in the 1970s, he was the subject of a media frenzy in Britain. Barbet Schroeder observed in his documentary *General Idi Amin Dada: A Self Portrait* (1974) that footage of Idi Amin was in high demand on British television for comic relief. He was considered a 'a huge joke and was satirised on British TV by actor John Bird' (Wooding 2013). Macdonald's adaptation, although less derogatory than the novel, does not depart from the colonial template. There are the positive elements of Whitaker's stunning and culturally sensitive performance, local cultural context and ambience arising from location shooting in Uganda, the modern trappings of material progress, and the complexity of Amin's legacy in Uganda in light of post-Amin human rights abuses and corruption. There is the charming leader, heavyweight boxer and musician, and the African champion of the fight against neocolonialism — but beneath this calm facade lurks another Dark Continent Euro-American cultural production about Africa.

Notes

1   Foden's interviewees include among others: photojournalist Mohamed Amin, Denis Hills (who survived Amin's firing squad for insulting Amin in his book *The White Pumpkin* (1975)), Bishop Festo Kivengere (most famous evangelical preacher during Amin's and early post-Amin years), Henry Kyemba (Amin's former Minister of Health, featured in Foden's novel and in the film adaptation), renowned Kenyan historian Professor Ali Mazrui, exiled Kabaka of Buganda, Sir Edward Muteesa, Barbet Schroeder who made the only known cinematic portrait of Idi Amin, and current Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. Finally, Foden expresses his 'thanks to those personal informants currently living in Uganda who gave interviews but asked for their names to be withheld…' (ix).

2   *Zulu* is a 1964 super-British production that re-enacts the historical Battle of Rorke's Drift between the British and Zulu armies in January 1879. Owing to their superior firepower, a small company of 150 British soldiers successfully defended themselves against 4 000 Zulu spear-wielding warriors. A total of 23 Victoria Crosses (VCs), the British Empire's highest medal of valour, was awarded to British soldiers who fought in this battle. It was the highest number of awards for a single battle.

3   It is important to point out that there is no 'Mau Mau' tribe in Kenya. The Mau Mau Uprising (or Revolt or Rebellion), also called the Kenya Emergency, was a liberation movement through which native Kenyans, under the command of Dedan Kimathi, waged war against British Settler colonialism between 1952 and 1960. It involved mostly the Kikuyus and affiliated groups.

4   Forest Whitaker won many awards including Best Actor at the Academy Awards, the Golden Globe, the Screen Actors' Guild and the BAFTAs. He also won many Critics' Awards among which are: the Broadcast Film Critics' Association, New York Film Critics' Circle, Los Angeles Film Critics' Association and the National Board of Review.

5   See examples in Eamonn Walker's performance of Andre Baptiste Senior (a caricature of Charles Taylor) in *Lord of War* (2005), or Lennie James's performance of General Zateb Kazim in *Sahara* (2005). The only African leaders portrayed respectfully are Nelson Mandela, Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara and Steve Biko.

6   Songs in Luganda include, "Nakawunde" written by Mike Musoke and Herman Sewanyana and performed by Percussion Discussion Afrika; "Otole Dance Music", a traditional Acholi warrior dance that Amin used to perform, arranged by Ugandan musician Stephen Rwangyezi and performed by The Ndere Dance Troupe — which has become Uganda's famous flagship dance troupe; "Fever" written by I. Jingo and performed by Jingo; "Butuuse No 1" a famous hit song written by Moses Matovu performed by Uganda's highly respected Afrigo Band. "Kasongo" another classic written by Kasongo Wakenema and performed by Afrigo Band; There were also Scottish songs but performed by Ugandan singers: "The Bonnie Banks O' Loch Lomond," performed by The Nyonza Singers; "Me and Bobby McGee", written by Kris Kristofferson and Fred Foster but performed by Angela Kalule. Other Ugandan songs are "Acholi Pot Song", written by The Ndere Dance Troupe and performed by the Ndere Dance Troupe with the 'Solo Voice' performance by Betty Akidi. These songs, including the ones written by non-Ugandans but performed by Ugandan bands situate the production in an Ugandan context.

7   The Orchestra Super Mazembe band had its roots in Super Vox, a band formed in 1967 in Zaire and led by Mutonkole Longwa Didos. The group combined the rumba style of Congolese Soukous music with the local Benga flavour of Kenyan music. Their biggest hits were "Shauri Yako", "Samba", "Bwana Nipe Pesa" and "Kassongo". The group was dissolved in 1985 (Matos 2013).

8   The Lango are Nilo Hamites while the Acholis are Nilotics, but they speak mutually intelligible languages from the Luo language family; hence, the two tribes were dominant in the Obote I army and were the focus of Amin's massacres.

9

Cyberactivism against 'whitewashing'

Ridley Scott's biblical epic *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) stirred more controversy than any other recent Hollywood-Africa film because of its alleged racist casting. The biblical epic about the liberation of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt featured some high-profile white actors: Christian Bale acts Moses, Aaron Paul is Joshua, Australian actor Joel Edgerton is Pharaoh Ramses II, John Turturro acts Pharaoh Seti I, and Sigourney Weaver is Seti's wife, Tuya. There is nothing new in the casting of white actors in *Exodus* film adaptations or any bible story adaptation for that matter. The important factor to note about the biblical book of *Exodus* is that it is an ancient African and Semitic story and much of the action took place on the African continent and involved African characters. If we go by the ancient map of greater Africa where the current Middle East was part of Africa (as opposed to the concept of the Middle East which is a World War II geopolitical creation of colonial Britain) then all of the action takes place in Africa! With that background, it is therefore historically inaccurate for any of these films to have an all-white cast because this not does not reflect the racial complexity of then greater Africa. Included are Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1923) and its iconic 1956 remake in which Charlton Heston features as Moses. The only adaptations that feature coloured people in major roles are the DreamWorks Animation's *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) directed by Brenda Chapman and Steve Hickner and the terribly irreverent comedy *Wholly Moses!* (1980), a parody of the Bible by director Gary Weis which cast renowned African American actor/comedian Richard Pryor as Pharaoh. Film critic Roger Ebert (1980) says, 'the audience did applaud Pryor, out of sympathy, no doubt' which tells of the audience's appreciation of, or sympathy towards, the casting of a black person as Pharaoh. Ridley Scott's is the latest film to face criticism following a series of controversies on Hollywood's racist casting of white actors in black or larger non-white roles. What this means is that there is increasing awareness of racism in Hollywood's casting generally, as well as growing resistance to such films.

The opposition is manifested widely through cyberactivism which McCaughey and Ayers define as 'political activism on the internet' (2003, 1). The internet, to borrow Carol Vernallis's relevant title, *Unruly Media* (2013), is a relatively new medium that is characteristically hard to control and gives individuals democratic space for activism against social and historical injustices. The instantaneous nature of web communication and the 'traversing of spatial and temporal boundaries' (2003, 5) allow for almost immediate access to the latest tweets, comments, blogs and reviews about films, as well as the opportunity to multiply the information and respond accordingly. Cyberspace has become the subversive space that outmanoeuvres the traditionally slow and rigidly controlled information highway, allowing for, in this case, greater scrutiny of Hollywood-Africa films. Hollywood may not be changing much, and most Hollywood audiences still enjoy their darkest Africa films uncritically, but there is a new kind of audience in America that is starting to question the racist superstructure of Hollywood and, especially, its obsession with darkest Africa iconography. The attack on *Exodus: Gods and Kings* was championed by a twitter hash tag #BoycottExodusMovie which received a lot of traction, was multiply retweeted and led to the rapid mobilisation of disgruntled moviegoers. Another site, the Care2 petition titled "Tell Ridley Scott to Stop Racist Casting!" (Maheshwari 2014) was also very effective in helping mobilise the boycott of Scott's film *Exodus: Gods and Kings*. This successful campaign — moreover by all races — against Hollywood's whitewashing of African history and obsession with celebrating whiteness at the expense of blackness, proves that the internet has the capacity to galvanise public imagination and to deliver in 'real-world-bodily-action' (McCaughey and Ayers 2003, 4).

Scott's problem was not really the casting of white characters in African or Middle Eastern roles per se; this is perpetually 'normal' in Hollywood and is to be expected, even though it is annoying — especially when it is designed to obliterate the achievements of Africans in history. For years, blackface minstrelsy, the phenomenon of white actors painting themselves black to act black roles for the pleasure of white audiences, was responsible for setting up racial archetypes, stereotypes, clichés and tropes about blacks that prevailed through to the Civil Rights era in America. But what enraged the audience is how Ridley Scott chose roles for Africans in the film: Adrian Palmer is an Egyptian *thief;* David Olawale Ayinde and Ibrahim Fagge are members of the Egyptian civilian *lower class;* Emeka Sesai is Pharaoh Rameses's Royal *Servant* and Mens-Sana Tamakloe is an *assassin.* There are other African characters in the film, but they play mute, exotically dressed servants. They stand guard at entrances like pillars as the white royals move freely. A pair of black servants hold the bird for sacrifice. Some serve food and wait on the royals without saying a word. One black woman is a mistress to the Hittite king. No black person plays

any significant role in the movie, except the assassin who is cast as a villain and is dramatically disposed of by Moses. This sustained casting of black faces in lowly roles against historical evidence concerning the position of blacks in the time period is deliberate cultural sabotage. David Dennis captures the frustrations of many who saw through this overtly racist and demeaning portrayal of Africans. He upholds the argument that the best actor should actually get the job no matter the race, but…

> to make the main characters White and everyone else African is *cinematic colonialism*. It's creating a piece of historical 'art' that carries on *oppressive imagery* that's helped shackle entire countries and corners of the world….I'm so goddamn sick of Hollywood and its acceptance of these *oppressive images*. If studies have shown the way that perpetual violence in movies begets violence in America, then what about perpetual maintenance of *the White saviour* standing over the ethnic servant/villain/imbecile? What damage is this creating for the American psyche? *How am I supposed to feel when all the messiahs, last samurais, African kings and saviours are White?* (Dennis 2014; my emphases)

Dennis's observation shows how Hollywood-Africa films recycle negative tropes about Africa and reinforce a specific way of seeing Africans as inferior to whites. Laya Maheshwari (2014) expresses the same sentiment about Hollywood's whitewashing of timeless biblical texts and 'retrofitting them to propagate the already widespread image of a white saviour coming to the aid of all mankind.' He calls it an 'insidious form of imperialist hegemony.' During an interview with *Variety*, Ridley Scott scoffed at the criticism of his film and unapologetically defended his casting, saying: 'I can't mount a film of this budget [$130 million, plus about $70 million in tax rebates], where I have to rely on tax rebates in Spain, and say that my lead actor is Mohammad so-and-so from such-and-such. I'm just not going to get it financed. So, the question doesn't even come up' (Foundas 2014). The director's honest but rather arrogant response shows that racism and bigotry in Hollywood are a larger problem than the ideological orientation of a single director or film. First, they are rooted in the larger superstructure of racism that informs Hollywood's Africa film productions, in this case exhibited by Scott's production dilemma which, in turn, is informed by colonial novels and films about Africa and their 19th century racist mastertext. Second, they are entangled with racial politics and the political economy of film financing; and third, they are constrained by the star-caste system which recycles the same white screen icons and consolidates the unfavourable projection of blackness.

The embarrassing 2014 Sony Corporations email leaks through North Korean hacktivism confirmed how Hollywood sees black actors — including two-time Academy Award winning screen icon Denzel Washington — as liabilities instead of assets. The revelations from these leaks underscore the undesirability of casting black actors or 'Mohammed so-and-so's from such-and-such' as Scott cynically put it! In one

Plate 6. Moses inspecting a construction project.

leaked email, an unnamed Sony Corporation producer writing to Sony Chairman Michael Lynton about the box office performance of *The Equalizer* (2014) says, 'I believe that *the international motion picture audience is racist* — in general, pictures with an African American lead don't play well overseas' (Mooney 2014; my emphasis). The irony of this statement is that the said official levels the accusation of racism at the international audience as a way of displacing the reality of her understated racist attitude towards African American actors. Besides, *The Equalizer* billed the third-highest grossing film of Washington's acting career was a great success locally and internationally (Wakeman n.d.). *Black Panther*, with an almost entirely black cast had a smashing box office performance, grossing 1.3 billion dollars worldwide (Mark Hughes, *Forbes*, April 2, 2018), prompting Clarence Page to write in the *Chicago Tribune* (February 27, 2018): 'So let's just bury that notion that movies about black characters don't sell.' The question arises: why should race be mentioned at all if what is needed in a particular role is just a talented actor? In any case, if indeed the international audience adores white actors and are repelled by black actors, who but Hollywood is responsible for inculcating that cinematic taste or distaste? Moreover, if there are other limitations with the film such as a poor script, production failures or

issues with marketing, should we blame it on the colour of an actor's skin? The reality is that black actors like Denzel Washington, Will Smith, Danny Glover and Morgan Freeman, to mention just four of so many, enjoy loyal viewership and tremendous respect at home and equally abroad.

Yesha Callahan calls attention to the normalcy of Hollywood's sidelining of black actors in biblical adaptations when he observes: 'If you take a look at any Hollywood film depicting characters from the Bible or ancient Egypt, you'll be hard-pressed to find a person of colour in any of the roles. Because that's what Hollywood does' (Callahan 2014). This obsession with white actors playing lead roles is a deliberate investment in whiteness which is quite profitable as discussed in Chapter 2. George Lipsitz's book *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (1988) underscores this intricate cultural politics. That Hollywood is part of a wider cultural hegemony is reflected in Media Mogul Rupert Murdoch's foray into the Ridley Scott controversy with his tweet: 'Moses film attacked on Twitter for all white cast. Since when are Egyptians not white? All I know are' (Murdoch 2014). This tweet situates the altercation in the wider battle for racial supremacy with the implication here that blacks want to blacken established white history by attempting to appropriate Egyptian civilisation. This turning of tables shows again that this problem is larger than Ridley Scott.

Given that previous Exodus films like DeMille's *Ten Commandments* (1956) participated in whitewashing even worse than Scott's *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, why was Scott judged so harshly? The reality is that Ridley Scott's film is more racist than it seems at first. It whitewashes through casting as well as through the set design. The casting systematically stunts Africans in marginalised roles, unlike in the other Exodus films where all-white casts obliterate this disparity. Of special note is the digitally reimaged Sphinx in *Exodus: Gods and Kings* with distinct Caucasian features such as the sharp nose and large ears. While the race of the Sphinx is the subject of much debate, speculation and contestation, the 1798 etching of the Sphinx by French artist and archaeologist, Vivant Denon, before the face was damaged, shows that the Sphinx has Negroid features, especially the broad cheekbones, flat nose and large lips (Freeman Institute). Scott's deliberate project in historical re-engineering flies in the face of contemporary knowledge about the ancient Egyptians and repeats the colonial exercise of stealing Africa's heritage. But there are also other reasons: (1) While many of Hollywood's audience are raised on the Dark Continent image staple, there is a rising awareness of Hollywood's racist representation of Africa based on increased available information — historical, archaeological and genetic evidence in various journals and forums regarding Africa's past that has long been silenced by colonial historiography. Of special scholarly interest is the African legacy of the ancient Egyptians. (2) There is no longer an excuse for lack of African actors given

the array of accomplished black and specifically African actors in Hollywood today: Djimon Hounsou (*Gladiator, Blood Diamond, Lara Croft Tomb Raider*), Chiwetel Ejiofor (*Amistad, Twelve Years a Slave, Queen of Katwe*), David Oyelowo (*A Raisin in the Sun, Rise of the Planet of the Apes, Selma, Queen of Katwe*), Hakim Kae Kazim (*Sahara, Hotel Rwanda, Pirates of the Caribbean III*), Peter Mensah (*Tears of the Sun, Avatar, 300*), Edi Gathegi (*X-Men: First Class*), Benjamin Ochieng (*Tears of the Sun*), Amr Waked (*The Aquarium, Lucy*) Academy Award winner Lupita Nyong'O (*Twelve Years a Slave, Queen of Katwe, Black Panther*), Benu Mabhena (*Blood Diamond*), Liya Kabede (*Lord of War*) and Chipo Chung (*Sunshine*), to mention but a few. There are also many accomplished African actors working in Nollywood who could be hired. It is evident that racial integration, or racial blending is on the increase in Hollywood, yet white privilege still manifests in the casting of white actors in important black or coloured roles. This continued racebending is a manifestation of racism. Also disturbing is the casting of African American and white American actors to play iconic African personalities and Afrikaner characters, respectively, often with fake African accents and mannerisms, while accomplished African(er) actors are available. (3) The rise of social media has undermined the tight control of access to information and has led to ease of distribution and response as forums like Facebook and Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube and Vimeo, among others, enable rapid critical responses to films and cyberactivism.

Ridley Scott's film suffered a heavy hit at the box office as a result of the boycott largely mobilised and sustained through social media. Scott Mendelson's article "Friday Box Office: God Smites 'Exodus' As Holdovers Tumble" summarises the disaster Scott suffered. In the first week alone, this highly billed biblical epic produced at the enormous cost of $130 million with the most dazzling display of special effects dropped 74% as movie goers kept their distance (Mendelson 2014). The poor box office performance of *Exodus: Gods and Kings* shows that cyberactivism is an effective weapon of war against Hollywood's cultural imperialism. As Sydney Levin (2015) observes, if this awakening continues, Hollywood's whitewashing of African history, a practice that is 'as old as Hollywood itself' will no longer be so overt. Perhaps we have this cyberprotest to thank for the radical all-black cast in *Black Panther* (2018)! Because Hollywood-Africa movies shape perceptions about Africa, confronting the Darkest Africa enterprise would offset misconceptions about Africa that feed into the continent's exploitation cycle through unfair trade, paternalistic international policy, and especially negative image branding that in turn undermines investments on the continent.

10

Afro-optimism

Contemporary arguments about Africa's past and future rehearse the old representations of the heart of darkness versus a postcolonial optimism for the future. This chapter examines the largely African-made film *Queen of Katwe* (2016) as a highly Afro-optimist film acclaimed for its story of hope as opposed to the dominant Afro-pessimist narratives of Africa over more than a century of Hollywood-Africa productions. *Queen of Katwe* is an American Sports biopic, an underdog drama about the life and phenomenal achievement of Phiona Mutesi, a Ugandan child prodigy from Katwe slum in Kampala. Phiona Mutesi (Madina Nalwanga) is an unlikely candidate for success having been born in this sprawling Katwe slum in the suburbs of modern Kampala City in Uganda. She seems condemned with her entire family to the lifestyle of struggle for survival with no chance for upward mobility until she accidentally meets Sports Outreach missionary Robert Katende (David Oyelowo), who introduces her to chess at the age of nine. She is captivated by the game and becomes a fast learner, overcoming social stigma and her mother Harriet Nakku's unfounded fears that she might be abducted by the white missionaries funding Sports Outreach Institute. By the time she is 10, Mutesi can play chess well and becomes the National Junior Chess Champion at 12 and the substantive Champion at 15. She helps Uganda win Africa's International Children's Chess Tournament in Sudan at the age of 13; plays in her first World Chess Olympiad at 14 and at 16 becomes a Woman Candidate Master during her second chess Olympiad. Her success feeds her dream of becoming a Grand Master. The abstract game of chess provides the much-needed strategy for her and her family to exit the life of poverty. The African Cinderella becomes a global sensation and an inspiration for youth all over the world.

This 'true story' film firmly supports the Afro-optimist theory of a hopeful youth rising to meet Africa's urgent needs. Written by William Wheeler and directed by Mira Nair, the film is adapted from multiple sources: an ESPN magazine article, "Game of Her Life" (2011), a book *Queen of Katwe: One Girl's Triumphant Path to Becoming a Chess Champion* (2012) both by Tim Crothers, and interviews conducted by Tim Crothers and Mira Nair and her production crew with the real life characters in Katwe and in Kampala. The film was produced by Walt Disney Pictures and

ESPN Films, both Western institutions that showcase the thrill of Phiona's victory and the agony of defeat. *Queen of Katwe* has been praised for its story of hope and for its largely uplifting representation of Africans. Brian Obara (2016) calls director Nair's film, 'a master class on how to get Africa right,' saying 'The consensus on Twitter is unmistakable: Africa approves!' The film is considered radical in its positive representation of African success, given that Disney Studios has been at the forefront of stereotypical reiterations of African darkness. It has, however, also been criticised for its dominant focus on poverty, especially in its cinematography. Like many ethnically charged Disney films, the *Queen of Katwe* lauds heroic struggle against largely negative cultural forces. Disney is an American multinational mass media and entertainment conglomerate in California with hundreds of companies and subsidiaries. Its biggest Africa production is *The Lion King* (1994). It is quite evident that the original cover designs for *The Lion King* and *Queen of Katwe* are quite similar, although *Queen of Katwe* largely transcends the stereotypes of the *Lion King* which created the impression that Africa was one huge game reserve. Its musical sequel, *The Lion King* (2019) does not depart from these same stereotypes.

Based on a true story

Like *Tears of the Sun, Black Hawk Down* and *Hotel Rwanda*, this film claims historical veracity as based on a 'true story'. The life characters, the film director and crew, and most Ugandans testify that the film is indeed based on actual events. Phiona Mutesi endorsed her biopic wholly for authenticity: 'That's a true movie…I felt like, it's *just* my life. It's *really* my life' (Young 2016; my emphasis). In an interview with the author, Mutesi insisted that the film was totally accurate. She said the horrific flood scene was based on a real flood that nearly killed her, and that watching the film still invokes terrifying memories of that particular day (Mutesi 2016). That entire sequence was shot in Katwe, bringing the film closer to the actual event. The characters in the film are based on specific people as opposed to composites, as reinforced at the end of the film when each of the actual characters appears on screen with their actor counterparts. There is also a 'sense of verified authenticity in that the slum scenes were shot in Katwe…we see the actuality of this story rather than the more usual use of re-creations' (Burke and Craig 2016). Moreover, local and international newspaper records attest to Phiona Mutesi's achievements in the world of chess.

Unlike the controversies of historical veracity surrounding the 'based on a true story' films earlier discussed in chapters 5 and 6, the true story claims of this film are not contested by anybody in so far as the account of Phiona Mutesi's life is concerned. Questions have been raised about the authenticity of the representation of Katwe,

but not about the history and chronology of Mutesi's life. At a theoretical level, as earlier discussed in Chapter 6, the claim 'based on a true story' is problematic given that a story is by implication a fictional product of emplotment that reorganises facts to create a new narrative (Leitch 2009, 285; White 1985, 84). This chapter does not focus on the theoretical quandaries of the 'based on a true story' claims, but rather on the degree to which Phiona Mutesi's life is 'incarnated on the screen', the inspirational nature of this incarnation and its situation within the theoretical paradigm of Afro-optimism in line with Hollywood's Dark Continent tropology.

Defining Afro-optimism

Afro-optimism refers to 'contemporary optimistic political, cultural and economic representations of Africa' (Gabay n.d., 1). Also described as a 'State of absolute conviction that a bright future lies ahead for the African continent, and that we (the sons and daughters of the continent) will be the crafters of such a future' (Afro-optimism)[1], Afro-optimism has been on the rise in Western representations and discourses about Africa since 2000. It is a phenomenon which has seen mainstream Euro-American media and academia emphasise Africa's agency in marked departure from pessimism as the dominant mastertext of imagining Africa. This Afro-optimist wave has been captured in narratives like 'Africa Rising', 'African Agency', 'Africa is Emergent', Africa's 'coming of age' and in a currently popular book *Africa's Moment* (2000) by Jean-Michel Severino and Olivier Ray. This positivist narrative was engraved in Western popular culture when a central character in the US Web television series *House of Cards* was seen reading the book. Other versions of this uplifting narrative include the 'African Renaissance' promoted by South Africa's statesman and intellectual, Thabo Mbeki. He postulates that during the 15th and 16th centuries at the time of the European renaissance, Africa was relatively advanced with established kingdoms, architecture and scholarly enterprises. Africans only need to rediscover themselves and break the colonial and neocolonial chains — 'the oppressive historical legacy of poverty, hunger, backwardness and marginalization' (Mbeki 1998). Others have called the 21st century, 'The African Century', anticipating that this century will bring Africa much-needed peace and prosperity. In 2012 the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and the University of South Africa hosted a colloquium of African intellectuals to ensure Afrocentricity in rethinking the global epistemological industry to make certain that Africa moves from consumption of Western knowledge to producing relevant knowledge that meets Africa's unique challenges. This resulted in a book project, *Building Blocks Towards an African Century* (2018).

Some authors, especially from the West, have dismissed this Afro-optimist wave as a subtly repackaged form of Eurocentrism that seeks to oversee or celebrate

'Africa's auto-development along Eurocentric lines.' It is argued that what appears as 'a softening of the Western gaze' is actually a 'Eurocentric anxious self-referentialism' (Gabay n.d., 10) or 'a celebration of Western historical institutional genius' which sees the rise of Africa under Western tutelage and along Western lines as a reflection of the offshore success of Eurocentrism (Gabay n.d., 15). Africa becomes what Achebe referred to as the 'Dorian Gray' into which the West is able to project its own flaws (Gabay n.d., 19). I consider this view an Afro-pessimist attack on Afro-optimism itself. In any case, even if Western Afro-optimism were just a mirage, given the overwhelming tradition of Western Afro-pessimist scholarship and neopatrimonialism, *Queen of Katwe* hardly celebrates a Western experiment but reflects the achievements of a Ugandan coach whose desire to help marginalised African children to overcome poverty and illiteracy leads him to introduce them to what was then considered outlandish, the game of chess. Katende's personal childhood and difficult early life mirrors that of Mutesi in many ways and explains his compassion for slum children. However, Katende does not ride on the heroic self-transcendence model of *Invictus,* or the larger-than-life Western heroic model of *Hotel Rwanda* or the white saviour industrial complex of *Tears of the Sun* and *Blood Diamonds.* This uplifting narrative of faith and sports has all the hallmarks of Afro-optimism. *Queen of Katwe* is a narrative that promotes a positive image of triumph against poverty, and the marginalisation of people under the pressures of monopoly capital that relegates the likes of Phiona Mutesi to perpetual slum life with no respite from the invincible cycle of poverty.

The uplifting story — breaking the cycle of Afro-pessimism

Queen of Katwe (2016) in many ways transcends the overt, century-old cycle of Afro-pessimist representations of Africa in all its classical and neoclassical mutations from colonial novels and films to neocolonial novels and Hollywood films about Africa discussed at length in the preceding chapters. According to the Afro-pessimist paradigm of Africa, everything about the continent is covered in deep darkness with no possibility of hope. Africa is 'a gone case' to use the classic slang. This apocalyptic narrative continues unabated in Western and even some African media. For instance, the African scholar Mathurin Houngnikpo, argues that 'Africa's crisis seems to be deepening', that 'some people believe the continent is collapsing.' He paints 'the image of a shipwrecked nation.' He goes on to say, 'Once a region with bountiful optimism and hope, Africa now teeters perilously on the brink of economic disintegration, political chaos, and institutional and social decay.' He notes further, that 'Steadily, the pillars of government, law, and even economic life have been destroyed' (Houngnikpo

2004, 135–136). Controversial Ugandan journalist, Timothy Kalyegira, who called *Queen of Katwe* an 'Embarrassment', believes that 'Ugandans and Africans at large are sloppy, mediocre and below average'; these qualities of 'Ugandanness' are fully on display in the film (*Matooke Republic* [Online], October 2, 2016). He had earlier tweeted, 'If you want to see Uganda in all its mediocrity and shabbiness, watch "Queen of Katwe". I walked out of the Kampala premiere today in pain' (Kalyegira 2016). His cynical statement is a clear expression of self-loathing, a product of the epidemiology of oppression captured so well by Frantz Fanon in his book, *Black Skins White Masks* (1967). This fatalistic diagnosis, now internalised, of Africa's predicament consolidates the Dark Continent mastertext that has formatted the narratives about Africa since the 19th century.

Queen of Katwe is a counterpoint narrative that celebrates African resilience and triumph in the midst of adversity. Ken Burke and Pat Craig observe that *Queen of Katwe* is one of those 'positive "soft stories"' that never make it to the front pages (2016) as opposed to the hot button disaster news associated with Africa. They further refer to it as 'a sweet, charming, heartwarming film' made even more appealing by the lack of gun violence and criminal activity and other forms of pornographic violence. It inspires 'millions of every society's left-behinds' and the film is 'infused with sincere intentions…genuine revelations of lives rarely seen in media depictions' (2016). Veteran Ugandan journalist Daniel Kalinaki argues that *Queen of Katwe*'s success shouldn't be measured by box office dividends or even quality of acting. Rather, the great success of *Queen of Katwe* is in the fact that the film, 'puts forward a truly Ugandan story of hope, of discovery, of small people pulling themselves up by the bootstraps, taking on and conquering the world' (*Daily Monitor* [Online], October 6, 2016). He argues further that the film transcends the predictable dominant narrative of war, diseases and disasters, or even the dominant array of narratives about Idi Amin in films about Uganda. *Queen of Katwe* wins 'for what it sets out to do — humanise us — regardless of how well it does it' (*Daily Monitor* [Online], October 6, 2016). For this reason, *Queen of Katwe* is a real breath of fresh air.

The film director and actors also see *Queen of Katwe* in a positive light. During a personal interview, director Mira Nair joked that this was the first Disney film about Africa without animals and a white saviour (Nair 2016). It is indeed paradoxical that this powerfully inspirational African story is brought to the screen by Disney which is best-known for racist representations of Africa that paint the continent like an extended wildlife reserve, especially in its earlier productions discussed in Chapter 2. Nair is definitely a film activist with the vision of telling alternative stories of Africa. Speaking to Danny Leigh after the Toronto premier of *Queen of Katwe*, Nair remarked: 'I don't want to make films about "the Dark Continent"

— this place that has to be rescued' (*Financial Times* October 14, 2016). She dissociates from the long tradition of darkest Africa productions in Hollywood. Nair is a prolific, internationally acclaimed Indian-born filmmaker who calls herself, 'an Indian filmmaker at home in the world.' Born in India, trained at Harvard and living in Uganda, her films exhibit multicultural sensibility. She is best known for her films, *Salaam Bombay!* (1998) about the plight of street kids, nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and winner of the Camera D'Or at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival; *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), which received a Golden Globes nomination for Best Foreign Language Film and also became the highest grossing Indian film ever released in the US at the time, and *Queen of Katwe*, winner of the African American Film Critics Association (AAFCA) award. The director, who has lived in Uganda for 30 years now, says the film project gave her an opportunity to bring out what she loves about living in Uganda… 'To visually capture the human dignity of our people the vibrant, original style, the streets that pulsate with life' (*Nation* [Online], November 1, 2016). David Oyelowo (Robert Katende) is all praise for the film and its director. The Nigerian-British actor does not hide his frustration about the lack of 'the real face of Africa' in Western movies at large owing to their usual focus on dystopian representations of the continent, while Africa is full of great inspiring stories of 'hope, triumph, love and joy…'. To Oyelowo, *Queen of Katwe* is unique: 'one of those stories filmed in Africa, played by Africans and filmed by a woman who has lived in the continent for nearly 30 years, so I knew we were in good hands' (*Nation* [Online], November 1, 2016). Academy Award winning Kenyan-Mexican actress Lupita Nyong'o further celebrates the film for its African agency:

> The fact that we have this uplifting story with the Africans front and centre of their own narrative — Africans saving themselves from their own situation — is really powerful for Africans and everyone else who will get to watch this film. (Masters 2016)

The film and its positive reception around the world gave many in the Ugandan film industry hope that the positive publicity and exposure *Queen of Katwe* has accorded Uganda will translate into more Hollywood films being shot in the country, and to more African stories being adapted to the Hollywood screen with greater authenticity and respect for Africa.

Local production context

How was this African story able to pass through the dream foundries of Hollywood unscathed or with minimum alterations? Its positive success derives from a number of factors: the resident Uganda director, Ugandan and generally African actors, location research and location shooting in Uganda, the local ambience including

Ugandan languages and music, and the full-time involvement of the actual, real-life people — Coach Robert Katende and Phiona Mutesi — on the set. Director Mira Nair has lived in Uganda since she first conducted research there for the making of her film *Mississippi Masala* (1991). She has a film school in Kampala, Maisha Lab, dedicated to training African filmmakers to tell African stories. Zohran Kwame Mamdani (Young Cardamom), her son with renowned Ugandan academic Mahmoud Mamdani, functioned in the production as co-music supervisor. He also curated the 'cutting-edge Afrobeat soundtrack' (Priyanka 2016) as well as the Western soundtrack. Zohran describes himself as 'the only Ugandan rapper of Indian origin' (Mamdani 2015). Academy Award winning actress Lupita Nyong'o (*12 Years a Slave* (2013)) joined Mira Nair's Film Academy in Kampala in 2005 to train as a producer. It was at Maisha Lab that her acting talent stood out, and she was guided to focus more on acting. She too praised the film for its empowering narrative. The Disney executive, Tendo Nagenda, who commissioned the project and first brought to director Mira Nair the ESPN article about Phiona Mutesi and Sports Outreach Institute is of Ugandan descent.

The political economy of Hollywood productions usually dictates a treatment of Africa to meet audience expectations in line with long-established negative paradigms of representing Africa; in this particular case, however, the director seems to have had her way. Nair said in an interview, 'Disney never pressured me to sugarcoat or sanitise. I think of it as my film. It feels radical…It's true that at the heart of this big, broad crowd-pleasing film are some discreetly fearless decisions' (*Financial Times* October 14, 2016). This is phenomenal given the fact that director Nair knows the inner workings of Hollywood: 'films are financed by people who want to see themselves on screen, and it's a white male world' (*Financial Times* October 14, 2016). Could it be that the black male Disney executive of Ugandan descent momentarily offset this white male system to create the opportunity for a unique African story? Or is Hollywood's take on Africa actually changing? To the director, it is a sign that America is waking up.

Queen of Katwe has a large Ugandan cast with most of the actors coming from Katwe, even though there are some South African, Nigerian and Kenyan actors as well. The real-life characters of the film, Phiona Mutesi, Robert Katende, Sara Katende, Nakku Harriet and Mugabi Brian make cameo appearances in the credits alongside the individuals who play their roles, giving the film local flavour and a high level of authenticity. The background of Phiona Mutesi is similar to that of Madina Nalwanga who played the lead role in *Queen of Katwe*. As Elvis Senono notes, Nalwanga and her brother were also selling maize on the streets like Mutesi and her brother Brian when she was found by the director of Sosolya Undugu Dance Academy which provides food, shelter, education, life and drama skills to vulnerable

and socially disadvantaged youth (*Daily Monitor* [Online], September 26, 2016). In an interview with Bamuturaki Musinguzi, Nalwanga confirms this similarity when she says, 'Phiona's story is like my story. Her background is like my background, but for her it was chess that changed everything while for me it was dancing and singing' (*Nation* [Online], November 1, 2016). Nalwanga's performance is perhaps such a faithful rendering of Mutesi's life story because their stories merge in the context of their earlier years of despair and eventual breakthrough (chess for Mutesi and music for Nalwanga). The similarities enabled Nalwanga to retell Mutesi's story effectively in the film.

Language is another factor that adds to the film's African flavour. Timothy Kalyegira attacked *Queen of Katwe* for what he called its 'simplistic expression, overdone, overstated dialogue' which he considers typical of Ugandan acting. He also bashed the film for its 'Ugandan English' (*Matooke Republic*, [Online], October 2, 2016). It is, however, this Ugandanness in acting, mannerisms and language that makes the film authentic. In fact, Brian Obara argues that one of the key failures of Hollywood-Africa films are 'wobbly accents' where foreign actors pretend to speak like Africans. He gives the example of *Invictus* where Morgan Freeman was criticised for failure to bring out Nelson Mandela's accent. '*Queen of Katwe* appears to have passed this test with aplomb. Lupita Nyong'o and David Oyelowo pull off impressive Ugandan accents' (Obara 2016). Responding to Kalyegira's attack on Ugandan English in the film, actor Phillip Luswata (Minister Aloysius Kyazze) hit back saying:

> How do you expect Ugandan actors to act like Americans?! Ugandans act like Ugandans! The very reason they were cast! So that they can be Ugandan! Does this gentleman even know how much ADR was done to help SA actors to sound like Ugandans! (*Matooke Republic* [Online], October 2, 2016)

Indeed, apart from cutting costs, casting these mostly unprofessional Ugandan actors in total violation of the classical Hollywood star casting system lends the film greater authenticity in its attempt to recreate a Ugandan real-life story on screen. It is a neorealist gamble that paid off.

Generous use of Ugandan music also establishes in the film a clear sense of place and ambience. The film features Western, Indian and African musicians, but the majority are Ugandan. Some of the many featured Ugandan musicians are Kinene Ismail, Joanita Kawalya, Collin Lubega, Zohran Kwame Mamdani, Okello Michael, Lezon Mark Mugwanya, Madina Nalwanga, Nabeeta Nuhu, Omar Paul, Kirya Heavy Rock, Jose Chameleon, Radio and Weasel, Eddie Kenzo, Lukenge Yusuf and Bobi Wine. Here is an additional element of metatextuality that subverts the identity of this Western production, making it both local to the Ugandan audience and, in

some ways, foreign to the Western audience. Young Cardamom and HAB's song, "1# Spice", which Noor Brara (2016) calls 'the movie's anthem', sets the mood, tone and tempo of the film. The song is actually a musical advertisement for salt from Lake Katwe and relates to the fact that Lake Katwe in south-western Uganda (unrelated to Katwe slum) is known for salt mining. The song's extensive use of hyperbole works to market the salt. The song also praises the beauty of Kampala City.

Perhaps the best decision the filmmaker made was to shoot on location in Uganda. That decision alone resulted in the huge deployment of the Ugandan cast and crew, and the use of local languages and accent, and of Ugandan music. As Lupita Nyong'o notes, 'As someone who has seen what Mira Nair captured on screen in *Queen of Katwe*, I can tell you that the vibrancy and colour of the Uganda village adds necessary flavour to the story of Phiona and her chess club' (cited in O'Connell n.d.). The focus on Katwe and the locations with which Phiona's story was woven, such as their shanty house, the Agape Church, and the familiar market and streets of Katwe where she sold maize, contrast strikingly with an artificially staged studio setting for Katwe or with computer-generated imagery that would have undermined the authenticity of locale. As Katende notes, 'Everything was intact. There are people who weren't even auditioned; they were just there doing their daily work. The film crew simply had to beg them, "Please, don't look at the camera!"' (Katende 2016).

The participation of Robert Katende as consultant on the set also made a big difference. Katende said he was hired on the set to ensure the story was not 'Disneyfied' too much (Katende 2016). His advice was especially critical for the role of Robert Katende. He said the actor (David Oyelowo) would ask, 'Did I portray that part well?' Or say, 'Cut please. Robert, how would you handle this?' According to Katende, it did help to bring out the reality of Uganda so that no one could say, 'this is just Hollywood' (Katende 2016). Phiona Mutesi did the same thing with Nalwanga on the set. These embedded roles of the actual Robert Katende and Phiona Mutesi and the other subjects of the movie in the production process helped to bring the film much closer to the realities presented.

Novel–film interchange

This chapter is not complete without examining the interchange between the sports biography by Crothers and Nair's biopic. The sports biography of Mutesi and its screen incarnation by Nair provide an illuminating exception to Frederick Jameson's assertion that it is impossible for both novel/autobiography and film to have high quality. Jameson argues that great novels produce mediocre films and that great films can only be made from second-rate novels. In the event they are both excellent in quality, he argues that the adaptation should therefore be 'utterly unfaithful to its

original source'; that the aesthetic and spirit of the screen rendition must be markedly different from its progenitor text (Jameson 2011, 218). In the case of the adaptation interchange between Crothers and Nair, the autobiography/sports drama and its filmic adaptation share Kamilla Elliott's model of the 'spirit of the text'. They both celebrate the phenomenal achievement of Phiona Mutesi and its message of hope. Although both mediums tell Mutesi's life story well, Crothers's book tends to re-echo familiar tropes of Africans as the ultimate underdogs while Nair leans towards affirming Africa positively. To paint the underdog picture of Mutesi, Crothers situates her firmly in Dark Continent profile:

> Phiona Mutesi is the ultimate underdog. To be African is to be an underdog in the world. To be Ugandan is to be an underdog in Africa. To be from Katwe is to be an underdog in Uganda. To be a girl is to be an underdog in Katwe. (2012, 227)

This statement rides on the dichotomous variable that pits two opposites: white and black, good and bad, light and darkness, rich and poor, where Africa is painted as the antithesis of the West with everything negative attributed to Africa and everything positive to the West. The statement lacks any rationale other than Dark Continent presuppositions.

In reality, Uganda does not even make it to the list of the ten poorest countries in Africa in terms of GDP and is far better than most African countries on many indices like Conflict, Fragility, Instability, Environment, Freedoms and Rights, Gender, Governance and Socio-economics. International Peace Institute's *Global Observatory* has 30 different indices for measuring countries around the world, topmost and bottom most. Uganda does not appear at the bottom (*Global Observatory* 2012). This imputed underdog status of Uganda does not reflect the progress Uganda has made since the Amin years, the Luwero Triangle war and the LRA insurgency, yet this kind of negative portrayal of Uganda continues to shape world perception of the country. It does not historicise why Uganda, a promising country at independence in 1962 on a par with Malaysia and Singapore, became a wreck in the 1970s. Katwe becomes the epitome of poverty and social disintegration in Africa, yet Katwe is not even the largest slum in Kampala. That honour would go to Kisenyi slum neighbouring Katwe. Others even give that position to Namwongo! Crothers's native home in 'idyllic New Canaan, Connecticut', already separated from Mutesi's by 7 000 miles, with its night lanterns, is compared with Katwe, the overflow 'sewage lagoon' of Kampala City where burning garbage lights the night sky (Walters 2016). While women may be considered underdogs in Katwe, that also needs to be put in context because Uganda has made tremendous strides in the empowerment of women. Yearly examination results at all levels in Uganda now put girls way above boys owing to

affirmative action deployed by the NRM government in the late 1980s to promote girl child education. Ugandan women are demeaned and discriminated against far less than women elsewhere in the world. The extreme underdog story of the written Phiona Mutesi therefore makes for a miraculous exception, yet it also leaves the image of Africa, Uganda, and Katwe seriously damaged. There is no doubt about the author's sincerity and his great contribution in telling Mutesi's story which has opened many doors for Mutesi and, indeed, for Uganda's film industry. Nonetheless, the default Dark Continent mastertext of colonial narratology about Africa is plainly discernible here.

Faith in God is a fundamental part of Mutesi's and Katende's story and is captured vividly in the biography. Nair's screen adaptation deploys Kamilla Elliott's trumping model to eliminate the element of religious faith completely. In the film, the chess training takes place at Agape Church basically as a central venue; we see the blue van with the Sports Outreach Ministry's written on its side in white paint, but there is no connection to faith. Katende became a born-again Christian at a moment of deep crisis in his life before he joined Good News Football Club and, later, Miracle Football Club which became his steppingstone to Sports Outreach Institute (Crothers 2012, 45–53). The Christian conversion of Harriet Nakku, Mutesi's mother, and how it set the atmosphere of prayer and faith in the upbringing of her children, is also clearly highlighted (2012, 75). The book cites several instances of Mutesi praying. In the screen rendition, Chapter 6 of the book — the '*muzungu*' or 'white person' chapter which provides a central religious context to the stories of Katende and Mutesi — is excised in its entirety, which removes not just the faith element but also the 'white' connection to Mutesi's story. The 'Muzungu in Phiona's story' (2012, 99) as Crothers put it, is Russ Carr, the founder of Sports Outreach Institute. He started the ministry to reach out to disadvantaged children around the world after a visit to Latin America. There are other important *muzungus* in Mutesi's story: Rodney Suddith, who became the Director of Sports Outreach Institute and often visited Uganda and Mutesi; and, most importantly, Norm and Tricia Popp, who set up the Andrew Popp Memorial scholarship in memory of their son Andrew who committed suicide. Phiona received $75 yearly for her tuition from the scholarship. The Popps found great fulfilment and healing in helping underprivileged children like Phiona without patronising them. As they put it, 'Hey, we lost our son and the life that he doesn't have, we'd like you to have. We'd like you to live with hope' (2012, 116).

Although it shares qualities of the white saviour story, the book's story shows the internationalisation of human suffering and courage in confronting common human problems. It is an important part of Phiona's story that needs highlighting. Crothers, however, projects the 'white salvation' tone in his book. To Crothers, 'without Muzungu there would be no coach Robert and without coach Robert, Phiona Mutesi

would likely still be selling maize from a saucepan on her head, assuming there was still a Phiona at all' (2012, 99). This predestinationist statement leaves no room for the possibility of other interventions, local or international, that could have helped Phiona and Robert succeed. Certainly, a director cannot adapt everything in the progenitor texts; decisions have to be made on what to highlight to build a specific story and perspective. Katende feels that omitting the faith metanarrative helped to give the film greater appeal across faiths (Katende 2016). But this trumping model of adaptation creates the false impression that this was purely an African story with total African agency, therefore denying honour to the important American characters in Phiona and Robert's life. Silencing the element of faith in God and the transatlantic collaboration in the rise of Phiona and her coach also creates the fallacy of heroic self-transcendence. These changes, however, seem consistent with Nair's concern to make a positive and Afrocentric film.

Katwe as a character

The film is consistently committed to recreating Mutesi's story in a manner that affirms Africa, yet the residual Dark Continent representational template still lingers. Nowhere is this more evident than in the relentless focus on poverty in Katwe. As cited earlier, director Nair is an activist filmmaker, and did not set out to make a Dark Continent movie; she is very passionate about African stories being told properly, preferably by Africans. In fact, Sean Bobbitt, the Director of Photography, enjoyed his work in Katwe immensely. He says,

> Katwe is the visual heart of the film…As a news and documentary cameraman, I've been faced with drab poverty in slums all over the world, but Katwe is different. There is vibrancy there, a density of colour and a unique pallet. The contrast of the red earth with the yellows and blues they use to paint the buildings, the density of humanity, the bright elements of clothing, the constant movement. Everywhere we pointed the camera, there was something of beauty. (*Nation* [Online], November 1, 2016)

The film graphically captures the sights, sounds, and rhythm of Katwe. Because Katwe is presented as a world with all its beauty and ugliness, we celebrate the efforts of Robert Katende and Mutesi to dream of a better world. The poverty is not romanticised but taken for granted as a reality that does not degrade the humanity of its subjects, but rather, as a challenge that they overcome. 'We don't feel sorry for these financially underprivileged folks — we root for them' (Burke and Craig 2016). Aaron Leaf seconds this view that *Queen of Katwe* does not present 'generic Africa' but that Katwe is 'both a well-rounded and difficult character…The Katwe of the film has an incredible energy.' He advances further that *Queen of Katwe* also avoids

the trap of 'respectability politics' which attempts to sugarcoat the difficult realities of Africa to fit the 'Africa Rising' template — the 'ability to balance what's good about a place with what is difficult about it' (Leaf 2016). This is true as far as Katwe's sense of community and its challenges are concerned. It stands on its own; a place of vital energy yet it needs the rest of the city for affirmation; a site that replicates the living essentials of other human communities that support skill, competition and success. But the viewer of the film who knows nothing about Uganda or Kampala cannot tell from the film that there is more to Uganda, Kampala and even Katwe than the dilapidated matchbox houses, filth and despair.

The Dark Continent still lingers

This well-shot, passionately directed, well-acted, inspirational film nevertheless still consolidates the Dark Continent metaphor of Africa. The intense focus on Katwe slum deletes the greater Kampala area from the viewer's awareness. The director observes of the film: 'It is about time that we saw an honest version of the place we live in' (*Nation* [Online], November 1, 2016). But the director herself lives in a beautiful mansion, one of numerous villas that fill Kampala's mushrooming suburbia. The really honest take would be to show Kampala in all its poverty and wealth. Muritha Mutiga takes exception to the film's focus on the slum which he says plays on the old stereotype of Africa as the land of poverty. He had hoped the film with a heavy black cast would portray Kampala in a more nuanced way than a movie with such a conventional Western focalisation: 'Kampala is not just a landscape of misery. It is also home to perhaps the most vibrant entertainment scene in East Africa and a people that are among the most optimistic and charming you will see' (*Nation* [Online], October 16, 2016). He argues further that the large majority of Hollywood films set in the United States, for instance, conveniently evade the poverty of inner cities and focus on the sunny side of things and urban beauty. The representation of Africa on the other hand stands in complete contrast where the focus falls on urban poverty, if the urban area is highlighted at all given the obsession with Africa's wildlife. He concludes that '*Queen of Katwe* merely joins the long list of films that portray the continent in grim terms' (*Nation* [Online], October 16, 2016). While *Queen of Katwe* raises serious issues about individuality and community and success, and tells a great inspirational story, by focusing on Katwe without balancing it with more of the better side of Kampala, it creates the impression for the viewer who is seeing Kampala for the first time that the whole city is a slum. True, the film does visit the elite Kings College Buddo and the office of Minister Aloysius Kyazze (Phillip Luswata), but these sequences are very brief. We see Katende in Kyazze's office without the journey which would have captured the modernist architecture of Kampala. Besides, as Mutiga observes, the

ride to Buddo does not highlight the beautiful side of Kampala. The camera conveys the slummy side only all the way. Granted, much of the story unfolds in Katwe and its narrative goals require the slum to highlight Phiona's struggles and her victories, but some drama also occurs in the affluent areas of Kampala. Depth of field, wide angles, high-angled and panning shots especially, tell the tale of gross poverty in Katwe everywhere the camera turns, while the Kampala and Buddo shots are mostly interior shots that miss the opportunity to show the modern skyline of Kampala the way, for instance, *The Last King of Scotland* does.

Certainly, life in Katwe can be harsher than portrayed in the film, but that's not the complete story of Katwe either; there are progressive aspects to Katwe. In the film, Katwe is constructed as the world's worst slum, with the most extreme manifestation of poverty; yet it is one of the most enterprising locations in Kampala, and is part slum and part integrated into modern Kampala. It is the fabrication capital of Uganda where some of the most ingenious innovations take place. Hundreds of small-scale metal and steel fabricators manufacture anything from tea kettles to car parts (Najjuma 2006). In 2015, while *Queen of Katwe* was being shot in Katwe, Gillian Nantume reports that that 'Made in Katwe' taxis were being assembled in Katwe and that their car fabrications were being monitored by the government through the National Road Safety Council (NRSC), which inspects and licences their works (*Daily Monitor* [Online], October 27, 2015). Emma Ikwap also calls Katwe, 'home of African ingenuity' a location known for 'metal craftsmen, technicians, fabricators, carpenters, car assemblers, and all kinds of businesses' (*Daily Monitor* [Online], July 10, 2013).

Katwe comprises two zones: Katwe 1, which is quite developed, and Katwe 2 comprising the slum and residential areas. Katwe is also the gossip capital of Uganda, hence the term 'Radio Katwe', meaning unconfirmed news sources. As a slum with dire poverty, Katwe 2 has rampant crime, drug addiction, burglary and prostitution, according to residents interviewed, but these have been on the decrease, unlike the portrayal in the book and film where these negative elements constitute the permanent identity of Katwe (*Daily Monitor* [Online], July 10, 2013). Katwe 1 houses big businesses and institutions. By 2013, many commercial banks in Uganda were headquartered in Katwe including Equity Bank and Finance Trust Bank. Other big banks have branches in Katwe: Stanbic Bank, Barclays Bank, FINCA Uganda Limited and Pride Microfinance Limited. Warid Telecom (the second biggest telecom company in Uganda), and Quality Chemicals (the largest pharmaceutical company in Uganda) are headquartered in Katwe. Clearly the Katwe of Tim Crothers's book and Mira Nair's film does not represent the whole of Katwe and the diverse stories and predicaments of its residents. For example, by 2013, flats had been built in Katwe, sanitation improved, trenches paved with concrete and all feeder

roads tarmacked — thanks to funding from the Belgian Development Agency (*Daily Monitor* [Online], July 10, 2013). While the Katwe of *Queen of Katwe* the book and film will be frozen in time as the epitome of African poverty and desperation, the Katwe of Kampala City is continually transforming. In 2016, President Yoweri Museveni donated 275 million Uganda shillings worth of tools and another 100 million Uganda shillings cash to Katwe Welders' Savings and Credit Co-Operative Society (SACCOS) where he also commissioned the 'welding, drilling and grinding machines' to be used by groups of metal fabricators. He praised the people of Katwe for being organised (PPU 2016).

Given the intensely negative portrayal of Katwe in the novel *Queen of Katwe* and the focused portrayal of poverty and desperation in the film, I asked Phiona Mutesi if she never had any fond memories of Katwe when she was growing up as a child. Her response was:

> We always had fun…Katwe is a good place. I say Katwe is a good place because most of the time we were not with our parents…we were just free in the environment. We used to dance, we made up dancing groups and we had to compete…it was hard to do something stupid because everyone knew us. That was really good…that sense of community. (Mutesi 2016)

Phiona is now a college student at Northwest University in the USA and misses the community and social network of Katwe where everyone in the neighbourhood knows everyone else:

> So, I grew up in this community whereby if I'd done something somewhere, my mom would know. And before her knowing, I would be punished by another parent somewhere. And it's OK. So it's like a community thing that is there. *And I never appreciated it until I came here* — and I'm, like, 'Everyone lives by themselves. Like, people don't care. (O'Neill 2019; my emphasis).

While Katwe may look entirely terrible on the outside, it has a sense of community that Phiona can't find in America — at least, not yet. In Crothers' book and Nair's film, the brighter side of Katwe is silenced to highlight the darker side that makes Phiona's underdog story the spotlight. While this selective representation of Katwe drives the ultimate underdog story plot, it also consolidates the Dark Continent mastertext of Hollywood-Africa films and continues to negatively inform perceptions about Africa. Shooting the film on location hardly alters the ideological structure of the production; a framework that continues from America's understanding of Africa. Siegfried Kracauer argues that national cinemas stereotype other cultures informed by their perception of 'Others' (1948, 70). Consequently, a well-intentioned director like Mira Nair may do rigorous research, shoot on location, and engage plenty of African actors, but that effort does not offset in this case the

embedded Dark Continent qualities of all Hollywood productions about Africa. The film – despite all its positives – reflects Kracauer view articulated some 70 years ago.

Phiona rising!

Queen of Katwe is a story of faith and hope against insurmountable odds. One need not indulge in research to enumerate the dark clouds looming over Africa: political and economic instability, dictatorships, corruption, ecological disasters, and a catalogue of diseases and famine, among others. However, these matters do not tell the 'complete story' of Africa as the dominant Western media has projected for a century. There are also stories of hope, cultural rejuvenation, technological advancement, and increasing foreign investments in Africa that are given little attention. *Queen of Katwe* is an African story premised on that narrative of hope — a narrative that is replicating itself in the lives of young people in Uganda, Africa and around the world. In October 2018, Gloria Nansubuga, another girl from Katwe and a product of Robert Katende's Sports Outreach Ministry, went on to become a Woman's Candidate Master and eventually Woman FIDE Master at the World Chess Olympiad in Batumi Georgia, surpassing Phiona Mutesi's achievement by one rank and elevating herself to the third-highest rank in World Chess. This is quite a phenomenal achievement for a child from Katwe. Gloria Nansubuga was four years old when Robert Katende assigned her to teach nine-year-old Phiona Mutesi chess.

While the backdrop of Phiona Mutesi's story is extreme poverty, deprivation, hunger and daily struggle for survival, the real story dramatizes her successfully overcoming these negative forces to become an African hero and, indeed, a chess inspiration for youth all over the world. In 2018, Phiona Mutesi led the Northwest University Chess team to victory in the Pan-American Intercollegiate Chess Championship. She is a global celebrity and associates with sports, film, financial and media personalities like Garry Kasparov, Mira Nair, Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey, among many others. Robert Katende's chess vision has meanwhile expanded widely throughout Uganda, Africa, North America and the Middle East, obviously boosted by the *Queen of Katwe* film. He is also a globally sought-after inspirational speaker. Like I shared with Phiona Mutesi and her coach Robert Katende, the title of both the film and book should have been *Queen from Katwe* not *Queen of Katwe* because she is indeed the Chess Queen for millions around the world (Dokotum 2016). In this sense, *Queen of Katwe* can be read as an Afro-optimist film which largely departs from the colonial mastertext to tell a story of hope, in spite of the notable residues of Dark Continent narratology in its romanticisation of poverty.

Notes
1   Definition accessed at https://afrooptimism.wordpress.com

11

Afrofuturism

So let's just bury that notion that movies about black characters don't sell.
– Clarence Page

The Tate Museum defines Afrofuturism as 'a cultural aesthetic that combines science-fiction, history and fantasy to explore the African American experience and aims to connect those from the black diaspora with their forgotten African ancestry' ("Afrofuturism…"). According to Kodwo Eshun, Afrofuturism 'studies the appeals that black artists, musicians, critics and writers have made to the future, in moments where any future was made difficult to imagine' (2003, 294). Ryan Coogler's 2018 film *Black Panther* dramatically illustrates these social phenomena and for many, defines the term. The film draws upon a forgotten African history and the perception of that history as defined by all the central tropes discussed in this book. Science fiction speculates about the future from a perspective of the present, and the present in the representation of Africa remains replete with the legacy of colonialism and its fantasies about the Dark Continent. Part of that speculation envisions a future triumph over this past through the comic book imaginary of the super-heroic victory of good over evil. *Black Panther* charts an epic journey, from a mystical past rooted in the power of nature through an enslaved and violent diaspora, through a rich diversity of social cultures, through an imagined amalgam of nature resources and native ingenuity to a final victory for the human race, courtesy of African wealth, innovation, compassion and benevolence. This book would therefore be incomplete without discussing *Black Panther*, Disney's most talked-about Afrofuturist cinematic block buster of 2018, a screen adaptation of several superhero books by Marvel Comics. *Black Panther* received a bumper harvest of nominations and awards including seven Oscar nominations and three wins — for music, costume design and production design.

The Black Panther character created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in 1966 was incarnated onto the screen by African American director, Ryan Coogler. Almost the entire cast was black and it featured an African soundtrack. As an Afrofuturist film, *Black Panther* is part of the battle of black countermemory waged through science fiction, which Eshun calls an example of 'cybernetic futurism…that talks to things

that haven't happened yet…oscillating between anticipation and determinism' (2003, 291). The film creates counterfutures of Africa devoid of the classical evocations of the Dark Continent template of ignorance, poverty, war, diseases, cannibalism, and so on, which are those products of the colonial imaginary reinforced by the brutality of transatlantic slavery, colonial alienation, dislocation and loss. In the film, Wakanda is an African country that is uncolonised and self-determined, with a unique pristine culture, massive wealth and ultimate superpower technological advancement mediated by African epistemology. The country pursues an economic policy of isolationism and shuns globalisation to protect itself from corruption and exploitation. As science fiction, *Black Panther* constitutes a forum for evaluating Africa's present and calling for reparations for the stolen past in order to produce a desired future.

Synopsis

After the assassination of his father, King T'Çhaka, his first-born son and heir, T'Challa, returns home to lead Wakanda, the secluded and technologically advanced East African nation made rich by vibranium, a rare and powerful metal that came from the heavens in the form of a meteor. His authority is soon challenged in ritual combat, first by M'Baku of the Jabari Tribe and then by his hardened American cousin brother, Erik Stephen (N'Jadaka) whose nickname 'Killmonger' comes from the atrocities he committed while in a US black-ops unit. Killmonger defeats and seemingly kills T'Çhalla and assumes the throne and Wakanda's military might and wealth to use in his planned liberation of black people worldwide. Just as he is launching an aerial attack on the enemies of black people around the world, T'Çhalla returns, teams up with M'Baku, CIA agent, Everett K. Ross and members of the Dora Milaje, the all-women Wakandan commando unit, to prevent Wakanda from being dragged into a global war. T'Çhalla kills his cousin in the final battle but learns a lesson from Killmonger's black-liberation philosophy and vows to avenge his father's betrayal by offering Wakanda's wealth and technology to benefit the entire world.

Black Panther portrays Wakanda as the most civilised, affluent, and technologically advanced nation on earth, an African country never colonised and shielded from the world of colonial extraction and globalisation through a holographic camouflage. Powered by vibranium, Wakanda has magnetic levitation trains and teleoperated self-driving cars; the king flies the Royal Talon Airship, the Dora Milaje carry sonic spears powerful enough to stop a tank; in fact, General Okoye considers guns very primitive. King T'Çhalla wears a nanotechnology suit with vibranium-powered 'kimono' wrist blasters and sound absorbent boots and carries electromagnetic pulse discs that can stop enemy convoys; the army has armoured rhinos. The Afrofuturism

of this film establishes these phenomena as part of its theoretical premise that 'challenges traditional representations of the future world, setting it in conjunction with African and black culture' (Murray 2018).

African setting

The trope of Africa as a monolithic space of primitive people and exotic animals in colonial representations is replaced by a geologically specific Wakanda. In different Marvel Comics it is situated on the map of Africa as a fictitious landlocked country whose location varies. At times, close to South Africa, it is generally located in equatorial Africa, broadly surrounded by Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, and immediately surrounded by fictional countries like Azania (an actual name for South Africa), Nairobia and Canaan (*Marvel Atlas* #2 and *Captain America: Civil War* 2016). In the *Black Panther* film, Wakanda is situated in the great Lakes region between Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and the North Kivu region east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (*Black Panther* 2018). Marvel Comics writer, Ta-Nehisi Coates, situates Wakanda north of Lake Victoria sharing a border with Niganda to the southwest, Azania and Canaan to the West and Mohanda to the north (Coates 2015b) — placing it largely in Uganda. Indeed, Ugandans took the game further when they flipped the circulating WhatsApp discussion question, 'What do you know about Wakanda?' to read, 'What do you know about Uganda', with many saying that Wakanda should have been named Waganda after the Baganda tribe, the largest ethnic group in Uganda. The setting for the Golden City as a confluence of waters in Wakanda recalls the islands of Lake Bunyonyi in western Uganda. Indeed, Anthony Izama (2018) says some of the aerial shots of the mountain landscape and backdrop of Wakanda were filmed in the Rwenzori Mountain ranges in Uganda as well as in the Bwindi Impenetrable Rain Forest (renowned for Uganda's mountain gorillas).

Black Panther moves away from the Hollywood proclivity of treating Africa as one homogeneous country. Rather than the nameless and stereotyped settings in Hollywood films, the film establishes Wakanda as a real, ethnically diverse country in East Africa, inhabited by numerous tribes and cultures: the Golden Tribe, the Border Tribe, the River Tribe, the Mining Tribe, the Merchant Tribe and the Jabari Tribe. Each of these tribes wears a unique costume, lives in a place with different architecture and carries unique military weaponry and equipment. Costumes in *Black Panther* include hi-tech futuristic suits as well as familiar African attire from across the continent. Veteran African American costume designer Ruth E. Carter, who was nominated for an Academy Award for *Malcolm X* (1992), oversaw the film's costume design. Known for creating 'visions of black identity', she considers

her work part of a cultural movement. According to an article in the *New Yorker* (September 10, 2018), Carter, owing to her costume design, 'has been lauded as one of the essential visual storytellers of Afrofuturism.' African designers like Nigeria's Walé Oyéjidé participated in making costumes for *Black Panther*. In the film, the costume designers blend a futuristic quality with traditional, tribally specific costumes. Carters used ancient African history to develop her costume concepts. She recreates the colours and symbolism of Maasai garments and Ndebele women's jewellery (*New Yorker*, September 10, 2018). According to Lynsey Chutel and Yom Kazeem, the Maasai tribe of Kenya and Tanzania and the Himba tribe of northern Namibia dress the Mining Tribe in the film (2018). The ceremonial raffia skirts of the Jabari tribe derive from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria, the Dagon tribe of Mali and the Bari tribe of southern Sudan. The Merchant Tribe is modelled on the transnational Tuareg tribe of the Sahara with purple as the central motif of their attire. The Royal Tribe wears the black motif and panther-themed designs (*Quartz Africa*, February 19, 2018).

The same mix of cultural specificity and multicultural diversity adds to a futuristic amalgam of past and present in the film's use of language. The native language of Wakanda is ïsiXhosa, a South African language spoken by the Xhosa people from whom former President Nelson Mandela hailed. This linguistic empowerment makes Wakanda even more real to the African audience. The deployment and elevation of ïsiXhosa in *Black Panther* as pre-eminent over English is itself an element of Afrofuturism. African agency is shown in the film through the re-appropriation of ïsiXhosa and the simultaneous demotion of the English language to second place, as well as the insistence by Chadwick Boseman, the lead actor who plays the character T'Çhalla, that all the African characters use an African-accented English (Murray 2018). Like the use of costuming in the film, its range of languages designates an Africa rich in native diversity.

All-black cast

Superhero roles in Hollywood historically have been the preserve of white actors whose personas and prowess have incarnated the white visual iconic characteristic of Euro-American imaginaries of the world. A few black actors have played superhero roles in Hollywood: Halle Berry as Storm in *X-men* (2000), Will Smith in the title role of *Hancock* (2008), Samuel Jackson as Nick Fury in eight Marvel Cinematic Universe films, and Chadwick Boseman as Black Panther in *Captain America: Civil War* (2016). *Black Panther* not only stars black actors in both superhero and heroine roles but is the first superhero movie to star a largely all-black cast from Africa and the African diaspora: American actors and actresses Chadwick Boseman

as T'Challa/Black Panther, Michael B. Jordan as Erik Killmonger, Forest Whitaker as Zuri, Sterling K. Brown as N'Jobu and Angela Evelyn Bassett as Ramonda; Trinbagonian American actor Winston Duke as M'Baku; Kenyan-Mexican actor Lupita Nyong'o as Nakia; Zimbabwean-American actress and playwright Danai Jekesai Gurira as the powerful General Okoye; Daniel Kaluuya, British actor of Ugandan descent as W'Kabi; Guyanese-born British actress, Letitia Wright as Shuri; Brazilian actress Nabiyah Be as Linda; Ugandan-German actress Florence Kasumba as Ayo; veteran South African actor John Kani as T'Çhaka; and Atandwa Kani (son of John Kani) as the younger King T'Çhaka, among others. There are only two main white characters: British actor Andrew Serkis as Ulysses Klaue and British actor and comedian Martin Freeman as CIA agent Everett K. Ross. This visual empowerment of black people in *Black Panther* through casting has been celebrated around the world. African American columnist Alan Jenkins says Hollywood has been at the forefront of exporting harmful stereotypes about black people, disseminating 'a pernicious inventory of racial tropes, stereotypes and distortions.' Jenkins summarised the significance of the film's innovative casting when he said, 'after years of exporting harmful depictions of Black men and women to the world, Hollywood has an export of which we can all be proud' (*Hollywood Reporter*, February 23, 2018).

Moreover, this casting is also important in its representation of historical images that project futuristic strength and cultivate pride in the present. Gemma Mullin observes that the elite, all-women commando unit in *Black Panther*, the Dora Milaje, is modelled on the Ahosi of ancient Dahomey, also referred to as the *Dahomey Amazons*. King Houegbadja of Dahomey created this all women regiment in the 19th century and made them an effective fighting machine unequalled by men. Calling themselves N'Nonmiton [Ono mi ton] (our mothers in Fon or Gu languages of West Africa), their lives were dedicated to military training, protecting the King and taking on the bloodiest battles. They were known for their strength, ruthlessness and courage, and their willingness to fight to the death. These qualities are exemplified by the exceptional speed, courage and agility of General Okoye, the Dora Milaje Commander in *Black Panther*. Numbering between a thousand and six thousand strong, the regiment was disbanded in the early-20th century due to French colonial expansion (*The Sun*, February 20, 2018). *Black Panther* shows African women empowerment at its best, with strong, intelligent women fully motivated to act decisively. The representation of strong fighting women in the movie also challenges the age-old concept of the super-sexy in the Marvel Comic Books and in Hollywood. The women in the movie are fully dressed in tribal attire and military fatigues, have shaved heads, and walk bare foot even as they are portrayed as beautiful. As costume designer Carter put it, women 'can look like warriors and look great. They can have no hair, they can show no skin and be sexy' (Lang 2018).

Black Panther movie and Black Panther Party

One of the central interests of Afrofuturism as a genre is its investigations of the diaspora of Africans in the United States as well as the violence against this diaspora occasioned by slavery. In particular, the film develops this theme in the association of its title and its central character with the name of the black militant party, the Black Panther Party. Coogler's *Black Panther* is loaded with political paratexts relating to the Black Panther Party and the larger relationship between continental Africans and their African Americans cousins. The Black Panther movement was a product of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement with its 'demand for the integration of African Americans into mainstream American culture' (Ongiri 2018). The iconography of the black panther image was aggressively centred around the idea of self-defence. Black Panther Party co-founder Huey Newton explained its symbol best: 'The nature of the panther is that he never attacks. But if anyone attacks him or backs him into a corner, the panther comes up to wipe that aggressor or that attacker out, absolutely, resolutely, wholly, thoroughly, and completely' (cited in Ongiri 2018). This stance resonates with the superpower military might of Wakanda whose futuristic hypersonic weapon systems reflect a future of superior strength within a culture of violence and oppression. They are used to protect the people, wealth and cultural values of Wakanda from external aggression as opposed to colonial adventures or messianic quests to liberate other lands.

These politics also implicitly underlay the early comic book representations of black heroism. Black Panther was the first black superhero in the Marvel Universe and the first African superhero. Black Panther first appeared in 1966 in *Fantastic Four* #52 and became an *Avenger* in 1968. It inspired other black superheroes like the Falcon in *Captain America* #117 (1969), Marvel's first African American superhero (Ongiri 2018); Mal Duncan, African American hero in DC's *Teen Titans* (1970), and DC's first black superhero, the Black Racer, in Kirby's series *New Gods #1* (1971); and Storm, the first black superheroine in mainstream comics in *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 (1975). *The Day of the Man-Ape*, a 1972 reprint of the *Jungle Book* (which from the 1950s carried all the hard-core Dark Continent tropologies of the Tarzan universe) attempted to decentre the negative imaging of Africa. Although the comic book largely invoked 'the problematic visual thematics' of Tarzanist imaginaries of Africa, it was in many ways a revolutionary leap towards more positive representation of Africa (Ongiri 2018). But the comic series that influenced Coogler's film most is McGregor's master narrative *Panther's Rage* (1974) which pitted against each other a complex array of characters with different but legitimate claims to Wakanda. Among them in the film are Black Panther himself, African American character Killmonger (the diaspora son of Wakanda), and Panther's African American girlfriend,

Monica Lynne (Lupita Nyong'o as Nakia). The fallout between Black Panther and Killmonger in the comic book echoes the politics of the 1960s Black Panther Party. The debate over whether to consolidate Wakanda's military might for self-preservation or for the liberation of oppressed black people all over the world is incarnated in the film adaptation. This conflict reflects the power struggle at the heart of the Panthers between Huey Newton, who with Bobby Seal founded the Black Panther Party in 1966, and Leroy Eldridge Cleaver, one of the early leaders of the Panthers who was Minister of Information and Head of the International Division. Newton encouraged internal self-preservation while Cleaver championed internationalisation of the armed struggle. Other minor connections between the film and the Party include director Ryan Coogler's hometown Oakland, California being the birthplace of the Black Panther Party, and the Party iconography used in the film's publicity.

Indictment of colonialism

At the heart of the *Black Panther* movie is the question of what Africa might have looked like if it had escaped colonialism, the slave trade, the divide-and-rule strategies of the colonialists, the frustration of its technological advancement and progress, and the looting of its natural resources. Aside from all its Marvel Comics representations of crime, evil and superheroes, *Black Panther* turns the old stereotypical Hollywood depictions of Africa inside out, and reverses their values. It restores what is African to a position of knowing, as opposed to an inscrutability to be 'discovered', to a place of authority as opposed to a place to be captured and enslaved, to a place of developed wealth as opposed to a land of raw materials to be mined and exported to the Western metropolis for eventual re-entry into Africa as expensive value-added products. Its people enjoy a tradition of nobility and royalty as opposed to ignorance and savagery; they are a source of light and knowledge as opposed to the frightening forces of the 'heart of darkness'.

The great white hunter who adventured into darkest Africa to find fortune, romance, and self-worth becomes the mild-mannered, diminutive even effeminate officer of the CIA Everett K. Ross (Martin Freeman) referred to derogatively as 'Coloniser'. The mysterious, quaint, infantile natives of classical Dark Continent Euro-American imaginaries emerge as a fully civilized people with symbiotic and magical links to the power of nature. The film's natives replay pageantry of mythic rituals and traditions of royal authority. The ignorant and primitive savages of Tarzan's day here have developed a society with scientific and technological acumen of the highest level on earth. Eshun notes that 'The notion of black secret technology allows Afrofuturism to reach a point of speculative acceleration' (2003, 295). Vibranium represents a natural resource beyond the riches of diamonds and minerals to become the agent for accelerated technological advancement in Wakanda. Instead of a

frenzied mass of masked cannibalistic pagans, we see worshipful people loyal to the claims of tradition and responsibility and honour. We see a mature society structured around values of royal succession, social redemption and religious resurrection.

The legacy of their uncolonised past and present stands in sharp contrast to the continuing debasement of the African diaspora elsewhere in the world still suffering from the bonds of slavery. Their marginalisation dramatizes even more Wakanda's pristine uncolonised freedom, preserved culture, military technology and prowess. The hatred in the soul of the American brother, Erik Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan), grows from the ghettos of Oakland and the memory of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. As Amiri Baraka put it in his poem "Transbluesency", 'At the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean there's a railroad made of human bones. Black ivory. Black ivory.' At the end, a wounded Killmonger prefers to join his resisting ancestors at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean than stay alive as T'Challa's slave. The beauty and majesty of Africa contrasts sharply with the ugliness of North America's big-city ghettoes and racial violence. The enslavement of blacks and women in the larger world sharply outlines the powerful brotherhood of warriors and the commanding sisterhood of women guardians in this African culture of light. Unlike the Western mythos of Amazonian women who rule in strong singularity, this African culture embraces diversities of age, gender and race. The resources of the people of Wakanda reflect and enlarge the strength of vibranium. Here, this wealth of the land, the strength of its people and the power of its technology turn the old colonial quest for King Solomon's Mines and Eldorado into the already achieved African civilisation. The attempted quest by the white treasure hunter Ulysses Klaue is foiled and utterly frustrated. The power of Wakanda's traditions, its resources, and its technology to transform the world develops not as the result of colonial conquest and exploitation but as a gift from the African people. As Eshun observes, 'Afrofuturism may be characterised as a programme for recovering the histories of counterfutures created in a century hostile to Afro-diasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within current political dispensation may be undertaken' (Eshun 2003, 301). It is in defying the dystopian vision of Africa consolidated by colonial imaginaries of Africa that *Black Panther* emerges as the quintessential Afrofuturist film.

Not yet *Uhuru*!

Veteran Kenyan politician Jaramogi Ajuma Oginga Odinga (1911–1994) wrote his autobiography titled, *Not Yet Uhuru* (1967) to underscore the fact that the politically independent nation of Kenya was not yet truly independent. *Black Panther* cannot help but consolidate some Dark Continent tropes and negative representations of
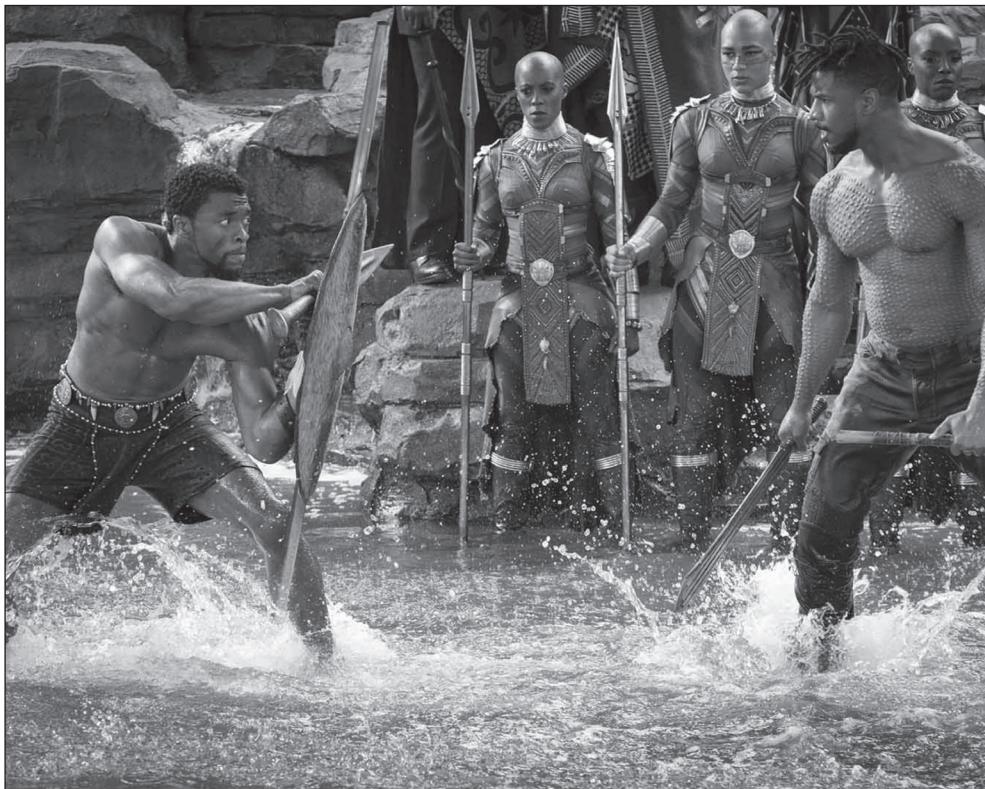
Plate 7. The deadly ritual combat between Killmonger and T'Challa.

Africa explored in this book; the film, nevertheless, exports a stronger, more positive, indeed more self-confident narrative of Africa than those earlier portrayals. Key among the Dark Continent elements is the exoticisation of Africa. Although the film does not posit the Western mythos of jungle darkness, Wakanda is portrayed as rooted in mystical, pantheistic forces merging human, nature and animal. The dead exist as the spiritual presence of tradition and advice for the present society. The brutal ritual combat for the throne between T'Çhalla and M'Baku and later with Killmonger provides thrilling fight sequences witnessed with trepidation by the cream of Wakandan society recycles the trope of Africans as savage and barbaric but this ritual combat energy also underlies Wakandan self-determinism and a regulated transfer of power. The howling of the Jabari tribe led by M'Baku evokes animalistic savagery. M'Baku's threat that he will feed Queen Ramonda's entourage to his howling 'wolf' children carries a veiled reference to cannibalism, although he later jokes that they are all vegetarians.

While the film celebrates African costumes, there is a clear exoticisation in the dressing, body painting, scarification, and in the barefoot uniforming of the Dora

Milaje. Equally evident in the film is black-on-black violence which is built around the estrangement of African American character, Killmonger. As one blogger put it, 'Portraying Killmonger as demented does not merely smear radicalism. It also recycles racist themes of black corruption and immorality' ("I have a problem with Black Panther"). This violence is also seen when Killmonger eliminates his lover, Linda (Nabiyah Be) — aka Lady Nightshade or Deadly Nightshade in the progenitor comic book series — when Klaue uses her as a human shield. Mpho Matheolane (2018) argues that African American character Tilda Johnson, whose name was changed to Linda in *Black Panther*, plays a much more significant role in the Marvel Comics as a genius supervillain and should not have been relegated to an insignificant role and disposed of so unceremoniously by her African American lover. These dimensions of the film derive as much from the sexist and racist cultures of contemporary America as they do from colonialist representations of Africa. Tilda Johnson's violent death at the hand of Killmonger seems to reiterate the violent relationship between African American men and women in Hollywood films, yet the relationship between the African man Wakabi and his wife Okoye is portrayed with real respect (Matheolane 2018). Linda joins the long list of 'disposable darkies' earlier discussed in this book. Christopher Lebron (2018) takes exception to *Black Panther*'s projection of Killmonger as the ultimate evil character, but the depiction of the trope of inner-city gangsterism derives again less from Dark Continent representations of Africa than from the racism of contemporary America.

Similarly, the depiction of the white CIA Agent Everett Ross (Martin Freeman) as a kind of hero who helps save Wakanda (Lebron 2018) underscores the familiar white saviour complex in Hollywood-Africa films. It also represents 'a grotesque twist' given the unpardonable role of the CIA in propping up dictatorships in Africa and overthrowing many legitimate African governments ("I have a problem with Black Panther"). The tragic end in which T'Çhalla kills his cousin Killmonger parallels King T'Çhaka's killing of his brother (Killmonger's father) N'Jobu and again consolidates the trope of black-on-black violence. Lebron sees this as another racist trope which portrays 'the fractured black family as a microcosm of the black community's inability to get it together' (Lebron 2018). Ironically, the film has been vilified for exaggerating its representation of Africans as virtuous and noble at the expense of the image of African Americans as violent and demented.

Black Panther excels in its favourable representation of Africa and debunks the racist notion that movies by black producers don't sell in the West or around the world. That success in the end emerges from a liberation of the film from many of the colonialist depictions of Africa. The Dark Continent has become America, and Wakanda offers salvation from the ghettoes of this modern Heart of Darkness.

Conclusion

This book set out to establish the invention, perfection, manifestations, consolidation and contestations of the Dark Continent myth in Western literature and film from the late 19th to the end of the first two decades of the 21st century through the reticulation of written and cinematic media from British colonialism to the neocolonial hegemony of the United States. Hollywood itself is understood in this book to mean a dominant classical model of film production developed and perfected in the United States but that transcends the United States to cover Euro-American and other Western productions. Consequently, American, Canadian, British, German, Italian, French and even South African productions are used in this book to illustrate how they all share the Dark Continent mastertext of depicting an Africa invented in the age of empire. The packaging of Hollywood's Africa films has changed form from the early classical colonial model, through the neoclassical and New Wave Hollywood-Africa models, to the more positive Africa rising Afro-optimist and Afrofuturist films. In his book *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o puts the Africa of the Western gaze into three categories. They are worth highlighting in this conclusion because they provide a succinct summary of Hollywood's engagement with Africa.

The first is 'Africa of the European hunter after profit' (Ngũgĩ 1993, 132) which focuses on exploitation of Africa's natural resources; the second, 'Africa for the European hunter after pleasure…the tourist' (133) which is basically 'pristine' Africa frozen in time for the colonial gaze; and the third, an Africa that he considers 'the most dangerous Africa…This is the Africa in European fiction' (133). Hollywood's engagement with Africa unifies all three of Ngũgĩ's categories, which is why it is so damaging to African culture. The Dark Continent tropes of Africa are themselves cultural products packaged for Western consumption. The display of African bodies, animals and landscapes for the voyeuristic pleasure of the Hollywood audience satisfies a craving for the exotic. These productions reflect not the reality of continental Africa but the Euro-American imaginary of Africa. Thus, extra animals were flown into Africa to increase the exotic flair of earlier classical Hollywood-Africa films. Africans are made to enact ways of life that are nonexistent on the continent. Discussing *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1980), a neoclassical Tarzanist South African film in his documentary, *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980), John Marshall observes that the main character, N!xau Kganna, for instance, was not as director Jamie Uys claimed a 'Bushman' who actually lived as a hunter, but a decent school cook when

he was cast for the role (cited in Gugler, 2003, 74). In fact, N!xau was earning about 300 rand a month from his duties at the school' (Davis, 1996, 90). There are actually no hunter-gatherers in South Africa. Educated and sophisticated African leaders like Charles Taylor are depicted as illiterate to create an image of a stunted continent with stunted leaders.

Ngũgĩ's notion of the third Africa of European fiction is incarnated on screen through the cinematic realisation of colonial literary texts. This is manifested through overtly derogatory colonialist representations in the classical mode of Hollywood-Africa adaptation. In the more intricate neoclassical model of colonial nostalgia, the cinematic apparatus creates a hyperreality that mass produces and consolidates these Dark Continent images of Africa. Classical and neoclassical Hollywood-Africa films, best represented by *King Solomon's Mines* and *White Hunter Black Heart*, do not attempt to conceal their colonialist template. New Wave Hollywood-Africa films, on the other hand, tend to be more sophisticated. Indeed, there is much to appreciate in these films, including their deployment of African actors in serious roles, engagement with serious social issues, and transcultural collaboration in casting and overall production. *The Last King of Scotland*, for example, is quite ironical because this colonialist production is able to communicate to Ugandans and to celebrate Uganda, owing to important production factors such location shooting in Kampala, familiar Ugandan actors and engagement with Ugandan languages, history and contemporary politics. It best illustrates what Ezra and Rowden have called 'the changing shape of mainstream American cinema' (2010, 1) owing to its hybridity of performers, content and form. Part of the irony worth mentioning here is that because of the production factors noted above, the film cannot communicate as richly and in such a nuanced manner with the mainstream Western audiences for which it is actually intended.

Overall, all the films discussed in this book recycle the Dark Continent myth in one way or another. Notably, however, in three of these productions, the central characters are African: the African superhero in *Invictus*, the supervillain in *Last King*, and the so-called 'Ordinary Man' in *Hotel Rwanda*. But the films show what happens when all three are thrust into the Hollywood neocolonial foundry: the Dark Continent mastertext extracts the African superhero Mandela and makes him a universal symbol of goodness while trumping South African history; the supervillain Idi Amin becomes the monstrous symbol of African savagery, as seen through the eyes of a young white man (although his dark image is redeemed a little by the sensitive and reverential performance by Forest Whitaker); and the 'Ordinary Man' Rusesabagina is transformed from a fictional to a legendary historical character imbued with Western heroic stature while the narratives of many real heroes of the Rwandan genocide are silenced in the Western media. White salvation is evident in *Blood Diamond*, and even more vividly so in *Tears of the Sun* through the imaginary

rescue missions in which US Navy SEALs swoop into Yolingo village in Nigeria. They create a positive image of the US military that consolidates its neo-messianic hegemony in saving helpless and pitiable Africans. In *Blood Diamond,* the white hero willingly gives up his life — an allusion to the propitiatory death of Christ — in order to give Solomon Vandy a life of luxury in London. In both films we see the consolidation of a colonial power structure of Western saviour and African victims.

Ridley Scott's racist portrayal of Africans may not be 'Just another day in Hollywood' as Callahan (2014) puts it. The director responds that 'the question doesn't even come up' when his whitewashing of black history in ancient Egypt is challenged. Scott and like-minded defenders of racism take the century-long Hollywood whitewashing of African history and heritage as normal. This myopic way of depicting Africans is now challenged through audience racism fatigue, alternative narratives of Africa, Afro-optimist and Afrofuturist models of representing Africa based on changing demographics in Europe and the United States, greater tolerance of diversity and celebration of multiculturalism, and increasing scientific revelations about Africa's past and present. Increased travel has also opened up modern-day Africa to Westerners who are beginning to appreciate the wonders of a continent that has been concealed from the outside world, like the fictional Wakanda by a metaphorical holographic sheet of misrepresentation, through which the West only saw what they wanted to see of Africa based on its distorted idea of the continent; a view that upholds the feeling of superiority of empire and US hegemony. The cyber uprising against Scott's overt racism in *Exodus: Gods and Kings* shows the increasing unease of the more ideologically conscious Western audiences with these debasing stereotypes.

Africa rising narratives synergise with the second scramble for Africa which in spite of some insidious investments by old and new players is this time less about colonial extraction and more about partnership with Africa to unlock its full potential. *Queen of Katwe*, despite its pronounced emphasis on poverty, provides a unique story of hope that is now inspiring Africa and the rest of the world. *Black Panther* uses the Afrofuturist model to project an image of Africa that is a technological marvel ahead of other nations. The power of *Black Panther* lies not only in its prophetic depiction of Africa but also in its dismissal of racist notions that films with black leads do not perform well at the box office. Perhaps future Hollywood-Africa films will borrow a leaf from *Black Panther* and abandon racial segregation in casting black actors, as well as embrace depictions of Africa that are more progressive. *Black Panther* has proven that films about progressive Africa, without wild animals and with an all-black cast, sell just as well as other popular Western films.

During a paper presentation on Hollywood's representation of Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2011, a member of the audience exclaimed,

'…of course Hollywood's representation of black people is terrible. So what?' My response then and no*w* is that much is at stake in these representations. Darrow Miller reminds us that 'ideas have consequences' and stories form 'basic cognitive orientation' or 'mental infrastructure' which in turn affects the destiny of entire groups of people for prosperity or for poverty (1998, 34–35). Adichie talks about the 'danger of a single story' and the buffet approach to telling Africa's story that focuses on the Dark Continent menu which 'robs people of dignity', creates negative stereotypes, and 'makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult' (2011). The Dark Continent colonial mastertext imputes darkness, poverty and backwardness to Africa while attributing light, civilisation and progress to the West. By consolidating this image over a 100-year period, building on the achievements of the colonial novel, tales of explorers and missionaries, Hollywood as the soft power of hegemony has contributed immensely to the devaluation of Africa. In the same way, uplifting films like *Queen of Katwe* and *Black Panther* help mitigate this negative programming by highlighting progressive stories of Africa which in turn feed into the 'Africa rising' effort.

Another telling seminar encounter was at the University of the Western Cape where I made a presentation on *King Solomon's Mines.* Someone in the audience argued that textual analysis should not be racialised; that Rider Haggard was actually celebrating Zulu-ness and that his book is just Macbeth repackaged. This book argues that Haggard's packaging of the Dark Continent mythos hardly celebrates either the Zulu or Shakespeare but reflects a larger cultural itinerary that degrades Africans. During another conference presentation, a member of the audience asked why I couldn't focus on Ousmane Sembene's films (the subject of my doctoral dissertation) instead of my wasting time on Hollywood. This book argues the need to confront the damaging depictions of Africa that feed into the historical cycles of inferiority, poverty and marginalisation. The critical exercise of confronting Hollywood's misrepresentation of Africa is urgent; but equally urgent is the need for Africans on the continent and in the diaspora in partnership with progressive forces in the West to produce alternative images of Africa that can tell our own stories and combat these damaging misrepresentations. Theory and practice of cinema must combine forces to respond to racist depictions of Africans in Hollywood.

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