

The Natives Are Still Restless: Black Representation in Whitened Africa from Tarzan to Mandela

Jungle adventures and colonial dramas of Sub-Saharan Africa are often regarded as vehicles for extreme racial stereotyping, but were also one of the few sources of film employment open to black actors in Hollywood and Britain (cf. Regester 1997: 104). With narratives frequently centred on a white saviour figure, these films commonly mark black male characters as either primitive natives (noble or savage) or Westernised ‘boys’ sufficiently trained and domesticated to serve as the hero’s loyal followers. At the same time, the black roles in these sub-genres refract debates on concepts of civilisation, honour, superstition, justice and political manoeuvring within a wider context of white colonialism versus native self-determination. Focusing initially on the *Tarzan* series, I consider the extent to which these films exhibit variation or progression from, or even subversion of, the jungle stereotypes established by *Tarzan of the Apes* (1918), the first screen version, and *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), which re-launched the character for the sound era. I also examine films based on historical events, such as the Haiti rebellion of enslaved Africans, the Zulu Wars, the Mau Mau uprising and the anti-apartheid struggle, and the figure of the black male protagonist as agent of resistance and transformation in both colonial and post-colonial Africa.

From the start, American and European cinema showed little interest in the real Africa, depicting the continent as a monolithic entity rather than a group of culturally and ethnically diverse nation states, many of them under colonial rule (cf. Clark Hine et al.: 15). The history of Africa was disregarded, whether Ethiopia’s 2000-year-old civilisation,

the ancient Kingdom of Ghana or Zululand's rise as a powerful nation in the nineteenth century (cf. Hope Franklin: 14; Clark Hine et al.: 9). On another level, Africa had never been the series of isolated self-supporting communities shown on the screen, rather, as historian John Hope Franklin stated, 'an area that had far-flung interests based on agriculture, industry, and commerce' (19; cf. Clark Hine et al.: 9). Cinema also downplayed or ignored the least palatable aspects of colonialism, past and present, such as the mass enslavement of young, healthy West Africans, which had disastrous long-term effects on the remaining population, exacerbated by European-sponsored in-fighting (cf. Hope Franklin: 44; Clark Hine et al.: 4). By the late nineteenth century Africa had become important to the industrialised Western world, in terms of resources, raw materials, labour and markets; it was regarded by the European colonial powers—Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Belgium—as territory to be claimed, divided equitably and exploited (cf. Hope Franklin: 295–6). The long-established cultures, interests and wishes of the native populations were of little relevance to this project unless they disrupted its smooth operation. As Kenneth M. Cameron notes, European and American concepts of Sub-Saharan Africa were standardised along reductive lines that refracted colonial-imperialist ideology and prevalent racial theories, resulting in a popular imagery encapsulated as jungle, darkness and savagery (11; cf. Nesteby: 115). This depiction sat alongside and complemented the colonial myth of the white man as bringer of aid and order, solver of problems and all-round benefactor (cf. Dyer 1997: 156–7). Counter-representations of Africa did exist in mainstream media but were rare and risked controversy. Louis Chude-Sokei cites the Bert Williams–George Walker stage show *Abyssinia* (1906) for depicting, via comic masquerade and songs, a more respectful if hardly authentic 'Africa' not marked by trauma or shame (12).

Gerald R. Butters, Jr. describes the Africa shown in early American and British films as foreboding, exotic, superstitious, violent, amoral and primitive, qualities that justified and, I would add, necessitated white imperialist intervention (2002: 51; cf. Nesteby: 117; Dyer 1997: 165). Titles such as *The Terrors of the Jungle* (1913) give a fair indication of the standard approach. In D.W. Griffith's *The Zulu's Heart* (1908), a native turns against his fellow tribesmen to save a Boer family during an uprising, endorsing the superiority of white culture, embodied by the domestic unit, as the natural and proper order of things. Butters, Jr. argues

that, in the minds of white viewers, these representations legitimated the US segregation and subjugation of African Americans, who supposedly carried the attributes of the Dark Continent in their blood (2002: 51; cf. Jackson II: 29; Everett: 249), a notion invoked in *The Emperor Jones* (1933) and as late as *Law of the Jungle* (1942), albeit in a throwaway gag. While this critique apparently assumes an ingrained conflation of African and African American, on and off-screen, the recurrent figure of the white jungle hero exemplified by Tarzan seemed in line with prevailing racial ideology. Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan, who made his literary debut in 1912, drew on nineteenth-century exploration, anthropology, safaris and conservationism (cf. Cripps 1993: 124), not to mention large chunks of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894). Tarzan is in essence a displaced British aristocrat, whose strength and nobility of mind and body are inherited Anglo-Saxon traits rather than qualities bestowed by his jungle upbringing and environment (cf. Cameron: 33, 34; Berglund: 78, 81). Tarzan lives in harmony with the jungle and (most) of its inhabitants, human and animal, but also stands apart from it by virtue of this natural superiority (cf. Dyer 1997: 156, 157; Berglund: 79; Cripps 1993: 124–5). Discussing the first novel, *Tarzan of the Apes*, Chude-Sokei argues that the natives are displaced African Americans, their freedom (from white control?) equated with reversion to 'wildness and savagery' (131). By extension, Tarzan's lethal use of a lasso has connotations of (justified?) lynching (131). It should however be noted that Burroughs's depiction of Tarzan and indigenous Africans can stress similarity as much as difference. In *The Return of Tarzan* (1913), the second in the series, Tarzan regards native warrior Busuli as 'a fellow-man' (135). They save each other from a lion attack and jointly slay the beast, cementing their friendship (135–6). White civilisation, cruel and perfidious, has almost corrupted Tarzan (134–5, 137); Busuli's tribe, the Waziri, projects intelligence and dignity (138). Tarzan comes to see himself as part of this community (144), though skin colour remains an issue (143) and the natives regard Tarzan as supernaturally powerful (146).

Discussing 1920s cinema, Butters, Jr. states that while films featuring African-American characters avoided the Brute stereotype promoted by *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), it transferred readily to Africa, where white fantasies of black male sexuality could be both expressed and contained in culturally acceptable form (2002: 180; cf. Pines: 77). Anna Everett posits 1930s Hollywood product as exporting American racism on a global scale, citing the Tarzan films for their consistent contrast

and opposition of the genetically superior white hero with the essentially savage black native (247, 249). Thomas Cripps sees this strategic racial schism as overstated, arguing that Tarzan films have tended to play on the disparity and hostility between nature and civilisation rather than white and black, thereby downplaying more contentious racial aspects, the natives often reduced to 'atmosphere furniture' (1993: 125; cf. J. Koyinde Vaughan 1957: 211). All these aspects have figured over a century of Tarzan films, from *Tarzan of the Apes* to *The Legend of Tarzan* (2016), displaying both variety and, to an extent, progression, though the sensibilities and motives of black characters are rarely explored in depth. Natives may offer local or specialist knowledge, yet character traits and function are often limited to servility and loyalty (porters), or aggression and destructiveness (savages) (cf. Nesteby: 134, 137; Dyer 1997: 157; Gugler: 2). From this perspective, the regular casting of African Americans in native roles, as opposed to blackface Caucasians, from *Tarzan of the Apes* onwards ensured a source of black employment rather than any guarantee of non-stereotypical characters. Occasional appearances by white actors playing Africans, as in *Tarzan and the Golden Lion* (1927) and *Tarzan the Tiger* (1929), underlined Hollywood's racial insensitivity, though this practice appears to have ceased after *Tarzan the Ape Man*.

In the extant version of *Tarzan of the Apes*, heavily truncated from its premiere length, there are no native characters as such and their representation is neutral at best and pointedly negative in masculine terms. Black men pose a sexual threat to white women, depicted more graphically than Gus's pursuit of Flora three years earlier. James R. Nesteby suggests the kidnapping of Jane, Tarzan's love interest, invokes white concerns over miscegenation, which he links to the US race riots of 1919 (138). While this reading is overly reductive, the film highlights images of Jane in the grip of a large lustful native, initiated by a POV shot where he reaches towards the camera, the woman and, by implication, the viewer. An extended medium shot has him laughing at Jane and her feeble resistance (Fig. 2.1), rapidly supplanted by Tarzan's superior strength that delivers a lethal retributive punch. The native as sexual menace would be toned down by the sound era then eliminated altogether for several decades, partly due to more restrictive industry censorship but also in line with the series' evolution into family-oriented entertainment.

The film serial *The Son of Tarzan* (1920) shows natives as reliable or at least useful, as with Tarzan's Westernised guide. The most



Fig. 2.1 *Tarzan of the Apes* (1918)

interesting depiction of African males occurs in ‘Chapter Thirteen: Double-Cross’, where a conversation between two men, highlighted in medium-long shot, gives the first indication that these are intelligent, reasoning people with lives, thoughts and objectives separate from the white bosses’ control. *Adventures of Tarzan* (1921), another serial, is part-based on Burroughs’s *The Return of Tarzan* and retains the Waziri tribe in reduced form, eliminating Busuli altogether. Nevertheless, they are shown as a benevolent, non-aggressive people. Their chief defies European-led Arab slavers, stressed by his upright posture and dynamic gestures. He clasps arms with Tarzan, who becomes an ally. Rather than battle the slavers singlehanded, or with animal support, Tarzan leads the Waziri in a counterattack, an interracial collective endeavour highlighted visually as they fight side by side.

From this perspective, *Tarzan the Ape Man*, released a decade later, marks no great advance on either *The Son of Tarzan* or *Adventures of Tarzan* and is in some ways retrogressive. The tribal natives are both superstitious and aggressive, while the docile porters' heavy loads force them to adopt stooped, servile postures. The film does offer a named and credited black character, Riano (Ivory Williams), expedition guide and leader of the porters, whose civilised or rather colonised status is reflected in his (broken) English speech and semi-Westernised clothing. Riano's subservience restricts his opportunities for individual agency; he helps save Jane from a cliff fall rather than instigating the rescue, though the image of a black man's hand on a white woman's back would be problematic, not to say censorable, in most other contexts during this era. *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934) features another native foreman, Saidi (Nathan Curry), along similar lines to Riano, though his tribal as opposed to colonial identity is emphasised further with distended earlobes and a lip ring. While Saidi rarely interacts with Tarzan and Jane he is highlighted and, arguably, humanised in several shots that connote both intelligence and a moral sense (Fig. 2.2). He also expresses veiled anti-colonial sentiments, usually the preserve of Tarzan, reminding his ivory-fixated bosses that their bearers require food. In the climactic sequence, with the white party besieged by cannibals, Saidi is shown in isolation making the decision to retrieve a vital ammunition box, without seeking permission from the bwanas. His off-screen death, surrounded by lions, at least connotes a white recognition of his courage and worth as a man, rather than just another hired 'boy'.

Tarzan Escapes (1936) offers a wily native chief who outwits the British villain and does not recognise white entitlement or supremacy in his territory. In *Tarzan's New York Adventure* (1942), the hero apologises to a uniformed native guard after grabbing his rifle. Tarzan's dislike of firearms is an established trait, though previous offenders were white and the film equivocates over the man's ethnicity being a further source of reflexive pre-emptive action. His acknowledgement of the guard as a fellow man deserving of courtesy is unusual for the series at this point and anticipates later developments. It is notable that, after *Tarzan's New York Adventure*, the series tended to marginalise African natives to the point of invisibility. The switch in studio, from MGM to RKO, may have been a factor but a more likely reason is America's entry into World War

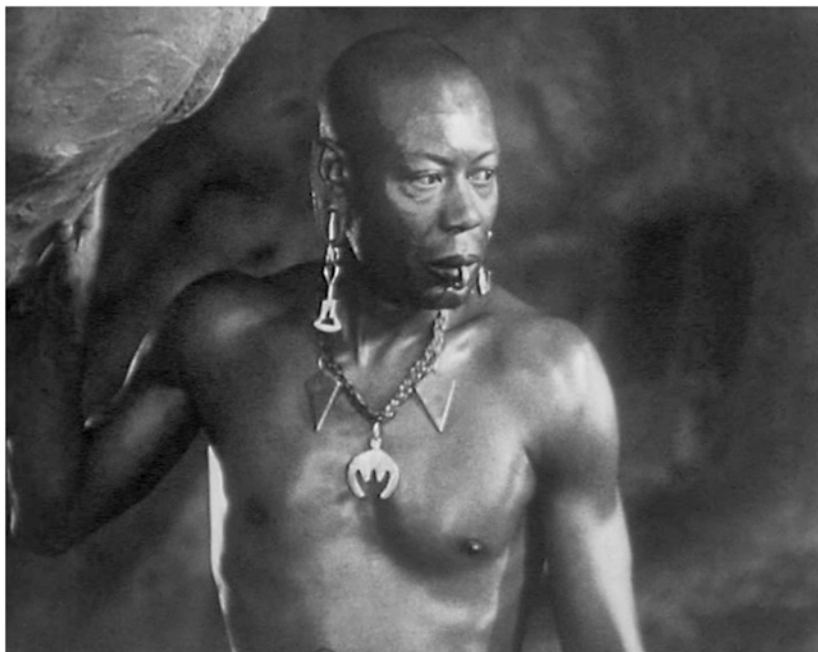


Fig. 2.2 *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934)

II and a government-sponsored initiative to promote national and by extension racial unity (see Chap. 4).

Whatever their racial politics or agendas, the *Tarzan* series and other jungle adventures were popular with African-American audiences during the 1930s and 1940s (cf. Nesteby: 155). Discussing *Trader Horn* (1931), critic Loren Miller noted, in a 1934 piece for NAACP journal *The Crisis*, how both working- and middle-class black patrons applauded when the white heroine was saved from a black villain; he concluded that Hollywood artifice had normalised and naturalised the triumph of white virtue over black vice to the extent that African Americans would effectively cheer their own denigration (cf. Knight 2001: 391; Everett: 266). James Baldwin argued that, growing up during the 1930s, heroes in life and movies were always white, placing young African Americans in ‘an ignorance which an entire republic had deliberately inculcated’ (18, 29;

cf. Gerstner 2011: 15). Moreover, it has been suggested that black children identified with Tarzan rather than his native allies or antagonists (cf. Murray: xiii; Manchel 2013: 420). This could all be criticised as anecdotal evidence that denies individual agency and response, yet there seems little reason to question the popularity of *Tarzan* films among a section of African-American filmgoers, especially in the younger age groups (cf. Petty: 114). In his autobiography Woody Strode, a supporting player in *Tarzan's Fight for Life* (1958) and *Tarzan's Three Challenges* (1963), affirmed his teenage enthusiasm for the series (Strode and Young: 42).

It is notable that *Afro American's* coverage of *Tarzan Escapes*, likely drawn verbatim from MGM publicity, lauds Tarzan as 'the idol of untold millions of kiddies of every race, color and creed' (16 January 1937, p. 11), endorsing the jungle lord as an appropriate black hero without comment or criticism. The natives in this film and *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939) are described in terms of their wildness, hostility and predilection for torture yet such problematic representation goes unchallenged (16 January 1937, p. 11; 22 July 1939, p. 10). This approach persisted into the 1950s, as seen in reportage of *Tarzan and the She-Devil* (22 May 1954, p. 18), the *Jungle Jim* adventure *Killer Ape* (21 August 1954, p. 16), *Cannibal Attack* (15 March 1955, p. 6) and *Tarzan's Hidden Jungle* (17 December 1955, p. 18). The last of these includes a picture of Tarzan hoisting an aggressive native onto his shoulder, accompanied by the caption 'Tarzan the Mighty – Gordon Scott, the new Tarzan handles a huge jungle warrior as though he were a small child', the native both emasculated and infantilised. *Afro American*, though hardly a radical publication, did not shy away from reporting or protesting media representations it considered insulting to its readership. Perhaps these jungle natives were so far removed from African-American life, on every conceivable level, that there was little or no sense of identification, connection or relevance other than the employment of black actors. It is arguable that even films produced for the African-American market, such as *A Daughter of the Congo* (1930) and *Son of Ingagi* (1940), invoked the same Hollywoodised African conventions and stereotypes as mainstream studio fare (cf. Cameron: 110–1). *Son of Ingagi* depicts the native African male as a murderous simian brute, the actor's make-up evocative of minstrelsy.

Cameron identifies fundamental distinctions between the British and American perspectives on Africa: the UK had a sizeable stake in the continent, the USA did not; the USA had a substantial black population,

the UK did not (186). He speculates that jungle–savage imagery was both insulting and ridiculous to Britain’s African colonies; moreover, the risk of offence to colonial populations was a factor in British film depictions of the continent (187). It is worth noting, however, that *Tarzan* films and similar jungle adventures were widely shown in Britain as suitable family fare from 1932 onwards, albeit with regular censor cuts for violence. Thus imagery and ideas perceived as inflammatory to black colonial subjects were acceptable for white British citizens of all ages, the rightness or wrongness of these representations not at issue. As Cameron concedes, while British films on Africa may seem less racist than US products, the structure and intent behind them was not necessarily dissimilar (88). These issues are well illustrated by the films of Paul Robeson, an African-American singer-actor who achieved unprecedented international stardom in the concert hall and theatre. Despite this success, he made few films, most of them in Britain, proclaiming himself dissatisfied and offended by the stereotyped Hollywood roles on offer. Running parallel to the 1930s *Tarzan* films, Robeson’s African-themed roles provide an interesting contrast, not least in the highlighting of a black star, cast as both African and African-American protagonists. In terms of personal interest and commitment, Robeson was an anti-imperialist who campaigned for African liberation, co-founding the US-based Council on African Affairs in 1937 and serving as its chairman (cf. Weaver Jr. 1978: 217–9).

Robeson’s first British film, *Sanders of the River* (1935), casts him as Bosambo, a petty thief who achieves legitimacy, on colonial terms, through serving the eponymous commissioner and by extension the Empire. In itself this depiction is barely progressive, in only the most qualified terms, yet the character has more interesting facets. A self-appointed chief, proving his worth in combat, Bosambo is also literate and wily, playing to white promotion of Christianity when expedient. He has a social and emotional life, even sexuality and a sexual partner (legitimised through marriage and fatherhood), attributes conspicuously denied Sanders (cf. Cameron: 100; Dyer 2004: 94). The men save each other’s lives and their handshakes suggest a mutual respect, even friendship. While this is a compromised positive portrayal of African masculinity, it is also a concession to black manhood few films were willing to make at the time. According to Anna Everett, Robeson’s performance was praised by sections of the African-American press (213) who perhaps saw something fundamentally different in his portrayal of a moral yet



Fig. 2.3 *King Solomon's Mines* (1937)

unashamedly ambitious, sensual and proud black man. In *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), set in 1881, Robeson plays Umbopa, a mysterious native guide whose visual dominance of expedition leader Allan Quartermain (Fig. 2.3) acquires an ethical-political dimension as he declines to serve as the white man's employee. Umbopa's voice echoes through mountainous terrain, the land speaking back to him, its rightful ruler, suggesting a harmony with his environment the white interlopers can never experience. Black-white cooperation and interdependence is acknowledged (cf. Dyer 2004: 93) and visually affirmed with another handshake. Nevertheless, Umbopa, flanked by his warriors, oversees and witnesses the British departure from his territory.

Robeson became associated with what Cameron terms a new black archetype, the Westernised worldly-wise black man who travels to Africa (96). *Song of Freedom* (1936) casts him as John Zinga, an African of indeterminate origin who lives in England, in a racially harmonious

dockside environment, yet feels out of place and yearns for his unknown homeland. Gaining fame as a singer, Zinga learns he is rightful king of Casanga, an island off the west coast of Africa, revealed as the stereotyped backward community that shuns the white man's benefits. Clare Corbould notes a refraction of Garveyesque neo-colonialism, Zinga bringing aid and progress to his ancestral people and ultimately regarded by the natives as one of them (276). While Zinga claims immediate kinship (and kingship), his white European safari clothes stand in contrast to the natives' loincloths. Some regard him as a white man's lackey, with the same sense of entitlement and dominion. He shows few qualms over taking another man's hut, looking on as the occupant is forcibly evicted. Zinga brings modern medicine and sanitation, marked or stigmatised as the white man's gift, yet his confrontation with the local witchdoctor does not draw immediate support. Only the titular song, half-known yet elusive since childhood, saves him from execution and enables his acceptance and elevation to recognised leadership.

Song of Freedom frames black masculine identity in positive yet problematic terms. Richard Dyer cites the Harlem Renaissance belief, by no means universal among the movement, that black feeling and sensuousness could be combined with white intellect and technology in forms that brought mutual benefit (2004: 73). By contrast, white appreciation of black qualities was not concerned with racial amalgam, seeking rather to preserve an 'unsullied' blackness (74). Both conceptions of racial difference are contentious, not least in terms of ethnically exclusive attributes. *Song of Freedom* attempts a reconciliation of synthesis and separation as embodied by Zinga, the anglicised African who retains his ancestral instincts and allegiance. He adopts and adapts aspects of white culture in order to remake his reclaimed homeland in a form compatible with and reciprocal to the modern Western world. The film struggles to contain the tensions and contradictions inherent to this process, as indicated by the *deus ex machina* climax that resolves the volatile mix of assumptions, agendas, misunderstandings and resentments at work on the island. Dyer argues that *Song of Freedom* lacks an idea or image of African spirituality to complement the depiction of white technology, refracting its wider absence in Western popular culture's notions of the continent (2004: 89), which trivialise and debase 'primitive' belief systems as hostile witchdoctors or *juju* men. The problems of Casanga may be resolved without direct white help (cf. Cameron: 102), yet Zinga is shaped by a British value system he has known since birth (cf. Bogle:

97), as much as a vaguely defined African culture he struggles to understand and articulate. Casanga will rely on Western income from Zinga's singing career, the king and his subjects still dependent on white patronage. Even at the moment of his ancestral validation, the song of freedom is performed in English.

I would argue that *Jericho* (1937) addresses issues raised by *Song of Freedom* in a more coherent fashion. Robeson plays Jericho Jackson, an African-American World War I army corporal who escapes military justice after killing a fellow soldier (by accident), fleeing to a territory in northern Africa. Jackson uses his medical training to serve the natives as a doctor. An integral member of the community, he becomes the man he was meant to be before the white man's war intervened. If the accompanying imagery is conventional, Jackson tending a sick baby, the film extends this idea of the black man as healer into a wider context of intertribal cooperation, harmony and unification. A paternal figure to his fellow African-American soldiers, Jackson placed humanity and brotherhood above military orders, qualities he retains in Africa even when obliged to serve as a military strategist and leader.

Jericho navigates some thematic stumbling blocks in its closing stages, bearing hints of post-production anxiety over a (black) protagonist going unpunished for a capital crime, despite his redemptive actions. Confronted by his former (white) captain, Jackson is ready to face US Army justice, yet this subplot amounts to nothing, superseded by reaffirmation of familial and tribal bliss. As the film stands, Africa is a place of freedom from oppression, in line with much African-American cultural production of the era, contrasted with the racist USA (cf. Dyer 2004: 100). The African American becomes Africanised, enhancing rather than displacing his pre-existing qualities, such as an affinity for jazz, a pre-eminent black musical form of the era. Like Bosambo, Jackson has a normal, domesticated emotional life, acquiring a wife and son (cf. Cameron: 105), without any need for white sanction. He is no longer bound by the constraints of whiteness, legal or otherwise (cf. Cameron: 105), his captain's abrupt departure a tacit acknowledgement that this white man and by extension the white world have no further claim on Jackson. There are obvious limitations to Robeson's depictions of African-centred masculinity. Images of the studio-bound star in front of back-projected footage of actual Africans induce a separation and dissociation that refract his literal if not representational inauthenticity in roles not marked as African American. Nevertheless, Ronald L. Jackson II rightly cites Robeson as a

figure of resistance to what he terms the ‘negative scripting of the Black body’ (43) all too prevalent in English-language cinema both during the star’s era and to this day.

After World War II, Africa assumed a new level of international importance with the formation of the United Nations in 1945. The US government sought to improve domestic racial policy as a means of winning support from African states in furtherance of its anti-communist stance (cf. Hope Franklin: 449; Clark Hine et al.: 504). Many African colonies gained independence during the period 1950–1964 (cf. Cameron: 39; Hall 2002: 113). In 1957 Ghana became the first former African colony to join the UN, underlining the fundamental transformations effected as European colonialism gradually lost its grip on the continent (cf. Hope Franklin: 462). Hope Franklin argued that the independence of the sub-saharan nations greatly affected the global significance of the US race issue and the consequent move towards racial equality (462). The impact of these developments on film representations of Africa and colonialism was not immediately obvious. Reviewing *The African Queen* (1952), British critic Dilys Powell summed up popular Western depictions of the continent as ‘tribal square-dancing, elephant shampoos and pythons under the bed’, suggesting an approach both formulaic and trivial (101). The film, set in 1914, offered little progression from the notion that Africa was a European possession to be contested by the colonial powers (cf. Cameron: 72), its inhabitants childlike innocents, obedient lackeys or absent altogether.

While the *Tarzan* series continued through the 1950s, it faced modest competition from *Bomba the Jungle Boy* (1949) and its sequels. The early *Bomba* films coincided with a short-lived cycle of ‘race pictures’ (*Home of the Brave*, 1949; *Lost Boundaries*, 1949; *Pinky*, 1949; *Intruder in the Dust*, 1949; *No Way Out*, 1950) which attempted sympathetic depictions of African Americans and their problems while also acknowledging, to varying degrees, the persistence of ingrained, institutionalised white racism. The *Bomba* series had no such agenda, yet it departs from the *Tarzan* films in featuring a regular black character, Eli, played by Robert ‘Smoki’ Whitfield, who appears in seven of the twelve films. Employed by a British official, Eli rarely questions white orders and attitudes, though in *Safari Drums* (1953) he withholds vital information from a suspect white party. He is however an expert tracker, negotiator and translator, entrusted with escorting white women and guarding white male prisoners. In both *African Treasure* (1952) and *The Golden Idol*

(1954), Eli initiates and executes the rescue of his boss from criminals, white and Arab, who underestimate native intelligence and resourcefulness. Eli's relationship with the semi-feral Bomba is tentative, though he fixes the latter's spear in *Bomba on Panther Island* (1949), offering skills the young white hero seems to lack despite his years in the jungle. In *Safari Drums*, Bomba places a hand on Eli's shoulder, a gesture accompanied by mutual declaration of friendship. *The Hidden City* (1950) casts Whitfield as a new character, Hadji, who complements and expands on Eli in several respects. His opinion is openly respected and heeded by his white boss and they dress in similar safari fashion, connoting cross-racial harmony. Hadji shows clear moral sense, aiding the rescue of a kidnapped girl and shooting down Arab villains, a lethal yet justified pro-activity rarely afforded black characters of this period in any type of Hollywood film.

The *Tarzan* series revived its interest in Africa as location filming on the continent, initially second unit, became both more feasible and a recognised box-office asset. *Tarzan's Hidden Jungle* (1955) reintroduces the English-speaking native overseer. In an unusual scene, the latter acts as if to thrash a white nurse who berates him for animal cruelty. The film cuts to a native medical orderly in a white coat, pointing a rifle at the man and giving a verbal warning. The connotations of education, training, gallantry and interracial accord are emphasised by a UN sign above the orderly's head, which also serves to distance him from the white-civilised 'boys' of the colonial era. This moment marks a modest progressive departure for the series, though the nurse quickly commandeers the weapon. It seems the virtuous black man may intervene to save the white woman but must cede to her the object of white technology and power. The cautious agenda of positive black representation is also found in a native chief, friend to Tarzan, who is open to modern ideas and medicine, while maintaining traditional tribal beliefs and customs. *Tarzan's Fight for Life* features another black orderly, Marco, who saves Jane's life when a disturbed native tries to throttle her. This racialised defence of the series' embodiment of white womanhood, normally the preserve of Tarzan, is both justified and unprecedented. The film also reconfigures the witchdoctor Futa (James Edwards) as an intelligent, if amoral political strategist, who rejects what he sees as white dominance veiled as beneficence. In an extended scene, Futa contemplates a course of action, the camera tracking with him as he weighs the pro and cons.

If *Tarzan* films of the 1950s exhibited hesitant yet discernible progress in native representation, the 1960s underlined the limitations of the format in terms of racial liberalism, despite events within Africa and civil rights activism in the United States. *Tarzan the Magnificent* (1960) highlights a moral, courageous black man, Tate (Earl Cameron), only to mark him as submissive to the point of absurdity, negating the concept of a self-determining individual whose choices are his own. The series' depictions of Africa, always fantastical, were now uncomfortably out of step with the realities of the era. *Tarzan and the Great River* (1967) demonstrated, five decades on from the first *Tarzan* film, that the harsh truths of an obsolete colonialism remained masked by the emphasis on the strong(er) white body (cf. Dyer 1997: 163).

An interesting *Tarzan* variant of the 1960s is *The Naked Prey* (1966), where an unnamed safari guide, billed only as Man, is forced into flight from, and combat with, a native tribe insulted by his arrogant racist partner. Initially dressed in standard European safari clothes, he is literally stripped of this 'civilised' identity and forced to run naked, with warriors in close pursuit. He strips the loincloth from a dead native, assuming the standard 'lord of the jungle' look. While his physical stamina, fighting prowess and negotiation of terrain put him on par with his pursuers, there is little hint of a Tarzanesque white male superiority. Where Tarzan was often fiercely territorial (if less so by the 1960s), Man makes no claim to any domain, seeking only a safe (white) haven. His running away from the natives and backstabbing of a warrior, depicted as brutal necessities, are out of keeping with the cinematic Tarzan of the era. He also struggles to find food, requiring help from a young native girl. His antagonists, no more or less violent than white men, are socialised and humanised to a significant degree. The natives initially seek only modest tribute in exchange for passage through their land, the leader (Ken Gampu) smiling and extending his hand to begin the transaction. A native mourns a fallen comrade and bears the body home for a funeral service; another stumbles and falters from tiredness, lying on his back. Man escapes the natives only with the last-minute support of white fortifications and armaments. The climactic exchange of salutes between Man and the leader is telling. The former is on his knees, unarmed and exhausted, knowing he has merely survived, not triumphed; the latter is upright, armed and firm of expression, acknowledging the white man's hard-won freedom.

The 1980s revival of the cinematic Tarzan placed him in direct opposition to the African male. *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1981) evokes the rapacious native of the 1918 film, anticipating the regular villainisation of black men in US action cinema of the Reagan era, which promoted body-centred notions of a tough, politicised and implicitly white masculinity (cf. O'Brien: 156–7; Jeffords: 148). Tarzan throws himself onto the Ivory King (Steve Strong) to prevent the latter achieving physical/sexual contact with Jane, the true king of the jungle breaking the black man's neck. Three years later, *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (1984) was received by some as both revisionist and progressive. *Afro American* critic Arthur J. Johnson praised the depiction of natives defending their territory from white invasion, a sequence he found both credible and rare in the cinema (6 April 1984, p. 5). This reading is, however, undercut, at least in visual terms, by the scene where Tarzan avenges the native killing of his adoptive ape mother, his snapping of a hunter's spine evoking the death of the Ivory King.

By contrast, *Tarzan and the Lost City* (1998) reconfigures the cliché of the hostile witchdoctor in unexpected ways. Benevolent shaman Mugambi (Winston Ntshona) is no power-hungry opportunist, but is committed instead to the welfare of his people. He also demonstrates genuine magical powers, summoning Tarzan back from England with a disturbing vision of his threatened jungle home. Mugambi heals the comatose jungle lord after a snake bite, strong black hands tending a limp white arm, and Tarzan acknowledges his dependence on the shaman. Mugambi is also a bulletproof shapeshifter with an entourage of undead warriors, which raises the question of why he needs Tarzan at all. From this perspective, the film is an incisive critique of the white hero's impotence and redundancy. While veiling its socio-political implications with familiar fantasy tropes, *Tarzan and the Lost City* is arguably the most racially progressive, and subversive, instalment since the 1950s.

The Legend of Tarzan features an African-American companion in adventure, George Washington Williams (Samuel L. Jackson), based on a real-life Civil War veteran, politician and historian whose trip to the Belgian Congo exposed the same brutal slavery that he knew back home. On film Williams is visually and aurally distanced from white imperialism, but appreciates that Tarzan, symbol of 'benevolent' colonialism, can be exploited for the anti-slavery cause. Williams leads the fight-back against Belgian forces, freeing the bound and helpless Tarzan, yet barely engages with Africa, uneasy in the jungle environment, or with

its indigenous peoples, who remain reliant on white intervention. He expresses guilt over his role in fighting Native Americans, participating in white-directed genocide, yet the complex racial issues raised by this parallel with the Congo situation are left unexplored. Released the same year, *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) at least depicts a (super) heroic African leader, T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman), aka Black Panther, who both protects his people and gives sanctuary to 'rogue' Avengers, including their emblematic white leader, now a fugitive in his native land.

Alongside the race films and jungle pictures of the late 1940s and early 1950s, Hollywood produced a notable anti-colonial drama, *Lydia Bailey* (1952), set in early nineteenth-century Haiti, formerly the French territory of Saint-Domingue. Inevitably, the film condenses and simplifies the history of the Haitian revolt, which had its origins in the seventeenth century, followed earlier uprisings and was facilitated in part by the French Revolution of 1789 (cf. Hope Franklin: 51, 75–6). It is also arguable that revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture, marginalised in the film, imposed a system of forced labour little different from slavery to equip his army against Napoleonic forces (cf. Hope Franklin: 76). The pre-eminent black masculine presence is King Dick (William Marshall), a former slave turned patriot and soldier. Physically imposing, King Dick is never objectified in terms of bare-chested display, unlike the white hero, and while his eight wives and numerous children evoke notions of 'primitive' or 'excessive' black male sexual prowess (cf. Bogle: 187), these attributes do not define him (cf. Leab: 166). A shrewd tactician and judge of human nature, he exhibits intelligence and integrity while rejecting the anti-white stance of some Haitians as another form of racism. It is notable that potentially inflammatory scenes of King Dick beating up white men are mediated for US audiences by marking these figures as French, while the only character he explicitly kills is a Haitian traitor. If this strategy suggests an element of caution in his depiction, King Dick remains a dominant figure, not least in the closing shot. Elevated above the white lovers as they depart, he raises his club high in response to the hero's wave, standing tall and proud in heroic pose.

Haiti had a particular resonance for many African Americans, especially during the 1920s and 1930s, not only as the first black republic, a symbol of black defiance, a recent victim of American imperialism, but also for its cultural traditions, distorted in mainstream US culture as eroticised primitivism and ritualised barbarism (cf. Brundage: 214; Corbould 2011: 261–2). As portrayed by Marshall, King Dick largely

avoided, or at least questioned, white-made stereotypes, in a populist form at variance with the more self-conscious race pictures. The African-American press regarded both actor and character as groundbreaking figures in black film representation. Writing in *Afro American*, James L. Hicks declared that Marshall had stolen *Lydia Bailey* with his performance (17 May 1952, p. 7). E.B. Rea's review for *Afro American* lauded Marshall as the film's dominant presence while noting that cliché 'primitive passions' were largely absent, the Haitians shown as courageous and clever as they forged a proud independent nation (24 May 1952, p. 24). *Lydia Bailey* was also endorsed or at least utilised by the NAACP (cf. *Afro American*, 22 October 1955, p. 7).

While *Lydia Bailey* was a one-off depiction of black revolt, Kenya's Mau Mau uprising of 1952 inspired several films from America and Britain, not least because, for the latter in particular, it was perceived as an illegitimate challenge to white rule that had been successfully contained. These screen dramatisations routinely ignored the wider socio-political context. There is no mention of the Kenyan African Union party, whose president, Jomo Kenyatta, sought independence through nonviolent means, or that the Mau Mau, drawn largely from the Kikuyu tribe, was a breakaway wing disowned by many former allies. The movement was suppressed in 1956 but this marked the beginning of the end of British control in East Africa (cf. Cameron: 114). The British-produced *Simba* (1955) highlights the white nightmare of Westernised natives turning on their bosses in lethal fashion. If the Mau Mau are beyond reason, controllable only by the white man's bullet, they are countered by Karanja (Earl Cameron), a committed and progressive doctor who feels distrusted by both sides of the racial divide. His only reward, it seems, is white acknowledgement of his humanity and worth as he expires in the arms of the hero and heroine. In *Safari* (1956), visual demonisation of the Mau Mau is balanced by reference to the Masai tribe as their opponents. While the latter appear only briefly, native soldiers are crucial to the final victory. Despite the focus on Mau Mau atrocity, *Safari* gives equal weight to interracial understanding, cooperation and friendship, albeit from a depoliticised US perspective that downplays the British presence.

Something of Value (1957), a big-budget Hollywood production, is a self-consciously 'serious' account of the Mau Mau uprising, underlined by the black-and-white filming, as opposed to the colour associated with sensational African spectacle. The film attempts a balanced racial

perspective, largely through the figure of Kimani wa Karanja (Sidney Poitier), a Kikuyu and childhood friend of the white hero, Peter (Rock Hudson). A two-shot of the young men matches their appearances—barefoot, shirtless—and postures, yet Peter is already integrated into the colonial establishment, accepting white racism as par for the course and standing by passively as Kimani is struck and humiliated. Kimani's subsequent flight evokes slave iconography, caught in a white man's trap and pursued by dogs (hyenas). Peter carries the injured Kimani on his back, a gesture of friendship and compassion, yet also a literal evocation of the white man's burden cliché. Kimani addresses him as *bwana* (master), repudiating the (English) language of friendship he now recognises as meaningless in the colonial context.

While Kimani embodies the native yearning for freedom and land, his morality and perspective are tainted by Mau Mau association. Unable to kill a white female acquaintance, he strikes her reflection instead, denying his part in the murderous campaign yet bound to it in political, visual and symbolic terms. The conflict is eventually reduced to the personal struggle between Kimani and Peter. When events render Kimani insensible to (white) reason he turns on Peter, precipitating his own self-destruction. A low-angle shot places the dying Kimani at the bottom of the frame, in semi-darkness, while Peter stands in upper-mid-frame, illuminated by daylight, holding Kimani's infant son and, by extension, the possibility of future racial harmony.

The less portentous *Beyond Mombassa* (1956) reconfigures the Mau Mau as leopard men cultists led by a white man. This murderous group, infused with religious and civic zeal, is defeated by the natives themselves, the leader engulfed and obliterated in a mass of black forms reclaiming control of their territory and society. Both invoking and inverting tropes of black aggression, the film is unusually progressive for this era, especially in the context of the Mau Mau panic, sidelining the American hero as the country's indigenous inhabitants confront and resolve internal problems largely caused by white interference and fanaticism.

In the realm of period epics, *Zulu* (1964) exhibits a reflective nostalgia for Britain's imperialist past, downplaying jingoism in favour of more nuanced commemoration of a key historical event. The film recreates the 1879 Battle of Rorke's Drift, where a small contingent held off thousands of Zulu warriors. Though featured in silent films, the Zulu nation had received little attention in more recent English-language cinema,

with the exception of *Untamed* (1955), a Hollywood epic set in mid-nineteenth-century Southern Africa. For the most part, the film is a displaced wagon-train Western, with Indians replaced by Zulu marauders, a faceless swarm that spurns white offers of peace. With a nod to evolving civil rights sensibilities, the script marks them as deserters not representative of their race. There is also a good Zulu warrior, the only significant native character, who emerges from the sidelines to save the white hero by killing the white villain, a clear if contentious example of positive black action.

Zulu establishes the power of this independent nation with a prologue outlining the earlier Battle of Isandhlwana, a comprehensive British defeat. An imposing low-angle shot depicts a triumphant warrior holding aloft his shield and a captured British rifle, framed against a clear blue sky and mountain. The Zulu have reclaimed their territory and birthright from colonial intruders, utilising traditional weapons which, invested with fighting spirit and deployed with keen strategy, have vanquished the white man's advanced military technology. An extreme long shot of Impi lined along a hilltop like a natural crest underlines their oneness with the landscape (cf. Hall 2002: 120). Jim Pines reads *Zulu* as refracting the racial conservatism of ostensibly liberal-slanted British filmmaking (78n). This seems to me a limited interpretation that disregards the film's racial complexities and contradictions. An arrogant upper-class officer's reference to 'cowardly blacks' is immediately refuted by a Boer ally who knows the Zulu at first hand (cf. Hall 2002: 121). Their courage is verbally acknowledged mid-battle by a British private, emphasised visually by a long shot filled with dead and dying warriors.

Alongside this sense of respect (cf. Hall 2002: 120; 2005: 7), the British view the Zulu *en masse* as something not quite human, their sound likened to a train, industrial and machinic, in contrast and at variance with their non-technological culture. Though individual warriors are briefly highlighted, they are in essence a choreographed collective. Compared with the gallery of white protagonists, the only Zulu character as such is Chief Cetewayo (Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi) (cf. Hall 2002: 121), who is introduced alongside yet above his white guests at a mass wedding ceremony, visibly amused by their Christian perspective. Having saved a young white woman from a warrior's violent (sexual?) threat, Cetewayo exits the film before the white male leads appear. Their only interaction with Cetewayo is via his Zulu warriors with whom they subsequently engage. Cameron argues that the worth of the white

soldiers is 'defined by the worth of the enemy, a superb if alien opponent' (142). More to the point, the British may hold fast against the Zulu but they cannot defeat them. For all their efforts, the Zulu stand tall on the horizon, in overwhelming numbers that stretch across the wide screen. The British survive because Cetewayo's braves permit it, acknowledging these white men as worthy opponents. A solitary Impi faces the British, raising his shield and weapon, mirroring the opening scene and reaffirming Zulu supremacy, tempered by respect and mercy, a pointed inversion of colonial propaganda.

The belated prequel *Zulu Dawn* (1979) depicts the Battle of Isandhlwana referenced at the start of *Zulu*. Cameron reads the film as showing an industrialised force destroyed by a pre-industrial one (144). The British Army is marked as complacent, its passivity contrasted with Zulu dynamism and action. Senior officers fail to respect Zululand as an independent kingdom or recognise the Impi as a serious military force. Again, Zulu warriors are not characterised, serving rather as embodiments of Cetewayo's military strategy, presented as a fight for land, crops and survival in response to broken British promises. He plants 'captive' natives to mislead the British, playing on assumptions of Zulu inferiority and weakness. These men allow themselves to be tied and beaten, the familiar images of oppressed and bloodied natives now invested with positive empowerment. A repeated image has the camera moving to place a Zulu in close shot as he surveys futile British manoeuvres in the distance. As the film closes, Zulus stroll across the sunset, evoking a conventional cinematic marker of rightful victory and future prosperity. Given the above, I take issue with Cameron's claim that *Zulu* and *Zulu Dawn*, made with South African cooperation, endorse and globalise a national myth of white martyrs versus the black horde (145), an assertion more applicable to *Untamed*. Viewed in terms of narrative rather than film chronology, the colonising white man is shown first as ignorant, arrogant and crushed in defeat, then part-rehabilitated as courageous and resourceful yet still dependent on black clemency.

Western films about post-colonial Africa tend to focus on endemic instability, and the legal and governmental corruption that enables continued exploitation by foreign governments and corporations. In this context, positive or nuanced images of black masculinity are qualified at best, especially in terms of self-determination and politicised leadership. The Italian film *Seduto alla sua destra/Out of Darkness* (1968) is loosely based on Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, killed during the 1961 separatist movement which he opposed. Star Woody Strode saw resistance leader 'Maurice Lalubi', whose country is unnamed, as a composite of various African leaders, countering their image in Western countries as subversive communists and criminals (Manchel 2007: 384; Strode and Young: 247). This progressive agenda is accompanied and, I argue, subsumed by an overtly Christian allegory, rendering Lalubi's fate predictable and, it seems, inevitable with crucifixion imagery taking precedence over political or historical resonance. Promotion for the film's US release in 1971 highlighted the religious parallel with a new title, *Black Jesus*, and sold Lalubi as a Black Power figure in keeping with more militant political attitudes among many African Americans. Word of mouth soon made it clear that the film had little bearing on contemporary black concerns in the USA (cf. *Variety*, 12 April 1972, p. 24; Manchel 2007: 384). *The Mercenaries/Dark of the Sun* (1968), features Ruffo (Jim Brown), a Congolese patriot allied to a white mercenary leader but not sharing his financial motivation. Cool-headed and methodical, Ruffo ignores casual bigotry, seeking to benefit his struggling country. Ed Guerrero cites Ruffo as exemplifying mainstream cinema's reworking of 'imperial narratives and codes of subordination', sacrificing himself for his comrades *à la* Gunga Din (80). This seems to me a partial misreading of the character. Visually elevated above his white buddy, Ruffo describes the latter as a bystander who regards the Congo only as real estate, whereas he sees a chance for democratic revolution, as opposed to the barbaric anarchy of the Simbas.

Shaft in Africa (1973), the third screen outing for the black private eye, was promoted by MGM as the first feature film to be made in Ethiopia, with star Richard Roundtree granted an audience by Emperor Haile Selassie (cf. *Afro American*, 17 February 1973, p. 11). The country serves largely as an exotic backdrop, with no reference to Ethiopia's domestic problems, be they the Eritrean independence movement, declining support for Haile Selassie (due to famine) or the political rise of Mengistu Haile Mariam, who was to be part of a 1974 coup (cf. Wilson 2010: 270–1). The attempt, however spurious, to invest an established action franchise with issues of post-colonial African identity and authenticity chimed more with US concerns of the era. By the late 1960s many African Americans were disillusioned with the perceived failures of the civil rights movement and continued white oppression, underlined by the murder of Martin Luther King. Some looked to Africa

as their true home, adopting African-style dress (hardly a uniform concept), and taking African and Arabic names as a sign they had broken all links with white America (cf. Hope Franklin: 487–8). Mainstream US media response to this Afrocentrism was ambivalent. In *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1970), distributed by United Artists, a black reverend's *dashiki*, a West African garment, and Garveyesque 'Back to Africa' movement mask a scam to exploit the locals financially and sexually (cf. Massood 2003: 89).

Hope Franklin noted how the vogue for all things African overlooked less savoury aspects of the continent, such as the persistence of slavery in parts of the Arab world (487). *Shaft in Africa* addresses this issue, the hero infiltrating a white-led gang smuggling African labour into Europe, invoking the colonial legacy while sidestepping US involvement in the slave trade. The showdown is in France, where Shaft claims the locals place their need for cheap labour over black exploitation. Early scenes highlight black male victimisation, persecution and captivity. As Ivy Wilson notes, the film draws racial parallels—spatial, topographical and social—between Paris and New York, in terms of both black diaspora and black mistreatment, though only the former is identified as a site of modern slavery (cf. Wilson 2010: 273–5).

Shaft in Africa touches on African-American and African kinship and solidarity, issues also explored in *Kin* (2000), *Tears of the Sun* (2003) and *In My Country* (2004). Guerrero regards Shaft as an apolitical individualist (93). In the previous *Shaft* films, he engages readily with the Harlem community yet seems detached from it on a geo-social level, upholding what Mark A. Reid terms 'a middle-class, raceless value system' (86), though in *Shaft's Big Score!* (1972) he donates money to a local children's clinic. In *Shaft in Africa*, he initially disavows any connection with Africans. A group who intrude on his national and domestic space are received with hostility rather than reasoned discussion. Contrasted further through costume, accent and vernacular, Shaft is forcibly tested on his ability to both pass and survive as an Ethiopian. Literally stripped of his American accoutrements, he retains his sense of capitalist entrepreneurialism, dismissing Africa as not his 'turf' but accepting the mission for a fee.

Obligated to learn tribal culture and dialect, Shaft expresses an appreciation of Ethiopia's ancient civilisation, alongside the cultured modernity of capital city Addis Ababa. He adapts to this new environment, underscored visually by camel riding and a humorous reference to Africa as his

mother country. It seems that Shaft will succeed where 'real' Africans cannot in beating the slavers. At the start of the film, an emir's son who penetrated the gang is caught and tortured, his only option to face death calmly with head held high, framed in ennobling if pathetic close-up. The film tempers this sense of African dependence by depicting ultimate victory in terms of collective endeavour. The dead man left Shaft a vital clue to the villain's base, etched on a wall with his handcuffs. This sense of the slavers' tools of oppression being turned against them is reinforced by a foreshortened shot of another captive reaching for a metal bar, deployed as a spear against his tormentor. Shaft stands aside while the gang boss is seized and executed, affirming respect for his African 'brothers' alongside recognition both of their differences and similarities.

Whatever its limitations, *Shaft in Africa* addresses and endorses empowered black masculinity in a form notably absent from later examples of the Africa-centred post-colonial drama. Four decades on, English-language cinema rarely addresses this issue without mediation through a white protagonist to guide viewer response. Even on these terms, the black man serves often as either victim or perpetrator, as in *The Interpreter* (2005) and *The Last King of Scotland* (2006). *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) at least focuses on a black character, Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle) showing extraordinary courage in the face of tribal genocide, though the survival of his family is down to the former colonial power indirectly responsible. Jared Sexton reads *Tears of the Sun*, set in a post-coup Nigeria, as questioning, even denying 'the possibility of a humane affective tie or social contract among blacks' (48). In its extended version, however, the film foregrounds African-American and African empathy and kinship, a native knowing more about one US soldier's ancestry than he does, despite the supposed benefits of first-world resources and education. The chief villain, a bloodthirsty butcher in the shorter cut, is given more nuance, accusing the former president of betraying his people for personal enrichment, and describing the latter's tribe as colonialists under the skin, still pawns of the white man who swallowed his principles along with his religion. *The First Grader* (2010), set in Kenya, humanises rather than heroises its black protagonist without on-screen white endorsement. Kimani Ng'ang'a Maruge (Oliver Litondo) is an octogenarian farmer and ex Mau Mau who seeks the education denied him under British colonialism. Broken physically during the Mau Mau struggle, as evidenced by his mutilated body, and robbed of his family, Maruge retains a spirit shown as lacking in men of his generation, who

live out their days with alcohol and chatter. Often isolated in the frame, he stands proud and determined, claiming his right to literacy (once the province of white men) while educating children on a past most prefer to forget. Barely containing his own violent tendencies, Maruge both embodies and critiques the divisive, masculinised tribalism that abetted British rule and endures to the present day.

I conclude by examining depictions of black masculinity under South African apartheid, a system of white racial dominance that lasted from 1948 until 1994, and the subsequent emergence of native leadership in the form of Nelson Mandela. While apartheid was increasingly criticised in Western countries, not least in the wake of anti-discriminatory legislation elsewhere, South Africa hosted British, American and Italian film production from the early 1950s onwards. For obvious reasons, films made in South Africa were rarely openly critical of the regime. The British production *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951) based on a novel by Alan Paton, a white South African activist, decontextualises and depoliticises the issues, a compromise partly redressed in the 1995 film version. The central character, Stephen Kumalo (Canada Lee), is a black village cleric whose piety and ministry are tested through the material hardship imposed by the white regime, and what he perceives as family disloyalty. Transposed to Johannesburg, Kumalo's inflexibly self-righteous attitudes are contrasted with those of the young Reverend Msimangu (Sidney Poitier), whose worldly pragmatism enables a compassion and understanding lacking in the older man. Where Kumalo is slumped in despair and defeat, Msimangu stands tall and (morally) upright, confident and perceptive. This concept of black masculine progression within a racially repressive system is, however, countered by the notion that reconciliation and understanding are facilitated largely by personal tragedy, individualising an institutionalised generational and racial struggle. Fifty years later, *Final Solution* (2001), a biopic of Gerrit Wolfaardt, white supremacist turned Christian minister, invokes Paton's novel and its theme of common humanity. The film also focuses on an elderly black reverend, this time as the voice of moral certainty, standing firm against all racial hatred in the South Africa of 1993 as apartheid comes to an end. The problems of interracial rapprochement are raised yet countered by the concept of (Christian) obligation to forgive, underscored by the reverend's slow-motion walk through his church doors into dazzling (divine) sunlight. This spiritualised way forward is linked with Mandela's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the tensions and contradictions played out

over the closing credits as a real apartheid agent claims amnesty while evading culpability.

In the intervening decades between these films, screen depictions of South Africa shot on location sometimes treated apartheid as present but unseen and unspoken. The indigenous indie *Joe Bullet* (1973), an ersatz blaxploitation movie, locates its Shaftian hero in an all-black milieu with little trace of the Afrikaner overclass. *Gold* (1974), a British–South African co-production, promotes the image of the ‘good’, self-sacrificing black man against a backdrop of global criminality distanced and disconnected from the local regime. A similar strategy is found in the Italian action comedy *Piedone l’Africano/Flatfoot in Africa* (1978), though the film at least features a black cop who aids the Neapolitan hero, punches out white bad guys and does not get killed. *The Wilby Conspiracy* (1975), filmed in Kenya, foregrounds its anti-apartheid agenda in the form of Shack Twala (Sidney Poitier), a Mandelaesque ANC activist released from prison after ten years. Though constrained by its thriller format and self-conscious nods to Poitier’s breakthrough hit, *The Defiant Ones* (1958), the film pre-empted widespread Western media criticism of apartheid and the withdrawal of US corporate investment (cf. Goudsouzian: 351). Playing on Poitier’s established persona, Twala is polite, reserved and well-spoken, though his steel resolve carries an implied threat to the state torturers who broke his body but not his spirit. Twala is contrasted with a white man, an apolitical British engineer, who learns the realities of black life in South Africa. *The Wilby Conspiracy* highlights racially provocative images, such as the handcuffed Twala throttling a white cop, that evoke *Sweet Sweetback’s Baad Asssss Song* (1971), an avowedly revolutionary African-American film. Where Sweetback’s cop assault, using handcuffs as a weapon, marks his awakening to the race war, Twala is a veteran of the struggle, fighting back when there is no alternative. Like Sweetback, Twala is also invested with an open, unashamed sexuality, making love with a young Indian woman. Both men are largely concerned with flight from racist authority, yet Twala leads an insurrection only promised at the end of *Sweet Sweetback’s Baad Asssss Song*, literally pulling his oppressors down to earth as they flee by helicopter.

The Wild Geese (1978), filmed but not set in South Africa, highlights a racial dialogue between Afrikaner mercenary Pieter Coetzee (Hardy Krüger) and Julius Limbani (Winston Ntshona), deposed and imprisoned ex-president of an unnamed African republic. Prior to meeting

Limbani, Coetzee is uneasy around a black mercenary and isolated visually as he articulates a passive hostility to 'kaffirs', a derogatory term for black people. Limbani's name and reputation are more powerful than his frail body, afflicted with a heart condition that renders him dependent on others. He is repeatedly shown as a slumped, pained and sweating figure, barely able to move without assistance. Coetzee volunteers to carry Limbani, literalising his view of blacks as the white man's burden. While Limbani repudiates the kaffir tag, Coetzee initially rejects both verbal and physical contact from his passenger, let alone dialogue. During a rest stop, Limbani maintains his gaze on Coetzee while the latter covers his eyes with a beret, stressing both his refusal to engage and a wider lack of vision. When Limbani re-establishes verbal contact, Coetzee finally addresses him as 'man', acknowledging at least a shared humanity.

Coetzee claims apolitical status, yet his discussion of personal liberty refracts apartheid-inflected notions of white colonialism, territorialism and entitlement. In a key verbal exchange, Limbani persuades him that true freedom requires contemplating a future built on interracial dependence and forgiveness, underscored visually in cross-cut one-shots as his argument takes hold on Coetzee. This racial enlightenment counters the film's visual emphasis on violent white-black confrontation as the mercenaries engage with pursuing Simbas. The budding friendship between Limbani and Coetzee is affirmed as the latter, mortally wounded, clasps the black man's head to his. Limbani in turn clutches Coetzee's dead hands, holding on to a hard-won symbol of racial accord. Outside his relationship with Coetzee, Limbani is depicted as both inspirational and pragmatic, refusing to let his people rise up for a hopeless fight. Injured in the final skirmish, Limbani is framed in high-angle close shot, ennobled and transcendent as he attains martyrdom, surrendering his body so that his spirit may endure. The mercenary commander holds Limbani's arm, evoking the latter's gesture to Coetzee and hinting that the dream of racial reconciliation has not died with its prime embodiments. Keyan Tomaselli states that in South Africa black audiences approved the film for this aspect (64), despite the emphasis elsewhere on white action heroics.

The Wild Geese's take on race relations is embedded in a Boy's Own adventure. *Cry Freedom* (1987) deals with apartheid head on, though I question the extent to which it expands and/or counters the earlier film's debate. *Cry Freedom* chronicles the relationship between Donald Woods, a white South African newspaper editor, and ANC activist Steve

Biko (Denzel Washington). Attacked by Woods as a black supremacist, the 'real' Biko is introduced in obscured form, both camouflaged and silhouetted, underlining how little even white liberals know of the man, his beliefs and the realities of apartheid. After a mutual testing, the men shake hands, the gesture illuminated by sunlight, suggesting the first glimmer of racial understanding and accord. Having rejected the white world as the normal, natural order of things, Biko preaches black self-belief, though his masculine virility is endorsed through violent response to white brutality. Speaking in calm, measured tones, Biko is the figurative and literal voice of reason, aware that black rule could be little different from white, one racial tyranny replacing another.

Cameron cites *Cry Freedom* as a belated contribution to widespread global criticism of apartheid, following economic and cultural sanctions, organised boycotts, world leadership condemnation and the Free Mandela campaign (158; cf. Gugler: 80). By the mid-1980s, the system was being questioned even by members of South Africa's ruling National Party (cf. Cameron: 160). I argue the film's critique of apartheid, though hardly radical, is less problematic than the depiction of Biko, which is curtailed barely halfway through the film, enabling Woods' emergence as the dominant form of heroic masculinity. In *City of Blood* (1987), released the same year, a black militant berates the white liberal protagonist for his ignorance: in South Africa a black male is denied recognition of his manhood, something whites can never understand. The Woods-Biko partnership sentimentalised in *Cry Freedom* is here impossible; only a black can speak and act for a black, by any means necessary.

A Dry White Season (1989), also focused on a white man's enlightenment, is notable for two black characters, Gordon Ngubene (Winston Ntshona), a gardener, and Stanley Makhaya (Zakes Mokae), a lawyer and political activist. The former cannot understand why his children reject the politicised linguistic control—refusing to be taught in Afrikaans—which restricted his own education and career, only challenging the state after the death of his oldest son. Ngubene's body, previously associated with nurture and preservation, becomes a site of violence and destruction, his battered corpse testament to white brutality and lies. While *A Dry White Season* avoids the extremism, and nihilism, of *City of Blood*, Makhaya insists that no white man, whatever his background, can know what it is to be black. A Zulu by birth, he rejects restrictive and divisive tribal/national categories, referring to himself as an African. His act of vengeance on behalf of the murdered white protagonist is accompanied

by flashbacks that evoke the wider cause, both recognising the white man's place in the struggle and stressing the scores of black activists whose deaths do not make the papers, let alone headlines.

Catch a Fire (2006) features a radicalised black male protagonist who is neither martyr nor avenger. Patrick Chamusso (Derek Luke) is initially a model 'good black': subordinate, apolitical, a loyal worker. Yet he also refracts the absurdities of apartheid, his modest success drawing police suspicion on the grounds that no honest black man can afford such 'luxury' goods as a camera. Faced with daily intimidation, he knows how to negotiate, playing the respectful kaffir, but cannot reconcile white approval with black self-respect, one colleague labelling him an Uncle Tom. Provoked by fracturing family relationships and wrongful arrest, Chamusso seeks to reclaim his suppressed masculine potency through the ANC, emphasised by visual association with Nelson Mandela, the ultimate symbol of anti-apartheid resistance and triumph.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission referenced in *Final Solution* is central to the post-apartheid dramas *In My Country* and *Red Dust* (both 2004). In the former, African-American journalist Langston Whitfield (Samuel L. Jackson) is assigned to cover the hearings. There are clear parallels with the African-American experience, Whitfield enduring a familiar white distrust with weary resignation, his own country still reluctant to confront racial issues uncomfortably similar to those of the apartheid era. *Red Dust* focuses on Alex Mpondo (Chiwetel Ejiofor), ANC activist turned politician, hailed as a role model for the new South Africa. Mpondo's scarred body marks the painful contradictions of apartheid, its aftermath and the elusive nature of 'objective' truth. A noble victim may be a desperate traitor as well; a brutal cop can also save lives and facilitate justice. In seeking forgiveness for himself, Mpondo at least recognises in a former white enemy his own flaws and virtues. Away from the expressly political arena, comedy dramas such as *White Wedding* (2009) acknowledge the unresolved racial tensions of the post-apartheid era while expressing hope for a harmonious future, as articulated and initiated by the black protagonist. *Skeem* (2011) even hints at the normalisation of interracial romance, albeit consummated in Zanzibar rather than South Africa.

In My Country and *Red Dust* reference Nelson Mandela through text, dialogue and archive footage. Moreover, his belief in the African concept of *ubuntu*, or interconnectedness, which informed post-apartheid policy, is crucial to the evolution in the protagonists' thinking. Film depictions of

Mandela himself tend to work from a specific, or limited, cinematic vocabulary, perhaps in deference to wider cultural conceptions of the man, not least the extensive news and documentary coverage. In *Goodbye Bafana* (2007), the incarcerated Mandela (Dennis Haysbert) is first seen through the peephole of his dark cell, facing the window bars but also the daylight, physically confined yet spiritually unyielding. His transformative influence on a white guard refracts his seismic effect on the entire apartheid regime. The closing scene highlights their handshake, placed centre-frame; Mandela puts his other hand on top, which can be read as a gesture of friendship or as an assertion of black dominance. *Invictus* (2009) follows Mandela (Morgan Freeman) through the precarious early phase of his presidency. Depicted as both politically and media savvy, he has sacrificed his personal life for the public good, becoming in effect an asexual secular saint (Mandela's own cameo in *Malcolm X*, 1992, is in essence a lay benediction of the title character). *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013), adapted from his autobiography, charts the life of Mandela (Idris Elba) from tribal initiation into manhood to presidency, equating true masculinity with public duty. Rejecting success on apartheid's terms, Mandela transcends his personal flaws—promiscuity, infidelity, neglect—and transforms via militant activism into the figure seen in *Goodbye Bafana* and *Invictus*. Screen renditions of Mandela present black masculinity in exceptionally positive and progressive form, yet they depart little from pre-existing media constructions and therefore contribute minimally to his popular representation. That said, even a succession of xeroxed Mandelas is culturally important given the ongoing recycling of the cliché black savage, as seen in *King Kong* (2005) and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006), with its cannibal boy clutching a knife and fork. In any case, film depictions of Mandela, whatever their significance, are just part of the wider field of Africa-centred black masculine representation, from *The Son of Tarzan* to *A United Kingdom* (2016), refracting a gradual evolution that is irregular, inconsistent and provocative yet undeniable.

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