

HOLLYWOOD'S AFRICA AFTER 1994

EDITED BY MARYELLEN HIGGINS

Ohio University Press • Athens

CONTENTS

Introduction: African Blood, Hollywood's Diamonds? Hollywood's Africa after 1994 MARYELLEN HIGGINS	I
1 The Cited and the Uncited: Toward an Emancipatory Reading of Representations of Africa HARRY GARUBA AND NATASHA HIMMELMAN	15
2 The Troubled Terrain of Human Rights Films: <i>Blood Diamond</i> , <i>The Last King of Scotland</i> , and <i>The Devil Came on Horseback</i> MARGARET R. HIGONNET, WITH ETHEL R. HIGONNET	35
3 Hollywood's Representations of Human Rights: The Case of Terry George's <i>Hotel Rwanda</i> JOYCE B. ASHUNTANTANG	54
4 Hollywood's Cowboy Humanitarianism in <i>Black Hawk Down</i> and <i>Tears of the Sun</i> MARYELLEN HIGGINS	68
5 Again, the Darkness: <i>Shake Hands with the Devil</i> KENNETH W. HARROW	83
6 Ambiguities and Paradoxes: Framing Northern Intervention in <i>The Constant Gardener</i> CHRISTOPHER ODHIAMBO JOSEPH	96

7	Minstrelsy and Mythic Appetites: <i>The Last King of Scotland's</i> Heart of Darkness in the Jubilee Year of African Independence	110
	RICARDO GUTHRIE	
8	“An Image of Africa”: Representations of Modern Colonialism in Africa in Peter Jackson’s <i>King Kong</i>	125
	CLIFFORD T. MANLOVE	
9	Plus Ça Change, Plus C’est la Même Chose: Hollywood’s Constructions of Africa in <i>Lord of War</i>	143
	EARL CONTEH-MORGAN	
10	New Jack African Cinema: <i>Dangerous Ground</i> ; <i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i> ; and <i>Blood Diamond</i>	157
	BENNETTA JULES-ROSETTE, J.R. OSBORN, AND LEA MARIE RUIZ-ADE	
11	“It Is a Very Rough Game, Almost as Rough as Politics”: Rugby as Visual Metaphor and the Future of the New South Africa in <i>Invictus</i>	177
	CHRISTOPHER GARLAND	
12	“Every Brother Ain’t a Brother”: Cultural Dissonance and Nigerian Malaise in <i>District 9’s</i> New South Africa	193
	KIMBERLY NICHELE BROWN	
13	Coaxing the Beast Out of the Cage: Secrecy and Disclosure in <i>Red Dust</i> and <i>Catch a Fire</i>	207
	JANE BRYCE	
14	Situating Agency in <i>Blood Diamond</i> and <i>Ezra</i>	222
	IYUNOLU OSAGIE	
15	Bye Bye Hollywood: African Cinema and Its Double in Mahamet-Saleh Haroun’s <i>Bye Bye Africa</i>	240
	DAYNA OSCHERWITZ	
	List of Contributors	261
	Index	267

INTRODUCTION

African Blood, Hollywood's Diamonds?

Hollywood's Africa after 1994

MARYELLEN HIGGINS

At the conclusion of Edward Zwick's *Blood Diamond*, Ambassador Walker lectures an audience about the complicity of Westerners in the human crises fueled by conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone. The target audience for Walker's speech is not the actors playing attendees at the staged meeting in Kimberley, South Africa, of course, but rather the spectators watching the film. Walker announces:

The natural resources of a country are the sovereign property of its people. They are not ours to steal or exploit in the name of our comfort, our corporations, or our consumerism. The Third World is not a world apart, and the witness that you will hear today speaks on its behalf. Let us hear the voice of that world, let us learn from that voice, and let us ignore it no more.

Solomon Vandy, a humble Mende fisherman, approaches the podium. But before he utters his first word, the film ends, and the screen goes dark. In the film's postscript, viewers are urged to insist that their diamonds are conflict free. Ironically, Solomon's voice remains ignored as the film credits roll.

What are the messages conveyed in this moment? Does the severing of Solomon's speech suggest that there is not yet an African (or "Third World") 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?

We might also look at this scene in the context of another Hollywood blockbuster: *King Solomon's Mines*, based on H. Rider Haggard's best-selling 1885 novel, which has been adapted for movie and television screens on at least six occasions.¹ *King Solomon's Mines* epitomizes the imperial rationale: white adventurers arrive in Africa to locate hidden treasures that belonged to a biblical king, but also to save friendly, noble Africans from evil, monstrous tyrants. In 2006, *Blood Diamond* re-presents an African character named Solomon who reveals the location of a precious diamond in exchange for white protection against murderous African militants. In Zwick's reframing of the colonial narrative, Solomon is not an ancient king but a Mende fisherman, and diamonds are viewed not as glamorous jewels for the taking, but as catalysts for bloody conflicts linked to human rights abuses in Sierra Leone's civil war. Zwick transmits a new cast of characters onto the African scene: greedy European corporate magnates, shady international arms dealers, and human rights advocates in the Kimberley Process initiative.

In recent films set in Africa starring Hollywood celebrities, human rights issues have become a major thrust. A close inspection of some of the most interesting new "Africa films" reveals a mixing of human rights concerns with familiar figures from what V. Y. Mudimbe describes as the "colonial library" (1994, 17), figures that have been revived and cleverly revised in a new century. The legendary David Livingstone, a nineteenth-century Scottish missionary doctor, is resuscitated cinematically in 2006 through the figure of Nicholas Garrigan, a Scottish doctor who loses his way during a mission to Uganda in Kevin Macdonald's thriller, *The Last King of Scotland*. There is a twist here, too. Previous Hollywood films tended to glorify Livingstone's "civilizing mission" in Africa: the tagline of Henry King and Otto Brower's 1939 *Stanley and Livingstone* reads, "The most heroic exploit the world has known! Into the perilous wilderness of unknown Africa . . . Heat . . . fever . . . cannibals . . . jungle . . . nothing could stop him!" In contrast, the Scottish protagonist in *The Last King of Scotland* befriends the tyrannical Ugandan president Idi Amin Dada, provides information that leads to the execution of Amin's opponents, and fails to save anyone. Dr. Livingstone's "three C's"—commerce, Christianity, and civilization—are replaced by Dr. Garrigan's covetousness, corruption, and complicity.

This collection questions whether recent cinematic depictions of Africa adapt colonial fictions in order to subvert them, or whether they serve,

ultimately, to reproduce colonialist ideologies. Crafted and reinforced by European and North American missionaries, travel writers, and filmmakers, colonial narratives consistently referenced Africa as a dangerous or exotic territory, as the pinnacle of horror and savagery, and as the recipient of the West's benevolent, heroic humanitarianism. The argument here is not that all of the films examined in the volume fall neatly under the rubric of Hollywood cinema; instead, our focus is on the fate of what Kenneth Cameron calls the "complex of received ideas" about Africa that Hollywood has perpetuated (12). The chapters that follow examine big-budget, celebrity-studded films produced and distributed by major Hollywood studios but also independent films and transnational films that engage with Hollywood's "Africa" archives. When recent films set in Africa revisit narratives of empire, are they recycled reinforcements of an imperial enterprise, nostalgic renderings of the past, revisionist engagements, creative attempts at atonement, anti-imperialist subversions, distractions, a blend?

The collection sets out not just to trace what remains of the colonial legacy in Hollywood, but to contemplate what has changed in Hollywood's updated projections of Africa. How do we read twenty-first-century projections of human rights issues—child soldiers, genocide, the exploitation of the poor by multinational corporations, dictatorial rule, truth and reconciliation—within the contexts of celebrity humanitarianism, "new" military humanitarianism, and Western support for regime change in Africa and beyond?² Do the emphases on human rights in the films offer a poignant expression of our shared humanity, do they echo the inequities of former colonial "civilizing missions," or do human rights violations operate as yet another mine of grisly images for Hollywood's dramatic storytelling? Does the continent serve as a stage for redemption and reconstituted intervention during a time when American and British military operations abroad have received intense global scrutiny?

The year 1994 was selected as a starting point for several reasons. The Rwandan genocide of 1994 pricked the consciousness of human rights advocates worldwide, and Hollywood celebrities responded. Human rights activists have looked to film as a medium to circulate images and interpretations of human rights violations in Africa, and to motivate viewers to participate in human rights campaigns. The DVD version of Annie Sundberg and Ricki Stern's *The Devil Came on Horseback* (2007), a documentary about US marine captain Brian Steidle's travels through Darfur, promises that for every copy sold, a dollar is donated to Save Darfur. Terry George's *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) would not be released until a decade after the Rwandan genocide, yet the

prominent media presence of *Hotel Rwanda*'s leading actor, Don Cheadle, in the Save Darfur movement underscores the role of Western filmmaking and Western celebrities in the process of "raising awareness" about African conflicts—what Heike Härting describes as the development of a Western "humanitarianist consciousness" (2008, 63). On the DVD version of *Hotel Rwanda*, Don Cheadle speaks about the heroism of the nonfictional Paul Rusesabagina, whose character he plays in the feature film. Immediately after, Cheadle urges viewers to take action for victims in Darfur. The Save Darfur movement saw film as a vehicle to prompt agitation against oppression in Africa, yet what kind of activism is generated when the exposition of the Darfurian context is based not on historical or political knowledge, as Mahmood Mamdani observes, but on the Rwanda analogy?³ Several contributors to this volume perceive that films about human rights violations in Rwanda, Darfur, and Sierra Leone base their pleas on analogies, disturbing images, and sentimental narrators; the assumed humanitarian gaze is dictated by the camera's frame in a move that privileges what Mamdani calls "evidence of the eyes" over substantive understanding of complex African political histories (2009, 7).

At the African Studies Association Conference in 2007 and at the African Literature Association Conference in 2008, Ken Harrow and Thomas Turner organized a series of panels titled "What's Wrong with Human Rights Films?" At first glance, one may wonder: What could be wrong with a film that advocates human rights? To address this question, contributors look critically at the types of awareness that human rights films set in Africa invite. The Hutu militia that killed Tutsis and moderate Hutus attempted to dehumanize their victims by portraying them as "cockroaches." What are the effects of the U.N.'s General Roméo Dallaire's assertion that Hutu militiamen have eyes that are "not human" in Peter Raymont's documentary, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (2004)—a film that won the Audience Award for Best World Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival? What are the effects of the references to "devils on horseback" in the Sudanese context? Do references to demons function to elicit a particular emotive impact, and if so, what are the implications? If human rights films are truly invested in bringing about positive change, is generating sympathy for one side and outrage against the other the best means of persuasion? Three scholars who have worked extensively on human rights issues in Africa—Margaret Higonnet, Joyce Ashuntantang, and Ken Harrow—investigate these questions much more elaborately in their contributions to the volume.

We also look at Hollywood's Africa in the aftermath of Nelson Mandela's historic inauguration as president of South Africa in 1994. The earliest "Africa films" in the Hollywood archive concentrated on South Africa: How has Hollywood interpreted South Africa's transformations after the end of apartheid, and how have South Africans challenged Hollywood? What is the imprint left by one of Hollywood cinema's most prominent icons, Clint Eastwood, in his direction of *Invictus* (2009), a film that narrates Mandela's struggle against the kinds of widespread expectations of African catastrophe that Hollywood has traditionally reinforced? Do the massive explosions in Darrell Roodt's *Dangerous Ground* (1997) signal the breaking of new ground in cinema's South Africa, or is the spectacle of violence in the film just another staple of Hollywood-style filmmaking? Gillian, Robyn, and Shawn Slovo—the daughters of the late South African activists Joe Slovo and Ruth First—also intervene in Hollywood's Africa through their writing and production in Tom Hooper's *Red Dust* (2004) and Phillip Noyce's *Catch a Fire* (2006). How do these activist-inspired films mediate the new South Africa for global audiences? Given the star power of American celebrities (Hillary Swank and Tim Robbins) in these films, how do we situate them vis-à-vis Hollywood's Africa? In terms of its cinematography and the absence of Hollywood stars, one of the most unusual films set in South Africa is Neill Blomkamp's *District 9* (2009); but in terms of its depictions of alien "Others" and decadent Nigerians, does it offer anything significantly new to Hollywood's Africa?

Just as Edward Said argued that Western articulations about the "Orient" reveal more about the articulator's "battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections" than anything substantial about the East (1978, 8), the contributors argue that Western film images of Africa express more about the West than anything substantial that could be said about actual Africans. In terms of the number of films produced, box-office success, and visibility at the Academy Awards ceremonies, Mandela, who is arguably Africa's most celebrated political icon, has been upstaged on Hollywood screens by figures such as Idi Amin, the Rwandan *génocidaires*, and militant rebels in Sierra Leone. In the wake of debates over the American military withdrawal from its operations in Somalia, the failure to prevent genocide in Rwanda, and widely publicized massacres in Sudan, it is not surprising that so many Hollywood films set in Africa after 1994 present us with images of humanitarian crises and questions of Western intervention. Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* (2001) would be invoked by Vice President Dick Cheney to argue for continued American force in Iraq. At a town hall meeting in Milwaukee in

2004, he referenced *Black Hawk Down* to illustrate two lessons he thought should be gleaned from the withdrawal of American forces in the world: “one, they could strike us with impunity; and two, if they did hit us hard enough, they could change U.S. policy” (qtd. in Lawrence and McGarrahan 2008, 448). Even the vice president recognized the potential of Hollywood images of Africa, not just in their reflections of our national preoccupations, but in the shaping of popular opinions.

The contributors see Hollywood’s Africa not as a series of detached fantasies that offer pure entertainment, but as projections—entertaining as they may be—that reflect various national and international investments, both material and ideological. Hollywood’s interest in Africa has surfaced at a time when the American Council of Foreign Relations asserts that “Africa is becoming steadily more central to the United States and the Rest of the World in ways that transcend humanitarian interests” (Lake and Whitman 2006, 5). Two publications of the Council on Foreign Relations—*More than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach toward Africa* (Lake and Whitman 2006), and *Beyond Humanitarianism: What You Need to Know about Africa and Why It Matters* (Lyman and Dorff 2007), argue for more aggressive intervention on the continent. Stephen Ellis, in his chapter “How to Rebuild Africa,” calls American intervention in Africa “tough love” (Lyman and Dorff 2007, 160). In 2007, the Bush administration created the U.S. Africa Command, or AFRICOM. AFRICOM’s 2011 Posture Statement includes the aim of reducing threats to American citizens “by helping African States to provide for their own security.”⁴ Concurrently, the website seems to be very engaged in the winning of hearts and minds through humanitarian appeals. AFRICOM’s first commander, General William E. Ward, states, “Years from now we want Africans and Americans to be able to say AFRICOM made a difference—a positive difference.”⁵

When we watch Hollywood films set in Africa, do they also participate—consciously or unconsciously—in the winning of hearts and minds, the fostering of resolve to intervene in humanitarian crises in Africa, the building of support for American-enforced security in Africa and elsewhere? U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force operators in *Black Hawk Down* (2001), characters based on the soldiers who fought the Battle of Mogadishu, swoop into Somalia to assist the Red Cross and to capture the Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid and his allies. The Navy SEALs in Antoine Fuqua’s *Tears of the Sun* (2003) rescue a humanitarian doctor from brutal rebels and help reinstall the friendly heir to the presidency. We could read these films as Hollywood

projections of well-intentioned military humanitarianism and regime change—or, if one wishes to read them more skeptically, as “philanthropic imperialism” (de Waal 1997, 179) and “humanitarian bombing” (Weiss 2007, 10). We could contemplate the good-hearted, democratic American protagonists (played by the likable actors Josh Harnett in Scott’s film and Bruce Willis in Fuqua’s); contrast them with their one-dimensional, tyrannical African foils; and read the films as promotions of what Uzodinma Iweala calls “the West’s fantasy of itself” (2007, B07). We might also look at the critical responses to the films: Why was *Black Hawk Down*, a film in which powerful, armed Americans can save only each other in the end, much more successful than *Tears of the Sun*, which glorifies American-enforced regime change and provides uplifting images of thankful Africans?

In 1994, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argued that American celebrities who play British colonial heroes imply a “historical lap-dissolve by which the British-dominated imperialism of the nineteenth century faded into the US-dominated imperialism of the twentieth” (113). Beyond 1994, American action heroes—embodied by actors such as Bruce Willis in *Tears of the Sun*, Matthew McConaughey in Breck Eisner’s *Sahara* (2005), or Michael Douglas in Stephen Hopkins’s *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996)—step in to rescue endangered European characters, suggesting that the transfer of imperial power from Europe to the United States has fully materialized. If, as Ruth Mayer argues, films are “indefatigably adjusting the symbolic repertory of yesterday to the conceptual and ideological frameworks of today” (2002, 1), what do recent cinematic reshapings of the colonial archive suggest about the world’s most powerful nations? What is the impact of celebrity heroines in Africa after 1994—Jennifer Connelly in *Blood Diamond*, Gillian Anderson in *The Last King of Scotland*, Rachel Weisz in *The Constant Gardener*, Monica Bellucci in *Tears of the Sun*, Naomi Watts in *King Kong*, Penelope Cruz in *Sahara*—who, like their predecessors, engage in romantic relationships with the heroes, but who also guide the films’ humanitarian consciousness? If new “Africa films” adapt Hollywood’s proven formulas (for example, *King Solomon’s Mines* meets *Heart of Darkness*) to make a profit, why is it that these formulas work (or fail) today? And what, if anything, had to be tweaked in the colonial formulas to render them appealing and acceptable to audiences after 1994?

Films about Africa that have been nominated for Academy Awards after 1994 project new affairs with Empire that replace the “ideal imperial figure” (Shohat and Stam 1994, 110) with flawed tragic heroes. The morally suspect treasure seeker (Danny Archer in *Blood Diamond*) and the parody of the

colonial savior (Nick Garrigan in *The Last King of Scotland*) suggest a conscious reshaping of the colonial archive. *Hotel Rwanda*, which diverges from the status quo in its emphasis on a black African hero, casts shame on former colonizing nations (especially Belgium) and the most powerful countries in the United Nations for their abandonment of Rwandan victims of genocide. The practices of Western corporations in Africa are likewise held up for popular scrutiny: Fernando Meirelles's *The Constant Gardener* (2005) scorns human rights abuses by Western pharmaceutical companies; Andrew Niccol's *Lord of War* (2005) places American arms dealers at the center of African tragedies; and *District 9* ridicules the multinational corporations that would harvest the very bodies—the raw materials—of “Others” to extract fuel (for example, African uranium) in their pursuit of the deadliest weapons.

But perhaps Western cinematic condemnations of imperialist exploitation in Africa function also as trickster narratives, as Christopher Odhiambo Joseph argues in his chapter on *The Constant Gardener*. In this interpretation, Hollywood-style trickster films seem to point toward African independence from Western dominance, but then switch gears and advocate revised Western intervention. Through characters like Ambassador Walker in *Blood Diamond* or Tessa in *The Constant Gardener*, trickster films criticize the treatment of Africans by powerful Western nationals and multinational corporations. Yet within these same narratives, African characters who are initially resistant to European or American partnership, like Solomon Vandy in *Blood Diamond*, discover that they depend on Western humanitarian heroes and heroines for their survival. Thus, Solomon refuses Danny Archer's positioning as master, but ultimately learns that he can trust his fate to Archer when his actions are monitored by the well-intentioned American journalist, Maddy Bowen. Another example emerges in the *Last King of Scotland* when Nick Garrigan initially scorns British imperialist meddling in Uganda. Nick's anti-British alliance with Amin proves to be too dangerous, and this time it is the Scottish anti-imperialist who needs the British to help him escape from the terrifying Ugandan leader. The interventionist impulse is thus modified: colonial exploitation is scorned, but the complete withdrawal of dominant Western influence is projected as dangerous, unconscionable, and cowardly.

In order to further analyze the tensions between African independence and Western influence in the films, we might examine the portrayals of menacing African despots who resist Western intervention. In *The Last King of Scotland*, the tyrant is embodied by the anti-imperialist Idi Amin; at the commencement of *Hotel Rwanda*, he is the voice of a genocidal RTLM “Hutu

power” radio announcer who explains that he hates Tutsis because they were collaborators for the Belgian colonists; in *Blood Diamond*, he is the menacing Captain Poison, who trains child soldiers; in *Tears of the Sun*, he is the genocidal commander Terwase, who insists that his people did not embrace “the religion of the colonists” and “will never be pawns for anyone.” The toppling of these villains through Western intervention is depicted as a pathway toward peace, while the voices of anti-imperialism and African struggles for independence from the West are contained within the rhetoric of the ruthless despot bent on vengeance.

To set the stage for Western intervention, a number of films after 1994 echo what James Ferguson describes as “Africa talk,” which characterizes the history of the continent as “a series of lacks and absences, failings and problems, plagues and catastrophes” (2006, 1–2). In *Blood Diamond*, the veteran Danny lectures the idealistic Maddy: “Peace Corps types only stay around long enough to realize they’re not helping anyone; government only wants to stay in power until they’ve stolen enough to go into exile somewhere else; and the rebels, they’re not sure that they want to take over, otherwise they’d have to govern this mess. But T.I.A. . . . This Is Africa.” In *The Last King of Scotland*, the Scottish doctor initially defends Idi Amin’s oppressive regime: “This is Africa: you meet violence with violence or you’re dead.” In *Black Hawk Down*, the pilot Michael Durant’s Somali captor reinforces T.I.A. talk from within: “We know this: without victory, there can be no peace. There will always be killing, you see? This is how things are in our world.” In Michael Katleman’s horror film *Primeval* (2007), it is an African American cameraman who concludes, “I would never say this in front of a bunch of white people. . . . Slavery was a good thing. Anything you gotta do to get the fuck out of Africa is OK with me.” Celebratory denouements for African characters are often imagined as Western-assisted escape, rather than a locally orchestrated peace, whether it be *Blood Diamond*’s Solomon Vandy, *Hotel Rwanda*’s Paul Rusesabagina, *Primeval*’s Jojo, *Shooting Dogs*’ Marie (Michael Caton-Jones, 2005), or the televised film *24: Redemption*’s schoolboy refugees (Jon Cassar, 2008). As Binyavanga Wainaina writes in his satirical comments aimed at Western narrators in Africa: “Africa is to be pitied, worshipped or dominated. Whichever angle you take, be sure to leave the strong impression that without your intervention . . . Africa is doomed” (1995).

Colonial formulas, Africa talk, and Western rescue fantasies still permeate representations of Africa in films after 1994, but films set in Africa are not essentially and inevitably the product of social and political forces that control

the scriptwriters' pens, the cinematographers' gazes, or the directors' decisions. It is interesting that a notable exception to the African catastrophe formula in Hollywood's Africa emerges from the direction of Clint Eastwood, who takes the pessimism of Africa talk head-on in *Invictus* (2009). *Invictus*'s Nelson Mandela is quite familiar with predictions of African failure, and like the South African national rugby team depicted in the film, Mandela is determined to defy the widespread expectations of postapartheid devastation and collapse. And he does so without the intervention of Western saviors. Mandela's recitation of lines from William Ernest Henley's eponymous poem could apply not only to his character but also to a wider vision of African agency: "I am the master of my fate / I am the captain of my soul."

The science fiction film *District 9* offers a more playful cinematic commentary on "Africa talk" in the rendering of the authoritative white guide, Wikus Van De Merwe. Wikus's obviously flawed exposition on aliens, nicknamed the prawns, mimics self-proclaimed "experts" on African affairs in the apartheid era: Wikus positions himself as "Mr. Sweetie" while he lures prawn children out of their homes in order to force them into concentration camps. His claims to humanitarianism—and by extension the assumed humanitarianism of those who view themselves as experts on "Others"—are ridiculed by the camera as Wikus's blithe, amused, and self-serving disregard for the lives of prawns under his control becomes increasingly apparent. Even when Wikus transforms into a prawn and rescues one of them, his desire to save himself from becoming alien overrides any concern about the fate of the tortured prawns in Johannesburg. It is difficult to determine whether we are ever supposed to take Wikus—or the film—seriously. Do the ubiquitous cameras embedded in the film's mise-en-scène suggest a metacommentary on Western filmmaking about Africa? Is Blomkamp's stereotypical portrait of bloodthirsty, menacing Nigerians in the film so overblown as to call attention to its ridiculousness?⁶ Or is the portrait yet another troubling example of the demonization of "Others," as Kimberly Nichele Brown suggests?

The question of whether new "Africa films" films are ultimately viewed as repetitions, reinforcements, or subversions of the colonial archive is not, in the end, determined by the films themselves, but by how we interpret them. If we follow the suggestion of Harry Garuba and Natasha Himmelman and look for "images that arrest us precisely because they do not fit into the structures of our expectations," we might detect curious moments that open up new creative avenues for our readings of Hollywood's Africa. For example, as I remark in a subsequent chapter, I was struck by the Somali character

Atto's reference to John Sturges's Hollywood western, *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), in *Black Hawk Down*. Why did the scriptwriter, Ken Nolan, insert an amused Somali character who asks, "What is this, the K.O. Corral?" Atto's inversion of the "O.K." seems to foreshadow the reversal of the Americans' presumed easy victory in the gunfight. Looking at this moment prompts an investigation into further references to the American western film genre, from Scott's staging of Bakara Market as the "Wild West," to Nolan's invention of the character Hoot Gibson, who carries the same name as an American cowboy rodeo champion who turned to Hollywood film acting in the 1920s. Thus, an alternative reading of the film might see the soldiers' interpretations of their roles in Somalia as part of the fictions and fantasies of American cinema.

Western studios have the power to frame events in Africa for global audiences—and to revise, edit out, voice in, and distribute the final product to mass audiences. Africans in Western cinema are still, to use Edward Said's terms, "contained and represented by dominating frameworks" (1978, 40). However, Africa is not framed in the exact same way throughout the films, and some of the differences emerge as we recognize the competing narratives and metacommentaries within the films themselves. There are also several overt exceptions to Hollywood cinema's typical reliance on European and American heroes. *Invictus*, unlike typical Hollywood films that filter South African history through the figure of a white hero, presents Nelson Mandela as its central protagonist and a white rugby captain as his cooperative partner. Phillip Noyce's *Catch a Fire* concentrates on the political awakening of the black South African ANC activist, Patrick Chamusso, who takes over the film's voiceover in the concluding shots as he appears beside the actor Derek Luke, who portrays him. The "white consciousness" that used to drive Hollywood films about South Africa dissolves as events on screen are filtered through the points of view of significant black African characters. In her chapter on *Catch a Fire* and *Red Dust*, Jane Bryce argues that these films "perform the important gesture of making visible aspects of the past which were repressed under apartheid, and bringing these to the attention of audiences. Moreover, they do this by to an extent reversing the usual terms of engagement—focusing on what South Africa offers to the world as opposed to what the world offers Africa." Of course, for over half a century, African directors have presented local perspectives as they employ African writers, cinematographers, and actors. A full discussion of African cinema is well beyond the scope of this book, but the concluding chapters consider African cinema's critical engagements with Hollywood's Africa.

How can Hollywood's Africa be characterized after 1994, and how has it been challenged? There is not a single conclusion, as the various chapters in the volume demonstrate. In order to provide a broad range of perspectives on Hollywood's Africa, I asked scholars in Barbados, Kenya, South Africa, and the United States to contribute to the book project. To my delight, they agreed. The resultant volume includes analyses by interdisciplinary scholars situated within departments of African studies, English, film and media studies, international relations, and sociology across continents. Several contributors grew up, have resided, or currently live in countries represented in *Hollywood's Africa after 1994*. The international contributors to this volume offer a variety of suggestions for interpretation, but the goal of the volume is not to offer definitive conclusions. Rather, by reading the various strategies and multiple contexts in which Hollywood's Africa and its counterparts can be studied, we hope to inspire readers to develop their own creative interpretations.

NOTES

1. See Ruth Mayer (2002) on *King Solomon's Mines* and "trick translation," 30–40. Kenneth Cameron discusses Haggard's influence on American and British cinema in his chapter, "The White Queen and the Hunter" (1994, 17–32). See also Peter Davis on Haggard and "Zooluology" (1996, 124 and 147). For an exploration of representations of monstrosity in film adaptations of *King Solomon's Mines*, see Paul Ugor (2006). For a study of "the purification of imperialism" in *King Solomon's Mines*, see Jeff Bass (1981).

2. Several books contemplate the transition from neutral humanitarian endeavors that aim to provide relief from human suffering to a "new humanitarianism" that allows the taking of sides and seeks to remove the causes of suffering through intervention. For much more detailed discussions of the debates surrounding "new humanitarianism" and humanitarian intervention, see Alex de Waal (1997), David Chandler (2001), Thomas Weiss (2007), Margaret Denike (2008), Michael Barnett and Thomas Weiss (2008), and Nathan Hodge (2010).

3. For more on Save Darfur's use of analogy, see Mahmood Mamdani (2009). For a related discussion of the problematic generation of "understanding" of human rights issues in *Hotel Rwanda*, see Renate Kahlke (2007).

4. AFRICOM's 2011 Posture Statement was written by General Carter F. Ham. At the time of writing, AFRICOM is situated in Stuttgart, Germany. Its website is located at www.Africom.mil.

5. Ward, www.Africom.mil/africomDialogue.asp?entry=20.

6. Dayna Oscherwitz contemplated what she saw as the deliberate insertion of cameras and the overblown representation of Nigerians in *District 9* in her presentation at the African Literature Association's annual conference in Athens, Ohio in 2010: "Re-globalizing Africa: Reversal and Renegotiation in Recent African Films."

REFERENCES

- Barnett, Michael, and Thomas G. Weiss, eds. 2008. *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bass, Jeff. 1981. "The Romance as Rhetorical Dissociation: The Purification of Imperialism in *King Solomon's Mines*." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 67 (3): 259–69.
- Bickford-Smith, Vivian. 2006. "Picturing Apartheid: With a Particular Focus on 'Hollywood' Histories of the 1970s." In *Black and White in Colour: African History on Screen*, edited by Vivian Bickford-Smith and Richard Mendelsohn, 256–78. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Cameron, Kenneth. 1994. *Africa on Film: Beyond Black and White*. New York: Continuum.
- Chandler, David. 2001. "The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda." *Human Rights Quarterly* 23 (3): 678–700.
- Davis, Peter. 1996. In *Darkest Hollywood: Exploring the Jungles of Cinema's South Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Denike, Margaret. 2008. "The Human Rights of Others: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and 'Just Causes' for the 'War on Terror.'" *Hypatia* 23 (2): 95–121.
- de Waal, Alex. 1997. *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Douzinas, Costas. 2007. *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*. New York: Routledge-Cavendish.
- Ferguson, James. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Haggard, H. Rider. 1885. *King Solomon's Mines*. London: Cassell.
- Härtling, Heike. 2008. "Global Humanitarianism, Race, and the Spectacle of the African Corpse in Current Western Representations of the Rwandan Genocide." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 28 (1): 61–77.
- Hawk, Beverly G, ed. 1992. *Africa's Media Image*. New York: Praeger.
- Hodge, Nathan. 2010. *Armed Humanitarians: The Rise of the Nation Builders*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Iweala, Uzodinma. 2007. "Stop Trying to 'Save' Africa." *Washington Post*, July 15, B07.
- Kahlke, Renate. 2007. "Understanding Genocide? Western Cinematic Depictions of Rwanda and Bosnia." *Politics and Culture* 2. Retrieved from <http://aspen.conncoll.edu/politicsandculture>.
- Lake, Anthony, and Christine Todd Whitman, chairs. 2006. *More than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach toward Africa* (Report of an Independent Task Force). New York: Council on Foreign Relations.
- Lawrence, John Sheldon, and John G. McGarrahan. 2008. "Operation Restore Honor in *Black Hawk Down*." In *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*, edited by Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, 431–57. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- Lyman, Princeton N., and Patricia Dorff, eds. 2007. *Beyond Humanitarianism: What You Need to Know about Africa and Why It Matters*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 2009. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Pantheon.

- Mayer, Ruth. 2002. *Artificial Africas: Colonial Images in the Times of Globalization*. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Mudimbe, V. Y. 1994. *The Idea of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. 1994. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. New York: Routledge.
- Ugor, Paul. 2006. "Demonizing the African Other, Humanizing the Self: Hollywood and the Politics of Post-imperial Adaptations." *Atenea* 26 (2): 131–50.
- Wainaina, Binyavanga. 1995. "How to Write about Africa." *Granta* 92. Retrieved from <http://www.granta.com/Magazine/92>.
- Weiss, Thomas G. 2007. *Humanitarian Intervention*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Thank you for your interest in this
Ohio University Press title.

This book is available for purchase
[online at our website](#) or through
other ebooks vendors.

**OHIO
UNIVERSITY
PRESS**