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Original Citation

Webster, Wendy (2003) Domesticating the Frontier: Gender, Empire and Adventure Landscapes in British Cinema, 1945-59. *Gender and History*, 15 (1). pp. 85-107. ISSN 0953-5233

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Domesticating the Frontier: Gender, Empire and Adventure Landscapes in British Cinema, 1945-59

This article is about developments in the empire genre in British films in a period when Britain was on the cusp of transition from imperial power to post-imperial identity. It explores the beginnings of a shift in the gendering of the empire genre where a number of empire films foregrounded women, and showed adventure landscapes as hybrid places – both masculine and feminine, both challenging and increasingly domesticated. In focusing on three films from different moments in the period – *Men of Two Worlds* (1946), *Simba* (1955) and *North West Frontier* (1959) – the article examines their interplay of ideas of gender and racial difference, and the wide range of meanings they assigned to white femininity.¹

Scholars of a literary genre of imperial narratives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have argued that it came under considerable strain by the late nineteenth century, and was buried in the mud of Flanders Field.² Patrick Brantlinger detects an elegaic quality in late Victorian and Edwardian imperial literary adventure as Britain's power declined, while John McLure suggests that imperialism was beginning to be identified as the enemy of romance by the close of the nineteenth century, as global modernisation robbed empire of mystery.³ Many scholars date the demise of the adventure hero to the Western Front of 1914-1918, when the immobilisation, dismemberment, and slaughter of trench warfare wrote the obituary of active masculinity in quest of military glory.⁴ After 1918, Martin Green argues, 'the adventure of imperialism had lost intellectual and moral credibility'.⁵

Scholars who have looked at visual rather than literary texts have traced the history of an important new site for consumption of imperial adventure narratives in Britain after 1918: the cinema. As Alison Light notes, some literary texts, like E. M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*, first published in 1924, began to imagine imperial experience as 'an extension of domestic or private life'.⁶ But the 1930s empire genre in film showed action, not domesticity. Typically celebrating a homosocial world and adventure heroes who discovered and demonstrated their manhood on the frontier, it defined British masculine adventure against the world of domesticity and women.

There are readings of particular films made in the 1930s that suggest the increasing fragility of the adventure narrative, arguing that 'an overwhelming sense of masculine loss' associated with the First World War resonated in an exposure of the inadequacy of English imperial masculinity.⁷ But most film historians have seen the empire genre between the wars – to which Hollywood made a substantial contribution – as one which continued to celebrate British masculinity and was highly successful in promoting an imperial world view.⁸ Marcia Landy argues that it translated expansionism, colonisation, and commerce into a 'spectacle of benevolence', featuring high-minded heroes taking up the white man's burden.⁹ While the adventure genre in printed media was addressed predominantly to boys and men, films were consumed by women, as members of cinema audiences. There is little work that has investigated how gender, 'race' and geographical location inflected readings of empire films.¹⁰ Producers of mainstream media, however, generally thought in terms of a white audience, and any acknowledgement that empire audiences might also comprise non-whites was contained within the assumption of their inferiority. Indian audiences were seen as ignorant, childlike and deficient in understanding.¹¹ African audiences

were assumed to be visually illiterate.¹² The idea of audience thus replicated the construction of colonisers and colonised in the imagery of empire: modern and civilized against backward and primitive. Prem Chowdhry's pioneering study has explored the reception of 'British' empire films in India in the 1930s and 1940s, and the popular and official protests against their projections of India which shaped the politics and cultural policies both of colonisers and Indian nationalism.¹³ Despite these challenges to the adventure narrative, empire films remained popular at box-offices in Britain in the 1930s, their mass consumption suggesting that imperial adventure continued to be important to imaginings of Britishness

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the idea of adventure remained important to British national identity. In 1945, Michael Balcon, the film producer, advocated the production of films which projected Britain as among other things 'questing explorer, adventurer and trader'.¹⁴ Maintaining this aspect of national identity was also a more general concern. When Queen Elizabeth II made her first Christmas broadcast in 1952, before her Coronation, she spoke of the need 'to keep alive that courageous spirit of adventure': a spirit which, she said, 'still flourishes in the old country and in all the younger countries of our Commonwealth'.¹⁵ News that men had reached the summit of Everest was extensively mobilised to project Britain as adventurer and, appearing in the press on Coronation morning, meant that the narratives of these events were strongly linked, providing an image of the frontier spirit to embellish the Queen's crown. In October 1953, the Queen attended the first performance of a film featuring this adventure landscape -- *The Conquest of Everest* -- accompanied by her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, who was patron of the expedition. The film began with scenes of her Coronation, with cheering crowds juxtaposed against images of

newspaper headlines acclaiming the 'crowning glory' of the Everest news. 'On June 2 everything was new and exciting', the commentary announced, 'Britain had won a new victory'.¹⁶

Dating the death of imperial adventure is therefore a complex process, but in film there is no doubt about the appropriateness of an obituary by the 1980s. This was a decade that produced a range of colonial nostalgia films and television programmes, which, through their focus on India, earned the label 'raj nostalgia'.¹⁷ But although these still offered imperial spectacle in abundance, they moved towards a narrative of white personal and sexual relationships and an increasingly elaborate portrayal of white domestic community life that divorced imperial spectacle from adventure. Highlighting private life and personal dilemmas, colonial nostalgia in this period often showed white characters enacting their conflicts and divisions through encounters with colonised men, in plots that revolved around heterosexual and homosexual relationships, and rape, between white women and men, and colonised men. The colonised were associated with personal relationship and community only through their encounters with whites.

Colonial nostalgia of the 1980s has attracted considerable scholarly attention focusing on the meanings of white femininity. According to Laura Kipnis, since these films code colonialism as female, and represent female sexuality as pathological, their ideological project 'is to disavow the moral culpability for a tainted history and to sanitize that history by reenacting colonialism as a female disease, and thus confer responsibility onto the female'.¹⁸ John Hill, noting that white women are often associated in these films with questioning of British attitudes to the colonised,

suggests that they attract blame for loss of empire, not because they embody colonialism, but because they fail to uphold it.¹⁹ Richard Dyer, noting how colonial nostalgia of the 1980s embodies a shift in the gendering of the empire genre, dates this shift from the late 1940s, although he does not connect this with the fading of imperial adventure. He argues that women begin to be foregrounded as doubt and uncertainty creep in, and – in relation to colonial nostalgia of the 1980s -- that they represent impotence.²⁰

These arguments fit some of the developments in the 1945-59 period when, as empire began to be an increasingly problematic aspect of national identity associated with national weakness, failures could be associated with white femininity, and white women could also attract blame for the collapse of imperial boundaries. *Black Narcissus* (1947), set in India and released in the year of Indian independence, is a notable example of an immediate post-war empire film that represented female sexuality as pathological, associating loss of empire with female hysteria.²¹ But although in the 1960s a number of empire films returned to a focus on a homosocial world, to tell epic stories of manly adventure,²² in the 1950s it was the Second World War film that became a vehicle for the celebration of the virtues of the old imperial hero – courageous, resourceful, and associated with the traditional values of a middle- or upper-class public-school educated gentleman.²³ The empire film of the 1950s thus took an opposite trajectory from the Second World War film which, once the war was over, began to expel women from imagery, and transpose the idea of masculine heroism from an imperial to a Second World War setting. As the Second World War quickly assumed an importance place in ideas of national identity, national strength

was associated with white masculinity, while loss of imperial power – as in *Black Narcissus* – was associated with white femininity.

There were, however, a very wide and shifting range of meanings assigned to white femininity in empire films of the late 1940s and 1950s. White women could not only represent vulnerability, weakness and failure, but also be mobilised as symbols of a modernised imperial identity. In some films this meant a move away from an adventure narrative, but women could also be used to modernise the imperial adventure genre. This article considers the relationship between concerns to modernise imperial identity and the incorporation of women into empire films as part of an attempt to address a range of anxieties and tensions which were not peculiar to the 1950s, but were particularly prominent in that decade. One was anxiety about the collapse of boundaries between colonisers and colonised, black and white, in a period that not only saw loss of imperial power, but also the reversal of the colonial encounter through black migration to Britain. Another was the tension produced by the transition from empire to Commonwealth. A third was anxiety about American power, which had a long and specific history in the film industry and which, after Suez, became pervasive in many areas of British life, closely linked to anxieties about loss of imperial power.

On the eve of Coronation day in 1953, the *Daily Express* affirmed:

In a joyful sense, indeed, it is true that Britain is in decline -- for the other members of the Empire bulk larger in it every year. Britain is already no

better than an equal among other vigorous people. She can have no prouder or happier place in the world than that status of equality.²⁴

The celebration of the idea of a Commonwealth of equal nations in the *Daily Express* – a staunch champion of empire – suggests the prominence of a discourse of Commonwealth in Coronation year, and its importance to a modernised British identity.²⁵ Representations of the Coronation and Everest intermingled ideas of tradition and modernity, with a youthful Queen Elizabeth II symbolising the idea of a Britain that was rejuvenated after the exhaustion of the Second World War.²⁶ Edmund Hillary's arrival on the summit of Everest fitted this youthful image, fulfilling the hopes expressed by the Queen in her Christmas broadcast six months earlier, demonstrating the 'courageous spirit of adventure' flourishing in 'the younger countries of our Commonwealth'. As the *Daily Express* noted: 'Everest was conquered by a New Zealander. What could be more joyfully appropriate than such a reminder that the spirit of old Britain has spread through the whole of the young Commonwealth?'²⁷ Tenzing Norgay's arrival on the summit did not fit this image so easily, for Sherpas had traditionally been cast in the role of porters, not climbers. But the discourse of Commonwealth, particularly when combined with nationalist claims in Nepal and India that Norgay had reached the summit first, meant that it was extremely difficult to exclude him from the idea of adventure.²⁸ In July 1953 the *Daily Express* published 'Tenzing's Own Story' over four days – a story which they were keen to establish had been dictated by Tenzing and accurately translated.²⁹

The moment when Tenzing Norgay's story was elaborated was short-lived. After 1945 imperial adventure did not move to tell the story of the 'porter' or the colonised man, still less the colonised woman, and did not give the colonised identity or history. Rather by increasingly incorporating white women, films changed the way that whites were represented. A number of empire films moved away from a focus on expansive, active, virile masculinity, and themes of power and conquest were joined by domestic, romantic and familial imagery. Britishness could be associated with modernity through the figure of the emancipated woman in empire, and women could provide films with a more personal and liberal register, gesturing towards a discourse of Commonwealth. The shift in the gendering of the empire genre also softened the image of white male heroes, introducing heterosexual romantic plots into adventure landscapes, and moving the focus of imperial narratives away from a homosocial world. It was thus through shifting gender imagery that films produced a particular version of a modernised imperial identity, but one that bore little resemblance to the idea of a multiracial community of equal nations embodied in Commonwealth discourse. Whites continued to be constructed as superior, but the emphasis was increasingly on moral superiority.

Representations of the white woman in empire drew on a complex range of ideas and images, which showed her as strong and formidable as well as vulnerable and nurturing. The idea of the strong and intrepid female in empire had been mobilised by women to insert themselves into narratives of nation in a range of Victorian and Edwardian writing, and imperial adventure featuring heroines had been produced in literature for girls, although not in the empire film genre.³⁰ Post-war films drew on two connected images: the adventurous and pioneering imperial woman, and

the formidable and forceful emancipated woman. While this could produce a rather masculinised image, there was also emphasis on feminine qualities of nurturance, associating empire with ideas of welfare and development as a modernising project. Sometimes these qualities were split between two or more women where, for example, an older woman was shown as more vulnerable, and a younger woman as strong. However, they could also be aspects of the same woman -- who might advocate liberal views on race, and was concerned about the welfare of the colonised, but also carried a gun to protect herself against their violence.

An early post-war film that associated the white woman with the idea of empire as a modernising project in Africa was *Men of Two Worlds* (1946). Set in Tanganyika, it was commissioned by the Colonial Office and the Ministry of Information, and developed a view of an empire of development and welfare that had been strongly foregrounded in wartime propaganda, and a theme that had been particularly developed in relation to Africa: that of partnership.³¹ Gervas Huxley who was head of the empire division at the Ministry of Information during the war had recommended that ‘the imagination of the British people would be fired by such slogans as ‘war in the colonies against locusts’’. His wife, Elspeth Huxley, who worked at the BBC as liaison officer with the Colonial Office wrote a script for a Home Service programme on ‘War Against the Locusts’, broadcast in 1943 -- part of a series of three Empire programmes which also included ‘War Against Superstition’ and ‘Life of a District Officer’.³² *Men of Two Worlds* offers a story that merges these themes focusing on a moral mission to combat an outbreak of sleeping sickness caused by the tsetse fly – a crusade mounted by District Commissioner Randall (Eric Portman), and threatened by African superstition. The theme of partnership is represented through the figure of

Kisenga (Robert Adams) -- a Westernised African who has spent many years in Europe, and is employed in Africa to assist Randall to persuade Africans to move away from infested areas. The doctor responsible for medical investigations and reports on the spread of disease is an unmarried British woman -- Catherine Munro (Phyllis Calvert). The theme of welfare is thus linked to white femininity, but the emphasis is on Munro's emancipation and medical expertise, strengthening the associations of Britishness with modernity,

Munro is an ambivalent figure who is given the attributes characteristically associated with emancipated spinsters, as a formidable, forceful, and even domineering figure, as well as the emblems of the modern emancipated woman – she smokes and, on occasion, wears trousers and drinks whisky. In a metropolitan context where there was a strong post-war emphasis on a return to domesticity, and little representation of female doctors, Munro's behaviour and attributes would have marked her as irredeemably unfeminine. But in an imperial context they have a slightly different resonance, aligning her with British men as a representative of scientific rationality against African superstition. The brief appearance of another white British woman – Mrs. Upjohn (Cathleen Nesbitt) – provides a double-coding of British femininity within the film, for in a set-piece debate, Upjohn represents the opposite of rationality, arguing that science is incapable of understanding 'the soul of a primitive people' and that education will destroy this soul. Munro, however, is strongly associated with modern science and technology, particularly through her medical work, as she is shown taking samples of blood from unwilling Africans to test for infection and scrutinising slides down a microscope. She is also shown as a figure of considerable authority, speaking to large groups of Africans to explain the need to

sample blood, and providing the narrative voice for a film screening that warns them of the dangers of sleeping sickness. In emphasising the extent to which she shares the qualities of British men – authority, expertise, rationality -- gender difference between Britons is made less significant in an imperial context than racial difference between Britons and their ‘others’.

At the outset of the film Munro is more hard-line than Randall, who is prone to describe the resistance of Africans to his efforts to relocate them as ‘a bit ticklish’, while Munro advocates that he should ‘not stand any more nonsense from these people’. In these sequences it is her forcefulness rather than any romantic plot that softens his image by comparison, and in a number of encounters between them she is the advocate of firm action – ‘they’ll just have to be pushed’ – while he acknowledges the limitations of his power, defining his job as ‘standing nonsense’. The film moves, however, to reverse this as Munro and Randall clash over Kisenga’s fate, and Munro rebukes Randall for being too hardline. In these sequences her image becomes more nurturing as she cares for Kisenga, whom she diagnoses as suffering from a nervous breakdown, and she is shown adopting the role of nurse as well as doctor – tucking him into bed. Despite her forceful qualities, Munro is given the femininity of youth and glamour, and in the final images of the film which show Munro and Randall with their arms around each other at the bedside of the African, the suggestions of a romantic attachment soften both their images.

When the *Daily Telegraph* reviewed *Where No Vultures Fly* (1951) – another film that represented empire as a modernising project in Africa -- it commented that ‘the corner of the empire where it is set is fresh, beautiful and exciting to look at’.³³

This image of Kenya as idyllic and majestic spectacle was quickly succeeded by representations which showed it as a savage and murderous place where no white settler could feel secure against the atavistic Mau Mau. But films of colonial wars – including *The Planter's Wife* (1952) set in Malaya, and *Windom's Way* (1957), set on an unspecified island somewhere in 'the East', as well as *Simba* set in Kenya -- also softened imagery through the incorporation of women and children, and featured heterosexual romantic plots.³⁴ Through a focus on civilians rather than the military, they produced a hybrid adventure landscape, where domestic interiors and gardens were transformed into a main theatre of war, with wire over windows, and sandbags and searchlights in gardens. This was a landscape where white women carried guns and shot to kill, defending their homes against attack alongside men.

The opening of *Simba* marks the changing image of Kenya. It shows an expansive landscape, familiar from *Where No Vultures Fly*, where an African man is riding a bicycle along a path in daylight. Dismounting to investigate cries for help, and propping his bike against a tree-stump, he discovers a white man in pyjamas, lying seriously wounded on the ground. Instead of ministering to him, the African proceeds to butcher him. The film, however, quickly moves to the promise of a white romantic plot, showing Mary Crawford (Virginia McKenna) arriving at Nairobi airport to meet Allan Howard (Dirk Bogarde), who is on a visit to his brother from England. As they arrive at Allan's brother's farm, they enter a domestic interior reduced to chaos by a Mau Mau attack, where Allan's brother has been murdered. This juxtaposition of the happy anticipation associated with familial and domestic imagery against murder and chaos – the promise of brothers' reunion, as well as romance, against the devastation

of the Mau Mau attack -- is characteristic of a film that sets the ideas of white home, family and community against African violence.

The representation of Mary Crawford offers an example of the way in which the woman in empire could combine a range of qualities – strong and courageous as well as nurturing and compassionate. Although Mary's work is similar to that of Catherine Munro in *Men of Two Worlds*, bringing the benefits of Western medicine to Africans, it is represented as prompted by her concerns for Africans, emphasising her compassion rather than her expertise or authority. Moreover Mary acts as an assistant to an African doctor – Peter Karanja (Earl Cameron) -- and in many ways her image is aligned with Karanja's rather than with a British man, for they not only work together, but are the chief exponents of liberal views on race. Within a film that is concerned to represent a variety of white attitudes to Africans, it is Mary who speaks for a position broadly in line with the Commonwealth discourse of a multiracial family of nations, identifying this as a feminised discourse through its associations with welfare. Mary's work in the dispensary, however, is also associated with the idea of her independence as an emancipated woman and, like white females in other colonial war films, she carries a gun to protect herself against African violence. She therefore provides an image which resonates both with the liberalism of Commonwealth discourse, and the idea of the emancipated and courageous woman. In the final sequence these ideas are brought together as she is shown preparing to defend her lover's farm against African attackers with a gun, and then ministering to Karanja, who is wounded in this attack, and dies in her arms.

If Mary Crawford represents strength combined with nurturance, her mother is shown as more vulnerable. In a sequence which, like the opening of the film, juxtaposes the idea of happy anticipation associated with familial and domestic imagery against African violence, Fred Crawford tells his wife of his plan to get in a manager for the farm, so that they can take a holiday in England. They are sitting over a midday meal in a room where one of the few signs of the Mau Mau menace is that all internal doors are scrupulously locked after the entry and exit of servants. Immediately after Fred Crawford conjures for his wife a vision of ‘A year in England! Peace!’ – as she expresses it – he leaves the room to investigate noises in the kitchen, handing her a gun. Locking the door after him, his wife braces herself with a little straightening of her shoulders, against what she fears. Despite this sign of her courage, she is rendered a rather passive figure, imprisoned in a locked room while Fred takes action, and finally, as the Mau Mau try to break down the locked door, firing at it inexpertly. While Fred is murdered immediately in the kitchen, his wife is only wounded, and her vulnerability is emphasised by scenes of her death-bed.

Both Mary and Karanja minister to Mary’s mother, as she is dying, their images once more aligned. Despite the suggestions of closeness between them, the romantic plot in *Simba* is between whites. ‘Miscegenation’ – usually envisaged as relationships between white women and black men – was a major theme of immigration discourse in the period, expressing the fear of a collapse of boundaries between black and white. But although a number of British films, including empire films, showed interracial romances and sex between white men and non-white women, the portrayal of white women in empire films – long subject to censorship -- did not venture into the territory of interracial romance, maintaining the boundaries between colonisers and

colonised.³⁵ Karanja may be aligned with Mary in terms of their shared liberal perspective on race, their shared medical work and their friendship, but he functions in the plot as a character through whom Mary and Allan work out their emotional conflicts, and finally resolve them. Their conflicts reference different versions of white masculinity. Allan, aware that his murdered brother, David, like Mary, was Karanja's friend and shared his liberal position on race, poses the question 'Are we being weak? Was David just hiding weakness with a whole lot of ideals?' Allan's attempts to avoid weakness are expressed particularly through his suspicion and hostility towards Karanja -- bringing him into conflict with Mary who tells him: 'You're beginning to hate Africans aren't you'. This is a conflict that is also resolved through Karanja, as the film moves to show Allan's increasing respect for him, culminating in the final image where Allan and Mary tend Karanja's wounds. This final image suggests how far the romantic plot serves to soften Allan's image, for it is in tending the dying African that Allan and Mary are united.

The heroine of *North West Frontier* (1959), like Mary Crawford in *Simba*, embodies a range of attributes associated with the woman in empire: nurturing, intrepid, emancipated and independent. The film -- ostensibly set in 1905 -- shows a British attempt to get a Hindu prince to safety, away from Hindu-Muslim conflict, by taking him out of the war zone on a train. The nurturing qualities of Catherine Wyatt (Lauren Bacall) are emphasised through her care for the prince's safety and welfare during this dangerous journey in her role as his governess. At the same time she participates in the action, shooting and killing one of the passengers, a man of mixed Dutch-Indonesian parentage -- Van Leyden (Herbert Lom). In his determination to capture and kill the Indian prince, Van Leyden threatens the lives of all the whites on

the train. Finally, in a conventional image from adventure, he overcomes the British soldier hero – Captain Scott (Kenneth More) -- in a fight on the carriage-roof. In taking a gun and killing him, the heroine saves Scott's life.

Wyatt's most nurturing moment is also a result of independent action – this time, an action taken against Scott's advice. The film takes on an end of empire resonance, as the train halts at a station and the outcome of Hindu-Muslim conflict is shown – a massacre of people who had been on a refugee train fleeing the communal violence. Scott steps down onto the station platform to investigate and inspect the scene but, when he returns, Wyatt insists on making her own investigation, to find out whether anyone is still alive. As she walks back to the train, she provides a distinctly maternal figure for an adventure landscape, cradling an Indian baby in her arms. Her independent action is endorsed by Scott, who admits that he was wrong about the possibility of survivors of the massacre. Wyatt, however, is not only a maternal, but also a romantic figure. As in *Simba*, this is a romance that softens the image of the British hero, who acts with Wyatt as co-nurturer of the Indian prince, and later of the Indian baby, whom he calls 'young India'. This unconventional image of a soldier hero, whose responsibilities include a baby, is reinforced by the closing images of the film, which also seal the notion of romance between Wyatt and Scott. As Scott successfully delivers the passengers to a place of safety, and completes his mission by handing over the Indian prince to his guardians, the final image shows Scott emerging from the train, putting one arm around Wyatt and the other around the baby basket.

The challenges to conventional gender roles embodied in these images, and their connections to ideas of modernity are reinforced through the dialogue between Scott

and Wyatt which develops the romantic plot. This is given an Edwardian context appropriate to the setting of the film, as Scott asks Wyatt whether she is ‘one of those emancipated women we’re having so much trouble with at home?’ and dismisses them as ‘just a lot of cranks’, and she retorts that: ‘A woman who has a mind of her own is a crank! Well, I think men who spend their lives obeying orders are cranks!’. Since this discussion takes place while Wyatt is ministering to Scott, after he has been wounded by van Leyden, her assertion of the value of independence is combined with an emphasis on her femininity. Her companionate relationship with Scott, as they jointly take responsibility for the care of the prince and the baby, suggests contemporary rather than Edwardian ideas of familial relationships. Edwardian mores are represented much more clearly in the British female figure on the train – Lady Windham (Ursula Jeans), the wife of the British governor. Windham is not only a much older woman, but also represents traditional attitudes to sex roles, where she is shown supporting her husband, with an idea of duty that includes conceding his wish that she should get out of the war zone, however reluctantly. The contrast between the modern and traditional woman is thus also a contrast between Americanness and Britishness, and is reinforced by the casting of a high-ranking Hollywood star to play Wyatt, through reference to the ideas of modernity associated with American popular culture.

North West Frontier, despite its historical setting, might be regarded as a more successful attempt to modernise the empire genre than *Men of Two Worlds* which told a contemporary story. Both deploy similar images of the emancipated woman who is independent and forceful. In attempting to shift imperial narratives towards ideas of Commonwealth by showing empire as a modernising project in Africa, fuelled by

concerns for the welfare of Africans, *Men of Two Worlds* produces an image of an earnest undertaking where the emancipated woman is characterised by medical expertise. In contrast, *North West Frontier* provides exciting adventure, and Wyatt's image offers this the glamour and modernity associated with Hollywood.

'So far as films go, we are now a colonial people,' stated Grierson's *World Film News* in 1937, referring to British-American relations in cinema.³⁶ The shift in the gendering of the empire genre in film addressed anxieties about American power as well as the transition from empire to Commonwealth. These were anxieties that had a long history in the film industry. In the 1930s, 80% of films consumed in Britain and India were American, and the lion's share of box-office receipts to producers went to Hollywood.³⁷ Hollywood domination of British cinema was a main focus of anxieties about the Americanisation of popular culture in the 1930s, often associated with the threat of feminisation. British critics characteristically condemned Hollywood films as slick, shallow and over-emotional, undermining solid traditional virtues by their commercialised trivia and glamour, and turning young girls' heads by inviting them to ape Hollywood stars.³⁸

After 1945, anxieties about Americanisation intensified. In 1953 there were protests in Britain that, when shown on American television, the solemnity and dignity of the Coronation ceremony had been debased by commercial breaks.³⁹ Youth culture was a main focus of anxieties, and the popularity of rock and roll, milk bars and horror comics was seen as exemplifying moral decline and depravity.⁴⁰ But the preoccupation with Americanisation, and the focus on youth culture, indicated a wide adoption of American popular culture in Britain where it was strongly associated with

modernity. After the Suez debacle of 1956, when America effectively vetoed the British attack on Egypt, anxiety about American power became pervasive in many areas of British life, and was strongly linked to anxieties about loss of imperial power.

Incorporating white women into empire imagery offered a way not only of modernising narratives, but also of modernising the empire genre, through reference to Hollywood models. Hollywood had set a precedent for such modernisation in *The Rains Came* (1939), an empire film which, like *Men of Two Worlds*, moved away from ideas of adventure, conquest and subjugation of the colonised, to emphasise British concerns for their welfare, foregrounding emancipated white women.⁴¹ More generally, Hollywood models set a precedent for incorporating women into adventure landscapes in Westerns. Making films that drew on Hollywood developments, and Americanised British imagery, while demonstrating the dominance of Hollywood, could also serve as one strategy to secure the survival of the British film industry -- enhancing the possibilities of box-office success in America as well as Britain.

The traffic in images between America and Britain, empire/ Commonwealth in the 1930s was complex for, however subordinate Britain's position in the film industry, Hollywood provided a range of films on British history, literature, and culture which were popular in America as well as Britain.⁴² H. Mark Glancy comments on this range of films representing Britain in the period 1930-1945: 'No other foreign country was portrayed by Hollywood so often and with such apparent admiration'.⁴³ Admiration in films which showed the British at home was generally reserved for ancient institutions and customs, suggesting an opposition between the modernity of American masculinity and British masculinity mired in tradition. But

Hollywood also produced a number of films celebrating the British empire which portrayed a different version of British masculinity associated with adventure, resourcefulness and excitement. It was also Hollywood that broke with this convention in *The Rains Came*. Central characters in this film, as in *Simba*, are a Western-educated doctor – the Indian prince, Rama Safti (Tyrone Power) – and a white woman, Lady Edwina Esketh (Myrna Loy), who volunteers to help him at the hospital. The romance between the two – a theme that was avoided in British films – is punished by her death. Like *Men of Two Worlds*, *The Rains Came* offered a contemporary story that moved away from adventure and feminised empire imagery, linking ideas of welfare to white femininity, particularly through the legacy that Esketh leaves to the Indian state depicted on her death. The film was publicised as ‘the true face of modern India’.⁴⁴

If empire films that moved away from adventure, like *Men of Two Worlds*, were following one strand of Hollywood developments, those that Americanised the empire genre by drawing on imagery from Westerns were following another. Hollywood empire films in the 1930s had merged British and American versions of adventure genres, often casting American actors in the role of British heroes, and claiming the manly virtues they portrayed, however indirectly, for white Americans. This merging of British and American identities in a process of Americanisation of British adventure narratives was also apparent in the resemblance between Hollywood empire films and Westerns, due in part to the practice of shooting both genres in Lone Pine, California. Jeffrey Richards observes that when *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935) was produced there in 1934, Gary Cooper played the leading role, replacing the original choice – the British actor, Henry Wilcoxon -- whom the director found ‘authentic but

dull'. Cooper was advised to think of the film 'as a western set in India'.⁴⁵ The merging of the empire film with Westerns was increasingly evident in Hollywood films made during and immediately after the War.⁴⁶

After 1945, a number of British films followed the advice offered to Gary Cooper, and thought of imperial adventure as Westerns set in empire. By drawing on the Western, the empire film could offer an image that, by the mid-1950s, was the most common visual image of adventure consumed in Britain, as cinema attendance declined and Westerns were imported by the new commercial television companies.⁴⁷ *North West Frontier* thus belongs to a history of attempts to modernise imperial adventure through drawing on Hollywood imagery. Like earlier examples of adventure narratives that had incorporated women into frontier imagery, *North West Frontier* drew heavily on the Western, with the train occupying the place of a stagecoach, as hordes of Indians descended to attack it, and were successfully beaten off.⁴⁸ The casting of Lauren Bacall in the role of an American female, caught up in a British imperial adventure, was part of an attempt not only to modernise the narrative through her associations with Hollywood, but to make a film that would be commercially successful. This is a film which may take the British empire as its subject, but where all the attention goes to American models and American markets. Its director, J. Lee Thompson, moved to Hollywood in the early 1960s, having dreamed since childhood of being 'an *American* film director'.⁴⁹ Its reviewer in the *Daily Herald* enthused that: 'At last we have beaten Hollywood at its own game'.⁵⁰ Its makers – Rank -- had announced a policy of only producing films that had international entertainment value in 1956 and, in their determination to get films into

the American market had established Rank Film Distributors of America in 1957 to penetrate the American market and bypass the American distributors.⁵¹

But *North West Frontier* is a post-Suez text, and its concerns with American power are not only about beating Hollywood at its own game. This is an Americanised text, that also counters fears of Americanisation through its plot line. The romantic attachment that develops between Wyatt and Scott signifies American-British friendship, and produces some sense of American admiration for the British. Wyatt, initially sceptical about the British and their empire, is converted from the view that they are ninnies who spend all their time drinking tea, and comes to respect them – and particularly the soldier hero’s vitality and resourcefulness. There is no evidence that *North West Frontier* was ever shown in India but, had it been, it seems likely that its imagery would have been as offensive to Indians as that in *The Drum* which, when released in Bombay in 1938 had caused protests which brought the city to a virtual halt for more than a week.⁵² Indians had also protested at Hollywood films which celebrated the British empire in the 1930s and 1940s, but by 1959, as Britain’s imperial frontiers collapsed, Hollywood was no longer producing such films. If Britain wanted admiration from Americans, it had to portray this in its own productions.

The empire film remained one of the most important sources of visual imagery of racial difference in Britain in the 1950s. Despite Commonwealth migration to Britain in this period, there was a dearth of visual images of immigrants in the metropolis in films or television programmes, and television documentaries provided the dominant visual image of immigration as a social problem.⁵³ Empire films --

continuing to portray black people in an ‘elsewhere’ defined by empire and characterised by exoticism, primitivism, or barbarism -- maintained the idea of boundaries between empire and metropolis. This imagery reinforced the idea that black migrants from empire and Commonwealth were ‘dark strangers’ who did not belong in Britain: an idea that reversed Commonwealth discourse with its emphasis on familial imagery, and its ideas of a multi-racial community of equal nations.⁵⁴ Empire films, although gesturing towards more liberal ideas by softening the image of Britons, also undermined Commonwealth discourse through their racial imagery.

In many ways the shift in the gendering of the empire genre served to reinforce conventional racial imagery, reinforcing oppositions between Britishness and various versions of colonised masculinity as primitive, brutal and violent. The violence of the colonised is a main theme of both *Simba* and *North West Frontier* – the latter beginning with Kenneth More’s narrative voice informing the audience that India is ‘a country of many religions’ where ‘men find many reasons for killing each other’. In both films British violence is no longer about conquest and subjugation of the colonised, but self-defence – a theme which is highlighted through the incorporation of female violence into these images. In *Simba* women bear arms to protect themselves and their homes against attack, while in *North West Frontier* Wyatt kills Van Leyden to save Scott’s life. Oppositions between British modernity and African primitivism are also strengthened in *Men of Two Worlds* through the foregrounding of a British female, since her rationality and expertise are in contrast not only to African women – who are all characterised as backward and hostile to Western medicine – but also to African men. The double coding of white femininity as both nurturing and intrepid could be used to strengthen a further version of colonised masculinity, as the

effeminacy of the colonised man was contrasted with the forceful, strong, or courageous qualities of white women.

The closing images of *Men of Two Worlds* and *Simba* provide a particularly interesting example of some of the complexities involved in the interplay of ideas of gender and racial difference. Both show a white female and male coming together over the body of an African man who is on the point of death. In both cases the African man represents a version of masculinity that had previously received little attention in British empire films -- the Westernised or Western-educated African. This African man is on the point of death because of his Westernisation – his fate a consequence of the way he has been rejected by fellow Africans as a white man. As the white female and male are united in their care for the African man, these are images that produce a strong contrast between the idea of his unbelonging against white connectedness

In *Men of Two Worlds* a number of conventional racial themes are reworked around new figures in various contrasts between the Westernised African man and the white woman. Early sequences emphasise Kisenga's modernity, showing his performance as a solo pianist at a wartime concert in the National Gallery in London, wearing a suit and bow-tie, accompanied by an entirely white orchestra, and acclaimed by a white audience. On his return to Africa the emphasis on his Westernisation continues, as he acclaims the benefits of Western education, and works for the British to persuade Africans to leave infested areas. In these images his Westernisation is contrasted with other male Africans, who identify him as a white man who does not belong in Africa. Westernisation is also a masculine attribute,

shared by Kisenga's brother-in-law who dresses in Western clothes and runs a dispensary. In contrast all African women believe in the potions of the witch-doctor, and burn down the dispensary.

Kisenga's illness reverses this imagery of modernity, signifying the fragility of Westernisation. The battle between the forces of progress, represented by the British and the forces of darkness, represented by an African witch-doctor who opposes their efforts, is enacted through the figure of Kisenga. Diagnosed as a 'nervous breakdown' by Munro, the film shows Kisenga's illness as a result both of Africans disowning him, and of his belief that he will die because he has been cursed by the witch-doctor. One message of the film – that as an educated African Kisenga is a key figure in African modernisation – is constantly undercut in the sequences that show his illness, where he is reduced to a pitiful state, overwhelmed by superstition, and regressing to a state of primitivism. Abandoning Western clothes, Kisenga is contrasted with Munro, who wears trousers when she visits him. This reinforces the idea of regression not only to primitivism but also effeminacy, as Kisenga's voice becomes high-pitched, and he loses all the attributes of Western masculinity – crying, sweating, shaking. In the final images where Munro and Randall keep a vigil by his bedside, they are both cool and collected, while Kisenga lies sweating and hallucinating. Munro's image is aligned with Randall's against the Westernised African. Kisenga is thus constructed as effeminate and primitive in opposition to the white woman as strong and modern.

In *Simba* the dying man over whom a white couple come together is also a Westernised African. Peter Karanja is dying because he has been murdered by the Mau Mau – led by his father -- after he has appealed to them to stop using violence. In

a film that associates the Mau Mau with darkness, showing them at night while whites are usually shown in day-time, the Mau Mau are only shown in light when they attack white farms. In contrast Karanja is generally shown in daylight -- his image connected with the whites with whom he associates. In the final sequence, however, both whites and blacks are shown in darkness as the Mau Mau gather to attack Allan's farm, their faces lit only by the flare of torches. In this sequence Karanja moves away from whites to speak to blacks, rejecting the gun that Allan hands him. He also rejects Allan's characterisation of Africans as 'a bunch of howling savages', claiming them as 'my brothers'. Karanja's speech to the Africans is shot from the perspective of Mary and Allan, who stand watching behind Karanja, and it is Mary, interpreting Karanja's words for Allan, who speaks his words for a Western audience: 'You must choose. Will you follow my father, or will you follow me and those like me'.

Karanja's appeal is rejected. Like Kisenga, he is disowned by Africans as a white man. Moreover it is his father who disowns him, in words that are also spoken by Mary: 'He's not my son. He's a white man'. Karanja's father is represented in opposition to Karanja not only through his advocacy of violence, as leader of the Mau Mau, but also through appearance – he wears what the British describe as 'a blanket', and is heavily bejewelled, in contrast to Karanja's suits and ties. As he moves to kill his son, and in his turn is shot by Allan – defending Karanja from behind -- the Africans finally advance on Karanja and seriously wound him. Unlike Kisenga, Karanja is associated neither with primitivism nor effeminacy, but with courage and independence, endorsed by Mary speaking his words, and the scene has Christian connotations as he speaks to an assembled gathering of 'my brothers'. His death marks the defeat of his position by primitivism. Showing Africans making the choice

that he has offered them by killing Karanja rather than following him, the final images of *Simba* endorse Allan's view. Far from being 'my brothers', Africans are 'a bunch of howling savages'.

Richard Dyer suggests that Karanja embodies the possibility of blacks becoming like whites, and that the anxiety surrounding this possibility is the foundation of *Simba's* narrative.⁵⁵ If a fear of the collapse of boundaries between black and white characterised representations of Westernised men, however, this was resolved through giving them particular narratives of unbelonging. In portraying the plight of Kisenga and Karanja -- rejected, cursed or murdered -- both *Men of Two Worlds* and *Simba* attribute to them a crisis of identity associated with being disowned by other Africans. A sense of unbelonging in both black and white worlds is articulated by Karanja, when he speaks about whites to Mary: 'Nobody quite trusts me -- you know that', and when he speaks of Africans to Mary and Allan as he is dying: 'They didn't listen'. Kisenga returning to Africa in early sequences, repeatedly refers to it as 'home', but as he becomes ill, he tells his sister: 'I thought I had two worlds -- now I have none at all'. Since the final images of both films show white couples coming together over the bodies of these men, forming a kind of family group, they are associated with the idea of family only through their connections with whites. The emphasis on a familial and caring image of white benevolence produces a hierarchy where black men are rendered like powerless children in their suffering.

While these films produce particular narratives of unbelonging for Westernised Africans, the final image of *Simba* offers a more general narrative of unbelonging. It shows an African child -- Joshua -- walking towards the form of family group that is

offered by the figures of Mary, Allan and Karanja, and focuses on a close-up of Joshua's face. Joshua's image has been read in different ways -- Richard Dyer suggesting that he symbolises 'the only possible hope for the future', while Christine Geraghty sees him as 'the symbol of the uncertain future', used in the film 'to restore a liberal position that has been thoroughly defeated'.⁵⁶ Since early sequences are careful to establish that Joshua is a victim of Mau Mau violence, this is an image that also acts as a final reminder of African incapacity for family and community. Joshua is familyless, abandoned, and wandering aimlessly around Allan's farm because, as Allan's servant tells him: 'He belongs to nobody. No family at all Bwana. Mau Mau kill all of them'. Like Karanja, he is a victim not of British, but of African violence, so that this final image, as well as Karanja's death, tended by Mary and Allan, contrast white capacity for relationship and community with black incapacity.

The domestication of the frontier meant that capacity for personal relationships, family, and community became an increasingly important marker of racial difference. The incorporation of white women, and the modification of the masculine adventure story, with its imagery of conquest, power and action by the introduction of familial, romantic and domestic imagery, meant that home, family and community were constructed as white. The development of a narrative of unbelonging for the colonised in empire was reinforced by the absence of colonised women from most imagery. While whites enacted and resolved their conflicts and divisions through relationships to colonised men, the colonised were associated with family and relationships mainly through their connections with whites.

The erasure of the colonised woman is particularly evident in *North West Frontier*. Like Joshua in *Simba*, the closing image of *North West Frontier* acts as a reminder of the incapacity for family and community of the colonised. The Indian baby inside the basket Scott is carrying as he walks away with Wyatt is a sign of the appalling consequences of the violence of the colonised for their own children -- consequences that have been carefully established in the massacre sequence, where the film dwells on the horror of this violence. Scott and then Wyatt step down on to the station platform to inspect the scene of the massacre, and it is represented from their perspective. The camera lingers on the image. Scott steps over bodies piled up on the station platform. There is a close-up of a blood-soaked body. The camera moves to bodies hanging out of carriage doors and windows. As Scott returns to the train and Wyatt goes out to find out whether anyone is still alive, she steps over piles of bodies, and goes inside first one carriage, and then another to find tiers of bodies inside. Her gleaming white dress is set against the scenes of carnage. There is virtual silence on the sound track, disturbed only by the sound of flies buzzing, and the cries of vultures. The image resonates with the Indian independence and partition massacres of 1946-8.

Wyatt's rescue of the Indian baby provides the only reference to a colonised woman in the film. Returning to the train, she tells her fellow passengers that: 'He was completely hidden. The mother had covered him with her body', providing an obscure reference to Indian motherhood. It is through this baby that Indian communal violence brings the white passengers on the train together. Most do not have family connections – Wyatt is a widow, Mr. Bridie (Wilfred Hyde White) lives alone, Scott is a soldier – and they represent a range of different attitudes to the imperial project. But they are connected by their horror at the violence of Indians and their consequences.

Lady Windham tells Wyatt: ‘that was a very courageous thing to do my dear’. Mr. Bridie provides the baby with a basket, and together they improvise a feeding device out of one of Windham’s gloves. Although British military and political order is restored at the end of the film, its final sequence shows Scott and Wyatt coming together over the baby basket. The erasure of the figure of the colonised woman, who is present in the film only in Wyatt’s words, demonstrates Indian incapacity for community, and white connectedness.

In a period when there was increasing anxiety about the collapse of boundaries between coloniser and colonised, black and white, empire films were an important source of racial imagery for British audiences, and worked to maintain the idea of boundaries between empire and metropolis. In moving to change the image of whites, particularly through the incorporation of women, they adapted the imperial narrative, giving it a more liberal gloss associated with the attempt to modernise imperial identities through the idea of Commonwealth. In giving attention to American genres and markets by drawing on the Western, they modernised the narrative giving it Hollywood associations, especially when Lauren Bacall was cast as one of the women. Within a context where so much attention was given to America and Western audiences, there was no move to give the colonised history or identity.

While the incorporation of women could provide films with a more liberal register, it also suggested the fragility of Commonwealth ideas. Like immigration discourse which showed migrants from the Commonwealth as dark strangers who did not belong in Britain, empire films gave narratives of unbelonging to the colonised in empire. The shift in the gendering of the empire genre in this period anticipated

developments in the colonial nostalgia films and television programmes of the 1980s, which divorced imperial spectacle from adventure. Capacity for personal relationships and domestic community began to be shown as a marker of difference between coloniser and colonised, where colonised men were associated with family and community only through relationships with whites, while colonised women, if shown at all, rarely spoke. The conventional imperial narrative had claimed empire for white men and their adventures away from home. As empire films moved to incorporate women and focus more on white familial life or domestic community, and as empire increasingly became a subject of memory and nostalgia, it was claimed as British history and British heritage. As Scott pronounces at the scene of the massacre of Indians in *North West Frontier*: 'Have a good look and see what happens when the British aren't around to keep order'.

¹ Men of Two Worlds (Thorold Dickinson, 1946); Simba (Brian Desmond Hurst, 1955); North West Frontier (J. Lee Thompson, 1959).

² Martin Green, Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914 (Cornell University Press, 1988); John McClure, Late Imperial Romance (Verso, 1994). For a critique of what he calls 'the end-of-adventure arguments' which, he suggests, concentrate on 'serious' and 'literary' forms at the expense of popular narratives, see Graham Dawson, Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imaginings of Masculinities (Routledge, 1994), pp. 171-2. .

³ Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness, p. 42; McClure, Late Imperial Romance, pp. 11-12.

⁴ There is an extensive literature on the impact of the First World War on ideals of masculinity and femininity. See, for example, Bernard Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War (Constable, 1965); Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (Oxford University Press, 1975); Robert Wohl, The Generation of 1914 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980); Elaine Showalter, 'Rivers and Sassoon: The Inscription of Male Gender Anxieties', in Margaret Higgonet, ed., Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars (Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 61-9; Alison Light, Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars (Routledge, 1991); Susan Kingsley Kent, Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain (Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁵ Green, Dreams of Adventure, p. 323.

⁶ Light, Forever England, p. 212.

⁷ See the discussion of The Four Feathers (Zoltan Korda, 1939) in Kathryn Dodd and Philip Dodd, 'Engendering the Nation: British Documentary Film, 1930-1939', in Andrew Higson, ed., Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema (Cassell, 1996), pp. 45-6. Sarah Street has also noted that the contradictions of imperialism began to surface in empire films of the 1930s, and argues that in The Drum (Zoltan Korda, 1938) contradictory themes, sounds and images 'emphasise the sense of imperial insecurity which pervaded the 1930s'. British National Cinema (Routledge, 1997), pp. 43-6.

⁸ This is the view taken in Jeffrey Richards, ‘ ‘Patriotism with Profit’: British Imperial Cinema in the 1930s’, in James Curran and Vincent Porter ed., British Cinema History (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983), pp. 245-256; Jeffrey Richards, ‘Boy’s Own Empire: Feature Films and Imperialism in the 1930s’, in John MacKenzie, ed., Imperialism and Popular Culture (Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 140-164; Marcia Landy, British Genres: Cinema and Society 1930-1960 (Princeton University Press, 1991), Chapter 3; Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (Routledge, 1994); Lola Young, Fear of the Dark: ‘Race’, Gender and Sexuality in the Cinema (Routledge, 1996); Jeffrey Richards, Films and British National Identity (Manchester University Press, 1997), Part I. John MacKenzie’s important criticism of the view that empire was discredited after 1918 explores the popular culture of the period, including film. See Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion (Manchester University Press, 1984).

⁹ Landy, British Genres, p. 97.

¹⁰ E. Ann Kaplan explores the relationship between the ‘male’ gaze and the ‘imperial’ gaze in Looking For the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze (Routledge, 1997).

¹¹ Prem Chowdhry, Colonial India and the Making of Empire Cinema: Image, Ideology and Identity (Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 17-28. Since many films of the British empire were produced in Hollywood, the term ‘British’ is used to refer to images produced in America as well as Britain. When used without quotations marks, the term British refers to images produced in Britain, but not America.

¹² See James Burns, ‘Watching Africans Watch Films: Theories of Spectatorship in British Colonial Africa’, Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 20 (2000), pp. 197-211.

¹³ Chowdhry, Colonial India.

¹⁴ Michael Balcon, ‘Let British Films Be Ambassadors to the World’, Kinematograph Weekly, 11 January 1945, p. 163.

¹⁵ Illustrated London News, 3 January 1953.

¹⁶ The Conquest of Everest (Countryman Films, 1953).

¹⁷ These included Flame Trees of Thika (Thames television, 1981), set in Africa; Heat and Dust (James Ivory, 1982); A Passage to India (David Lean, 1984); Jewel in the Crown (1984 – a fourteen episode

television serial which was adapted from Paul Scott's The Raj Quartet – a series of novels published between 1966 and 1975).

¹⁸ Laura Kipnis, 'The Phantom Twitchings of an Amputated Limb: Sexual Spectacle in the Post-Colonial Epic', Wide Angle 11 (1989), p. 50.

¹⁹ John Hill, British Cinema in the 1980s (Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 112.

²⁰ Richard Dyer, 'There's Nothing I Can Do! Nothing!', in Richard Dyer, White (Routledge, 1997), p. 184.

²¹ Black Narcissus (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1947).

²² Lawrence of Arabia (David Lean, 1962); Zulu (Cyril Endfield, 1964); Khartoum (Basil Dearden, 1966).

²³ See Andy Medhurst, '1950s War Films', in Geoff Hurd ed., National Fictions: World War Two in British Films and Television, (London, BFI Publishing, 1984), pp. 35-9; Nicholas Pronay, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema: A Survey of the Films Relating to World War II Made in Britain between 1945 and 1960', Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 8 (1988), pp. 39-54; Neil Rattigan, 'The Last Gasp of the Middle Class : British War Films of the 1950s', in Wheeler Dixon, ed., Reviewing British Cinema, 1900-1992 (State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 143-52; John Ramsden, 'Refocusing 'The People's War': British War Films of the 1950s', Journal of Contemporary History 33 (1998), pp. 35-63; Michael Paris, Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture 1850-2000 (Reaktion Books, 2000), pp. 222-230. Ramsden notes a dearth of studies of British post-war films about the war of 1939-45 by comparison with films made during the war.

²⁴ Daily Express, 1 June, 1953.

²⁵ The language of 'colonial' and 'colonialism' was increasingly abandoned in the 1950s. The Colonial Review changed its title to Overseas Quarterly in March 1958. The Committee and Institute for Colonial Studies at Oxford University substituted the word 'Commonwealth' for 'Colonial' in its title in 1956. See Richard Symonds, Oxford and Empire: The Last Lost Cause? (Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 290.

²⁶ The discourse of the Coronation is explored in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort, and Chris Waters, eds., Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964 (Rivers Oram Press, 1999), pp. 1-3.

²⁷ Daily Express, 3 June, 1953.

²⁸ For representations of Everest and Norgay see Gordon Stewart, 'Tenzing's Two Wrist-Watches: The Conquest of Everest and Late Imperial Culture in Britain 1921-1953', Past and Present 149 (1995), pp. 170-197; Peter Hansen, 'Confetti of Empire: the Conquest of Everest in Nepal, India, Britain, and New Zealand', Comparative Studies in Society and History 42 (2000), pp. 307-32; Peter Hansen, 'Coronation Everest: the Empire and Commonwealth in the 'Second Elizabethan Age' ', in Stuart Ward, ed., British Culture and the End of Empire (Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 57-72.

²⁹ Daily Express, 1,2,3, and 6 July, 1953.

³⁰ For explorations of colonising women's attachment to imperial identity as one amongst a complex range of responses to empire see Margaret Strobel, European Women and the Second British Empire (Indiana University Press, 1991); Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, ed., Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance (Indiana University Press, 1992); Inderpal Grewal, Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel (Leicester University Press, 1996); Clare Midgley, ed., Gender and Imperialism (Manchester University Press, 1998). For the incorporation of girls and women into imperial adventures in literature for girls, see Kathryn Castle, Britannia's Children: Reading Colonialism Through Children's Books and Magazines (Manchester University Press, 1996); Richard Phillips, Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure (Routledge, 1997). For representations of the intrepid imperial female in the post-1945 period, see Wendy Webster, 'Elspeth Huxley: Gender, Empire and Narratives of Nation, 1935-64', Women's History Review 8 (1999), pp. 527-545.

³¹ Rosaleen Smyth, 'Britain's African Colonies and British Propaganda During the Second World War', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 141 (1985), pp. 65-82; Thomas Hajkowski, 'The BBC, the Empire, and the Second World War, 1939-1945', Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, 22 (2002), pp. 135-155; Barbara Bush, Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945 (Routledge, 1999).

³² Smyth, 'Britain's African Colonies', p. 70; BBC Written Archives, Elspeth Huxley, Scriptwriter, 1943-62.

³³ Daily Telegraph, 6 November, 1951.

³⁴ The Planter's Wife (Ken Annakin, 1952); Windom's Way (Ronald Neame, 1957).

³⁵ British films of empire that showed relationships between white men and non-white women included The Seekers (Ken Annakin, 1954); Outcast of the Islands (Carol Reed, 1951).

³⁶ Quoted in Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the Government of 1927-1984 (British Film Institute, 1985), p. 58.

³⁷ Hollywood's share of the Indian market fell very rapidly in the decade after the early 1930s – from 80% to 45% of all releases. See H. Mark Glancy, When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood 'British' Film 1939-45 (Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 17.

³⁸ For a discussion of the relationship between the American and European film industries between the wars, see Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby, eds., 'Film Europe' and 'Film America': Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange 1920-1939 (University of Exeter Press, 1999). For fears of the cultural effects of American cinema in Britain see Andrew Higson, Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain (Clarendon Press, 1995). esp. pp. 15-22.

³⁹ The controversy over the handling of the Coronation ceremony on American television was the subject of debate in the House of Lords. See The Times, 18 June, 1953.

⁴⁰ For post-war fears of Americanisation, see Paul Swann, The Hollywood Feature Film in Postwar Britain (Croom Helm, 1987); Dick Hebdige, Hiding in the Light (Routledge, 1988), Chapter 3; Neil Nehring, Flowers in the Dustbin: Culture, Anarchy, and Postwar England (University of Michigan Press, 1993), Chapter 4; Richard Pells, Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II (Basic Books, 1997).

⁴¹ The Rains Came (Clarence Brown, 1939).

⁴² Hollywood's 'British' films are discussed in Glancy, When Hollywood Loved Britain.

⁴³ Glancy, When Hollywood Loved Britain, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Chowdhry, Colonial India, p. 193.

⁴⁵ See Richards, 'Boy's Own Empire', p. 145.

⁴⁶ This is particularly evident in Soldiers Three (Tay Garnett, 1951). Jeffrey Richards observes that three epics of British India (Lives of a Bengal Lancer, Four Men and a Prayer and Gunga Din) were 'remade as cavalry westerns'. Soldiers Three was the remake of Gunga Din. See 'Boy's Own Empire', p. 157.

⁴⁷ Dawson, Soldier Heroes, pp. 236-7. Cinema attendance declined from 26.3 million annual admissions in 1951 to 22.7 million in 1955 and 17.6 million in 1957. See Swann, The Hollywood Feature Film, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Earlier examples include The Overlanders (Harry Watt, 1946); The Seekers (Ken Annakin, 1954).

⁴⁹ Steve Chibnall, J. Lee Thompson (Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 278.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Chibnall, J. Lee Thompson, p. 224.

⁵¹ See Vincent Porter, 'Methodism Versus the Market Place: The Rank Organisation and British Cinema', in Robert Murphy, ed., The British Cinema Book (British Film Institute, 1997), p. 129.

⁵² Chowdhry, Colonial India, pp. 28-46.

⁵³ Of the few films of the period that featured blacks in the metropolis, Pool of London (Basil Dearden, 1950) showed a black seaman as a transient visitor, while Sapphire (Basil Dearden, 1959) associated black migrants with crime and low-life. The BBC documentary Has Britain a Colour Bar? broadcast on 31 January 1955, opens by asserting that 'we have a Colonial problem on our hands', identifying this as 'the problem arising out of the increasing numbers of coloured people in this country'.

⁵⁴ See Chris Waters, 'Dark Strangers' in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963', Journal of British Studies 36 (1997), pp. 207-238; Kathleen Paul, Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era (Cornell University Press, 1997); Wendy Webster, Imagining Home: Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945-64 (UCL Press, 1998); Bush, Imperialism, Race and Resistance, Chapters 8 & 9.

⁵⁵ Richard Dyer, 'White', Screen 29 (1988), p. 51.

⁵⁶ Dyer, 'White', p. 53; Christine Geraghty, British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the 'New Look' (Routledge, 2000), p. 126.