JUNGLE FILMS IN EGYPT:
RACE, ANTI-BLACKNESS, AND EMPIRE

By Ifdal Elsaket

> You, O Egyptians, are the whiteness of the eye, and we are its Blackness, and sight cannot be complete without whiteness.
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> —*Naduja* (1944)[1]

The scene could be from any of hundreds of jungle films. Safari-suited swashbucklers stumble across an "African" community. There are leopards and tigers, men and women dancing around a fire, torches hoisted in the air, drums pounded rhythmically, tribal spears threatening a distinctly "lighter" female hostage, tied up and ready to be burnt at the stake. The swashbucklers interrupt the dancing and drumming and attempt to save the woman from the ostensibly threatening tribe. But this scene is from *Wadi al-Nujum*, an Egyptian film made in 1943, when Egypt was still under British occupation and fighting its own battles against colonial misrepresentation.

These tropes entrench African otherness. They are typical of the jungle film genre, epitomized by the Tarzan franchise. Beginning with the 1918 film adaptation of Edgar Rice Burroughs's novel *Tarzan and the*

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Apes, audiences around the world enjoyed a steady stream of American and European jungle films.[2] A byproduct of late nineteenth-century "animal films," jungle films replayed fantasies of colonial power in the context of the post-World War I sense of imperial decline. In America, Hollywood jungle films enjoyed their heyday in the 1930s and 1940s. A racially charged genre, jungle films deepened Hollywood's relationship with racism, coloniality, and the production of empire. Typically set in a fabricated African terrain, these jungle films reduced people and landscapes to a series of shots that recall what Richard Abel describes as the fatal "analogy between the camera and the rifle."[3] Relying on a violent juxtaposition between Euro-American superiority and African subservience, marked visually by white and Black bodies respectively, these films frequently included images of bare-chested Black porters carrying luggage on their heads for a group of safari-suited, pith-helmeted, armed white adventurers.[4]

Much has been written about jungle films, a violent colonial genre that operates as part of what, in another context, Edward Said called "narratives about geographical possession."[5] Eric Cheyfitz, Gail Bederman, and Alex Vernon, for example, have explored how the hierarchies of power inherent in the jungle genre reflected psychological, class, racial, and gender relations in European and American societies.[6] These and other scholars examine American and European representations of "African" people and landscapes through the Tarzan franchise. What has not been addressed, however, is how colonized or occupied people, struggling for independence and fighting against colonial stereotyping, reacted to and adapted this genre. An examination of this adaptation may help us think through the workings of empire and race in colonial settings.

The popular and commercial success of Tarzan narratives, paeans to virile whiteness and empire, among Egyptian and other Arab audiences raises questions about their appeal in different contexts. This article considers what happens to Tarzan when he is removed from a Euro-American context. It unpacks the way directors and producers transplanted the jungle film within an Egyptian colonial context by examining two Egyptian-made jungle films, *Wadi al-Nujum* (Valley of the Stars, 1943) and *Naduja* (1944).[7]

The films demonstrate key tensions in Egypt's cinematic self-representation at a crucial moment in Egyptian history. Depictions of Africa in *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* reflect an ambiguous and messy configura-

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tion of national identity, racial politics, and ideas about empire. At the time of the films' productions, different social factions hotly contested the political parameters that defined Egypt, its relationship to modernity and nationhood, and attitudes toward tutelage and sovereignty. Egyptian jungle films fracture the binary of colonized and colonizer in a way that exposes the political realities of Egypt's efforts at empire building in Africa, especially in relation to Sudan.[8] They also reveal the place of race, anti-Blackness, and claims to "whiteness" in constructions of colonial modernity.[9]

By positioning Egyptian characters against African ones and representing Egypt as the beacon of modernity, *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* assert imperial and racial fantasies rooted in an ambiguous and often antagonist relationship to Blackness. A detailed analysis of these films helps us better understand that the triumphant anticolonial nationalist narrative of Egypt in the 1940s never radically disavowed empire and its racial hierarchies. Rather, Egyptian tutelage over Sudan, and complex processes of racialization in which Egyptians positioned themselves as superior, were central to the narrative of nationalist liberation.

The cinema offers a unique vantage point to explore the role of race in modern Egypt. The emergence of the cinema was intimately linked to the twin processes of nation building and racialization, under which lay a current of anti-Blackness that played a central role in image making. This is not only evident in the silencing of Black characters on screen or their rendering as servants, but it is also hinted at in the rationales of early cinema proponents. These hints, for example, can be found in the ideas of the industrialist and economist Talaat Harb. In 1925, under the auspices of Bank Misr, Harb established the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema and tasked the company to make local films that promoted Egypt and its industries. Harb argued that local films should counter Western stereotypes of Egyptians by proving Egyptians' modernness. This entailed showing that Egyptians were not as Europeans imagine them to be, as a people "close to barbarism." For Harb, cinema would prove that Egyptians are not a "people of Central Africa."[10] In this aspiration, we can glimpse the connection between race, cinema, and claims to modernity. For Harb, Central Africa was the antithesis of the modern. To be modern on screen entailed a visual disassociation of Egyptians from Africans.

Egyptian jungle films' tropes mirror American Tarzan films. They depict a crude, stereotypical racial binary between African characters and white-collar adventurers. This binary celebrated Egyptian civilization and contrasted it to images of Africans to make Egypt modern on screen. In striking metaphoric clarity, both films evoke a powerful visual trope of empire: the pith helmet. In each film, the Egyptian male protagonists replace their tarbushes with pith helmets and trek through an "African" jungle to save an Egyptian woman. Unpacking these cinematic images of Egyptian imperial fantasy and Egypt-specific modes of race enables us to trouble the myth of Egyptian solidarity with Africa and examine the inflections of race and empire in twentieth-century Egypt.

Wadi al-Nujum

Released on 15 April 1943, *Wadi al-Nujum* (Valley of the Stars) was the first Egyptian film to depict an Africa-based jungle adventure narrative. The veteran actress and filmmaker 'Aziza Amir, famous for her 1927 film *Layla*, produced the film and wrote the screenplay with her husband, the actor Mahmud Dhul-Fiqar. Amir recruited Niyazi Mustafa, of Sudanese and Turkish descent, to direct. *Wadi al-Nujum* follows 'Adli, an Egyptian anthropologist conducting field research in Wadi al-Nujum, a fictional island off the coast of northeastern Africa. With camera, notebook, and gun in hand, 'Adli (played by Mahmud Dhul-Fiqar) encounters an African ceremony in which a tribe is sacrificing a woman to its leader. The leader is a magician, wearing a bejeweled turban. 'Adli enthusiastically photographs the event for his research. Suddenly, the woman being sacrificed, Zaynab (played by 'Aziza Amir), begs for mercy in Egyptian Arabic. Realizing that Zaynab is Egyptian, 'Adli swells with nationalist passion and rushes to save her. His intervention incites the fury of the leader and tribesmen, who give chase. Through a clever escape plan, 'Adli leaves the Valley of the Stars and takes Zaynab back with him to Cairo.

The film's narrative in Cairo follows a different trajectory, shelving the jungle theme for an urban melodrama of love and despair. 'Adli dis-covers that Zaynab is his long-lost cousin and proposes to marry her. Then, however, he realizes that he is going blind as a result of a spell cast by the jungle magician. He vows to protect Zaynab from the hardship of marrying a

blind man and rejects her. The tribe's leader arrives in Egypt to take Zaynab back to the Valley of the Stars. But the leader's plans are foiled in a contrived moment when he falls on a knife protruding from a couch. As the leader dies, 'Adli regains his eyesight and embraces Zaynab. They decide to return to the Valley of the Stars.

Naduja

While *Naduja*'s plot differs somewhat, it also depicts a quest for a lost Egyptian woman in the African jungle. Husayn Fawzi wrote and directed the film, which was released on 5 October 1944, a year after *Wadi al-Nujum*. The famed dancer and actress Tahiyya Kariyuka starred as Naduja, who one of the film's characters describes as *tarazan harimi* or "female Tarzan." While *Wadi al-Nujum* has a dramatic feel, *Naduja* is more of an adventure comedy. The film follows Murad (played by composer and singer Muhammad al-Bakkar), who sets off into the jungle to find Nadya, the long-lost daughter and sole heir of Murad's late employer, Khurshid Pasha. Nadya was lost in Sudan during her father's stint there as a physician. Murad is accompanied by two clumsy assistants, Khamis and Jum'a, whose names literally mean Thursday and Friday, and are played by Isma'il Yasin and Fu'ad Shafiq, respectively. In the jungle, Murad encounters Naduja, a feisty "white girl" (*bint bayda*) clad in a fashionable floral swimming costume and protected by a gorilla named Cheetah. Murad realizes that she is, in fact, Nadya, and falls in love with her. But her greedy cousins, who want her father's inheritance, thwart his efforts to bring her back to Egypt. After foiling her cousins' plans, Nadya/Naduja returns to Egypt, inherits her father's fortune, and lives happily with Murad.

Jungle Films in Egypt

By the 1940s, jungle films were certainly not novelties for Egyptian audiences. During the interwar period, Egyptian cinemagoers, like audiences all around the world, enjoyed a steady stream of American jungle films.[11] By the 1930s, Tarzan films were among the most popular films screened in Egypt, and Tarzan became a recognizable cultural icon.[12] Cinemas in Egypt regularly showed jungle films such as *Tarzan the Fearless*, *Tarzan Finds a Son*, *Her Jungle Love*, and *Stanley and Livingstone*. Despite their popularity,

however, Egyptian film companies seldom invested in producing jungle films. From the scant information available about *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*, it seems commercial factors discouraged local filmmakers from making jungle films.[13] They were risky ventures and, as in the case of *Wadi al-Nujum*, could cause considerable financial losses for their producers.

The financial losses incurred at the box office following *Wadi al-Nujum*'s release apparently left producer and star 'Aziza Amir bedridden for three months.[14] Scholars and critics have suggested various reasons for the film's failure. According to Muhammad 'Abd al-Fattah, Amir and Dhul-Fiqar's adaptation of the American jungle film failed because they did not sufficiently Egyptianize the genre.[15] 'Abd al-Fattah argues that the film's plot and characterization are strange, "neither Egyptian, nor foreign."[16] 'Abd al-Fattah also critiques the film for its technical flaws, despite it being the work of Niyazi Mustafa, one of the Egyptian film industry's top directors.[17]

Muna Ghandur, however, blames Amir's unconvincing performance for *Wadi al-Nujum*'s failure. She claims the film did not suit Amir's usual acting style, which was more appropriate for tragedies.[18] Certainly, Amir's acting was awkward and heavy-handed at times, and the plot quite fractured, moving from one story to another—first a jungle adventure, then an urban melodrama—without sufficient development. It left too many questions unanswered, such as the intentions of the turbaned, Egyptian dialect-speaking leader of the tribe.

Despite Husayn Fawzi's inexperience relative to Mustafa, he executed *Naduja* more successfully than *Wadi al-Nujum* in several respects. First, *Naduja*'s narrative progressed clearly and did not struggle with a subplot. Second, Tahiyya Kariyuka, a former nightclub dancer and a relative newcomer to the cinema, portrayed a light-hearted jungle simpleton much more effectively than screen veteran Amir. As with most films of this era, little data is available regarding *Naduja*'s box office performance. But we do know that it debuted against stiff competition at the Kursal Cinema in Cairo. It was shown only four days before the premiere of *Sayf al-Jallad* (Sword of the Executioner), a film with an all-star cast—Yusuf Wahbi, 'Aqila Ratib, Bishara Wakim, Mahmud al-Miliji, and, in his first-ever film role, Muhammad Fawzi—that likely trumped *Naduja* at the box office.[19] Husayn Fawzi never made another jungle-themed film, which might attest to *Naduja*'s modest returns.

Anti-Blackness and Empire

Notwithstanding their lack of box office success, it is clear that *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*'s directors took into account a set of ostensibly profit-generating variables during the production process. A mix of global ideas and images, the convergence of worldwide cinematic trends, and prevalent nationalist ideas informed *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*'s representations of Africans. The directors drew upon recognizable international cinematic tropes, not only of racial hierarchy but also of adventure, heroism, and masculinity, that had made foreign jungle films successful with audiences at home and worldwide. Yet local Africanism and anti-Blackness, rooted in Egypt's own legacies of slavery, violence against Black bodies, and claims to empire, also shaped the jungle genre in Egypt. Broader efforts to present Egypt as advanced and civilized on the world stage tempered and shaped Egypt's imaginary of Africa in the films.

Justifications (and corresponding images) for Egypt's imperial drive into Africa accelerated in the early nineteenth century, as Muhammad 'Ali strove to acquire resources and slaves for his new industrial and military state.[20] These justifications shifted in intent and focus, from claiming a civilizing mission to claiming sovereign rights over Sudan, and appeared frequently in political statements for over five decades. They became a central point of reference for international diplomacy in the 1940s.

At the time *Naduja* and *Wadi al-Nujum* premiered, the question of Sudan was a central political issue. Throughout the 1940s, prominent politicians such as Mustafa al-Nahhas, Isma'il Sidqi, and Mahmud Nuqrashi declared with increasing intensity their determination to keep Sudan under Egyptian tutelage.[21] A few months prior to *Naduja*'s release, the Egyptian press reported on British maneuverings to throw the Egyptians out of Sudan.[22] Deploying the language of unity and paternalism, Egyptian nationalists argued that Sudan was an extension of Egypt, and thus a place to which Britain had no right. In Sudan itself, opinions differed regarding what exactly a post-British Sudan would like look. Egyptian nationalists argued that at least eighty percent of the Sudanese population favored union with Egypt, and that the remaining twenty percent consisted of inhabitants of the south of the country, people whose ostensibly uneducated opinions did not really matter.[23] Sudanese political parties, however, advocated diverse positions

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on the issue of unity with Egypt. The Unionist Party (Hizb al-Ittihadiyyin) and the Liberal Party (Hizb al-Ahrar), both established in 1944, did indeed advocate Sudanese autonomy in a federation with Egypt.[24] The Umma Party (Hizb al-Umma) rejected unity with Egypt and used the slogan "Sudan for the Sudanese" to demand complete independence.[25] Egyptian visions of what exactly a post-British Sudan would look like and attempts to reconcile the rhetoric of brotherhood with that of tutelage played out in the ambiguous nature of the films' representations of the Sudanese and Africans.

  Wadi al-Nujum and *Naduja*, however, did not simply reproduce the rhetoric of nationalists and unionists of the 1940s. The jungle films, by their very nature a smorgasbord of local images and recognizable Hollywood tropes, reveal something far more complex. The messages of brotherhood woven throughout the films veil a pervasive anti-Blackness and claim to racial superiority that played a key role in marking Egypt as modern and, for reasons I will discuss further, "white" on screen. *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* portray Black people as objects of a dominant Egyptian gaze. Both *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* reduce Africa to maps, dense jungle, animal combat, and tribal gatherings.[26] Reproducing the Black porter image typical in American or European jungle films, *Naduja*'s credits open with shots of bare-chested Black men wearing loose white shorts, carrying luggage on their heads for three safari-suited, pith-helmeted Egyptians who walk beside them. This image is repeated throughout the film, and functions as a potent device depicting the power relations between Egyptians and their African counterparts.

  In *Wadi al-Nujum*, African people provide the visual and aural backdrop to an essentially Egyptian narrative. It is telling that the pro-tagonist's "discovery" of a tribe dancing around a fire in a sacrificial ritual is the audience's first encounter with Africans in *Wadi al-Nujum*. In this double discovery, the audience becomes entangled in the protagonist's explorations and voyeurism. 'Adli's photography represents a scientific-anthropological encounter with Africa that reproduces the imperialist trope of "discovering," quantifying, and classifying an unknown land. Archival documentary images of wild animals—large snakes, monkeys, bats, alligators, and tigers—punctuate scenes of the jungle and reinforce the audience's sense of the perilousness of the terrain the Egyptians seek to conquer.

In both *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*, African characters—aside from the loyal servants and tribal leaders, who are conspicuously "lighter" than their followers—are wordless. They provide mere background noise and movements. In each film, ethnic classifications remain ambiguous. At times, Egyptian characters refer to the Africans simply as *wuhush* (savages). In *Wadi al-Nujum*, 'Adli describes the African characters as *wuhush* during his nationalism-inspired rescue of Zaynab. In response to pleas from his sidekick not to interfere in the tribe's affairs, 'Adli, with gun in hand, retorts, "Should I leave my sister in the hands of *wuhush*?" (*asib ukhti bi-idayn wuhush?*). In an ostensibly comic scene in *Naduja*, Khamis and Jum'a plead with Murad not to fight the natives after they had threatened to kill him, because "they are nasty, they would do it" (*dul wahshin awi, bi-ya'maluha*).

Wadi al-Nujum and *Naduja* contain frequent references to the alleged cannibalism of the Black characters, which further juxtapose these characters to Egypt's claims to civilization.[27] In *Naduja*, Murad's goofy aides, Khamis and Jum'a, repeatedly express fear of being eaten in the jungle. In one scene, the loyal African guide, Cougar—a name that brings to mind a disturbing blend of animal and human—joins in the Egyptians' jokes about his own cannibalism. In jest, Khamis and Jum'a describe what they would do to one of the greedy cousins should they get their hands on him. They imagine undressing him, cleaning him, marinating him, cooking him, then handing him over to Cougar, who replies in thickly accented Arabic, "and Cougar will eat his flesh and suck his bones," to rapturous laughter. In a later confrontation between Murad and the angry tribespeople, Khamis expresses fear of being eaten when he cries: "They will make *mulukhiyya* [Egyptian jute-leaf soup] from our stock" (*dul ha-ya'milu mara'itna mulukhiyya*).

Establishing Power Through Imperial Maps

Both films use maps of Africa to assert an imperial Egyptian gaze on the African terrain and grant overriding power to an Egyptian narrative and geography.[28] *Wadi al-Nujum* opens by zooming into a map of Africa, then into trees to reveal a wild tiger and leopard in combat as squealing monkeys scramble to safety. The map scene represents the passage into the island of Wadi al-Nujum, a figment of an Egyptian imagination. As the map leads the audience into an African space, it predetermines the narrative as an Egyptian one.

In *Naduja*, an African map is superimposed on scenes of railroad tracks. This merging of tracks and map depicts movement away from Egypt and frames the Egyptian entry into Africa as modern, rational, and driven by science. In this period of Egyptian film, the train was a potent symbol of technological superiority and modernity. The map and train scene in *Naduja* occurs as the protagonist Murad sings about the sights he sees through the window of his train carriage. The map includes an arrow showing the audience the train's direction. As the arrow moves down the map, the image is intercut with shots of people dancing to Murad's song. Each shot shows people from the different regions the train is traveling through: southern Egyptian peasants, Upper Egyptian Sa'idis, Sudanese men, and southern Sudanese men and women. The scene gives expression to Egyptian technological superiority as the protagonists project their gaze on the songs and dances of the various peoples they see through the window of their train.

Son of Modernity: Civilized Egyptian Men

The images that fill *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* corresponded to broader Egyptian claims to modernity. When the greedy cousins pay Naduja's guardian to get rid of Murad and his friends, the guardian tells Murad, "You have defiled this pure land, O son of modernity (*ya wild al-madaniyya*). Leave immediately, you and your devils." The guardian tries to convince Naduja of the vileness of city life by expressing distaste with the "hell of modernity" (*jahim al-madaniyya*). He chides Naduja for wanting to

> go to the country of cities (*bilad al-madayin*), and live in the clamor with a people who worship money, and who are like fish: the large one eats the small, the brother kills his own brother, the friend betrays his friend. Will you leave, O Naduja, the beauty of nature, and the love of nature, and replace love with remorselessness . . . and freedom with slavery?

Taken out of context, such lines seem to express an underlying primitivism and condemnation of urban life's moral bankruptcy. But, despite the apparent profundity of the film's anti-modern attacks, the character who articulates them is unlikable. Expressions such as "son of modernity," "country of cities," and "hell of modernity" further position Egypt as a rational, industrial, and fundamentally urban nation. Murad describes life in Egypt to the fascinated

and naïve Naduja as they sit by a river, surrounded by plastic alligators. He exuberantly comments:

> Egypt is far, far away. We must ride a ship to arrive in Egypt. . . . Egypt, filled with people, roads, cities, buildings, cars, hoot hoot hoot, trams, clang clang clang, and [newspaper] vendors [yelling] "*al-Ahram*, *al-Muqattam*, *al-Musawwar*, *al-Ithnayn*." Egypt! Long live Egypt!

Both *Naduja* and *Wadi al-Nujum* establish Egypt as a modern urban space. In *Naduja*, scenes set in Egypt take place in mansions or courts, while African scenes are always in the wilderness. *Wadi al-Nujum* portrays Zaynab's arrival in Egypt with bottom-up camera shots taken from a car. These shots not only give the city's high-rise buildings, trams, and cars a look of grandeur, they reinforce the notion that Egypt is a nation to be *looked up* to. Both Naduja and Zaynab discover technological gadgets and commodities such as clocks, lamps, mirrors, clothing, and eating utensils. They become "civilized" by swapping their jungle attire for modern women's fashion.

Wadi al-Nujum juxtaposes rationality and suspicion by positing Egyptians against Africans. When 'Adli discovers the tribe, they scurry to take cover from their leader, who suddenly appears from an underground chamber. We learn that the tribal members took flight because they believed that looking into their leader's eyes would cause death. Even the loyal guide, Ahmad, who, like Cougar, reaffirms the racial hierarchies underpinning Egypt's relationship with Africa, superstitiously urges 'Adli not to look into the leader's eyes. Of course, 'Adli brushes off Ahmad's warnings. In the ultimate display of scientific and academic sophistication, 'Adli not only looks at the magician, but also photographs him. 'Adli's defiance embodies modern conquest through the lens of a camera. Seeing through both 'Adli's and the filmmaker's cameras, the audience becomes complicit in a double-lensed colonization.

African Characters in Other Egyptian Films

Wadi al-Nujum and *Naduja* were not the only Egyptian films to feature negative stereotypes of Black characters. From the early 1930s, Black actors appeared as servants, doormen, or exotic characters. Black children played such roles in films such as *Yaqut* (1934), *Mamnu' al-Hubb* (Love Is Forbidden, 1942), *Gharam wa Intiqam* (Love and Revenge, 1944), and *Rabha* (1943).

Directors also cast Black actors as exotic genies. For example, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Said plays a Black genie clothed in lion skin in *Khatim Sulayman* (Solomon's Ring, 1947). In *Ya Halawat al-Hubb* (How Wonderful Love Is, 1952), starring Muhammad Fawzi, a Black girl plays a genie. She sings at one point, "I am your servant / you own me / give me commands / what do you request? / what do you need?" Tellingly, when the protagonist requests servants, four Black men appear and bow. The film *Bayn Narayn* (Between Two Fires, 1945) includes a scene of Africans dancing around a fire. Black men appear as slaves being whipped in *Mughamarat ʿAntar wa ʿAbla* (The Adventures of ʿAntar and ʿAbla, 1948). In all of these cases, the Black characters were mere extras, inconsequential to the plot.

Characters in blackface also appear in films of the 1930s and 1940s. In *ʿAyida* (1942) an adaptation of the opera *Aida*, Umm Kulthum shows up in blackface playing an Ethiopian princess. To see Umm Kulthum in blackface provoked such shock from audiences that the film was pulled out of circulation and remade.[29] But actors in blackface did not provoke controversy in the popular Bedouin adventure classics *ʿAntar wa ʿAbla* (1945) and *Mughamarat ʿAntar wa ʿAbla* (1948). These two films portray the classic Arabic love story of ʿAntar, the son of an Ethiopian slave mother who overcomes all the odds to prove his bravery and marry his sweetheart ʿAbla. Actors in blackface also appear in the 1953 *Bilal Muʾazzin al-Rusul* (Bilal, the Prophet's Muezzin), a film based on the life of the Prophet's Black companion, the first to make the call to prayer. *Bilal Muʾazzin al-Rusul* represented Black people positively, and partly condemned racist attitudes toward them. Indeed, in 1966, the Nation of Islam in the United States screened *Bilal Muʾazzin al-Rusul* in Chicago as part of its celebration of great Black men in history.[30]

A number of other Egyptian films used blackface more maliciously. In the 1949 film *al-Layl Lana* (The Night Is Ours), the Lebanese singer-actress Sabah performs a song titled "Aʿshaq al-Asmar" (I Adore the Dark Man) in minstrel-show blackface, complete with heavy body movements, widening and rolling of the eyes, and whitened lips. She is flanked by a chorus of blackface dancers in hula skirts. The film *Dahab* contains a similar blackface scene featuring the actor Anwar Wagdi and his child co-star, Fayruz. In the scene, a musical number, Fayruz purports to transfer a Black pianists' skin color onto her face. The resulting song and dance pokes fun at Black people with exaggerated dance moves and incomprehensible lyrics.

The Gendered Dimensions of Allegory

Scholars have paid much attention to the gendered dimensions of the jungle genre. For Gail Bederman, David Leverenz, John R. Kasson, and Alex Vernon, the character of Tarzan expressed white middle-class masculine fantasies of domination and power.[31] In Bederman's particularly insightful argument, Tarzan, "the one-man lynch mob," reflected broader masculinist desires for a pure, primitive virility to support America's struggle against civilization's feminizing forces.[32] Vernon extends this argument to include what he calls "femme-Tarzan" films in which the jungle-raised protagonist is a woman.[33] American studios produced several femme-Tarzan films in the 1930s and 1940s, including *Blonde Savage* (1947), *Daughter of the Jungle* (1949), and *Nabonga* (1944), which may have influenced *Naduja*. Each narrated a white man's rescue of or encounter with a white woman in the wilderness. For Vernon, the white woman is the "object of a white man's quest" who underscores white civilized men's strength.[34]

Similarly, affirmations of masculinity vis-à-vis women characterize *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*. The only jungle films made in the interwar period were femme-Tarzan films, perhaps because primitivism—exalting the "noble savage"—did not accord with conceptualizations of ideal Egyptian manhood. Instead, the effendi urban middle-class professional personified ideal Egyptian masculinity. Both *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* depict middle-class men, an anthropologist and a secretary, as heroes, and therefore assert white-collar masculine superiority. The visual juxtaposition of Egyptian characters to their African counterparts in *Naduja* is a case in point. One scene contrasts the Egyptians, clean-shaven and wearing professional attire, with the Africans, bare-chested and their faces painted.

In addition to middle-class masculine virility, the films' gendered dimensions constitute a powerful allegory of Egypt's political relationship with Sudan. 'Adli and Murad's quests to take from the African jungle what they believed to be rightfully theirs—a woman in need of guidance—echo Egyptians' claims to Sudan. The female Tarzans are underdeveloped, veering toward barbarism, but fundamentally Egyptian, and require only guidance, civilization, and union with a more modern counterpart. The films thus position Naduja and Zaynab between the "barbarism" of Africa and their true Egyptian selves.

The racial hierarchy explicit in the films is complicated by the inclusive rhetoric of "Nile Valley brotherhood." By gesturing to Nile Valley unity, the films did not undermine the imperial structure that governed Egypt's relationship with Sudan.[35] The films blur the distinction between Sudan and other African nations and at times are very unclear about which countries are included in the Nile Valley. These confusing geographic representations may be a product of carelessness but they also operate at the heart of the films' claims to Sudan. Sudan, despite being obscured from view, is sandwiched between its neighbors to the south, marked Black and barbaric, and Egypt, which appears as its modern, enlightened savior to the north. Representations of African people not only affirmed Egyptian modernity, but they also constituted the binary opposite against which Egypt struggled to save Sudan.

Marking Egypt as White

The film *Naduja* exalts the unity of the Nile Valley through a relational understanding of whiteness and Blackness.[36] In a declaration of unity and "brotherhood" one of the tribal leaders in *Naduja* tells Murad and his friends, "You, O Egyptians, are the whiteness of the eye, and we are its Blackness, and sight cannot be complete without whiteness." With this line, those of the south of the Nile Valley are "Black" and Egypt is marked as "white." *Naduja* also marks whiteness as Egyptian when Murad describes Naduja as the missing "white girl." These descriptions of Egyptian whiteness seem misplaced because they were not common self-descriptors in Egypt. But they nonetheless invite us to think about whiteness as a potential category for thinking about how race—and its implications for beauty and desirability—functioned in 1940s Egypt. Thinking about whiteness as a desired categorization can also raise questions about the function of cinema culture, both foreign and Egyptian films, in propagating white forms of desirability, especially if we consider the proliferation of Hollywood films in Egypt from the 1920s onward. Yet in *Naduja* whiteness worked to distance the Egyptians from Africa. It revealed a trope of difference at the crux of Egyptian self-representation in the film. The film signifies that Blackness is not only undesirable but also a trait belonging to other co-inhabitants of the Nile Valley, against whom Egyptians can make claims to whiteness.[37]

For the most part, the films' deployment of Nile Valley rhetoric served to position Egyptians as not Black, or "not like the peoples of Central Africa," to use Talaat Harb's words. *Wadi al-Nujum* celebrates the unity of Egypt and Sudan, and positions Egypt as a paternal savior. 'Adli rushes to save Zaynab from the *wuhush*, ignoring his sidekick's pleas not to interfere in the affairs of the tribe because she might "just be a Sudanese girl." Indignant, 'Adli snaps back: "The Sudanese woman is my sister, exactly like the Egyptian. The one Nile unites us, and if I do not defend her when she is in trouble, I would be a coward . . . and I would not deserve to be an Egyptian." In his rescue of a Sudanese woman, 'Adli enacts a claim to both masculinity and paternalistic Egyptianness. 'Adli's sidekick is actually a Sudanese servant played by Muhammad Kamil, who was typecast in this role throughout his career. It takes an Egyptian to remind his Sudanese counterpart of their unity. 'Adli's reprimand of his Sudanese servant and his ironic insistence on their unity expresses the tension underlying cinematic representations of Sudan. In Egyptian films, while Black characters (often Nubians, an ethnic group from a region on the Egyptian-Sudanese border) were indeed part of the nation, they were servants, not equal compatriots. Sudanese and Nubian characters, identified by their accents, served as domestics, butlers, or *bawwabs* (doormen). Many films included Sudanese or Nubian servants, including *Rabha* (1943), *Qalbi Dalili* (My Heart Is My Guide, 1947), *Layla Bint Madaris* (Layla the Schoolgirl, 1941), and *Bint al-Akabir* (Daughter of Aristocrats, 1953). These cinematic depictions of Sudanese and Nubians as servants can be traced back to late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Egyptian theatrical productions.[38]

'Adli's declaration also disassociates the Sudanese from other Africans. He and his sidekick know the young woman could be Sudanese by virtue of her use of Arabic, a shared language. Those she is surrounded by, whose language no one could understand, are simply barbarians with whom 'Adli has little connection. The message is clear: unlike the Sudanese, the film's other Africans are not Egypt's siblings. The line might have also spoken to a demarcation between Sudan and its southern region, perhaps alluding to a broader elite northern Sudanese discourse that did not mark itself as "Black."[39] Similarly, *Naduja* evokes unity through a song about the Nile Valley while also entrenching ideas of racial hierarchy. The key lyrics state:

> What is this exile (*ghurba*) and I am in my nation?
> Present with my family and friends (*khillan*)
> This is what unites us, this is what unites us, and kept us brothers
> The Nile that refreshes both regions.

The song, composed by Muhammad al-Bakkar, follows an Egyptian musical style and its words, written by the famous lyricists Bayram al-Tunisi and Abu Suʻud al-Ibyari, are sung in colloquial Egyptian Arabic. The music and lyrics work together to assert the dominance of Egypt's self-portrayal. This song's entire *mise-en-scène* constitutes the most compelling metaphor for how a paternalism that marked Blackness as inferior and servile structured representations of Africa. As Murad, in his safari suit, begins bellowing about the unity and brotherhood of the Nile Valley, he takes his position at screen right and grasps the gun on his waist, while silent, bare-chested Black porters—presumably the brothers of his song—carry luggage and other equipment in the background. Images of wild animals are synchronized with the words, "This is what unites us," to further liken the African characters to the flora and fauna of the terrain.

By representing Egyptians as imperial modernizers, *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* illustrate the tensions in Egyptian self-identification as, to use Eve Troutt Powell's expression, "colonized colonizers."[40] To be sure, the films intended that Egyptian cinemagoers identify not with the African people but with the safari-suited quasi-imperialists armed with rifle and camera.[41] This move is not surprising, as middle-class Egyptian filmmakers did not typically present radical cinematic critiques of the class and racial underpinnings of power. African characters were the others against which Egyptians asserted their claims to Egyptian modernity, international prestige, independence, and an ambivalent mode of whiteness, the characteristics of which lay in fantasies of empire and superiority in relation to Africans. In their representations of Africa, *Naduja* and *Wadi al-Nujum* allude to visions of a postcolonial order whose nature remained fundamentally imperial and plugged into global racial hierarchies.

Sudanese Responses

Far from being silent onlookers, Sudanese critics expressed offense at Egyptian films' portrayal of Sudanese people. In October 1952, a Sudanese

musician, 'Uthman Husayn, published an article in *al-Kawakib* decrying Egyptian cinematic representations of the Sudanese, which he believed undermined the entire premise of Egypt's Nile Valley rhetoric.[42] Husayn berated filmmakers for the practice of limiting Sudanese characters to goofy doormen or servants. He questioned why Egyptian filmmakers never gave Sudanese actors the kinds of important roles played by Lebanese or Syrians. Reflecting an acceptance of pan-Arab identity, he was particularly annoyed that pan-Arab musical mosaics, a popular feature in Egyptian films during this period, hardly ever included Sudan. Conscious of the importance of profitability, he guaranteed that should Sudanese scenes be included in films, they would find a profitable market in Sudan. For many in the cinema industry, the post-1952 revolution political era demanded new filmmaking practices. For Husayn, this new era meant that cinema could no longer justify excluding Sudan.

Less than two months after the publication of Husayn's article, Anwar Ahmad, a prolific Egyptian cinema journalist, author, and actor, published his views on cinematic representation of Sudanese people. A conversation with an up-and-coming Sudanese actor, Khalid al-'Ajbani, prompted Ahmad's article. 'Ajbani complained about the constant casting of Sudanese actors as servants or doormen. According to 'Ajbani, these representations hurt his countrymen's feelings.[43] 'Ajbani critiqued what he saw as a complete disregard for the Sudanese-inspired storylines in Egyptian films and chided directors for failing to take advantage of Sudan's scenery. Ahmad defended Egyptian filmmakers against the accusation that they only included Sudanese characters as servants by arguing that a vast array of Egyptians were given these same roles. But he agreed that Egyptian cinema should include more Sudanese-focused films. Like 'Uthman Husayn, Ahmad complained that Sudan, which he describes as "our southern half" (*shatruna al-janubi*), continued to be left out of pan-Arab musical scenes. For Ahmad, the inclusion of Sudan in Egyptian films would facilitate a sense of camaraderie and unity. In both cases, the writers condemned the cinematic blind spot for Sudanese Arabness and modernity.

While Egyptian films largely denigrated Sudanese characters, some filmmakers did include more favorable portrayals. The actor, musician, and producer Farid al-Atrash, for example, included a Sudanese character in his 1952 *Ma Tqul Shi Lhadd* (Don't Tell Anyone). The film starred Sudanese

vocalist Isma'il 'Abd al-Mu'in, who sang a Sudanese song in the film's final scene. The Sudanese section, composed by Atrash with lyrics by Ma'mun al-Shinnawi, celebrated the unity of Sudan and Egypt. The Sudanese section ends with Atrash, representing Egypt, and 'Abd al-Mu'in embracing. According to the film's trailer, the inclusion of a Sudanese song was unprecedented in the history of the Egyptian cinema. Yet an appearance by the dancer Samya Jamal in blackface offsets Atrash's attempt at musical inclusion.

Post-Revolutionary Representations

Representations of Africans changed after the 1952 revolution as the new regime propagated a strict anticolonial ideology.[44] The new political leaders even banned American-produced Tarzan films because they reflected a "colonialist outlook."[45] The government lifted the ban in 1968, with stern warnings that such films would remain under the watchful eye of the censorship board. Khalid al-'Ajbani, who had complained about negative portrayals of the Sudanese in Egyptian films, scored a very minor role as an Egyptian soldier in Niyazi Mustafa's 1953 nationalist film *Ard al-Abtal* (Land of Heroes). 'Ajbani continued to star in roles, albeit minor, throughout the 1950s and 1960s that transcended the characterizations of Sudanese men in previous Egyptian films. In Yusuf Chahine's 1956 *Wadda'at Hubbak* (I've Bade Farewell to Your Love), 'Ajbani also played a soldier. In 1961, he starred as a senior lieutenant in Mustafa's *Dima' 'ala al-Nil* (Blood on the Nile), in which his upright character contrasts starkly with the film's depiction of Upper Egyptians as lawbreaking and reckless.

Niyazi Mustafa, it seemed, used the new post-revolutionary political milieu to overturn negative images of Sudanese people. In 1958, Mustafa directed his second jungle film, *Isma'il Yasin Tarazan*, starring 'Ajbani. 'Ajbani plays a charming, educated Sudanese guide, a characterization that differs radically from superstitious Ahmad and cannibal Cougar, the loyal guides who trek through the jungle with 'Adli and Murad in *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*. Joel Gordon argues that *Isma'il Yasin Tarazan* presents a more modern image of Sudan and reflects a new phase in the Egyptian-Sudanese relationship.[46] Certainly, the film portrayed Sudan sensitively and described it in the credits as "*al-Sudan al-shaqiq*" (Sudan the brother). But when compared with Mustafa's earlier *Wadi al-Nujum*, it is clear that

Isma'il Yasin Tarazan delivered a powerful critique of the power dynamics that had informed older Egyptian cinematic representations of Sudan. By narrating a quest to find the lost heir to an Egyptian millionaire's fortunes, *Isma'il Yasin Tarazan* defined the Egyptian character's journey to the Sudan as one motivated by economic greed. It thus took a subtle swipe at the real motivations of Egyptian excursions into Sudan. In *Wadi al-Nujum*, the acquisition of knowledge motivated the Egyptian adventurer. The noble anthropological efforts of the adventurer in *Wadi al-Nujum* detracted from the inherently imperialist undertones of his quest.

Isma'il Yasin Tarazan* also rejected the practice of assigning Sudanese characters to domestic roles. Although the film portrays Black men trailing the Egyptian protagonists through the jungle, the Black men are not porters. They wear similar clothes to the Egyptian actors and are armed, in stark contrast to the half-naked porters juxtaposed against rational, safari-suited Egyptians in *Wadi al-Nujum*. By arming the guides, Mustafa gave them a power denied to the porters in *Wadi al-Nujum*. The Sudanese actors did not conform to any stereotype, but played sensible, well-dressed, amiable characters. By contrast, the film depicts the Egyptian adventurers as silly, clumsy, greedy, and cruel. One Egyptian character's repeated pleas for help—"Papi, papi!" (Daddy, daddy!)—when he mistakenly thought that he was in danger provides a hilarious spoof of the earnest adventurers of earlier jungle films.

In contrast to *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*, in which the voices of Sudanese people are sidelined, *Isma'il Yasin Tarazan* allows Sudanese characters to express themselves and their cultures. For example, the film uses Sudanese music, performed by Sudanese artists such as Ibrahim 'Awad, a strategy of inclusion absent from *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*. A song about "dark men" in the background of one scene, sung by the female Lebanese vocalist Sabah, points to another conscious strategy of inclusion, albeit one tinged with a required defense of loving a "dark man." The song begins, "*Asmar asmar, tayyib maluh, w-Allah, samaruh, sirr jamaluh*" (Dark man, dark man, so what's wrong with him? / by God, his darkness is the secret to his beauty).[47]

While the 1952 revolution and end of British colonialism did not entail a radical rejection of anti-Black stereotyping in Egyptian cinematic culture, they did open up the possibility of reinventing Egypt's relationship with Africa through a reconsideration of the colonialist image. Niyazi Mustafa's

spoof of the Tarzan genre in *Isma'il Yasin Tarazan* is a prime example. Things, however, did not structurally change. Problematic Tarzanesque images persisted in Egyptian popular culture. Perhaps the apotheosis of this persistence was an image on the cover of *al-Musawwar* in February 1954 depicting Free Officer Salah Salim in shorts swinging from a tree in the "jungles of the South" and his Egyptian companion, the colonel Jamal Thabit, clasping his hands around his mouth in a Tarzan war-cry pose.[48] The caption read: "An Egyptian Tarzan in Sudan." In 1953, while Mohammad Naguib bolstered Sudanese-Egyptian unity, child star Fayruz and one of the biggest male stars of the time, Anwar Wagdi, engaged in an unashamedly offensive blackface scene in one of the year's biggest movies. Although there were efforts to curb the trend, anti-Black images and the marking of Africa as a site of adventure, danger, and comic relief would continue to shape visual practices throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Conclusion

Wadi al-Nujum and *Naduja* help us better understand the uncertain and often slippery concepts of nation, empire, and race in early 1940s Egypt. The films rode a wave of popular international jungle films, but were also produced at a time in which Egypt's claims to Sudan took on greater urgency and Blackness marked otherness, undesirability, and comic relief.

These films cracked open the contradictions that inhabited the space between image and political rhetoric. They inherited the wider anticolonial nationalist project of asserting modernness on the screen and creating the oppositional characters against which Egyptians would be modern. The films positioned Black characters, silenced or servile, in this oppositional role. *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* make appeals to Nile Valley unity but also portray Africa and Blackness as sites of violence, irrationality, and servitude. These portrayals doubtlessly stem from Hollywood tropes, but also from a pernicious history of anti-Blackness in Egypt itself—ideas rooted in histories of slavery and claims to empire.

Wadi al-Nujum and *Naduja* reordered hegemonic narratives of empire by evoking fantasies of imperial power and racial superiority. By juxtaposing Africans to Egyptians and affirming Egyptian claims to Sudan, the films brought the contours of Egyptian modernity into sharp focus. The assertion

of modernness so central to the anticolonial nationalist project was never a radical rejection of racial superiority and empire. Indeed, these fantasies of empire and racial superiority were central to the imagining of nationalist liberation. Switching between tarbush and pith helmet was far more seamless than one would imagine.

The 1952 revolution, increased acceptance of Sudanese independence, and official solidarity with decolonization campaigns across the world spurred attempts to confront negative representations of African people in Egyptian popular culture. However, a deeply ingrained vision of Africa as a place of adventure and inferiority continued to inflect films and broader visual cultures. One could find a blatantly offensive blackface image (an advertisement for the film *Dahab*) on the same page as image of a Sudanese politician playing pool with his Egyptian counterparts.[49] Likewise, press coverage of Sudanese independence and support for liberation moments in Africa provided a new visual lexicon of Africa, which coexisted alongside images of Free Officers Salah Salim and his posse playing Tarzan in the "jungles" of Sudan.[50] As Eve Troutt Powell and Joel Gordon have shown, the issue of race in Egypt is messy and difficult to fix. Race lies between claims to being colonized and colonizers, between a negative marking of Blackness and its acceptance as part of a broader Nile Valley brotherhood, as well as a postcolonial imaginary of solidarity. But the cinema of the 1940s, especially *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja*, denies us the luxury of sidestepping the issue through claims to complexity. *Wadi al-Nujum* and *Naduja* provide important case studies for race's role in the making of a modern Egypt, calling attention to how the cinema was deeply implicated in histories of anti-Blackness and white desirability. The films also invite us, by way of widening the scope of research, to interrogate more seriously the role that representations of Africa and an aversion to Blackness played in visions of national liberation.

ENDNOTES

1   Husayn Fawzi, *Naduja* (Cairo: Nahas Films, 1944), DVD.

2   Documentaries showcasing white men's conquest of Africa preceded the production of feature jungle films. The 1909 release of *Hunting Big Game in Africa*, also known as *Roosevelt in Africa*, set the jungle film genre in motion in the United States. Richard Abel, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 25-26.

3   Ibid., 25.

4   Many other jungle films are set in non-African locations such as Southeast Asia. This article only examines jungle films set in Africa.

5   Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), 191.

6   Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from the Tempest to Tarzan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Alex Vernon, *On Tarzan* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008). See also Clara Henderson, "'When Hearts Beat Like Native Drums': Music and the Sexual Dimensions of the Notions of 'Savage' and 'Civilized' in *Tarzan and His Mate*, 1934," *Africa Today* 48, no. 4 (2001), 91-124. For a study of the relationship between technologies of travel and visions of Africa see Amy J. Staples, "Safari Adventure: Forgotten Cinematic Journeys in Africa," *Film History* 18, no. 4 (2006), 392-411. For a brief examination of French films set in Africa, see David Henry Slavin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France, 1919-1939: White Blind Spots, Male Fantasies, Settler Myths* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 60-64.

7   Niyazi Mustafa, *Wadi al-Nujum* (Cairo: Sharikat Aflam 'Aziza Amir, Isis Films, 1943), DVD; and Husayn Fawzi, *Naduja* (Cairo: Nahas Films, 1944), DVD.

8   For a discussion on the limitation of this binary, see Eve M. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), 8-19.

9   There has been little research conducted on race and blackness in Egypt historically, and there remains very little theory around which to structure studies on anti-blackness. Studies that have engaged with the topic include Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*; and Wilson Chacko Jacob, "The Masculine Subject of Colonialism: The Egyptian Loss of the Sudan," in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 153-169; Shaun Lopez, "Football as National Allegory: *Al-Ahram* and the Olympics in 1920s Egypt," *History Compass* 7, no. 1 (2009), 297-300; Kenneth M. Cuno and Terence Walz, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (American University in Cairo: Cairo, 2010). For a more contemporary take on the issue, see Ebony Coletu, "Revisiting Race by Proxy: State Limitations, Translation, and the Contested Relevance of Race in Egypt," paper presented at the American Studies Association, 8 November 2014.

10   For a partial transcript of speech in which these comments were made, see Ilhami Hasan, *Muhammad Tal'at Harb: Ra'id Sina'at al-Sinima al-Misriyya, 1867-1941* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma lil-Kitab, 1986), 90-92.

11   The international appeal of the Tarzan genre was not lost on Sol Lesser, a famous producer of Tarzan films in the United States. He claimed that "there is always a Tarzan picture playing within a radius of 50 miles of any given spot in the world . . . in Arab village theatres, African bush theatres, and in Pampa settlements down Argentine way." Vernon, *On Tarzan*, 1. Other jungle-themed films shown in Egypt included the 1932 American film *Bird of Paradise*,

directed by King Vidor. See the front cover of *al-Kawakib*, 13 March 1933.

12   *The Times* in London noted that Tarzan films were one of the most popular film genres among Egyptian audiences. "Films in Arabic," *Times*, 26 January 1937, 65.

13   Film reviews are difficult to find because, as Farida Marʿi has noted, specialized magazines reduced output or stopped publication altogether during World War II. Farida Marʿi, "El-Sayyed Hassan Gomaa and the Cinema Movement in Egypt," *Turath al-Nuqqad al-Sinimaʾiyyin fi Misr: Kitabat al-Sayyid Hasan Jumʿa*, ed. Farida Marʿi, vol. 1 (Cairo: al-Markaz al-Qawmi li-l-Sinima, 1998), 38.

14   Muna Ghandur, *Sultanat al-Shasha: Raʾidat al-Sinima al-Misriyya* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2005), 104-105.

15   Muhammad ʿAbd al-Fattah, *Sinima Niyazi Mustafa* (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿAmma li-Qusur al-Thaqafa, 2005), 97-99.

16   Ibid., 98.

17   Ibid.

18   Ghandur, *Sultanat al-Shasha*, 104-105.

19   Mahmud Qasim, *Dalil al-Aflam fi al-Qarn al-ʿAshrin fi Misr wa-l-ʿAlam al-ʿArabi* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 2001), 69.

20   For more on the issue of an Egyptian empire see Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, "The Egyptian Empire, 1805-1885," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume Two: Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 204. Egyptian historiography has "Egyptianized" this era, so to speak, by positioning Muhammad ʿAli as the founder of the modern Egyptian state, and as such the term "Egyptian empire" reflects certain perceptions and myths of modern nationhood and empire. See also Emad Ahmed Helal, "Muhammad Aliʾs First Army: The Experiment in Building an Entirely Slave Army," in Walz and Cuno, op cit., 17-42.

21   The discourse of Nile Valley unity also found expression in failed nationalist attempts to create economic unity. See David E. Mills, "A Failed 'Nationalist' Endeavor: Egyptian-Sudanese Textile Trade, 1935-1945," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 2 (November 2004), 175-94.

22   M. W. Daly, *Imperial Sudan: The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, 1934-1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 162.

23   William Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 252.

24   Daly, *Imperial Sudan*, 164-65.

25   Ibid., 165.

26   This is what Robert Stam and Ella Shohat might call a "topographical reductionalism" of the terrain. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 148.

27   For discussion of cannibalism in "dark continent" narratives, see Okaka Opio Dokotum, "Sembene's 'Xala': Alternatives to the Representation of Africa in Colonial and Neocolonial Novels and Films" (PhD diss., Northern Illinois University, 2008), 25-26.

28   On maps, see Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 146-48. Later African filmmakers inverted the use of maps in imperial films. In 1986, in an effort to highlight the violence of the imperial project in Africa, Med Hondo, a Mauritanian filmmaker, creatively overturned the map image in *Sarraounia* by filming it as it burned. Melissa Thackway, *Africa Shoots Back: Alternative Perspectives in Sub-Saharan Francophone African Film* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003), 95.

29   Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society*

in the Twentieth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 108.

30   Edward E. Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 82.

31   Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 217-39; David Leverenz, "The Last Real Man in America: From Natty Bumppo to Batman," *American Literary History* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1991), 753-81; and Vernon, *On Tarzan*.

32   Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 228.

33   Vernon, *On Tarzan*, 90-92.

34   Ibid., 90.

35   The inherent imperialism in the Egyptian vocabulary on Nile Valley unity did not seem to have been an issue except perhaps for the communists. See Rami Ginat, "Swimming Against the Nationalist Current: The Egyptian Communists and the Unity of the Nile Valley," in *Narrating the Nile: Politics, Cultures, Identities*, ed. Israel Gershoni and Meir Hatina (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), 67-90. For more on Nile Valley brotherhood, see Eve M. Troutt Powell, "Brothers Along the Nile: Egyptian Concepts of Race and Ethnicity, 1895-1910," in *The Nile: Histories, Cultures, Myths*, ed. Haggai Erlich and Israel Gershoni (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 171-81.

36   This idea of relationality is inspired by George Yancy's discussion of it in a different context. See George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America* (Rowman and Littlefield: London, 2017), 19.

37   More study needs to be conducted on how modes of and the desire for "whiteness" were transplanted into Egyptian cinematic culture.

38   Troutt Powell shows how Egyptian literature, theater, and music limited Sudanese and Nubian characters to the roles of loyal servants. She argues that these representations illuminated the ambiguities in nationalist visions of Sudanese people, which positioned them as both servile and nationalist compatriots. See especially *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 64-104, 168-216.

39   For a detailed discussion of "Black" and Sudanese identities, see Heather J. Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 16-39. The Sudanese were aware of negative stereotypes in Egyptian cultural production even before these films. In 1938, the theatrical production *Tum Tum* staged by the veteran theater actress and cabaret owner Badi'a Masabni in Cairo drew criticism for its offensive and culturally ignorant scenes. In one critique, published in the Khartoum-based Sudanese newspaper *al-Nil* and republished by *al-Sabah* in Cairo, a Sudanese resident in Cairo thought the play's characterizations resembled the traditions of the Dinka or Shilluk peoples, not the Sudanese. The writer condemned these portrayals as "offensive" and "hurtful." What is interesting about this response to Masabni's play is that Sudanese offense did not result from the play's stereotypical images. For the critics, the play was unacceptable because the Dinka and the Shilluk cultures were set up as representatives of Sudan. By expressing offense at being conflated with the Dinka and Shilluk peoples (who are from the south of Sudan), the letter writer highlighted Sudanese anxieties about their own national prestige, racial classifications, and an awareness of the role of representations to bolster or undermine it. For article see "Raqsat Tum Tum allati 'Aradtaha Firqat Badi'a," *al-Sabah*, 18 February 1938, 44-45. For more on Sudanese identity, see Heather J. Sharkey, "Arab Identity and Ideology in Sudan: The Politics of Language, Ethnicity, and Race," *African Affairs*, 107, no. 426 (2008), 21-43; and Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Sudan: Contested National Identities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

40   Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*.

41   This is also apparent when the adventurers are not Egyptian. There has been some study of

spectatorial identification with Tarzan that disrupts neat notions of racial solidarities. For example, see literature on African-American audiences identifying with Tarzan: Miriam J. Petty, *Stealing the Show: African American Performers and Audiences in 1930s Hollywood* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 113-14. For a consideration of the colonized audience at blackface ministel shows see Eve M. Troutt Powell, "Burnt-Cork Nationalism: Race and Identity in the Theater of 'Ali al-Kassar" in *Colors of Enchantment: Theater, Dance, and the Visual Arts of the Middle East*, ed. Sherifa Zuhur (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001), 27-38.

42 'Uthman Husayn, "Nasib al-Sudan fi al-Aflam al-Misriyya," *al-Kawakib*, 14 October 1952, 11.

43 Anwar Ahmad, "Al-Sudan fi Aflamina," *al-Kawakib*, 9 December 1952, 8.

44 This was not always the case. Joel Gordon, for example, argues that in the 1957 musical comedy *Inta Habibi*, Black Nubians functioned as a mere background in an essentially urban Egyptian narrative. Joel Gordon, "River Blindness: Black and White Identity in Early Nasserist Cinema," in Gershoni and Hatina, *Narrating the Nile*, 137-56.

45 There is little information on the exact date of the ban. Eric Pace, "Cairo is Willing to Let Tarzan Films Return," *New York Times*, 24 November 1968, 115.

46 Gordon, "River Blindness," 147-51.

47 Ibid., 149.

48 Front page, *al-Musawwar*, 5 Feburary 1954. See also pages 9, 14-17.

49 *Al-Musawwar*, 27 March 1953, 39. The page includes an advertisement for the film, *Dahab*, with an image of Fayruz and Anwar Wagdi in blackface. To its side is an image of member of a Sudanese delegation in Egypt playing pool with Egyptian counterparts.

50 On Sudanese politics and African liberation movements see, for example, *al-Musawwar* articles on 17 July 1953, 15-18; 7 August 1953, 14-15; 12 August 1953, 25; 25 September 1953, 29, 44.