

Africa and livingstone

[Parts of the World](#), [Europe](#)



A review of a recent biography of David Livingstone began with the words "His heroic figure looms over the continent". Discuss constructions of white 'heroism' in Africa, focussing on a critical analysis of two journalistic or non-fiction texts. The texts you choose to analyse can be from any historical era or they can be modern, or you can choose to analyse one historical text and one modern text but at least one must be by, or about, Livingstone. As this is a Journalism module, one of the texts which you analyse must also be a piece of journalism (so for example, you might choose to compare Livingstone's own work, with how Stanley uses Livingstone's symbolism within his newspaper despatches, or Livingstone's work with a contemporary piece of journalism which uses some aspect of the Livingstone myth).

European writers during the 19th Century depicted Africa as a place of Barbary and disorder which then became the dominant vision of how Europeans viewed Africa. Africa was seen as the 'Dark Continent' a mysterious place which lacked the light of European civilization, development, religion and education. Driver argues that "The peculiar power of this myth of the 'Dark Continent' lay in its fusion of "a complex of race, science and religion; the iconography of light and darkness thus represented European penetration of Africa as simultaneously a process of dominion, enlightenment and emancipation." (Driver 1991) The landscape of Africa was a place completely new to Europeans and early explorers of the 19 century highlighted the vast differences in travel writing and novels between the towns or rural landscape they were familiar with back at home and the mysterious jungle and open land of Africa. During the end of the late 18th century concerted efforts of people in the abolitionist movement began

to protest against slavery, which eventually became outlawed in 1807. However, the fight against colonial slavery took many more years. The abolition of the slavery triggered a huge amount of western exploration in African. Portrayals of Africans during this period (early 19th century) were undoubtedly less derogatory and offensive than that of later years but nevertheless remained patronising . Though Abolitionists fought against slavery they did not view Africans as equals to white Europeans and instead created romantic ideas of Africans as ' noble savages' who were childlike and simple minded. Buxton's portrayal of Africa is almost entirely negative: " Bound in the chains of the grossest ignorance, [Africa] is a prey to the most savage superstition. Christianity has made but feeble inroads on this kingdom of darkness" (A, pp. 10-11). The term ' Noble Savages' connotes the idea that some societies are able to be redeemed and in the western sense, able to conform and comply with western ruling. The abolition of slavery also meant that " The British began to see themselves less and less as perpetrators of the slave trade and more and more as the potential saviours of the African. " (Geneology) There are many reasons for the colonisation of Africa One reason has to do with the gathering of scientific knowledge about the ' dark continent by mainly scientists and geographers. The next reason is self-rooted in Christianity whereby Europeans felt it was their duty to civilize the African people and uplift them from a state of " Barbary. " The final reason is to do with imperialism and ethnocentrism of European people who viewed anyone that was different as being inherently inferior. After the decision to obtain colonies in Africa was made it was up to the writers, academics and poets to create justification for colonisation. During the mid-

18th century the English press was beginning to take off with a " Communication revolution that was expanding the quantity of available news and speeding up its transmission to ever increasing audiences. " This expansion led the way to a more sustained and efficient national press which meant that " Britain's overseas empire was brought closer to home as an imaginable reality. " Travel journalism was a popular form of journalism during the 19th century and used by explorers in Africa to report on what they were seeing. Travel narratives provided information about the " Rest of the world to Europe and so contributing to the shaping of European identity in contrast to that of the „ otherâ€ (Pratt, 1992, 5-6). Travel books were an integral aspect in the colonization of Africa they served as a tool in constructing the African image and therefore Africans became the " subjects of imperialism rather than citizens. " (Franley, 2003, 6) Explorers accounts were based on romantic stories of traveling through a dark continent filled with challenging obstacles. Africa became the setting of western heroism and Africans as a result were portrayed as evil beings in dire need of western intervention. The Berlin conference of 1884 is seen as the beginning of the " scramble for Africa, " where all the European powers met in order to partition Africa and discuss their share within the continent. By this time in Britain the image of Africans had shifted from being ' noble savages' to evil barbarians. Explorers painted Africans as dangerous while missionaries usually portrayed them as childlike and primitive. Africa was viewed as an axis of evil, a part of the world filled with demonic darkness and savagery " cannibalism was evidence of this and Europeans viewed it their obligation to exorcise. " Cannibalism was a common characteristic associated with Africans,

Winwood Reade in his book *Savage Africa* (1863) writes that " The mob of Dahomey are man- eaters; they have cannibal minds; they have been accustomed to feed on murder." This sensationalist image of Africans was a strategic representation in order for Europe to deepen its presence within the region. Stuart Hall argues that radicalized discourse is founded on a set of binary oppositions where civilization (white) which is seen as the light and is dichotomous with savagery (black) which was often referred to as darkness. He argues that " There are rich distinctions which cluster around the supposed link, on the one hand, between the ' white races' and intellectual development —refinement, a belief in reason and a civilized restraint in their emotional, sexual and civil life, all of which are associated with culture. On the other hand...black races, the open expression of emotions and feeling rather than intellect, a lack of civilized refinement. A reliance on ritual...all of which are associated with nature. " Here, Hall is arguing that among whites culture and nature do not coincide whereas for black people it was accepted that their culture and nature were interchangeable parts of their identity. By debasing the culture of Africans to nature it means that they are beyond " History, permanent and fixed, " and that they unchangeable. In this view it was beneficial to white colonialist to portray them this way, as they were able to argue that it was the natural order of things for blacks to be under the control of whites and therefore this representational strategy was " designed to fix difference, and thus secure it forever. " James Hunt a member of the Anthropological Society argued " that Africans, if not nonhuman or a different species, were such an inferior " breed" that they might be impervious to " higher influences" Hunt believed

in the existence of ' races' and argued that there were vast differences between European men which set them above other humans. To Hunt the role of Africans " was to be slaves. Hunt also argued that the negro were closer to the ape than Europeans, to Hunt " there were deep"rooted physical, mental and moral differences dividing Europeans from Africans and making the latter much inferior to the former" Africa and African culture were constantly measured against European ideas of morality, civilization. Edward Said writes " the power of culture by virtue of its elevated or superior position to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, demote, interdict, and validate: in short, the power of culture to be an agent of, and perhaps the main agency for, powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond it too." (HERE I WILL DISCUSS STUART HALL OTHERING THEORY) The ruling class of Britain who had authority over " uncivilized and primitive" people of overseas, power became ' self-validating.' " There might be many stages of social evolution and many seemingly bizarre customs and " superstitions" in the world, but there was only one " civilization," one path of " progress," Nationalism and patriarchy honoured ' high culture' and looked down upon other cultural groups which didn't fall into the same category as ' high culture.' . During the late 19th century because of the slew of negative reports on Africa by westerners, people in Europe felt that it was their moral duty to colonize Africa and that it was " the " White man's burden, " in Rudyard Kipling's phrase, to dominate Africans until they could be sufficiently civilized to take their place in the world. " By the beginning of 1900, almost all of Africa was under European rule an the western created idea of " Dark Continent' and uncivilized African inhabitants had become the

European imagining of Africa. The most renowned explorer of the Victoria period was David Livingstone the English missionary who published his *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* IN 1857. Livingstone carried a " saint like" image and was viewed as a heroic British emblem. Although, Livingstone was also an explorer his attitude towards Africans was more sympathetic than his counterparts, but still he viewed Europeans superior to Africans. In the study ' *Professing Rhetoric*' a ' hero' " is one that has been ubiquitous in public discourse for centuries, especially in politics. A recurring discussion of heroic rhetoric is found in analyses of conservative political rhetoric that utilize the formal concept of romantic myth. Romantic myth creates a symbolic universe consisting of idyllic and a demonic world... The romantic myth is the story of a heroic struggle of good versus evil. Romantic myth provides a narrative scheme in which people are justified in acting aggressively to promote positive change in society (a'crusade')" Heroism operates as a moral indoctrination and sets the standard for moral values. Heroes are viewed as role models who have the ability of constructing norms and promoting different " ideological world views. " Basil Joseph Matthew's biography on Livingstone titled ' *David Livingstone: The Pathfinder*' is a clear example of the constructions of white heroism. The biography upholds imperialistic conventions of writing in using a range of stereotypes and derogative language when describing the Africans and hyperbolic description of Livingstone as a hero. The beginning of the biography opens up as follows, " They rolled themselves up in the skins of beasts and slept. But the White Leader, whom they had followed for a thousand miles along the rivers and through the forests, sat on, gazing into

the red embers of the fire. His face was brown and strong, and no man had ever seen fear in his blue-grey eyes. His left arm hung stiffly by his side, and could not be lifted without pain, because of the shattered bone and the eleven great tooth-marks left there by a lion. " The first part describes the African natives who sleep in the skin of dead animals. Here, Matthew is suggesting that the Africans unlike Livingstone are weak and therefore sleep, whereas Livingstone stays awake absorbing his surroundings. " The imagery of dead animals evokes an image of death and suggests that Africans are backwards and uncivilized as they do not sleep on beds. The second part uses romantic lexis to describe Livingstone, " White leader...strong...tooth marks left there by lion" paints an image of a gallant indestructible hero who is able to defeat a lion. Matthews then describes Livingstone's thoughts, " As he sat there, thinking of the stories of hunting adventures and of tribal war told that night by his brown fellow-camper. " Stuart Hall's theory of binary opposition can be applied here as Mathews creates an image of Africans as tribal warriors who engage in killing and in contrast a passive Livingstone who views them disdainfully . Africa was a setting where British boys could become men but also where British men could behave like boys with impunity, as do Haggard's heroes. Africa was a great testing-or teething-ground for moral growth and moral regression; the two processes were often indistinguishable SAID Said writes of " the power of culture by virtue of its elevated or superior position to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, demote, interdict, and validate: in short, the power of culture to be an agent of, and perhaps the main agency for, powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond it too." in imperialist discourse the voices of the

dominated are represented almost entirely by their silence, their absence. Following Said's (1978) demonstration of how „otherness“ created a system of discourse and representations, studies of orientalism have tended to take the dichotomy „us“ / „other“ as given rather than as shifting and hybridized. These binary categories need to be problematized in order not to create a dualistic positioning of „us“ and „other,“ i. e. in order to avoid the risk of ratifying and naturalizing them (Loomba, 1998, 49). Ann Stoler has emphasized the need for scholars to re-evaluate the dichotomy of colonizer and colonized as comprising historically constructed categories, rather than as given and natural categories (1992, 321). Otherness is historically constituted, implying shifting categories which can gain contradictory and incoherent meanings in different contexts. Africa was a setting where British boys could become men but also where British men could behave like boys with impunity, as do Haggard's heroes. Africa was a great testing-or teething-ground for moral growth and moral regression; the two processes were often indistinguishable. Charles Dickens: Between the civilized European and the barbarous African there is a great gulf set.... To change the customs even of civilisedmen ... is ... a most difficult and slow proceeding; but to do this by ignorant and savage races, is a work which, like the progressive changes of the globe itself, requires a stretch of years that dazzles in the looking at. AFRICA FEMINISED By the end of the nineteenth century, European travel to Africa had become more commonplace, and even a number of women journeyed there. The Englishwoman Mary Kingsley, one of the first Feminist critics in particular has emphasized how the African landscape is repeatedly feminized and sexualized. Some feminist scholars

have claimed that female European travelers who wrote about Africa were more sympathetic in their depictions, but others have contended that women writers' imperialist attitudes are just as entrenched as those of their male counterparts. ng other things, how Blyden's views contrast with nineteenth-century Western attitudes. the feminization of African men thus suggested that African men were more emotional and lacking in self-control than their white counterparts. The rhetoric of gender was applied to the distinction of humanity into different racial types, the white race was viewed as the male while the black one was seen as female (McClintock, 1995, 55). As argued by Michael Pickering, racist discourse was still not static (2001, 125) and ideas of racial boundaries were entangled with other ideas of boundaries and exclusion(s) relating to nationality as well as class, gender and religion.