

# KING KONG [1933]

by

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There is an overwhelming dielectic in many monsters films, but it is particularly prominaent in *King Kong*. We are both shocked and fascinated by the uncontrollable savgery of the monster while realizing at the same time his busom harbors a child-like innocence and sensitivity. This strikes us because it is us.

*King Kong* is at once an adolescent monster as star-crossed as any Romeo and the Natural Man trying to survive amidst urban blight and economic depression.

At the beginning of the film, director Carl Denham (Robert Armstrong) makes it clear that he has no use for women and no use of emotions. He wants an ingeneau only for the benefit of the box office. He antipathy toward women is clear when he states that as a last resort – presumaby a fate worse than death – he'll even marry one for the sake of the film. What we have here is a gang of adolescent boys who enjoy their adventues and everything is fine until a woman barges in and spoils everything.

When actress Anne Darrow (Fay Wray) delicately assumes Denham wants to make her his mistress, he vehemently denies it. And we believe him, for it is necessary to keep his adolscent view of woman as a Madonna figure.

John Driscoll (Bruce Cabot), the first mate's attitude toward women is equally adolescent. He begins his wooing of Anne by hitting her in the adolscent belief the enmity is the key to love. Perhaps, the mysogny of the adolescent boy is based on his fear of being unmanned by his overdependence on the mother.

It is immediatley after Driscoll stammers out is love for Anne like a schoolboy that the black spirit her away as a gift for Kong. Obviously, it is the manifestation of Driscoll's own repression that removes him from the danger of an emotional attachment to the feminine. What is interesting about *King Kong* is that we see here the psychological roots of racism writ large on the screen. It is the Other, and typically the dark Other, that is the recipient of our projected collective repressions – especially sexual ones. *They* have rhythm, are well hung, can't be resisited by white women, and so on. They do all the delicious things we deny ourselves in the name of civilization.

Kong sniffs his finger like an adolescent who won't wash his hands after a heavy petting session in order to hold on the feminine aroma.

The remainder of the film is a prolonged acting out of the rescue fantasy central to the adolescent's chivalrous, asexual relationship with an idealized beloved.

At the end of the film, we assume that Driscoll has worked through his fear and sadism toward women, moved through adolescence and formed a viable, if tepid, sexual adaptation. Denham, on the other hand, has not matured. It is his greed, not beauty, that killed Kong. The collective insisted that he mature, that is include a woman in his movie/dream/unconscious world. He did so against his will. And that antipathy materialized as Kong just as much as it did from Driscoll's adolescent sexual fantasies. He exacts callous revenge for the intrusion of the feminine into his previously happy homoerotic existence and homeostasis. Denham is more doomed than Kong himself – at least Kong was reintegrated into the unconscious at the end of the film. Not so Denham's problems – his is bound to live out his life making movies, fantasies which should reflect the unconscious but, in his need for control and power, are under his fully conscious control. And with total conscious control, growth cannot occur.