

RIDER HAGGARD: A STUDY IN POPULAR FICTION

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IN POPULAR FICTION

by

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis my dual purpose is to account for Haggard's lasting popularity and to examine hitherto ignored aspects of his work that, in my opinion, deserve critical attention. The thesis is essentially a re-assessment of Haggard's status as a novelist.

My introduction gives a brief outline of Haggard's life and indicates my approach to his work.

Chapter I deals with Haggard's boyhood and youth, and the early influences on the formation of his personality. It demonstrates that Haggard's literary subject matter was influenced by family relationships and personal experiences, particularly his relationship with his father and his experiences in Africa as a young man. The chapter presents Haggard as a product of the contemporary literary scene and indicates the extent to which he reflects contemporary beliefs and attitudes. Most important perhaps, it shows him to be possessed of a social consciousness that invites comparison with such writers as Hardy and Gissing.

Chapter II examines Haggard's very special talents as a romantic writer, talents that produced some of the most memorable romantic adventure novels ever written. The chapter involves a discussion of the characteristics that he shares with other romantic writers and how his works illustrate certain generally accepted theories of what constitutes the romantic. A detailed examination of a number of his romances serves to illustrate the special characteristics that

set Haggard apart and to demonstrate his outstanding achievements in the romantic vein. The importance of setting and stylistic devices in creating memorable romantic effects is given special consideration.

Chapter III deals with the contribution of symbolism to the total effect of Haggard's work. It examines Haggard's use of symbolism both as a revelation of the author's philosophy and also as a device to increase the imaginative effect on the reader. A number of Haggard's highly symbolic works such as Eric Brighteyes and She are discussed at length.

Chapter IV is concerned with those books that reveal Haggard's experience and knowledge of African history and affairs, and his dream-vision of Africa that transcends the reality, an imaginative concept that for many of his readers becomes the reality. Haggard's knowledge of African customs, politics and special problems is discussed with reference to such novels as Jess, Marie, and Swallow, while his interpretation of Zulu history is dealt with at length. His careful, and on the whole unbiased, presentation of English, Dutch, and Zulu viewpoints (unusual from an Englishman of his time) is illustrated and discussed. Throughout this chapter the continuing value of Haggard's first-hand observations and shrewd opinions of African peoples and affairs is assessed.

Chapter V categorizes Haggard's characters into five groups: the personal reflection, the ideal man, the ideal woman, types of good and of evil, and the real. Various examples of each type are selected for discussion. A large segment of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of Haggard's presentation and development of the character



of Allan Quatermain, certainly one of the author's finest achievements. Hans and Umslopogaas are considered at some length as excellent examples of Haggard's understanding of African natives.

My conclusion reiterates the very important point that, although various aspects of Haggard's work may lend themselves to critical analysis, his essential appeal is on an imaginative level that evades criticism; the impact of Haggard's best romances is on the imagination rather than the critical faculties of the reader, and the lasting impression on the reader defies analysis.

## PREFACE

It is perhaps not without precedent that a doctoral dissertation should have its roots in the mind of a child of twelve. It must nevertheless be rather unusual, since the preoccupations of the child's mind, literary or otherwise, are seldom of a nature to motivate the depth of study associated with the scope of such a dissertation. In the case of Haggard, however, the concept is not far fetched. Haggard appeals most strongly on the level of the subconscious and the imaginative, a realm that includes the sleeping and the waking dreams of child and adult, savage and sophisticate.

I can vividly recall as a twelve year old boy on a long summer evening straining my sight to live just one more paragraph of King Solomon's Mines before the fading light forced me to put the book aside. In a Newfoundland outport during the Hungry Thirties artificial light was not used for activities considered as unnecessary as reading, nor were exciting books so plentiful that it was normally desired.

The book was lent me by a kind of great uncle, a small shopkeeper, who had made peace with his environment and found great satisfaction in it. He was a great reader, particularly of romantic adventure, and in spring, summer and fall, whenever the weather was fine (not often enough to interfere seriously with business), he would leave his shop to be tended by his wife, harness the old horse to cart or carriage, and spend most of the day fishing, picking

berries or cutting wood, as the weather or personal whim dictated. On such occasions the horse found his own way to the appropriate spot, often stopping to crop grass along the country road, while the septuagenarian master reclined on the cart reading some tale of exciting adventure, returning temporarily, and instinctively it seemed, to reality when the well-trained horse stopped at a crossroads.

To that old gentleman, a lover of Dickens, Marryat, Stevenson, Dumas and Haggard, I owe a great debt. I too had plenty of time for reading, and he believed that books were for enjoyment.

I am also grateful to all those who helped in any way to facilitate what has been, without financial assistance or leave from the heavy burden of high school teaching, a long and arduous process. My thanks go to Dr. E. R. Seary, who helped me choose a dissertation topic, Miss Roberta Buchannan who gave good advice in the initial stages; and Dr. Alison Feder, whose kind suggestions were always welcome. I am extremely grateful to Dr. and Mrs. Gordon Bennett and to Mr. Ray Wight for much practical help, and to the library staff at Memorial University, invariably helpful and efficient.

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progress, which combined thoroughness with kindness and consideration, served as both corrective and source of inspiration. Dr. Story's encouragement at a time when the going became particularly rough provided the necessary restorative.

To all those, and to my wife, who bore my trials cheerfully, I express my sincere thanks.

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## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Rider Haggard is one of the most interesting in English letters. At a time when novel reading constituted one of the chief influences on popular taste and thought, he caught the public fancy and held it, with slight lapses, through three decades. Although admired during his heyday by Besant, Lang, Stevenson and Kipling, and later by Jung, Graham Greene, Henry Miller, George Orwell and William Plomer, he is now usually relegated to the middle, and sometimes to the lowest rank, in any scheme of criticism. Yet, in contrast to most of the other popular novelists of his time, Caine, Corelli, Miss Braddon et al., he has survived and is, I think, likely to continue to survive.

Since some knowledge of Haggard's life and personality adds considerably to the understanding of his novels, a brief summary of his life may not be out of place here.

Henry Rider Haggard was born on June 22, 1856, at West Bradenham Hall, Norfolk, England, the sixth son of William Meybohm Rider Haggard, barrister-at-law. His erratic and far from thorough education included two London day schools (one of them a business school), a two or three year period with the Rev. Mr. Graham at Garsington, a short period at Ipswich Grammar School, and private tutoring, including a period with a crammer, as preparation for the Foreign Office examination. At nineteen, he went to South Africa as secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, the governor of Natal. In 1877, as a member of Sir Theophilus



Shepstone's staff, he hoisted the Union flag at Pretoria when the Transvaal was first annexed. Later he became a master and registrar of the Transvaal high court.

An early love affair ended unhappily and in 1880 Rider married Louisa Margitson, a Norfolk heiress. With a partner, he had started an ostrich farm in Natal, but the venture ended in disaster because of political troubles in the area. On returning to the Transvaal with his wife, he was in time to witness its surrender to the Boers, and soon returned to England.

Haggard was called to the bar in 1884 but soon substituted literature for law. His first book Cetywayo and His White Neighbours, written in defence of Shepstone's African policy, had been published in 1882; in 1884 his first novel, Dawn, appeared. In 1895 he unsuccessfully ran for Parliament in the East Norfolk riding. By that time he had published more than twenty books.

The loss of his one son in 1893 was the second great disappointment of his life, but he seems to have found a new and absorbing interest in agriculture. The Farmer's Year Book (1899) and Rural England (1902) are considered among the best of their kind. In 1905 he was appointed special commissioner to investigate Salvation Army settlements in the United States, which resulted in The Poor and the Land (1905). He was knighted in 1912, and in his later years spent considerable periods travelling as a member of various official government committees. He died in London on May 14, 1925.

Haggard's life was a curious mixture of obscurity and almost overwhelming popularity, of the extremely romantic and the extremely

prosaic, of great grief and great rewards, all of which are reflected in his novels. His wide experience of the world enabled Haggard, not merely to reflect public taste, as most popular writers do, but, like Stevenson, Doyle, Wyeman and Kipling, to help to mould it.

My purpose in this dissertation is to attempt to account for Haggard's great popularity by examining certain elements in his work that contribute to its lasting appeal. For subtleties of style, complexity and wit one must look elsewhere. Haggard's style is generally simple, but well suited to his narrator and narrative. His greatest assets are a remarkable narrative zest, the ability to present imaginary events within a framework of credibility, and a versatility in conveying the thoughts and imitating the language of characters of different social backgrounds, beliefs and personalities. His use of symbols often gives his work a universality that raises it far above the general level of popular fiction. His ability to recreate imaginatively the culture and atmosphere of different periods, particularly the period in Zulu history from Chaka to Cetewayo, has seldom been surpassed. Moreover, he is one of the few authors to whom it is possible to accord that "primitive response" that Northrop Frye describes as "unmediated . . . neither naïve, . . . nor so sophisticated as to be indifferent,"<sup>1</sup> a response that depends (if I understand Frye correctly)

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<sup>1</sup>Northrop Frye in *Modern Criticism*, ed. Murray Krieger (1966), p. 141.

on an inherent, almost instinctive awareness of the archetypes and conventions of our literature, uninfluenced by set critical terms.

Whenever possible I shall deal with those elements separately. Very often, however, such separation is impossible. In Haggard's books we find two worlds closely interwoven--the world of the body and the world of the spirit, the naturalistic and the romantic, the real and the imaginary. In combining those two worlds, Haggard reveals as much of his own personality as he does of the imagined personality of his characters. He often communicates his attitude towards a character or situation by means of skilfully chosen images, and thus indirectly and possibly unconsciously reveals both psychological depth and deep compassion.

Most significant of all, perhaps, he seeks in the life of the African tribesman, in the religious strivings of his European characters, and in the theology of the ancient Egyptians, an antidote to the ills of the materialistic age in which he lived.

Every tale of Haggard's takes the form of a quest. The quest may be ostensibly for a lost race, a great treasure, or a beautiful woman, but in Haggard's mythology the real objective is that realm of the spirit and the imagination that modern civilization has, to a great extent, taken away from us.

Haggard began his career as a writer at a time when telling an entertaining story was considered one of the principal forms of literary art, and when such masters of the mysterious and the romantic as Robert Louis Stevenson, Wilkie Collins, R. D. Blackmore and Sheridan Le Fanu were among the most widely-read writers in English. His personal



experience of Africa, moreover, provided him and his readers with a literary territory so far removed from the average Englishman's experience as to have great appeal to his imagination. The response to The Witch's Head (1884), and the even more enthusiastic response to King Solomon's Mines (1885) were strong indication that Haggard had discovered a rich vein of romance.

That he wrote too fast and too much cannot be denied. From the publication of Dawn in 1884 to that of Belshazzar in 1930 (five years after his death) his output was almost continuous. Hardly a year passed without the publication of one or more books. In both 1887 and 1888 he published four.

Eulogized and condemned by the critics, accused of plagiarism and even of contributing to the deterioration of public morals, Haggard continued to please himself and the public. He believed that a novel should be a spontaneous production, written as quickly as possible before the imaginative impulse faded. In a romance, he maintained, "The really needful things are adventure . . . and imagination, together with a clever use of coincidence and an ordered development of the plot, which should, if possible, have a happy ending."<sup>2</sup>

To dismiss Haggard as an insignificant purveyor of romance has been, however, the mistake of critics who have either read very few of his books or used criteria inapplicable to the greater part of his writing. I hope to show that besides being superb popular entertainment,

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<sup>2</sup>The Days of My Life (1926), ii, 90.

Haggard's work, at its best possesses cultural values that are usually neither found nor expected in the popular adventure novel.

## I. INFLUENCES AND OPINIONS

### A. The Formative Years

#### 1

Any attempt to evaluate influences on Rider Haggard as a writer may usefully take into consideration his experiences as a child and as a young man.

In dealing with the influences of a writer's experience on his art, the critic may either rely upon direct evidence, or base assumption and conjecture upon that art. I shall do both.

As direct evidence, Haggard's autobiography, The Days of My Life (1926), is the main source, supplemented by Liliias Rider Haggard's account of her father's life, The Cloak That I Left (1951), and Morton Cohen's Rider Haggard: His Life and Works (1960). Each of those writers, admirable in most respects, has one outstanding fault. Haggard is sometimes too reticent about the experiences that must have affected him most deeply. Liliias is often guilty of romanticizing those experiences.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cohen sometimes assumes too much, particularly when he relies heavily upon Liliias.

In addition to those three books, certain characters, incidents and descriptive passages in Haggard's books throw light on his private life. His writings therefore have an intimacy, a greater

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<sup>1</sup>Compare the account of the incident in the Sandwich room as told by Haggard and by Liliias.

degree of humanness than those of most romantic novelists. One senses that the author of such romances as Heart of the World (1896) and Ayesha (1905) has not only suffered, but has also given a great deal of thought to life, death and religion. The reader familiar with the facts of Haggard's life has the added interest of recognition.

Haggard's account of his childhood in The Days of My Life, although brief, is fairly revealing. He was a quiet, sensitive, imaginative boy, who grew up in the shadow of his more active and apparently more talented brothers. His mother, with nine children and a boisterous, often tyrannical husband, had little time to spare for the one who evidently needed it most.

Haggard remembers his mother's remarking that he "was as heavy as lead in body and mind." He remembers his father's shouting "in a voice like to that of an angry bull" that he was "only fit to be a greengrocer." Not wishing to cast blame upon his parents for their lack of understanding, but reluctant to accept their judgement of him, he comments: "Without doubt I was slow at my lessons, chiefly because I was always thinking of something else."<sup>2</sup>

A sensitive child, continually forced to turn inward, may become a lout or a dreamer, depending upon the amount of imagination he possesses. Haggard became a dreamer, and dreaming further developed his imagination.

After dwelling at length, rather wistfully one suspects, on

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<sup>2</sup>The Days of My Life (1926), i, 28.

the personality that made his father "extraordinarily popular," he remarks, "His rows with his children were many, and often on his part unjust."<sup>3</sup> The injustice must have wounded Rider much more deeply than it did his less vulnerable brothers. His brother Andrew's taunting him about his supposed stupidity served to remind him of the impossibility of pleasing his father.

He remembers his misery at London day schools and certain unpleasant experiences at Ipswich Grammar School, remarking wryly: "Also, as I was supposed to be not very bright, I dare say it was thought that to send me to a public school [like my brothers] would be to waste money."<sup>4</sup>

Having to prove himself again and again at different schools was hard on Rider. At Ipswich he was "elected captain of the second football team, but did not stay long enough . . . to get into the first." A teacher who had offered a special prize for an essay forgot to award the prize after Rider won it.

A period of desultory travel in Europe, during which he was thrown into the Rhine by his brothers in order that he might learn to swim, his father's dragging him from his cabin on a Rhine steamer by the "scruff of the neck", and a narrow escape from drowning in France, added considerably, one may very well suppose, to his feeling of insecurity.

Even as a small boy, he was preoccupied with death. Lillas

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

quotes from a notebook in which her father remarks on his astonishment when he discovered that princes, like ordinary mortals, were subject to death, and on the effect upon him of the austere beauty of the dead body of an old man he "persuaded the carpenter to show [him]."

In The Days of My Life he recounts a bizarre incident in which, sleeping alone in the room known as the Sandwich, he shivered, prayed and wept at the thought of death and hell. At that time, he tells us, he was about nine, although Liliias, in elaborating the incident makes him thirteen.

It is Liliias who mentions that the ugly rag doll known as She-who-must-be-Obeyed was used to frighten Rider. In The Days of My Life he mentions the doll rather vaguely as being used to frighten certain of his brothers and sisters. This doll, Cohen implies, was metamorphosed in the child's mind into the surpassingly beautiful and mysterious Ayesha. Whatever the truth of the matter may be, Rider certainly used the name in his fiction.

In spite of his being continually overshadowed by his brothers, and his parents' apparent inability to understand him, his childhood was not altogether unhappy. At any rate, he did not develop into a pessimist.

His happy memories seem to revolve around his eldest sister Ella, who went to some trouble to help him out of difficulties; Garsington Rectory, where he studied under the Rev. Mr. Graham; and a farmer called Quatermain, who was extremely kind to him. In describing Allan's childhood in Allan's Wife, he lovingly recreates certain scenes from his own. A close reading of The Days of My Life indicates that a

passage involving mother, brother and childhood play<sup>5</sup> is a composite of certain of Haggard's own memories. The "long grey house" is Garsington Rectory, the hollow tree is an elm in which the boy played at Garsington, while the attic, with an appropriately unpleasant memory, was doubtless that shared by Rider and Andrew at Bradenham Hall. The touch of cruelty seems fairly representative of Andrew as Haggard describes him in The Days of My Life. Mrs. Graham's little sister Blanche, with whom Rider played, was probably the inspiration of the child Stella.

As a child growing up mostly in the country, Rider enjoyed the usual country pursuits. He learned to handle a gun and to ride, but apparently did very little reading. He mentions two childhood occasions, however, when great force was necessary in order to separate him from a book. It seems that he grew very fond of a few books. In the introduction to The Brethren he expresses gratitude to Ella, who taught him to read, and who possibly influenced his choice of books. The fact that his mother wrote, or had written, poetry seems to have had no part in forming his taste.

The books he read were certainly of a type to stimulate a boy's imagination, and seem to have had some effect on his own subject matter and style. Dr. Cohen lists Robinson Crusoe, The Arabian Nights, The Three Musketeers, and poetry by Poe and Macaulay.<sup>6</sup> Whether Robinson Crusoe had the power that Rousseau attributes to it of strengthening

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<sup>5</sup>See page 134.

<sup>6</sup>Morton Cohen, Rider Haggard: His Life and Works (1960), p. 23.



a boy's self-reliance is problematical in Haggard's case, but it seems to have taught him the value of external realism in a romantic tale, as evidenced by certain passages in his books, notably the preparations for the journey in King Solomon's Mines. Very noticeable, too, is the influence of Poe in such books as The Witch's Head, Montezuma's Daughter and Heart of the World.

That Haggard loved the Norfolk countryside is apparent in such passages as the following:

Then, to the west, almost at the foot of Molehill, the ground broke away in a deep bank clothed with timber, which led the eye down by slow descents into the beautiful valley of the Ell. Here the silver river wound its gentle way through lush and poplar-bordered marshes, where the cattle stand knee-deep in flowers; past quaint wooden mill-houses, through Boisingham -- Old Common, windy looking even now, and brightened here and there with a dash of golden gorse, till it was lost beneath the picturesque cluster of red-tiled roofs that marked the ancient town. Look which way he would, the view was lovely.<sup>7</sup>

At eighteen, while studying with a tutor in London, Haggard fell "truly and earnestly in love" with a very beautiful girl. We read nothing more about that girl in his autobiography except the part played later by Rider's father in terminating the affair. Always sensitive, Rider seems to prefer not to talk about it, but it certainly served to increase the bitterness that he felt towards his father. How deeply Rider was affected is indicated again and again in his writings. In Montezuma's Daughter he writes: "Oh! we think much of the sorrows of our youth, and should a sweetheart give us the go-by, we fill the world

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<sup>7</sup>Colonel Quaritch, V. C. (1911), p. 7

with moans and swear that it holds no comfort for us."<sup>8</sup>

In The World's Desire Helen's irresistible attraction is that she appears to every man as his lost first love.

Many years later, wishing to justify his father's behaviour, Haggard cannot forget his grief:

It was after my return from Secocoeni's . . . that I received that harsh epistle from my father . . . that, as I have said, caused me at the last moment not to start for England . . . . I should have remembered that when he wrote his letter my father could not have known that I was coming home in this important position, namely to give viva-voce information to Lord Carnarvon as to all the circumstances connected with the Annexation. Nor, although I have little doubt that my mother and my sister Mary . . . were privy to the secret and private reasons for my journey, to which I have already alluded, was he perhaps aware of them. . . . I had to make up my mind on the spot while, as the Zulu say, "my heart was cut in two."<sup>9</sup>

Try as he might Rider failed to please his father. His throwing up a government post to start an ostrich farm with Arthur Cochrane was an indication to his father of the young man's irresponsibility. His early articles on Africa gained him the sobriquet of "miserable penny-a-liner."

"Devil" Caresfoot, in Haggard's first novel, Dawn, whose first wife "died of fear of him," and whom his son Philip finds impossible to please, is, I feel, a highly exaggerated portrait of Haggard's father. If one accepts Caresfoot as a product of boyish resentment and fear, the ritual nature of his murder by Philip becomes apparent. It is at any rate a theory not inconsistent with the tenets of modern

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<sup>8</sup>Montezuma's Daughter (1934), p. 304.

<sup>9</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 99-100.

criticism. Perhaps such a murder was necessary before Haggard could create the character of Allan Quatermain.

Certainly Rider's ideal of fatherly love as conveyed by means of Allan's love for his son Harry is coloured by an unfulfilled wish of his own boyhood. The possibility of providing a fortune for Harry is a very important factor in Allan's undertaking the hazardous journey in King Solomon's Mines. Harry and his father hunt for gold together in "A Tale of Three Lions." The genuineness of Allan's grief for the dead Harry in Allan Quatermain cannot be doubted.

In the light of his unsatisfactory relationship with his own father, it is easy to understand Haggard's feelings towards older men who were kind to him in Africa, and his lasting gratitude for the attention they accorded him. Sir Theophilus Shepstone, he remembers with great satisfaction, remarked "I love that boy." Sir Henry Bulwer was his "beau ideal of what an English gentleman should be." Sir William Butler was "a most agreeable and sympathetic man, who took the trouble to talk a good deal to me." Those particular friendships, involving a great deal of hero worship, are reflected in the relationships of such pairs as Holly and Leo in She. Older men in his later novels are usually well endowed with sympathy and understanding. That he gradually grew to estimate his father's character more justly may be indicated by the portrait of Squire de la Molle in Colonel Quaritch, V. C., whom C. J. Longman, editor of The Days of My Life, believes to be based on Rider's father.

One other experience of Rider's in London was to have a lasting effect-- his encounter with spiritualism. Introduced by Lady

Paulet<sup>10</sup> into a circle of spiritualists he was at first amused and later very much impressed. An experience with a young and beautiful medium who, during a séance, apparently lost her hair and became temporarily quite bald shocked him profoundly and may have had some influence on some scenes in She and Ayesha.

To one who could dwell so morbidly on the thought of death at the age of nine, any communication with the spiritual, real or assumed, must have been particularly moving. How very moving must have been Haggard's experience of the dark primeval forces and the primitive religious superstitions of Africa!

The one factor without which Haggard's romances could not have existed, or would not have existed as they are, was his experiences in Africa. The effect of those experiences on his work is treated in full elsewhere in this thesis, but a brief reference to his imaginative use of those experiences is appropriate at this stage.

Haggard went to Africa at nineteen, mixed with experienced officials and hunters, learned the life at first hand and became so attracted to the Zulus that he learned their language and as much as possible of their history. He kept a notebook of unusual stories and experiences that was to prove of inestimable value to him later. Readers of The Days of My Life recognize in The Witch's Head (1884) incidents of Haggard's life in Africa -- the incident, for example, in which Ernest and his party are saved from ambush by deciding at the last moment to take a different route from that planned. Many of the

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<sup>10</sup>Cohen's spelling is Poulett, presumably a correction.

episodes, notably the Battle of the Little Hand, are a retelling of stories that Haggard had heard from men who had been involved.

Both The Witch's Head and Jess (1887) are early, rather uncertain attempts to obtain, through the imaginative contemplation of the African scene, psychological relief from a life in England that Haggard found too tame. That he needed such relief is attested by his wistful comment in the dedication of Nada the Lily: "Chance has taken me by another path, and I must leave the ways of action that I love and bury myself in books."

There are many things in Jess of interest to the student of Haggard or of Africa. In the opening description of a hot day in the Transvaal and the fight with the ostrich, Haggard is obviously at home. Captain John Neil and Silas Crofts represent the kind of pioneer Englishmen that Haggard knew, and are as believable as their background. The Hottentot Jantje, a type that Haggard was to develop later in the character of Hans, is an early example of the author's sympathy for and understanding of the African native. Childlike, timid, shrewd, superstitious, sulky and unreliable, but extremely lovable, Jantje has an unmistakable air of reality. The ostrich farm is Hilldrop, where Haggard and Arthur Cochrane established themselves, and where he later brought his wife. The house that Jess occupies during a crucial part of the story is the house that Haggard shared with Cochrane.

In his autobiography he remembers his sadness on leaving Hilldrop, "which neither of us ever has, nor I suppose ever will, see again except in dreams." In a sense The Witch's Head and Jess, like the portrait of "Devil" Caresfoot in Dawn, may be an effort to exorcize a

portion of the unpleasant reality of life in order to make room for the dream. Haggard's dream of Africa is the basis for the African romances; he continues to depict reality in his historical romances about the Zulus; but Africa as a personal reality soon fades into the background.

### B. The Contemporary Literary Scene

Haggard's statement that he was not a great reader leads one to wonder to what extent he was directly affected by past or contemporary writers other than the two or three I have mentioned and two or three others to whom he acknowledges a debt. It is certain that he must have been indirectly affected by the literary climate of his time, as any person who engages in any art is affected by the current milieu of that art.

The dominant figures in the imaginative literature of the period were Tennyson, Dickens, Browning and Thackeray, while the greatest influences in non-imaginative literature were Darwin, Ruskin, Carlyle and Newman. Certainly the influence of Tennyson, Dickens and Darwin helped to create the great dichotomy of the age, in which seriousness and frivolity, fantasy and science, faith and doubt sometimes coëxisted peacefully, sometimes struggled for mastery.

Numerous other great, near-great and merely popular writers produced prodigiously. It may even be that the total influence of the host of popular writers, most of whose names are now found only in publisher's catalogues in the backs of contemporary volumes, overshadowed the influence of any single writer. A brief examination of



the various kinds of writing that achieved popularity may serve as a reminder of the literary world in which Haggard gained considerable notice in the 1880's.

The Victorian age was a period of great diversity in literature. It was so diverse in fact that one can merely indicate the range in a brief introduction. That diversity included such contrasts as the inanities of the drama and the excellences of the novel. It included Darwinism and the Oxford Movement. It was highlighted by George Eliot's profound study of an English community in Middlemarch and Emily Brontë's passionately romantic Wuthering Heights, Tennyson's idealistic creation of beauty in his retelling of the Arthurian legends and Browning's subtle portrayal of evil in his dramatic monologues. It was broad enough to encompass the hilarious farce of "Box and Cox", the stern pessimism of The City of Dreadful Night, the homespun realism of the "Kailyard" school, the fantasy of Alice, the propagandist didacticism of Reade and Kingsley, the careful creation of regional dialect and atmosphere by Lever and Blackmore, the crime, mystery and romantic love of Collins, Mary Braddon and Ouida, the novelistic presentation of various religious views by Mrs. Humphry Ward, Elizabeth Sewell, Charlotte M. Yonge and Margaret Oliphant, the political scene as depicted by Disraeli, Ballantyne's and Henty's adventures of self-sufficient English males in virgin territory, designed to be read in quiet English homes by boys and their sisters, missionary volumes to be read by sedate young ladies, and under-the-counter pornography to be read by only apparently sedate older gentlemen.

It was a period in which the work of women writers, particularly

novelists, proliferated abundantly. The mere fact of having a woman as the arbiter of national taste and the centre of social and political life seemed to provide encouragement to women to participate in all fields. The influence of women led to a more romantic, more sentimental and more reticent tone in literature. Fortunately the great women novelists managed to rise above the prevailing mode that the host of others perpetuated. Neither men nor women novelists, however, could really afford not to please the host of women readers.

Few writers could afford to ignore the influence of the middle class that formed the great mass of readers. Most resigned themselves to write for a public avid for melodrama, sentimentality, mystery and an obvious moral code. Haggard's experiments with various types of the novel and his general ambivalence of attitude that attempts to combine the philosophical and the romantic are due to his trying to please a public of which he deplored both the ethics and the taste.

Diversity often leads to dissipation, and with the death of Dickens in 1870 and the decline of Tennyson and Browning, the great age in Victorian literature came to an end in the 1880's. Dissatisfaction with things as they were or popular idealism tended to replace dogmatic faith, and new writers seemed to be presented with the alternative of realism on the one hand or a more pronounced romanticism on the other.

In dealing with the fiction of Rider Haggard the prime consideration is his status as a romantic writer. His best-known and most-rewarding books (King Solomon's Mines, She, Allan Quatermain, Ayesha) are especially representative of the late nineteenth century neo-

Romantic movement in the novel. Pioneered in England by Payn, Blackmore and Stevenson, that movement found its most characteristic expression in the well plotted tale of adventure, and its most persistent practitioner in Haggard.

Haggard was, however, very much aware of the growth of the realistic novel. While such writers as Conan Doyle, Stanley J. Weyman, H. Seton Merriman and Baring Gould found the romantic novel an adequate vehicle for their very considerable talents, Haggard was too conscious of the social problems of the time to find complete satisfaction in the romantic world that his imagination created. Hence, those books that Haggard designated "novels" are more directly concerned than his romances with social conditions and a personal search for values.

He preferred the writing of romances, which, he maintained, were harder to write because of their very limitations. In his autobiography he indicates a distaste for the psychological novel, observing that the author of such a book "may burrow in the obscene depths of human nature . . . may discuss . . . 'love' in all its forms." Love in all its forms obviously indicates sexual activity, which Haggard often goes to great lengths to ignore. His view of woman involves idealization, even sublimation. Dawn was inspired by a beautiful woman seen at church. Leo's love for She can never be consummated. Stella means star, and stars are unattainable.

The analytical and sociological novels such as Joan Haste and Colonel Quaritch, V. C., which deal with the results of sex if not sex itself, and the metaphysical Stella Fregelius and The Way of the Spirit are representative of attempts by the author to go beyond the romantic

formula in which he excelled. Those novels, we shall find, reveal certain aspects of the author's personality, beliefs and experience more clearly than the scope of the purely romantic novel permits.

Dawn, published in 1884, when the author was twenty-eight, is a rather clumsy attempt to depict human relationships. Haggard's first novel, it indicates little more than an urge to write and, very probably, a wish to impress various members of the family who had not been inclined to take him seriously. Derived from and appealing to the Victorian middle-class taste for the sentimental and the melodramatic, it is so inferior to the main body of the author's work that the Haggard enthusiast might be advised not to read it.

Victorian melodramatic fiction, like the stage melodrama of the time, relied heavily on placing its characters, particularly important female characters, in situations that allowed for extreme exaggeration of speech and gesture. To the new middle-class readers such exaggeration raised those characters above the level of everyday life. To those readers, people in books were interesting only if they possessed sensibilities and ideals of behaviour that the reader could try to imitate but could never hope to equal. Consequently, in popular fiction human failings became depravity, the good became sublime, the unusual became grotesque, and loss and pain were endowed with sentimental pathos. The use of exaggeration to provide contrast resulted in the delineation of character and actions in uncompromising scarlet, white or black, instead of in the varying tones of gray that make up the life of the ordinary individual.

The opening sentence of Dawn: "You lie; you always were a

liar, and you always will be a liar," becomes ironic in the light of the falseness the modern reader senses in the characterization, atmosphere, plot and language.

Because of the woodenness of the characters and the flamboyancy and prolixity of the style, the plot (involving murder, blackmail, seduction, forgery, suicide, magic and madness) fails to become more than so much intricate machinery. The staginess of action and the pomposity of speech regarded by the less critical contemporary readers as the height of drama now seem the essence of affectation. Such descriptive passages as, "And the girl stood before him to await his answer, one hand pressed against her bosom to still the beating of her heart, whilst with the other she screened her blushing brow,"<sup>11</sup> imply a kind of posing that is no longer tolerable.

Among many scenes deplorable for their bad taste, influenced considerably by the exaggerated acting style of stage melodrama, the worst is probably Philip's attempt to effect a reconciliation with Maria, who has just said her final farewell to his dying wife Hilda. Here and elsewhere over-dramatization of the domestic scene for effect must have been offensive even to contemporary readers. Haggard soon came to recognize the falseness inherent in that style; Allan Quatermain insists that there be no "flights and fancies" in King Solomon's Mines.

Dawn seems to reflect Haggard's knowledge of certain popular novels of the time rather than knowledge of real life. Haggard confessed

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<sup>11</sup>Dawn (1899), p. 26.

that his early models were R. D. Blackmore and James Payn, both of whom attracted a large public chiefly by means of bizarre characters and melodramatic effects. Critics were quick to compare Dawn to the novels of Mrs. Henry Wood. There is more than a slight similarity of setting and character. The striking difference is in Haggard's attitude towards his subject matter. Mrs. Wood presents the people of her society in all their sentimentality and dullness - which she obviously shared. Haggard tries to improve on the usual characters of the domestic novel, and, in an effort to make them more exciting (in the style of Blackmore's Clara Vaughan or Payn's Lost Sir Massingberd) deprives them of any reality they might otherwise have.

In Mrs. Wood's The Shadow of Ashlydyat, for example, Sir George Godolphin and his son Thomas are much more typical of that odd mixture of sentimentality, piety and materialism that we associate with Victorian middle-class society than "Devil" Caresfoot, simply because they are dull. Mrs. Wood's Charlotte Pain may be as despicable as Mrs. Bellamy, but she achieves a kind of reality because of her colourlessness. Mrs. Wood fails through ordinariness, Haggard through exuberance. The techniques that Haggard was to develop so successfully in his adventure novels are out of place in a novel in the manner of Mrs. Henry Wood, who reduces even the supernatural to the commonplace, and whose particular attractions include the lingering illness and the death-bed scene.

For quite a number of years the English novels that had captured public approval had, for the most part, involved the domestic scene. Such books as Oliver Twist (1838), Coningsby (1844), Jane Eyre (1847),

The Heir of Redclyffe (1853), East Lynne (1861), Lady Audley's Secret (1862), and Lorna Doone (1869), had all been best sellers. Those and their numerous imitations had pretty well exhausted the possibilities of the lost heir, the poor governess, the erring wife, the robber baron, the deep, dark family secret and the struggling politician. Melodrama and sentimentality had begun to pall.

Many writers turned to realism as a reaction against the false values of domestic melodrama, but the public was not yet ready to accept a curtailment of entertainment in their reading. To gain the attention of the public in the 1880's new subject matter was imperative. Popular writers soon discovered that there was a taste for religion and exoticism.

Religion was exploited to the full. When John Inglesant became a best seller in 1880, popular writers were quick to take advantage of the interest that it awakened. Religious titles became common. Marie Corelli's The Sorrows of Satan, The Master Christian and Barabbas were considered to embody the most sublime religious sentiments. Hall Caine caught the public favour with such titles as The Christian and The Eternal City. The books of Silas Hocking sold at an average rate of 1,000 copies a month to his Methodist public for at least twenty years. Mrs. Humphrey Ward's Robert Elsmere and James Barrie's The Little Minister were more thoughtful and more enduring than the novels of Corelli, Caine and Hocking, but could not fail to be best sellers in 1888 and 1891 respectively.

The growing interest in exoticism accounted for the success of Marie Corelli's pseudo-scientific A Romance of Two Worlds and for the



popularity of Wells' more genuinely scientific romances. The exoticism of far-away scenes made Kipling's Plain Tales from the Hills a best seller in 1888, and during the next twenty years accounted for the remarkable sales of Anthony Hope's Prisoner of Zenda (1894), Robert Hichens' The Garden of Allah (1905), and de Vere Stacpoole's The Blue Lagoon (1908). To a lesser extent exoticism helped to popularize Stevenson, Doyle, Weyman, Ouida, Seton Merriman, A. E. W. Mason and Gilbert Parker, all of whom realized the lure of far-away places and exotic settings.

The literary climate was right for Haggard, whose imagination needed more highly-seasoned food than the English domestic scene. He found it in his African experiences. In The Witch's Head (1884), one of his most autobiographical novels, he opens a new romantic vein that enables him to use his considerable knowledge of Africa and the Zulus. It is soon apparent to the reader that Africa has awakened his romantic nature and become a symbol of freedom to him. Like Kipling's India, Stevenson's Pacific Islands and Gilbert Parker's Canada, Haggard's Africa was to late nineteenth-century readers exotic enough to require very little invention.

### C. Haggard's Beliefs and Attitudes

In his obvious searching for a religion strong enough to offset the growing doubt of his time, Haggard is very much in the spirit of Tennyson, but he also has certain affinities with Yeats. Like Tennyson he was disturbed by the undermining of faith in the doctrines of the Established Church; and he fought the growing materialism--refusing

to surrender his belief that the spirit was much more important than the flesh. Like Yeats he superimposed upon his Christian ideals certain tenets of Eastern religions that he found both comforting and aesthetically attractive.

To one of Haggard's sensitive nature the warring claims of religious groups must have presented many problems. In religion as in literature, diversity had a weakening effect. During the mid-Victorian period emphasis on religion in politics and as a guide to conduct was stronger than ever before, but religion had gradually become a dividing rather than a unifying force. The Oxford movement had divided and weakened the Anglican Church, which had to contend both with the growing Roman Catholic Church and with various dissenting bodies. The low church leaders resented the high church leanings towards Rome, while the evangelical sects were opposed to all established ritual and authoritarianism in religion. Darwin's evolutionary theory resulted in anti-religious sentiments, while the poorer segments of the population, particularly in the large cities, had become apathetic through poverty and neglect. Difficulties of reconciling warring claims caused many people to seek a code that would transcend sectarianism. Haggard reflects both the growing religious uncertainty and a groping towards greater spiritual enlightenment. Like Henley he is willing to embrace "whatever gods there be," and like Kipling to "feel the soul of all the East." At a time when many professed agnosticism or atheism and many others clung more tightly to the literal interpretation of the Bible and to the orthodox observance of the forms of their particular denomination, Haggard's tolerance comprehended both the great religions

of the East and the religious philanthropy of the Salvation Army.<sup>12</sup>

Religion as a necessity to man's well being is a recurring theme in Haggard, but he is never narrow in his definition of religion.

In Joan Haste, Henry Graves says:

Yes, I believe in [religion]. I think that you will find few men of my profession [sea captain] who do not--perhaps because their continual contact with the forces and dangers of nature brings about dependence upon an unseen protecting Power. Also my experience is that religion . . . is necessary to all human beings. I never knew a man to be quite happy who was devoid of it in some shape.<sup>13</sup>

Through Alston in The Witch's Head Haggard states his belief that the forms and ceremonies of religion are not important, since all the great religions provide the necessary belief in a Divine power.

In The Witch's Head Haggard first gives successful expression to his obsession with the powers of good and evil and the inevitable struggle between them. In the character of Florence Ceswick one finds that embodiment of evil that Haggard takes for granted in certain individuals. Florence's deliberate attempt to ruin her sister's happiness, watching unmoved her growing suffering, foreshadows the malevolence of Zikali and Gagool.

Haggard's belief in reincarnation stems partly, he tells us, from certain dreams or visions of his own in which he saw himself as living during various historical periods. He regards these visions as subconscious memories, but, always honest, admits that they may be

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<sup>12</sup>Haggard wrote: Report on Salvation Army Colonies, 1905, and Regeneration: an Account of the Social Work of the Salvation Army, 1910.

<sup>13</sup>Joan Haste (1895), p. 62.

products of his imagination. He maintains that a belief in reincarnation is not anti-Christian, since "our Lord refers to Elijah as having returned to earth in the person of John the Baptist." Like the Buddhists, he says, he believes that the personality is passed on from one body to another. His belief that the whole animal creation is closely inter-related and, under special conditions, can communicate is illustrated by Lilius' story of the dog Bob. After a dream in which Bob was calling vainly for help, and in which Haggard suffered with the dog, it was discovered that the dog had been killed by a train. The effect upon Haggard was so great that he published the details of the incident in the Journal of the Society of Psychical Research, and gave up his favourite sport, shooting.

Haggard's attitude towards reincarnation seems, at any rate in his early work, to be influenced somewhat by Darwinism. It may well represent an effort to reconcile an inherent idea of God the creator with the doctrine of evolution. In The Witch's Head, Ernest remarks: "I believe that what we are now passing through is but a single phase of interwoven existence; that we have already passed through many stages, and that many higher stages and developments await us."<sup>14</sup>

Haggard's interest in past ages and in the very old is partly dependent upon his belief in reincarnation. Ancient peoples such as the Norsemen, he believed, live on in modern man. In his autobiography he states his belief in the Buddhist doctrine of Karma, a doctrine of which he makes use in such books as Ayesha and The Ancient

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<sup>14</sup>The Witch's Head, C. Arthur Pearson, London, n.d. p. 315.

Allan. It is logical, he affirms, that man's soul should have more than one earthly existence, since it would be unfair "that man appearing here for the first time through an accident of the flesh is placed and judged eternally in accordance with his deeds of at most about thirty waking, conscious years." He believed that during multiple existences "matters and opportunities would equalize themselves, and [the] ego would follow the path it selected to its inevitable end."<sup>15</sup>

In the light of that doctrine, the implications of evil in the very old, as in Gagool, are all the more terrible, since the very old person has had a greater opportunity to improve the state of his soul during that particular existence. For some, however, the struggle is harder, since each has to struggle against "the unchanging personality that grows not old, the animating spiritual 'ego', [which] is there and practically identical at all periods of life."<sup>16</sup> The main function of religion, Haggard suggests, is to present "an united front . . . to the evil that is in the world, which lessens little, if at all, with the passage of the ages."<sup>17</sup>

If religion was important to Haggard, love -- which is often closely related to religion in his work -- was even more so. He continually emphasizes his belief that love is the most powerful force in the world, working either good or evil according to circumstances. In The Witch's Head thwarted love results in the desire for revenge,

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<sup>15</sup>The Days of My Life, ii, 243.

<sup>16</sup>The Witch's Head, p. 184.

<sup>17</sup>The Days of My Life, ii, 236.

and in the juxtaposition and manipulation of the opposing forces of love and vindictiveness Haggard excels. Mr. Cardus's love for Mary Atterleigh, for example, is the motivation of his hatred for De Tabor and the cause of his own death at the hands of Atterleigh. Similarly, Alston's hatred of the Zulus is the result of his love for his wife, and the cause of his own death and that of his son.

Haggard also shows awareness of the alienation of man in society. In passages such as the following, he isolates the problem of aloneness and lack of reciprocity that was to become a major theme of twentieth century literature.

The greatest terror of our being lies in the utter loneliness, the unspeakable identity, and unchanging self-completeness of every living creature, so the greatest hope and the intensest natural yearning of our hearts go out towards that passion which in its first heats has the strength . . . to . . . give to the soul something of the power for which it yearns of losing its sense of solitude in converse with its kind.<sup>18</sup>

Haggard's obviously deeply-felt observations here probably stem from his own experience. He knew the misery of both love that was ignored and love that was forcibly terminated. Although he uses "passion," he is doubtless thinking of idealistic, chivalrous, even spiritual love; and would by no means condone certain modern writers' preoccupation with sex as a solution to the ills of society.

A brief look at Stella Fregelius may help to clarify certain of Haggard's attitudes. His visits to Egypt, Iceland and Mexico, which produced such concrete results as Cleopatra, Eric Brighteyes and Montezuma's Daughter, also strengthened his belief in the continuity and

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<sup>18</sup>Colonel Quaritch, V. C., p. 110.

universality of the soul and the struggle between man's physical and spiritual being. His increasing mysticism, which found its most direct expression in Stella Fregelius, pervades most of his writing henceforth.

In his introductory note to Stella Fregelius (1904), Haggard says that he "wrote it purely to please himself." The theme, "a conflict . . . between a departed and a present personality, of which the battleground is a bereaved human heart and its prize its complete possession; between earthly duty and spiritual desire," is admirably suited to reflect Haggard's feelings on a number of related topics.

Haggard poses the questions: "Without a union of the spirit was there indeed any marriage as it should be understood? And who in this world could hope to find his fellow spirit?"<sup>19</sup> In the story of the scientist Morris Monk's divided love for the physical Mary Porson and the spiritual Stella Fregelius the author attempts to work out the problem.<sup>20</sup>

Mary warns Morris, "You had better look out that you don't find whatever it is you seek. It's a horrible mistake to be so spiritual . . . you should eat and drink, and sleep ten hours as I do, and not go craving for vision till you can see, and praying for power until you can create." Morris's "It is sick hearts that dream"<sup>21</sup> expresses the dissatisfaction with real life that caused Haggard to seek relief in

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<sup>19</sup>Stella Fregelius (1904), p. 23.

<sup>20</sup>The union of the spirit is a recurring theme in the late Victorian novel. A notable example is found in S. Baring - Gould's Mehalah, 1880.

<sup>21</sup>Stella Fregelius, pp. 43 and 44.



fantasy.

Haggard realizes, however, that we cannot completely escape from our physical reality. Morris talks about "the mad attempt unduly and prematurely to cultivate our spiritual natures that we may live to and for them, and not to and for our natural bodies."<sup>22</sup> After rescuing Stella from the wrecked Trondhjem, however, he is drawn more and more to the spiritual, until just before Stella is washed away in the Dead Church during a storm they celebrate a spiritual wedding and promise to meet in the hereafter.

Naturally Morris's physical union with Mary is doomed after such a prelude, and when he finally manages to overcome his flesh to the extent that he can communicate with Stella, we feel that, as Mary warned him earlier, he would have done better to settle for the here and now. The sincerity of thought saves the book from mawkishness, but for the modern reader, more in sympathy with Mary than with Stella, Morris's victory over the flesh becomes an anti-climax, which defeats Haggard's apparent purpose of demonstrating the joy of renunciation.

Stella's groping for faith, however, is Haggard's:

"I look," she wrote, "but everywhere is blackness; blackness without a single star. I cry aloud, but the only answer is the echo of my own voice beating back upon me from the deaf heavens. I pray for faith, yet faith fades and leaves me. I ask for signs, and there is no sign. The argument? So far as I have read and heard, it seems the other way. And yet I do not believe their proofs. I do not believe that so many generations of good men would have fed full upon a husk of lies and lain down to sleep at last as though satisfied with meat. . . . I am immortal. I know that I am immortal . . . .

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

Yet, O God, help Thou my unbelief. O God, draw and deliver me from the abyss."<sup>23</sup>

Such thoughts do not quite fit Stella's actions, which are in fact more pagan than Christian. The spiritual marriage, paradoxically enough, because of the lack of earthly passion has an air of sterility.

Alan Sandison sees Haggard's exceptional imaginative power "as the result of the tension set up by his effort" to reconcile a Providence which ordered events and the "purely mechanical" growth postulated by Darwin's Theory of evolution.<sup>24</sup> As a revelation of Haggard's spiritual confusion Stella Fregelius is interesting, but in separating the spiritual and the physical, the author succeeds only in presenting a problem without a solution.

In his suggestion that science may contribute to spiritual as well as physical progress, Haggard is optimistically conjectural, but his machinery is inadequate to the purpose. His effort to equate the aërophone with spiritual communication, for example, seems a rather weak device, while in the mundane setting of the book Stella herself is as unacceptable to the imagination as a ghost in the supermarket.

The book does, however, point the moral of the evil that results from too much knowledge. Haggard, although convinced of "the continuance of the personality beyond the changes of death," is not sure whether seeking to go beyond purely earthly knowledge is not a device of the devil "to lead heart-sick mortals into regions they were not

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>24</sup>The Wheel of Empire, p. 26.

meant to travel."<sup>25</sup>

The critics naturally did not know quite what to make of Stella Fregelius. The Atheneum praised Haggard's "descriptive gifts" and remarked "a subtler power of characterization than we have hitherto recognized in the author."<sup>26</sup> The New York Mail and Express commented: "Mr. Haggard has written a story that is much of a novelty for him, and, truth to tell, it is far more interesting than would be another fall of Jerusalem or South African wonders from his pen."<sup>27</sup> The New York American said: "Like most of the author's novels the style is brilliant, easy and clear. The narrative will of necessity be followed with breathless interest from beginning to end."<sup>28</sup> The Mail, Halifax, echoed: "The story is of absorbing interest like most of the author's novels, the style is easy, brilliant and clear."<sup>29</sup>

The last two comments may be regarded as revelatory of the state of contemporary popular criticism rather than of Haggard's work.

No book is more revealing of Haggard's beliefs than his short fantasy The Mahatma and the Hare (1911). In a very complimentary review, the Atheneum captured the essence of the book:

Here [Mr. Haggard] makes use of the supernatural very delicately and deftly . . . . The machinery of this "dream story" is odd and yet persuasive . . . . The tale is a frank statement of the claims of "sport" and those of humanitarianism . . . . [The]

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<sup>25</sup>The Days of My Life, ii, 250.

<sup>26</sup>Feb. 20, 1904, p. 236.

<sup>27</sup>From an advertisement.

<sup>28</sup>From an advertisement.

<sup>29</sup>From an advertisement.

story is as admirable an argument for the animal world as we have seen--all the more forcible because of its dispassionate fairness. In these pages we are made to see, willy-nilly, with the eyes of the hare, to listen with his ears; and . . . the good average English "sportsman" is shown as a hideous menace, a monster of cruelty. The author is careful to explain the latter's point of view, and he does not make the mistake of sentimentalizing. We congratulate Mr. Haggard on a fine imaginative piece of work.<sup>30</sup>

Haggard's belief in the importance of all life in the scheme of creation is responsible for the amazing empathy he obviously feels for the hare, and his apparently complete identification with the animal world.

Like Yeats, he believes in the subconscious memory of man, but that belief is blended with the belief in reincarnation:

In short, I think the subconscious in some ways resembles the conscious and natural memory; that which is very far off to it grows dim and blurred, that which is comparatively close remains clear and sharp . . . . Moreover there is foresight as well as memory. At least from time to time I seem to come in touch with future events and states of society in which I shall have my share.<sup>31</sup>

Of the victims of a plague in the East, he writes:

The knowledge which I have told me that one and all they were very ancient souls who often and often had walked the Road before, and therefore, although as yet they did not know it, were well accustomed to the journey. No, I am wrong, for here and there an individual did know.<sup>32</sup>

His sympathy embraces all creatures, the hunter as well as the hunted. Man as a creature of circumstances, to be pitied for his crimes, is represented by the hare's enemy, the Red-faced Man, who has to kill

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<sup>30</sup>Nov. 4, 1911, p. 552.

<sup>31</sup>The Mahatma and the Hare (1911), p. 17.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

in order to live. Fate can be cruel to both man and animal. Comfort is provided for the author by the contemplation of a purely spiritual existence. Complete annihilation of self results in a state of Nirvana. "In that place where my spirit visits, time and distance do not exist."<sup>33</sup>

The Mahatma and the Hare is both a synthesis of Haggard's mysticism and convincing evidence of his humanity.

#### D. Haggard's Social Consciousness

It is rather rare to find a writer so idealistic and romantic, so opposed to the physical and the materialistic, also noted for his interest in social conditions and for his plain common sense. Such a man was Rider Haggard. His works on sociology and agriculture were highly regarded and still have a certain relevance. He filled a number of responsible positions, and his opinions were sought and deferred to. Theodore Roosevelt wrote of him:

Mr. Rider Haggard is probably most widely known as a novelist, but, as a matter of fact, there are few men now writing English whose books on vital sociological questions are of such value as his, and hardly one among this small number who has grasped as he has grasped the dangers that beset the future of the English-speaking people, and the way these dangers can best be met.<sup>34</sup>

Even in the romances Haggard's social consciousness is seldom far below the surface. His novels, in the spirit of the time, show an extreme awareness of social conditions.

In an age when many feared that scientific progress would

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>34</sup>The Outlook, New York, July 1, 1911.

ultimately put an end to the spiritual and the romantic, it is natural that one of Haggard's temperament would deplore the growth of materialism.

As I have already noted, Haggard's malaise was a product of the time, the result of changing values, and affected many of the greatest writers of the time. It may be argued that Haggard, like Tennyson, was romantic because he was so well aware of actual social conditions, that his romanticism was both an escape from the growing concern with the physical and an effort to provide an antidote--possibly one and the same thing. The recognition of the need for such an antidote is not inconsistent with common sense. That Haggard never really resolved his own problem of the relative importance of the physical and the spiritual is not even important. Like other romantic writers he combated the tendency to regard man and his world as completely materialistic, a tendency that, most people would admit, has led to most of our present ills.

In Colonel Quaritch, V. C., (1888) one finds: "The present is a strictly commercial age, and we are the most commercial of the trading nations. Cossey and Sons . . . would rather sell up a dozen families who had dealt with the firm for two centuries than lose five hundred pounds."<sup>35</sup>

Umslopogaas remarks: "Better is it to slay a man in fair fight than to suck out his heart's blood in buying and selling and usury after your white fashion."<sup>36</sup>

The plight of Lord Devene in The Way of the Spirit (1906) is

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<sup>35</sup>Colonel Quaritch, V. C., p. 70.

<sup>36</sup>Allan Quatermain (1926), p. 209.

illustrative of Haggard's consciousness of the general malaise created by materialism, in our time to be referred to as the "void."

[He] would jibe at morality and all established ideas, and of every form of religion make an open mock. Yet . . . there was something so pathetic, so tragic even, about his aspect and attitude that [Edith's] heart ached for him. It was evident to her that his cold, calculated system of life had utterly broken down . . . that although, as he had so often demonstrated, there exists nothing in the world beyond the outward and visible . . . yet strong as he was that nothing had been too much for him.<sup>37</sup>

Although not a crusader for the poor in the style of Charles Kingsley, Mrs. Gaskell or Walter Besant, he was not unaware of their plight.

For . . . to those who think and have hearts to feel, and imagination to realize, and a redeeming human sympathy to be touched, the mere weight of the world's misery pressing round them like an atmosphere, the mere echoes of the dying and the cries of the children are sufficient . . . to destroy the promise of their joys.<sup>38</sup>

If, in the preceding quotation, Haggard seems more concerned with the vicarious suffering of the imaginative person, it must be admitted that such awareness as he suggests shows deep concern for the actual sufferers. Haggard must individualize. It is the problem of the individual that his sensitive mind visualizes most clearly. Therefore it is the effect of society on people of sensibility that he demonstrates most competently.

Haggard's realization that people are the victims of society often causes him to treat his least attractive characters with a certain

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<sup>37</sup>The Way of the Spirit (1906), p. 57.

<sup>38</sup>Colonel Quaritch, V. C., p. 110.

sympathy. In Colonel Quaritch, V. C., for example, Belle Quest and her supposed husband William (the former an apparent adultress, the latter a bigamist, blackmailer and swindler) are sympathetically portrayed as creatures of circumstance. Of Mr. Quest he remarks: "In short had he been born to a good position and a large fortune, it is quite possible, providing always that his strong passions had not at some period of his life led him irremediably astray, that he would have lived virtuous and respected."<sup>39</sup>

One notices the similarity of Haggard's thinking to Gissing's. In New Grub Street, Milvain says: "If I were rich, I should be a generous and good man; I know I should. So would many another poor fellow whose worst features come out under hardship."<sup>40</sup>

Marion Yule echoes the same thought when she says of her father: "I am all but certain that, if he became rich, he would be a very much kinder man, a better man in every way. It is poverty that has made him worse than he naturally is; it has that effect on almost everybody."<sup>41</sup>

Both Haggard and Gissing are dealing with a subject that is common in late nineteenth and early twentieth century writing -- the interaction of personality and society.

Haggard is also concerned with changes in society that affect the old families, suddenly faced with financial difficulties because of falling land values. In Joan Haste, he blames Sir Reginald Graves

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>40</sup>New Grub Street, Chapter VIII.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., Chapter XXI.



for mismanagement and extravagance but, feeling that the land has a value beyond that of money, presents Ellen's materialistic outlook towards it in an ironic light. Ironical, too, are Henry's having to give up a promising career and to overcome his natural instincts for the sake of his supposed duty to the estate, and Emma's knowledge that her money sets up a barrier to Henry's falling in love with her.

Lady Graves's pleading "not for myself and not for my son, Henry, but for his forefathers and his descendents, and the home that for three generations has been theirs,"<sup>42</sup> meets with Haggard's approval. If in his class-consciousness Haggard is snobbish, however, paradoxically he also possesses true humanitarianism. Valuing the old traditions, he realizes that there are things of greater value. Like many Englishmen, he wants to preserve the best in the English tradition, while urging the creation of a society that permits an individual to achieve success according to his merits. He is obviously in favour of the new freedom in the colonies, where Henry and Joan could be respected for what, rather than who, they were. He accepts the necessity for change, but, fearing the results of change on cherished values of the past, mourns that the "true old times are dead."

There is no equivocation about Haggard's attitude towards the status of women. The difference between woman's position in society and Haggard's idealized vision of woman was too great to be reconciled. A contemporary social problem, becomes in this case, a personal problem. In The Witch's Head he expresses a concern that he never loses, and

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<sup>42</sup>Joan Haste (1895), p. 334.

that colours his creation of women, in both the novels and the romances.

Why are women weak? Because men have made them so. Because the law that was formed by men and the public opinion which it has been their privilege to direct, have from age to age drilled them into the belief that they are nothing but chattels . . . . Because we have systematically stunted their mental growth and denied them their natural rights and that equality which is theirs before high Heaven . . . .

Surely it will be a happy day for the civilized world when, freed at last by the growth of knowledge and the increased sense of justice, woman takes her place as men's equal . . . when she brings her fine intellect and enlarged capacity to bear upon the questions which hitherto he has been pleased to consider his exclusive right.<sup>43</sup>

In Haggard's novels women are generally victims of society.

Eva Ceswick, Ida de la Molle, Belle Quest, Beatrice, Edith Devene are a few examples. Colonel Quaritch, V. C. is constructed around the theme of marriage for financial security, a theme that Meredith had handled in Beauchamp's Career. Meredith's Renée had been sacrificed for purely selfish reasons. Haggard attempts to justify a similar sacrifice when the welfare of those other than the participants to the marriage is at stake. In exploring the mental sufferings of Belle Quest, however, he does not spare a society that makes such marriages expedient.

In Haggard's mind there is nothing incongruous in Ida de la Molle's statement, "I would rather work for my living with my hands than take a price [for my hand in marriage]." Haggard shares with his contemporaries the belief that a woman of Ida's position did not engage in manual labour to earn a living. She was "equipped with every attribute that can make wealth and power what they should be--a frame to show off her worth

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<sup>43</sup>The Witch's Head (1885), pp. 123-125.

and state."<sup>44</sup>

It is curious that Haggard's attitude should be so similar to that of Gissing's Jasper Milvain, who says of his sisters: "Pity to see them in a place like that, isn't it? They ought to have a good house, with plenty of servants. It's bad enough for a civilized man to have to rough it, but I hate to see women living in a sordid way."<sup>45</sup>

The idea is the same, but Haggard's attitude has none of the unconscious irony implicit in Milvain's. Both are, however, traditionally snobbish. In Quaritch's attitude towards Ida we have the falseness of values epitomized in New Grub Street by Mrs. Reardon, who, not certain of enough money to pay the grocer, finds it necessary to keep a servant.

In Joan Haste, his most successful analytical novel, Haggard uses the status of women to emphasize a number of themes.

He is concerned with the difficulty of arriving at a solution to problems inherent in the nature of organized society with its intricate system of taboos, and with the validity of beliefs and mores imposed by social distinctions based on money and position. The real conflict, he implies is between the old and the new, between the dictates of society and the compulsions towards the personal freedom of action that society prohibits, between natural feeling and adherence to traditional beliefs. Well aware of the differences between public and private sanctions in matters of sex, with the accompanying difference in toleration of male and female immorality, and conscious of the need for a reassessment of

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<sup>44</sup>Colonel Quaritch, V. C., p. 144.

<sup>45</sup>New Grub Street, Chapter XIV.

the nature of morality, Haggard attempts in Joan Haste his most realistic theme.

Joan's problem is not that she is pregnant without being married, but that she will ruin the worldly prospects, and possibly the happiness, of the man she loves if she marries him. Whether or not Haggard was influenced by Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891) or Moore's Esther Waters (1894), he is certainly in tune with the new frankness in sexual matters. In his preface to the fifth edition of Tess (1892), Hardy maintains that "the novel embodies the views of life prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century, and not those of an earlier and simpler generation," a remark that might equally well apply to Joan Haste.

Tess and Joan are faced with a similar problem. The essential difference is that Hardy, from the man's point of view, justifies Tess's sin, while Joan, from the woman's point of view, casts doubt on whether there is any sin involved. Tess's final tragedy is an artificial one, brought about by her acceptance of the mores of the time. In contrast, Joan's tragedy is a moral victory. One can imagine Joan confessing her relationship with Alec D'Urberville to her prospective husband, and justifying it on the grounds of her innocence of the world. Tess, by waiting until after her marriage, not only puts herself in the wrong-- a mistake that Joan would have been too intelligent to make-- but creates (as Angel Clare remarks) a situation "which is rather one for satirical laughter than for tragedy."<sup>46</sup> As Tess's mother remarks, she had "sinned

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<sup>46</sup>Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1892), Chapter XXXV.

enough to marry him first."<sup>47</sup> Her confession was now without value. Tess awakens pity; Joan, admiration. Tess accepts her lot with resignation, blaming herself. Joan fights, and rightfully blames society.

Haggard's attitude towards the victims of society is characterized by sympathy and compassion. In his treatment of those who use society to achieve success through the process of victimization he can be quite biting.

Mr. Meeson's Will (1888) is noteworthy as a reflection of the author's capacity for irony and satire! In Frye's terms it is not a novel but a Menippean satire directed against "rapacious and incompetent" publishers, critics and lawyers.<sup>48</sup> As such it has relevance as contemporary social criticism.

Annoyed at the charges of plagiarism directed at him by certain critics, Haggard devotes, without undue rancour, a considerable portion of his preface to the paucity of their arguments. After a humorous exposition of their methods, during which he refuses to take them as seriously as they take themselves, he writes: "I verily believe that any practitioner of the literary detective's sorry craft could in this fashion prove that Blackstone's Commentaries were plagiarized from the Book of Job."

The story begins in the office of Mr. Meeson, a publisher. Mr. Meeson's employees are known by number rather than by name -- a state of anonymity, Haggard implies, to which publishers who cater to the

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Chapter XXXVIII.

<sup>48</sup>Anatomy of Criticism, p. 309.

public taste have reduced their authors. "His twenty tame authors . . . sat . . . in vault-like hutches in the basement and . . . poured out that hat-work for which Meeson's was justly famous."<sup>49</sup>

Hatwork, the author explains, is "work with no head in it."

Mr. Meeson's remark, "It's piety as pays, especially when it's printed," is certainly appropriate to the type of novel that sold best at the time, and preshadows Jasper Milvain's advice to his sisters in New Grub Street, "Look here, why don't you girls write something? . . . There's a tremendous sale for religious stories; why not patch one together?"<sup>50</sup>

Augusta Smithers, a best-selling novelist, and supposedly something of a genius, endeavours unsuccessfully to obtain more money from Mr. Meeson to take her young sister, dying of tuberculosis, to a warmer climate. Mr. Meeson remarks, "I know how to deal with that sort of thing-- half-pay and a double tale of copy." His nephew Eustace protests that "she will become a hat-writer like the rest of them-- for Meeson is a strictly commercial undertaking, you know, and Meeson's public don't like genius, they like their literature dull and holy!"<sup>51</sup>

Mr. Meeson, waiting at his lawyer's office to make a new will disinheriting Eustace, complains about being "kept standing about like office-boys or authors." Poetic justice is appropriately meted out to him when on the sinking Kangaroo he offers ten thousand pounds for a

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<sup>49</sup>Mr. Meeson's Will (1888), p. 20.

<sup>50</sup>New Grub Street, Chapter I.

<sup>51</sup>Mr. Meeson's Will, p. 30.

seat in a boat and is refused. A whimsical humour is achieved in Mr. Meeson's dying vision of his tame authors "pouring out of their Hutches" to murder him, Number 25 telling him that in the hereafter he is to be an author published "on the quarter-profit system, with an annual account, the usual trade deductions and no vouchers."<sup>52</sup>

Before Mr. Meeson goes "by-by," as Augusta describes his death to Lady Holmhurst's little boy, he wishes to reinstate Eustace as his heir. Situated as they are on a lonely island, the absence of paper, parchment and linen leaves only Augusta's neck as a medium on which to write, or tattoo, the will -- Augusta's love for Eustace, of course, plays a part in the matter. As Lady Holmhurst remarks later, "No girl would allow herself to be tattooed in the interest of abstract justice."

Augusta's tattoo is used as the basis of a satire on the law. She is now Mr. Meeson's will, and the question of filing her in the Registry and her status as a witness present almost insurmountable difficulties. It is suspected "that the will had herself procured the will, by an undue projection of her will upon the unwilling mind of the testator."<sup>53</sup> When Eustace remarks that showing her tattoo "is very unpleasant for a lady," his counsel retorts, "At present she must remember that she is not a lady, but a legal document."<sup>54</sup> As a document Miss Smithers can not speak as a witness until the Judge points out that her person could be separated from the document if she were "partially

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

skinned . . . [and] that which is separable must, for the purposes of law, be taken as already separated."<sup>55</sup> As a lawyer Haggard was well aware that the logic of the law is often far removed from the logic of common sense.

The materialism of the law is criticized in such remarks as "The stomach of The Bar, collective and individual, is revolted and scandalized at the idea of one of its members doing anything for nothing."<sup>56</sup>

Everything ends happily with Augusta's marriage to Eustace, who introduces various improvements in the firm, including doing away with the "system of calling men by numbers, as though they were convicts"- a rebellion against the computer before its invention.

Because war victimizes people Haggard is anti-war, although not anti-patriotic. In describing a battle in The Way of the Spirit (1906), he foreshadows such poets as Wilfred Owen.<sup>57</sup>

Such things sound heroic to tell of - the forlorn stands of the few against the many always do - but in practice they are only dreadful; the glory is naught but a residuum deposited on the cauldrons of their sanguinary and seething horror by the powerful precipitants of distance, romance and time . . . . Who could think of gallantry when a man shot through the bowels lay writhing on the ground beside him, cursing and praying by turns, but still loading his gun, and, in the pauses of his paroxysms, bringing other men to their death.<sup>58</sup>

He satirizes the type of official who puts duty to one's country

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>57</sup>Cf. Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est."

<sup>58</sup>The Way of the Spirit, p. 175.



before humanity.

"He must take his chance like the rest. Give him the K.C.B. and that sort of thing if he gets through, you know," the Secretary of State says when he chooses the newly-married Rupert for his dangerous mission.

"K.C.B.'s aren't much use to dead men, or their widows either,"<sup>59</sup> Lord Southwick retorts.

Haggard has perception enough to realize that those who kill are sufferers with those whom they kill. Quaritch cannot forget watching his enemy die. "There was some fascination in following the act of his own hand to its dreadful conclusion . . . . The terror of the sight, the terror of what in defence of his own life he was forced to do, revolted him even in the heat of the fight."<sup>60</sup>

The only novel of Haggard's that can be regarded as pure propaganda is Dr. Thorne (1898). Stimulated by what he regarded as a disastrous concession on the part of the Government in passing a bill granting freedom of choice in the matter of vaccination, Haggard employs melodrama, much in the style of Charles Reade, and considerable polemic against the anti-vaccinationists. His argument takes the form of a prophetic vision of what could happen if such permissiveness were allowed to continue.

As a consequence of its purpose the story is naturally melodramatic. Dr. Thorne has a very natural antipathy towards smallpox (including vaccination), since it was the cause of ruining his father's career as

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<sup>60</sup>Colonel Quaritch, V. C., p. 4.

a doctor, but he cannot escape from it. During an epidemic in Mexico he meets his wife. Two cases of smallpox in Dunchester bring him in contact with Stephen and Martha Strong, a rich anti-vaccinationist couple who befriend him and persuade him to enter politics. The considerable success of his political career depends on his remaining on the side of the anti-vaccinationists. After his daughter Jane contracts the disease, his secret vaccination of himself leads to his exposure and disgrace.

Haggard gives some very realistic pictures of the ravages of smallpox, which he felt needed to be brought to the attention of an England that vaccination, ironically enough, had caused to regard the disease in a too casual manner. He warns grimly:

Let [the reader] imagine a state of affairs . . . when for a woman not to be pitted with smallpox was to give her some claim to beauty, however homely might be her features. Lastly, let him imagine . . . what terror walked abroad when it was common for small pox to strike a family of children, and when the parents, themselves the survivors of similar catastrophes, knew well that before it left the house it would take its tithe of those beloved lives.<sup>61</sup>

Through a clever use of satire Haggard points out that politics are often dependent upon the whims of certain powerful but ill-informed segments of the population. He is not sparing in his criticism of a society in which money determines not only a man's social status and success in his career but also his moral values. He leaves no doubt that Dr. Therne, a product of a demoralizing social system, is more to be pitied than blamed.

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<sup>61</sup>Dr. Therne (1898), p. 124.

The style is spare but effective. In its omission of all details that do not further the plot or add to the effect that the author wishes to create, it demonstrates stark economy.

In its portrayal of a man whose weakness of character brings about his own downfall, it is a memorable tour de force. Particularly well drawn, too, are the characters of Sir John Bell, whose utter worldliness cannot tolerate the success of a rival; Stephen Strong, who uses the young Dr. Therne to punish a society that has treated him cruelly; and Martha Strong, whose life is governed by her fanatical interest in such fads as anti-vaccination and the idea that the English were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. The dangers to society of such apparently innocent faddists are conveyed by Dr. Therne's questioning his position as their public representative.

Must I appear upon platforms and denounce this wonderful discovery as the "law of useless infanticide"? Must I tell people that "smallpox is really a curative process and not the deadly scourge and pestilence that doctors pretend it to be"? Must I hold it up as a "law (!) of devil worship and human sacrifice to idols"?<sup>62</sup>

In his conviction that most diseases of the body are a result of a man's spiritual or psychological condition, and that doctors need to concentrate more on the mental condition in order to treat the physical, Dr. Therne anticipates a theory that was to find wide acceptance in the twentieth century.

Haggard was too romantic and too oppressed by the sordidness that he found in real life to continue writing on such themes as he handled

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-135.

in Joan Haste and Dr. Therne. Later in life he realized his limitations.

In his autobiography he writes:

For these reasons I know well that I could never be a success as a modern novelist. I can see the whole thing; it goes on under my eyes, and as a magistrate and in other ways I am continually in touch with it . . . . But the subject bores me too much. The naturalism I would not mind, but if it is to be truthful it is impossible and to say the least, unedifying. The petty social conditions are what bore me . . . . But we are all as we are made. Even the great Shakespeare, I observe, sought distant scenes and far-off events for his tragedies, seeking, I presume, to escape the trammels of his time.<sup>63</sup>

That Haggard had the ability to suit his style to his subject matter is shown by the intensity of feeling that he conveys in Joan Haste, the sacrificing of ornament to melodramatic effect in Dr. Therne, the facetious tone of Mr. Meeson's Will and the poetic evocation of the sombre beauty of the Eastern counties in Joan Haste and Colonel Quaritch, V. C. But, as he suggests, when he found his subject matter either distasteful or boring his style suffered. He was to find the best outlet for his descriptive gifts in the fast and exciting action of the adventure romance rather than in the more static problem novel.

Haggard in his novels and his romances reflected the ideas of his time and helped to propagate them. His special brand of Toryism, for example, tries to reconcile the right of the individual to establish his own position in the world with the desirability of perpetuating the best traditions and institutions of the past. If he looks backward in his obvious veneration of those traditions, he also looks forward in his insistence on human rights. He accepts the advances of science with

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<sup>63</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 256.

the hope that they will benefit man spiritually as well as physically. His socialism avoids sentimentality and is based on a practical assessment of social conditions.

Haggard was a visionary, yet his critical observations on society contain much of permanent value. His broad religious concepts placed him above denomination and creed. His humanity could not tolerate hypocrisy or greed. A man who avoided preaching, he exercised persuasion by means of his power to entertain.

## II. THE ROMANCES

### A. Observations on the "romantic" with a Small "r"

#### 1

The last twenty years of the nineteenth century produced not only much of the most enduring romantic fiction in English, but also much of the best writing of such artists in realism as Hardy, Moore and Gissing.<sup>1</sup> The striking dichotomy represented by those two streams of English fiction in the 1890's was the result of two widely divergent attempts to break away from the excessive sentimentality that had come to dominate Victorian fiction. The emphasis on the exotic, the bizarre or the merely adventurous by the romantics, and on the harsh actualities of life by the realists, were both substitutes for the emotional clichés of the domestic novel.

Caught in an eddy in his struggle to leave the main stream Haggard floundered for more than a decade among such examples of the domestic novel as Dawn and Beatrice; the more psychologically convincing Colonel Quaritch, V. C. and Joan Haste, which had certain affinities with the work of the realists; and such romantic adventures as King Solomon's Mines and She. Out of his more than sixty works of fiction, however, Haggard designated at least fifty as "romances".

Allowing due consideration to Haggard's experimental attempts

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<sup>1</sup>I am using the term "realism" rather loosely here to include all writers who made a serious attempt to portray life as they believed it to be.

to produce what he considered the "novel"--sentimental, psychological, sociological, satirical or metaphysical--the critic may affirm, safely I feel, that this author's special field is the romantic narrative. Although such books as Joan Haste and The Mahatma and the Hare hardly deserve the oblivion that has overtaken them, it is clear at this date, eighty-seven years after the publication of King Solomon's Mines, that it is the more romantic novels that have endured.

I use "romantic" here, as Haggard apparently does, merely to indicate the imaginative, the exotic, the visionary, the remote from everyday experience. This long-accepted meaning of "romantic," as distinct from Romantic, in literature is difficult to define. Although "romantic" could be applied to Coleridge and Byron, and to a lesser extent to Keats, the word as used here has little connection with the Romantic movement in English poetry. Used in this sense, the term may derive from such works as the early English Beowulf and the middle English Havelok the Dane, Sir Orfeo, etc., or from even older works that never found their way into written tradition. The association of the term with the fantastic certainly owes a great deal to the Arthurian legends and possibly to Greek mythology. Styles change, but "romantic" matter remains fairly constant, and seems never out of fashion.

The English novels of Defoe, Fielding and Richardson, rooted in the actualities of contemporary life, soon gave way to the spate of Gothic novels initiated by Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto (1765)--a romantic vein that culminated in the more convincing romances of Sir Walter Scott, who by the use of historical events and real settings achieved a verisimilitude lacking in his predecessors in the Gothic

tradition. By superimposing the Gothic atmosphere on the contemporary domestic scene the Brontës gave new dimensions to the romantic novel. They established their imaginative world of passion and melancholy on such a firm basis that, even today, writers using their formula with much less skill are ensured a place on the best-seller lists. Other writers such as R. D. Blackmore, Lord Lytton and Wilkie Collins helped to establish the romantic as an enduring element in the English novel. A Christmas Carol, Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, The Last Days of Pompeii, The Woman in White, Lorna Doone, are all romantic in the sense I have in mind, and they all helped to prepare the way for the neo-romantic movement in the novel that began with Treasure Island and included the romances of Haggard, Weyman, Doyle, Wells, et al. The modern gothic, detective, western, science fiction, spy story, and jungle adventure are all included in the genre. The romantic may also be a recognizable, though not always separable, element in the work of an author not primarily regarded as romantic. How much of the appeal of Dickens or Reade, for example, may be attributed to the romantic element in his work?

In the 1880's the British reading public was ready to devour with avidity romantic tales of adventure in far countries. Most imaginative travel up to this time had been set in Europe, but Europe was now becoming a little too familiar. Tales of shipwreck in far lands such as Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels were a perennial stimulation to readers only too willing to ignore the realism and the satire in those works. The world was being explored by intrepid adventurers from the British Isles. The term "British Commonwealth of Nations," first used



in 1884, and the recognition of the dominions as "full autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth" in the same year, had an elevating effect on the average Englishman's attitude towards far flung corners of the Empire. The idea of far travel became more inviting to the British mind and a visit to one of the colonies, once regarded as a necessary evil, became a romantic concept. Henty's and Ballantyne's pragmatic treatment of romantic settings gradually gave place to the more essentially romantic tales of Kipling, Masfield and Haggard.

The higher level of literacy which the average middle-class Englishman achieved in the second half of the nineteenth century stimulated the production of a great many books simply to entertain the reader. Publishing houses and periodicals proliferated. Diversity of subject matter was in great demand, and a writer like Haggard, who could present with authority a number of romantic settings was almost assured popularity.

## 2

Multitudinous critics have attempted to define the Romantic, with or without special emphasis on the Romantic period, or the "romantic" in literature, many of them very persuasively; but, as F. L. Lucas points out, the most noted of those critics express widely divergent views on even what one might term their main criteria. Lucas accepts only in part Hugo's association of the Romantic with "the grotesque" or with "liberalism in literature," Heine's insistence on Romanticism : having its main roots in medievalism and Christianity, and Pater's finding "strangeness" the chief ingredient. He not only presents a good

case for the reader's acceptance of this view of what seems to be the "romantic" as "a dream-picture of life; providing sustenance and fulfilment for impulses cramped by society or reality;"<sup>2</sup> he also insists that the "true enemy" of the romantic in literature is "the hackneyed and humdrum present, whether squalid or academic."<sup>3</sup> As a corollary to the latter point of view he demonstrates that romantic writers are often extremely realistic about matters that in themselves are removed in time or place from their everyday experience.

Sir Herbert Grierson is extremely reluctant to accept strict definitions of either Classical or Romantic. "These are terms," he insists, "no attempts to define which ever seem entirely convincing to oneself or others."<sup>4</sup> Equating what seems to be the "romantic" with a "spiritual quickening," Grierson attempts to reduce the romantic to a mood, even in literature. The classical, he affirms, represents man's need for order; and the romantic, the necessity to escape the rigid thought-action structures that his need for order causes him to erect. To Grierson, the "romantic" is a "conscious contrast of what the heart and the imagination envisage and beckon us to follow, and . . . reason in the sense of what the society in which a man lives deems reasonable." The romantic writer, Grierson suggests, is well aware of the realities, but he has come to the realization that "he lives by faith and not by

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<sup>2</sup>F. L. Lucas, The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal (1937), pp. 35-36.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>Sir Herbert Grierson, The Background of English Literature: Classical and Romantic, p. 256.

reason."<sup>5</sup> Lucas and Grierson seem to agree that to attempt to define the romantic in fiction too rigidly is to invite contradiction, since the term applied thus loosely is essentially indefinable. As Northrop Frye remarks, "The forms of prose fiction are mixed like racial strains in human beings, not separable like the sexes."<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the difficulties inherent in the nature of the subject, modern critics continue to promulgate general theories about the romantic. Most of those critics, such as Morse Peckham and René Wellek, use the work of the Romantic poets as a basis for argument, and their remarks only occasionally and, in a sense, accidentally reflect the concept of the "romantic" that I am using. The theories of Northrop Frye and Jessie L. Weston are, however, largely applicable.

Both Frye and Miss Weston theorize at some length on the connection between religion and romance, concentrating chiefly on the quest motif in romantic literature. Frye remarks, "Romance divides into two main forms: a secular form dealing with chivalry and knight-errantry, and a religious form devoted to legends of saints. Both lean heavily on miraculous violations of natural law for their interest as stories."<sup>7</sup>

Haggard's romances are, of course, secular. Allan Quatermain deals particularly with knight-errantry, and She leans "heavily on miraculous violations of natural law."

According to Frye:

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 289-290.

<sup>6</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 305.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

A quest involving conflict assumes two main characters, a protagonist or hero, and an antagonist or enemy . . . . The enemy may be an ordinary human being, but the nearer the romance is to myth, the more attributes of divinity will cling to the hero and the more the enemy will take on demonic mythical qualities. The central form of romance is dialectical: everything is focussed on a conflict between the hero and his enemy, and all the reader's values are bound up with the hero.<sup>8</sup>

This conflict between the Messiah and the devil on the neutral ground of nature (to use Frye's terms) is exemplified often in Haggard, particularly in Allan's encounters with Gagool and Jana. Frye's "dragon-killing theme" forms the basis of most of the Allan Quatermain romances.

The following is, however, only partly true of Haggard's romances. "Characters tend to be either for or against the quest. If they assist it they are idealized as simply gallant or pure; if they obstruct it they are caricatured as simply villainous or cowardly."<sup>9</sup>

Alphonse and Hans, for example, represent a greater degree of sophistication on the part of their creator than Frye's definition would assume. In Haggard, characters do tend to be "for or against the quest," but they are usually more than caricatures.

The classic example of quest literature is, of course, the Grail legend, that Miss Weston in From Ritual to Romance uses to support her theory that all romance is rooted in religion. Although there is no direct evidence to prove that Haggard was particularly fond of that legend, he must have been familiar with it, at least in its more simplified form, in the tales of King Arthur and his knights. Parallels to the most prominent elements in the Grail legend are common in Haggard,

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

particularly in Allan Quatermain.

It would be difficult to imagine a personal resemblance between either Captain Good or Allan and Percival, Gawain or Galahad, but it may not be merely a coincidence that Haggard has three adventurers set out on the quest for Zu-Vendis; and Sir Henry Curtis, at any rate, would make quite a passable knight, possessing the requisite strength, courage, idealism and personal beauty. The analogy of the dead king whose land has become waste is quite apparent. In Haggard, however, the dead king is not restored to life, but is replaced by Sir Henry, a worthy successor.

The concrete symbols of Allan Quatermain are surprisingly similar to those of the Grail legend. Water is the medium by which the heroes arrive in the troubled land of Zu-Vendis and thus serves indirectly to restore health, or fertility. The magic weapon motif is introduced when Mr. Mackenzie shows the travellers that wonderfully contrived sword from Zu-Vendis. The sword is soon superseded by Umslopogaas's axe, which, like the Lance or Sword of the legend, may be regarded as the male symbol, and contrasts with the female symbols of the Goya Lily and the flower altar. The latter opens to the sun and may be equated with the Grail itself as either a sexual or religious symbol.

The incident of the Perilous Chapel, with its aura of evil and its symbolic candle mysteriously put out, is in Allan Quatermain transferred to the river that serves to transport the knight-healers to the Grail castle--in the novel, the Temple of the Sun. Umslopogaas's breaking of the Sacred Stone heralds a new and better way of life. The Stone may be associated with the stone that closed Christ's tomb, or the rock that Moses smote to obtain water. Whether one accepts the

interpretation of the Grail legend as the romantic evolution of ancient fertility rites or prefers its more modern Christian connotations, the parallels in Allan Quatermain are equally valid. Water is both a Christian - Judaic symbol and a pagan fertility symbol. The deaths of Umslopogaas and Allan may be interpreted as a phase of the Vegetable Ritual or as symbolic of the death of Christ, which gave life to the world as theirs do to Zu-Vendis. Certainly without the final triumph of Umslopogaas's heroic death, in which he symbolically restores fertility to the Waste Land, good could not have triumphed.

Zu-Vendis is a microcosm of the world, in which the evils perpetrated by Agon (Frye's "demonic" figure or "dragon") are put down by such knightly virtues as courage, loyalty and love. By applying those restoratives, Umslopogaas and the other adventurers destroy the false values of an artificial society. Haggard's emphasis on the struggle between good and evil, or between the spiritual and the physical, is recurrent in his novels as well as his romances. The Brethren and The World's Desire illustrate different approaches to the theme in the romantic vein.

Haggard's use of the main symbols of the Grail legend can be observed in many of his novels. In Ayesha, the river is definitely a fertility symbol, while the wasteland has to be traversed to find the way to life. In Eric Brighteyes, The Wanderer's Necklace, and many other tales the magic weapon is prominent. In Heart of the World the river and the Sacred Stone play symbolic roles connected with the

restoration of health to a people.<sup>10</sup>

Frye suggests that the characters in romance "expand into psychological archetypes."

It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine and villain. That is why the romance often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes . . . . The romancer deals with individuality . . . and, however conservative he may be, something nihilistic and untamable is likely to keep breaking out of his pages.<sup>11</sup>

Of the hero, Frye remarks:

If superior in degree to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvelous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons [etc.] violate no rule of probability.<sup>12</sup>

To sum up, the "romantic," as I understand it, incorporates the theories of Frye and Miss Weston to the extent that I have indicated. That is, its elements are rooted in the remote past, and probably evolved from religious ritual; it involves a quest and a struggle between good and evil; it relies to a degree on "miraculous violations of natural law;" the characters are, for the most part, fairly simple; the hero is capable of amazing feats; the quest motif and other archetypes lend themselves to both symbolic and adventurous usages.

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<sup>10</sup>Some of my parallels here were suggested by Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance, a book that seems to reconcile many conflicting theories regarding the origin and meaning of the Grail legend.

<sup>11</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 305.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

What can be added to this list? It is taken for granted that the romantic novel involves imaginative truth rather than factual authenticity, thus requiring the reader's acquiescence rather than belief; that it glorifies the individual, and portrays idealized rather than actual human beings. In the dénouement the good are usually rewarded and the evil punished. The incidents of the plot arise naturally from the nature of the quest, which may involve adventure, mystery, love, war and religion. Character is revealed by action, or by reaction to the vicissitudes necessitated by the quest, rather than by thought. In the modern romantic narrative--science fiction, detective story, spy story or whatever other form may be in vogue from time to time--the enchanted weapons still exert a great influence over the imagination of the masses. A great part of the success of Ian Fleming's James Bond depends on the Beretta and other weapons that help to transmit the hero's sense of power to the reader. The use of judo and karate in such fiction inspires confidence or fear in the reader, depending on whether the hero or the villain possesses the secret knowledge. A bomb that can be released by pressing a button is possibly the ultimate magic weapon. On such television programs as Mission Impossible, the extensive use of technological devices provides a very modern example of the magic weapon's value as entertainment.

There seems to be no reason to dispute Miss Weston's theory that romance originated as ritual. Many of the Greek myths, such as the story of Persephone, stem, like the Grail legend, from man's efforts to propitiate the gods. Romance also created its own myths. The glory of war, the American West, the superiority of the male, are myths fostered



by romance. Catherine Earnshaw is as real to cultivated people as Mary, Queen of Scots; the personality of Sherlock Holmes is better known and has greater appeal than that of Edgar Hoover.

Perhaps related to Miss Weston's and to Frye's theories is my very strong conviction that the romantic involves a reawakening of primitive instincts. It plays upon the primitive emotions of love, fear, desire for riches, joy in lively movement and bright colours, and admiration for strength, courage, shrewdness and other qualities necessary for survival in a primitive world. Science fiction often combines the magic weapon motif with a forcible return to the primitive. The hippie movement, it may be argued, is an attempt to recapture the joy of experiencing the primitive satisfactions.

The characteristics of the romance that I have pointed out are not necessarily all present at the same time, neither do they exclude others. The romance is possibly the most eclectic of literary forms. It may be, and often is, raised far above the level of the mindless thriller, such as the tales of Doc Savage or the Shadow, by special skill in description, by imagery and symbolism, even by a judicious use of theme and philosophy. The romantic narrative, at its best, has a great deal more than a good plot.

William Dean Howells's definition of the romantic writer as one who seeks "the effect of reality in visionary conditions"<sup>13</sup> very aptly describes the late nineteenth century romancers. Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, Wells's The Invisible

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<sup>13</sup>Heroines of Fiction (1901), i, 162.

Man, Kipling's The Jungle Books and Haggard's early romances all achieved that "effect of reality." In all except a half-dozen, roughly a tenth of his output, Haggard presents the improbable in a way that imposes no strain upon the reader's sense of truth.

## 3

As a preliminary to a discussion of Haggard's methods, a brief summary of the most effective will indicate the scope of that discussion. Haggard uses the quest as a basis for his plot; he involves his protagonists in a struggle against evil; his heroes perform amazing feats, often with the aid of extraordinary weapons; he reveals character through action; he appeals to primitive emotions. In short, he conforms to what is generally expected of the writer of romantic adventure, and in doing so he shows himself a master of the story teller's art.

In combining his personal methods with the generally accepted methods of the romancer, Haggard accomplishes, however, a great deal more than is expected of popular romancers. He often demonstrates special skill in description, for example, by linking imagery, symbolism, theme and philosophy with setting and action. His use of images, or "properties," to create a particularly gothic effect, to foreshadow coming events, or to help portray a character, is striking. He has particular skill in creating an appropriate atmosphere for a particular tale, and by careful choice of detail makes that atmosphere complement, even highlight, the exciting action of the story. He carefully distinguishes minor characters, often by a touch of grotesquerie, so that they stand out as individuals, and characterizes his major ones in much greater depth than is usually found in this type of writing. He uses the

personality, the inside knowledge, even the prejudices, of his narrator to bring the reader closer to events. He has a special facility for imitating the style, tone, and point of view of his narrator or main character. The emotions of those characters are both a motivating force for the romantic, and a reflection of Haggard's continuous search for the ideal.

In creating suspense, he grasps and holds attention by telescoping, or showing events at a distance, by foreshadowing, by isolating a single character or a group for greater effect, and by building well spaced climaxes.

He appeals to the romantic ideal already present in the reader's mind by echoing concepts of literature and mythology with which the reader is familiar. The knight-squire relationship is common, but Haggard's squire is a more complicated character than "the awkward but faithful giant with unkempt hair [who] has shambled amiably through romance for centuries."<sup>14</sup> Haggard's squire figures, from Hans to Sihamba, have an originality all their own. In Haggard, knight and squire are engaged in "maintaining the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience."<sup>15</sup> In fact, that is the crusade in which Haggard, with a great many other romancers, participates. But Haggard never forgets the realities. Preparations are necessary for a journey, the daily chores can not be ignored. The real setting is created as carefully as the exotically fantastic.

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<sup>14</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 196.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

For those reasons Haggard appeals on many different levels to different readers, and offers greater rewards with greater familiarity.

Haggard's imagination required exotic settings and a great deal of action. Oppressed by the contrast between his life in Africa and the humdrum existence he returned to in England, he sought imaginative escape in remote ages and far countries. His vision of the world was too subjective for him to sustain a detached view of actual conditions. He needed scope for his visions that realism could not provide, and could comment on human values most effectively in a context of the highly imaginative.

Such romances as King Solomon's Mines, She and Allan Quatermain were therefore, in a sense, Haggard's return to his early life of adventure. His method of composition suggests that the process of writing such books was an escape. They were not planned, but grew in his mind as he wrote. Apparently the less conscious effort he exerted the more imaginatively satisfactory they were and the greater sense of release they provided from the depressing monotony of the law office in which Haggard spent his days. As an expression of the imaginative fulfilment of a state of being existing only in the mind of the creator, they are as valid an expression of dream literature as Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" or Lamb's "Dream Children," having the special quality of wish fulfilment of which Lamb's essay is a more obvious example. Like Malory's Morte d'Arthur, written in prison, and the early novels of Zane Grey, a practising dentist, they represent an escape from conditions that prevented the actual experience of adventure but could not confine the adventurous spirit.

In those early years as a writer Haggard was busy creating his own myths out of his early experiences. The character of Allan Quatermain, for example, probably owes a great deal to William Quatermain, the farmer who had been kind to Haggard at Garsington, but in the novels the kindly farmer becomes a hunter and is endowed with qualities that Haggard found in certain African associates. The composite is further coloured by the author's imagination and thus becomes a fictional character whose success depends on the extent to which he exists as a real individual in the author's mind. The same type of metamorphosis, no doubt, transformed the original models of Hans, Umslopogaas, Stella--even Ayesha--into fictional characters. The weaving of personal recollections into the fictional material to create the myth is a considerable aid to establishing an "effect of reality."

Haggard's visits to Egypt, Iceland and Mexico to study the relics of ancient cultures provided new imaginative raw material with a solid geographical and historical foundation. Those travels provide the author's imaginative creations with a framework of fact and legend, of history and setting, with which the reader is already at least vaguely familiar. This partial familiarity, by suggestion, leads the reader's mind to accept the purely imaginary. Even the most uncultured reader has become aware through picture or text of the world inhabited by the ancient Egyptians and the Norsemen. From what must necessarily be incomplete knowledge he has formed his own personal myth of those worlds. The reinforcement of the myth already existing in the mind of the reader is an important factor in Haggard's appeal.

Haggard's imagination was also stimulated by his reading. The

echoes of Shakespeare, Coleridge, and Poe in his work form a bond between the more cultured reader and the author. Echoes of the sagas in Eric Brighteyes and The Wanderer's Necklace give an authentic air to the settings, characters and events of those novels. The ordinary reader may not be capable of recognizing the similarity between Iduna the Fair in The Wanderer's Necklace and Hallgerd in Njal's Saga, but his conscious or unconscious recognition of the archetype, the woman cursed by her own beauty, plays a part in his acceptance of the Haggard version of the myth.

Haggard's need of outward stimulation no more detracts from his imaginative powers than did Coleridge's similar need. Such stimulation merely served as an aid to the expression of what was already present in his imagination.

Frye maintains that all literature is "mythopoeic" in the sense that our imaginations have been formed, often very indirectly, by the stories and traditions of the past, particularly by the remote past; that the Greek myths, for example, are so rooted in the subconscious that any approximation in modern terms will convey pleasure to the imagination; and that the imagination tends to reject material not rooted in the conscious or unconscious memory. Frazer traces emotive symbols to primitive origins. Jessie Weston finds the roots of romance in rites that originated so long ago that their earliest sources are shrouded in the mists of time.

Haggard's belief that romance is impossible without some basis in what is already known to the writer and, by implication, possibly known to the reader, bears some resemblance to those theories. Haggard

maintains: "We are not strong and skilled enough to carve out of quite unknown material figures so life like that even in a dreaming hour they can pass as real."<sup>16</sup>

Possibly in an attempt to define a type of writing that he felt was being judged according to criteria that did not apply, Haggard asserted that the most important elements of a romance are adventure, imagination, coincidence and a happy ending. It is understandable that Haggard accepted the use of coincidence as one of the most important elements in the romantic novel. The sensation novel was tremendously popular, and even highly regarded. Many critics, ignorant of, antagonistic towards, or incapable of appreciating the work of the realists, still considered an intricate plot with plenty of coincidences to be essential to the novelist's art. The use of coincidence was part of a long-established tradition, and many readers no doubt equated ingenious use of coincidence with literary excellence. The avoidance of coincidence was, in fact, part of the technique of realism, which concerned itself with the way life is, rather than the way it appears to the experience. Nowadays we reject in literature coincidences that would not appear too improbable in real life. To the pre-"realistic" novel reader the reverse was the norm. No coincidence was regarded as too improbable--especially in the romance, in which all is more or less improbable. George Gissing severely criticizes Dickens for his "abuse" of coincidences and other improbabilities of plot. Such criticism by one who was largely a realist of one who was largely a romantic illustrates the change in literary

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<sup>16</sup>The Days of My Life, ii, 91.

fashion in this matter towards the end of the century.<sup>17</sup>

An examination of popular contemporary novels will attest to Haggard's comparatively sparing use of coincidence. In Stanley J. Weyman's immensely popular and still very readable The Castle Inn, 1898, Mr. Fishwick is brought quite by chance to a certain church in Bristol, where he is shown a page of the parish register that has not only the name Fishwick on it, but also a record of the death of the child Julia Soane, who to his knowledge is the living claimant to the Soane estates. The supposed Julia Soane has meanwhile been abducted by Mr. Dunborough's hirelings and, by chance, been taken to the home of Mr. Pomeroy. Subsequently, again quite by chance, she is put into a carriage supposedly provided by Mr. Pomeroy, but which just happens to be that in which Mr. Fishwick is travelling. Later, Mr. Pomeroy, Mr. Dunborough and Sir George Soane, Julia's lover, quite by chance meet at the Castle Inn, where Mr. Dunborough fights and kills Mr. Pomeroy, thus leaving Julia free to marry Sir George.

A comparison with Haggard at his most coincidental will indicate, I believe, that he was more restrained in this respect than most romancers of the time. Lysbeth is one of the few novels in which Haggard uses coincidence extravagantly. In that romance, a train of exciting events begins when the Spanish Count Juan de Montalvo takes Lysbeth van Hout as a passenger in a sleigh race. A number of coincidences are used in the tale. Dirk van Goorl, who is in love with Lysbeth, meets his cousin Hendrik Brant by chance at Montalvo's quarters. It may be regarded as

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<sup>17</sup>George Gissing, Charles Dickens (1898), Chapter 3.



coincidences that Brant reveals himself a fellow heretic. It is a coincidence that Lysbeth's indeterminate attempt to commit suicide is foiled by Martha the Mare, whose life the former had previously been the means of saving. Many years later, Adrian, son of Lysbeth and Montalvo rescues Elsa Brant, the only child of Hendrik Brant. Ramiro, agent of the Inquisition, turns out to be Montalvo, who by endeavouring to extort Brant's treasure from him, is indirectly responsible for the exciting struggle for the treasure. Adrian's becoming involved in the evil machinations of Ramiro and his eventual discovery of the latter's identity are coincidental.

Neither Haggard nor the modern reader could reasonably object to Weyman's delightful series of coincidences, but most readers would probably admit that Haggard's use of coincidence is a little more judicious. In Lysbeth the coincidences are spaced over a period of about twenty years and are so integrated with the daily life of the Leyden Protestants as to merge almost imperceptibly with the total fabric of the tale. A modern parallel is Dr. Zhivago in which a comparatively limited group of characters keep appearing in a perfectly natural manner in different parts of Russia, meeting, separating and meeting again. In a period of historical flux such meetings are natural rather than coincidental. Moreover, the element of surprise involved in such meetings has great entertainment value.

Haggard, following his own formula for romance, filled his books with adventure and imagination. He was, however, willing to sacrifice a happy ending to artistic integrity in such outstanding romances as Nada the Lily and Montezuma's Daughter.

He insisted that romance should have as its theme "the quest for the divine, which must (for the purposes of story) be symbolized by woman. You see, the thing must have a heart, mere adventures are not enough."<sup>18</sup> This attitude on Haggard's part adds greater complexity and universality to what is essentially a simple genre. The quest for the divine combined with the elevation of woman plays an important part in mythology, as demonstrated by the widespread popularity of the Astarte cult, in different guises throughout the ancient world. It may also be recognized in both Hinduism and Christianity, and persists in literature in the Faerie Queen myth, which portrays woman as a conflicting amalgam of good and evil, with divine overtones. Ayesha is an outstanding example of such a paradoxical view of female nature.

Next to his ability to provide the thematic "heart," Haggard's most striking characteristic as a romantic writer is his ability to imbue his romantic settings with that "effect of reality" that Howells rated so highly and, at the same time, to manipulate a set of highly individualized characters through a series of suspenseful actions in such a way as to convince the reader of the imaginative rightness of the whole. Using the cause and effect of the appearance rather than the actuality of life, of the imagination rather than the reality, he convinces the reader that, given the particular set of imaginary circumstances presented by the author, such incidents would occur in the ordered sequence of the plot. It is the cause and effect of art, but that, after all, is what the reader of a romance is seeking.

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<sup>18</sup>The Days of My Life, ii, 77.

## B. The Allan Quatermain Tales

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At this stage a detailed examination of some of Haggard's successes will help to clarify those elements in his writing that place him in the first rank among "romantic" novelists. Since King Solomon's Mines was Haggard's first "romance," to use his own distinction, it provides a natural starting point for any discussion of his work. I shall, however, devote more space to Allan Quatermain, partly because it is my own favourite, and partly because in it the author avoided many of the faults for which he is eternally damned by those who have read no more of his work than King Solomon's Mines or She.

King Solomon's Mines (1885) will always be the book that to the general reader best represents Haggard's distinctive romantic qualities. There are many reasons for this, some of them less obvious than others. Possibly the most important is that it is read most often by boys of a very impressionable age. Even for those who come to it later in life, however, its dark, foreboding atmosphere is not easily forgotten. Perhaps the title, with its implications of the far away and long ago, of darkness and great riches, and of the glamour of Solomon and Sheba, is one of Haggard's most imaginatively stimulating. The romantic and mythopoeic appeal of those "beautiful people" of the Bible is for most people a vivid childish recollection. For certain readers, too, the original impression has been reinforced by one or another of the films inspired by the book. Perhaps its popularity depends upon the fact that its adventure is relatively uncomplicated by theme and values. Certainly the vigorous publicity campaign, with its slogan, "The most amazing

book ever written," started it off on a tide of popularity that has hardly diminished.

King Solomon's Mines was, according to the author's own admission, an attempt to surpass Treasure Island in its own genre. The exotic subject matter of Haggard's book assured it a much greater success than the latter during its first year in print. Pirate stories were not new; tales of darkest Africa were. Stevenson was one of the first to express admiration. In a letter to Haggard he commended the "flashes of a fine weird imagination and a fine poetic use and command of the savage way of talking: things which both thrilled me."<sup>19</sup>

Later he wrote: "You rise in the course of your book to pages of eloquence and poetry."<sup>20</sup>

For his locale Haggard chose Central Africa, then unexplored. In the scramble for territory, expeditions were penetrating farther and farther into the interior. The findings of those expeditions were romantic enough to sharpen the public appetite for stranger and stranger adventures. The time could hardly be more propitious for publishing a romance set completely in Africa, and Haggard's interests and experience had fitted him especially for writing it. The imaginative impact of the reality of Africa was already, in his own mind, taking on the semblance of a dream. Like Sir Melmoth Osborn, he had reason to look upon Africa as "this dark country full of dark deeds of evil and violence."<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., i, 235.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

materials of the myth were at hand for one with the skill to use them. In Africa, Haggard had heard travellers' tales as wonderful, in their way, as anything he could imagine, and he had known hunters like Allan Quatermain.

If the choice of Allan Quatermain as narrator was inspired only by Haggard's admiration for such older men as William Quatermain and Sir Melmoth Osborn, it was indeed a fortunate one. Such a narrator is peculiarly suited for the author's purpose. Without more proof than familiarity with Haggard's mind through his books, I believe that the choice was deliberate and that in making it Haggard exercised considerable foresight and very shrewd judgment. I believe that Haggard recognized that the tales of stirring adventure told in unvarnished language by Osborn and others had a great deal more force and originality than the sentimental, slow-moving, melodramatic plots related in the prolix style so popular in the novels of the day. In Dawn he had imitated the latter style, typified by such novelists as Mrs. Henry Wood, Hall Caine and R. D. Blackmore in Clara Vaughan, and was to do so again in Jess and Beatrice because it was popular, but one senses that he had a distaste for its falseness. The choice of Allan as narrator allows Haggard to express a point of view that, if not completely his own, is very close to it. It also allows him to employ literary techniques that are effective in the context because of their simplicity, and yet are subtle enough to create the ultimate in suspense.

The style is certainly that which one would expect from such a man as Allan Quatermain, who believed that "simple things are always the most impressive, and that books are easier to understand when - like the

Bible - they are written in plain language."<sup>22</sup> Haggard may be hinting here that the everyday language of the English people has been influenced so much by the Bible that it has captured the dignity and grandeur of the Authorized Version, simple only in the sense of being familiar. Allan makes it clear, at any rate, that there are to be no "flights and flourishes." He is not a literary man and therefore can not reasonably be expected to have developed a literary style. Since "flights and flourishes" were typical of the grand manner of Victorian melodrama, and novelists often exaggerated tone and manner in an attempt to elevate the prosaic, Haggard's simple approach to startling events adds greatly to the credibility of his story. Here, as in Swallow, Montezuma's Daughter, Nada the Lily et al., Haggard's facility for losing his own personality in that of the narrator results in his thinking and speaking as that narrator. The writing of so many impressive passages within the limits imposed by the choice of such a narrator as Allan Quatermain requires considerable literary skill.

The description of movement on a large scale that a battle necessarily involves could hardly be bettered than in the following:

Suddenly, like puffs of smoke from the mouth of a cannon, the attacking regiment broke away in flying groups, their white head-dresses streaming behind them in the wind, and left their opponents victors, indeed, but, alas! no more a regiment. Of the gallant triple line, which forty minutes before had gone into action three thousand strong, there remained at most some six hundred blood-bespattered men; the rest were under foot. And yet they cheered and waved their spears in triumph, and then, instead of falling back upon us as we expected, they ran forward, for a hundred yards or so, after the flying groups of foemen, took possession of a rising knoll of ground, and, resuming their triple formation, formed a threefold ring around

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<sup>22</sup>King Solomon's Mines (1933), p. IX.

its base. And there, thanks be to Heaven, standing on the top of the mound for a minute, I saw Sir Henry, apparently unharmed, and with him our old friend Infadoos. Then Twala's regiments rolled down upon the doomed band, and once more the battle closed in.<sup>23</sup>

A sense of great rapidity is given to the opening of the paragraph by the vivid simile, by "flying" and "streaming . . . in the wind." The splendour of the enemy even in defeat is suggested by the "white headresses streaming behind them," contrasted effectively with the decimated ranks of the victors -- "no more a regiment." The former "gallant triple line" is now "blood-bespattered" and "under foot." But the remnant are victors and are experiencing a sense of elation: they "cheered and waved their spears." It is a Pyrrhic victory, one that the reader, with Allan, feels will be the last. There is a quick reminder of what the struggle is all about in the brief glimpse of Infadoos, native general of the rightful ruler, a symbol of hope in the appearance of Sir Henry, the champion of right; but the forces of evil represented by the terrible King Twala seem overwhelming at the moment. The passage is a model of objective description by a subjective observer. The ending, reflecting Allan's fears rather than the actuality in the expression "doomed band" and the subtly foreboding "closed in," are not terminal, as might appear, but are well calculated to increase the reader's already avid interest in the outcome of the struggle.

The effect upon Allan is the effect upon the reader. In the following passage, Allan's realization that he has succumbed to the lure of the primitive is an irony probably not even recognized by the reader

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 190.

under the spell of the author's description.

At this moment, however, perhaps for the first time in my life, I felt my bosom burn with martial ardour. Warlike fragments from the "Ingoldsby Legends," together with numbers of sanguinary verses in the Old Testament, sprang up in my brain like mushrooms in the dark; my blood, which hitherto had been half-frozen with horror, went beating through my veins, and there came upon me a savage desire to kill and spare not. I glanced round at the serried ranks of warriors behind us, and somehow, all in an instant, I began to wonder if my face looked like theirs. There they stood, their heads craned forward over their shields, the hands twitching, the lips apart, the fierce features instinct with the hungry lust of battle, and in the eyes a look like the glare of a bloodhound when after long pursuit he sights his quarry.<sup>24</sup>

The Goyaesque glimpse of man's inherent nature conveys the ultimate horror, a recognition of the "mushrooms" that must be kept "in the dark," and that all man's capacity for good must be brought to bear against.

No passage, of course, can be fully appreciated when taken out of context. In the following static scene, for example, the reader's release from the suspense of the battle helps his awareness of what Haggard achieves. The atmosphere created by the quiet of the night, the horror of war and the weight of sorrow is brought to a peak by the "long piercing howl" of Gagool's voice-- animalistic, evil, yet capable of weeping for a departed friend and protector. The glimpse of "good" in Gagool, balances the earlier glimpse of "evil" in Allan. Even in such a short paragraph as this, Allan's philosophy is apparent. Man must act and woman must weep, but how little the actions of the one or the weeping of the other matter in the eternal scheme of man's destiny.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 191.



From every direction came the sound of the wailing of women whose husbands, sons, and brothers had perished in the battle. No wonder that they wailed, for over twelve thousand men, or nearly a fifth of the Kukuana army, had been destroyed in that awful struggle. It was heart-rending to lie and listen to their cries for those who never would return; and it made me understand the full horror of the work done that day to further man's ambition. Towards midnight, however, the ceaseless crying of the women grew less frequent, till at length the silence was only broken at intervals of a few minutes by a long piercing howl that came from a hut in our immediate rear. This, as I afterwards discovered, proceeded from Gagool "keening" over the dead king Twala.<sup>25</sup>

The passage involves both a lament for the death of the author's creation and a lament for the human condition, the ambiguity of the combining of the struggle against evil with the working of evil in order that, hopefully, good may ultimately triumph. As narrator, in King Solomon's Mines, Allan fulfils a number of functions, as is apparent from the passages quoted. He is the author's mouthpiece, the means of conviction, the relator of Haggard's vision to the grim reality of existence, the "little man" contending with forces too great even for his full comprehension. In subsequent tales the "little man" gradually takes on the status of hero, and his role broadens and deepens accordingly.

Having chosen his narrator, Haggard's second important task is to establish the air of reality necessary to the kind of story he has to tell. One of the lessons that he may have learned from R. D. Blackmore, one of his favourite authors, is the importance of maintaining the credibility of the narrator, which Blackmore so expertly illustrates in John Ridd of Lorna Doone and David Llewellyn of The Maid of Sker. It is crucial to the plot of the Allan Quatermain romances that Allan be both

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

endowed with the heroic qualities of the romantic hero and completely credible to the reader. Like Blackmore in the case of John Ridd, Haggard equips his hero with outstanding romantic qualities that Allan does not admit. This both adds to his appeal and makes him more believable. Details necessary for the initial establishing of Allan's character are economically provided by his musing in the first chapter on his private affairs, while the African locale is established by casual references to Boers and Kafirs and to the fever that curtailed Allan's hunting of elephants.

Nothing could be more natural than Allan's curiosity about two interesting strangers observed on a coastal ship, and his shrewd speculations about their character based solely on appearances are quite in keeping with what the reader has already learned about the narrator. Allan's becoming acquainted with the two strangers has no appearance of contrivance. Nothing could be more natural than Captain Good's comment on the pendulum, reflecting as it does his knowledge of nautical instruments. Allan's reply to Good's comment constitutes an introduction to that gentleman. It is natural that such a well-known hunter as Allan should be known to others on the ship, and when, at dinner, the conversation turns to elephants, he is naturally referred to by name. The recognition by Sir Henry of the name of one with whom his lawyer had corresponded regarding the whereabouts of his brother George is the kind of coincidence that happens in real life. In fact this is a much more acceptable way of bringing Allan and Sir Henry together than if Sir Henry, on the strength of Allan's letter to the lawyer, had sought him out, since the lawyer had undoubtedly corresponded with other

hunters and explorers on the same matter and there is no indication that Sir Henry meant to contact any of them.

It was apparently not uncommon at that time that young men should go to the wilder parts of the world for one reason or another. The fact that George Curtis had changed his name and emigrated to Africa in a fit of pique is quite credible under the circumstances. Nothing hurts the ego more than the feeling of being mistreated by one's own family. Just as understandable is Sir Henry's apprehension regarding George's welfare, and his wish to make amends for what he now regards as reprehensible behaviour in not having offered to provide for his younger brother. All is ordinary, reasonable, almost domestic, with just a hint of exciting adventures to come.

With such attention to probability in the first chapter, Haggard has prepared the way for the introduction of the legend of Solomon's mines. In the midst of so much that is normal, even commonplace, the exotic is now taken for granted. Reality can now be used as the springboard for fantasy. In encouraging his readers to take the leap, Haggard shows himself well aware of the imaginative value of what might be termed a concrete symbol of romance. Cabinets, trunks, documents, letters, masks, fans, cloaks, weapons, etc., all have their potential for romantic allusiveness. In King Solomon's Mines the provision of a map, whose very crudeness lends an air of authenticity, puts the reader in the midst of the adventure without any jolt to his sensibilities. We are quite willing to accept the fact that Allan received the map from the dying José Sylvestre, whose ancestor had visited King Solomon's mines and had died while attempting the return journey, and that George

Curtis, now known as Neville, has started for the mines. Haggard himself was so taken by his own invention that he requested Cassell's to print the map in blood.

Allan's reluctance to go on "wild goose chases of that sort," his concern for his only son Harry, and his deferring his answer even after Sir Henry has made his offer so financially appealing restore the atmosphere of everyday life. Allan's final acceptance because of his fatalism and his finances is logical and convincing. The reader's acceptance because of the legend and the map is every bit as binding.

A long journey is to be undertaken and, if the story is to be credible, there must be no suggestion of the "flying carpet." Instead a wagon and oxen must be used:

a twenty-two foot wagon with iron axles, very strong, very light, and built throughout of stink-wood; not quite a new one, having been to the Diamond Fields and back . . . . This particular vehicle was what we call a "half-tented" wagon, that is to say, only covered in over the after twelve feet, leaving all the front part free for the necessities we had to carry with us. In this after part were a hide "cartle," or bed, on which two people could sleep, also racks for rifles, and many other little conveniences. I gave £125 for it, and think that it was cheap at the price.<sup>26</sup>

Who could doubt the authenticity of that wagon? And yet it is a "property" deliberately used to help create an atmosphere of romance. Mundane as it is, it is also in essence the enchanted chariot to a world of marvels. The mention of the Diamond Fields, the use of the Dutch word "cartle" and the "racks for rifles" are probably a deliberate touching up of the property.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-32.

Allan's care in choosing the oxen is also worthy of note. His preference for the Zulu rather than the Afrikander, his familiarity with the diseases of those animals and the necessary preventive measures, his thoughtful consideration of provisions, medicines, arms and servants --all convince the reader of the length and seriousness of the journey.

Those details have the external realism of Robinson Crusoe. Similar descriptions can be found in true accounts of hunting and exploring in Africa. In fact, many hunter's tales, such as F. C. Selous's Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa (1893) owed their popularity to just such details. The sense of participation that such details give adds considerably to the reader's enjoyment.

Having built a solid base Haggard can now set the romantic structure upon it. The introduction of Umbopa at this stage is particularly ingenious. He is obviously superior to the majority of natives, particularly those who hired themselves out as servants to white explorers. His honest pride in what he is, highlighted by the comparison with the splendidly Nordic Sir Henry, makes him a minor Umslopogaas, admitting no inferiority. "We are men, thou and I," he remarks to Sir Henry. Such a remark appeals strongly to the primitive in the reader, while his dignified self-sufficiency makes it easy to accept him later as Ignosi, rightful king of the Kukuanas. Serving to whet the reader's curiosity regarding the tribe to which he belongs, he is given credibility through his connection with Cetewayo and the Battle of Isandhlwana. At the same time, his strange philosophy and his forebodings as to what is likely to happen beyond the mountains provide an intriguing air of mystery.

In stories of adventure in far countries the machinery needed to place the characters in the setting is often tedious. The original quest legends were relatively short, and one or two incidents comprised the perilous journey. Probability was not an important factor. In the novel of adventure, on the other hand, incidents must be well motivated and time must be accounted for. Far countries, too, are no longer beyond the wood or in the next valley and take longer to reach. Incidents of the perilous journey must therefore be more numerous with appropriate time intervals. Haggard, at his best, makes the journey both a preparation for, and an integral part of, the adventure. Interesting description of the African countryside and the excitement of the elephant hunt help to fill in the difficult time interval. Once under way, the narrative horrifies, intrigues and amuses. Good's servant Khiva is torn in two by a wounded elephant. Good stumbles onto the back of a sleeping quagga and is carried away. Umbopa finds water at the top of a hill in the desert. Ventvogel dies of cold in the cave where they discover the body of the elder Dom Silvestre. They are surprised by strange natives when Good has shaved only one side of his face and is without his trousers. In short, Haggard's powers of invention are more than sufficient to provide stimulation to the reader's imagination during this difficult phase of the tale.

The style, simple and at times even spare, is often intensely effective. The terrible old witch-woman Gagool is first seen, for example, as "what appeared to be a withered-up monkey, wrapped in a fur cloak [who] crept on all fours into the shade of the hut and

squatted down."<sup>27</sup> Here Haggard demonstrates great technical skill in conveying to the reader the appearance of a creation of his fancy and, at the same time, appealing strongly to the reader's imagination. The phrases "withered-up monkey" and "crept on all fours" could not be more ordinary, yet they are calculated both to appeal to the reader's primitive fears and to cause him to see Gagool from the beginning as a sub-human creature. "Withered up" increases the effect of age that "monkey," in the Darwinian sense and by appearance, suggests. The "fur cloak" supports the animal image, while the "shade" subtly suggests the presence of evil. At the same time, the monkey image is, in the light of Darwinism, a reminder of our closeness to the animal kingdom, and by implication, our closeness to the evil that is Gagool.

The threads of convincing reality and of horror in the journey are a fit preparation for Gagool, Twala, and the fantastic and terrible events of what might be regarded as the story proper - the witch hunt, the bloody conflict, the Place of Death, and the prolonged ordeal of the treasure chamber and the mine. In retrospect, it is evident that the initial stimulation, the preparations for the journey, the careful introduction of unusual characters and the events of the journey have all worked on the reader's sensibilities in a way to contribute to the total effect of the climactic denouement.

The atmosphere of evil and terror introduced by Gagool reaches a climax in the witch-finding scene and a still greater climax in the denouement, where, in trying to accomplish the death of the three

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

white adventurers, she meets her own. A comparison of the witch dance in the novel with the following extract from a letter written by Haggard in 1876 will indicate the impression on his receptive imagination of scenes that he saw and anecdotes that he heard in Africa, and his exceptional facility for transferring the actuality to a fictional context. At the time of the experience, one notes, he could not describe it. The Chief Interpreter's account of a similar incident he repeats, but without really conveying its horror. Such scenes provided the basis for his personal myth of Africa, and only as part of that myth could their romantic potential be fully realized. The myth-making process requires both time for growth and distance from its object.

I saw a curious sight the other day, a witch dance. I cannot attempt to describe it, it is a weird sort of thing.

The Chief Interpreter of the Colony told me that he was in Zululand some years ago and saw one of these witch-findings. "There," he said, "were collected some five thousand armed warriors in a circle, in the midst of which the witches . . . danced. Everyone was livid with fear, and with reason, for now and again one of these creatures would come crooning up to one of them and touch him, whereupon he was promptly put out of the world by a regiment of the king's guard."<sup>28</sup>

In his fictional accounts, in King Solomon's Mines, Nada the Lily, and Child of Storm, Haggard invests the scene with all the evil and terror of the original. Moreover, by involving his characters in it, he increases its emotive appeal to the reader, who vicariously experiences the event with those characters. In King Solomon's Mines, the cumulative effect of the preliminary expectant silence, the ominous stamping, the strange song, the ten terrible women who obey Gagool's

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<sup>28</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 56.



commands, the waiting executioners, the frenzied dancing and the pretended smelling-out of those already marked for death is both harrowing to the reader's sense of security and symbolic of the darker side of human nature.

The atmosphere created by this scene prepares for and pervades the entry into the cave with its statue of Death and its accompanying terrors. Gagool's dreadful end-- "shriek upon shriek, such as we had never heard, then a long sickening crunch, and the door is shut"--<sup>29</sup> provides a new climax that intensifies the horror of the hopeless wandering in the dark tunnels.

In spite of the general atmosphere so important to the spirit of the tale, all is not horror. Humour is used both as artistic contrast and antidote. The very tense scene in which Allan has accepted the inevitability of death at the hands of the Kukuanas changes to comedy when Good begins to manipulate his false teeth and is taken for a god. The suspense of waiting for the eclipse is relieved by Allan's use as incantations of passages from the Ingoldsby Legends and from a popular romance, Sir Henry's use of "a verse out of the Old Testament, and something about Balbus building a wall, in Latin," and Good's "classical bad language."<sup>30</sup> The final glimpse of the redoubtable old warrior Infadoos wearing Good's gift of an eye-glass furnishes a fitting farewell to the horrors of Kukuana-land and provides a link with the reality to which the travellers return. Throughout the tale, too, the values

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<sup>29</sup>King Solomon's Mines, p. 242.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 156-157.

of friendship, loyalty, and love counteract somewhat the emphasis on the horrific.

King Solomon's Mines is an outstanding example of that air of absolute credibility given to imaginary events that distinguishes Haggard's best romances. Frequent touches of verisimilitude keep the extraordinary plot from seeming contrived. References to the engineering problems involved in building Solomon's great road help to actualize it for the reader. The description of the Kukuana kraal is sufficiently detailed to appeal on a realistic level, as is also the convincingly created battle scenes. The description of the colossal statues in the mines gives credibility to the idea that those mines were once worked by an ancient race. The bats, the stalactites and the stalagmites add a semblance of actuality to the vast cave. The statues, the details of the cave, the memory of the great road somehow make the treasure imaginatively acceptable also. One of the main factors in the semblance of reality achieved in King Solomon's Mines is the obvious humanity of the narrator. Allan's self-doubts, his ability to see beyond the actions of the moment into the underlying nature of man, his compassion for human frailty, his sensitivity to the deeper emotions of others (Foulata's unmistakable love for Good, for example), help to give the story a dimension that is never wholly out of touch with reality.

The remarkable air of reality of the book caused it to be taken seriously by many readers. Haggard comments:

Even the great dealer in precious stones, Mr. Streeter . . . approached me on the subject. I believe he actually sent an expedition to look for King Solomon's Mines, or at any rate talked of doing so. Nor was he so far out in his reckoning, for since that day they have been discovered--more or less.

At any rate Rhodesia has been discovered, which is a land full of game and gold, the same land, I believe, as that whence King Solomon did actually draw his wealth.<sup>31</sup>

King Solomon's Mines uses a strong quest motif as motivation for the adventure, imagination, and happy ending that Haggard stipulated as three important elements of the romance. Coincidence is, however, sparingly used and not an essential element of this particular plot. The "heart" is provided by the nature of the quest, which is based on brotherly love. The qualities of the hero are more or less concentrated in Sir Henry, who, wearing chain armour and native plumes and performing extraordinary deeds with a battle axe, is "the typical hero of romance" and has the primitive appeal of all such heroes. Possibly most important, King Solomon's Mines celebrates the will to live and to accomplish and insists upon maintaining that will at all costs.

## 2

With a more detailed plot than King Solomon's Mines, a more carefully created atmosphere than She, and a greater number of well-created characters than either, Allan Quatermain is, for many readers, an extremely satisfying reading experience. A close examination of the novel reveals the methods Haggard uses to prepare the reader's mind for adventure, and to hold his attention after having gained it. In this respect Allan Quatermain is perhaps a greater tour de force than its two predecessors.

To begin with, the quest is of a more spiritual and therefore more universal nature. The sad philosophy of the introduction represents

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<sup>31</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 242.

Haggard's feeling towards a civilization that he was already finding tedious. The quest for Zu-Vendis is a quest for a better world, and in that sense is in keeping with the heroic and spiritual aims of the Grail archetype. Allan, too, both in this book and in others, is engaged in a permanent quest for love, for adventure, for youth. Having suffered so many losses he has been purified through suffering and is therefore a significant "questor" in terms of the Grail legend. In Allan Quatermain it may be said that both he and his black counterpart Umslopogaas find their Grail in the unparalleled opportunities granted them to experience life before their death, and to die enjoying the triumph of accomplishment.

In a book full of joie de vivre, the sad beginning has an artistic purpose as well as a symbolic one. Allan's grief for his dead son and his philosophizing establish him both as the father figure seemingly necessary to the stimulation of Haggard's imagination, and as a narrator of substance and integrity. He is, moreover, a man sensitive to his environment, a thinker and a sufferer, one who values life, but has not much use for mere existence. Most important, perhaps, he is a great hunter whose trophies indicate a life of great adventure, but who, like Haggard, is removed from that adventure and finds the values of civilization a poor exchange.

All of those factors provide both Haggard's mature readers and the type of boys he obviously hoped to influence with a great deal to respond to. Imaginative evasion of the rules of the establishment in company with such a respectable figure as Allan Quatermain has an allure for males who would not participate in actual rebellion against the

status quo but who need the vicarious freedom provided by at least an imaginative rebellion. For such readers the combination of the values represented by Allan with the mythopoeic and primitive appeal of Umslopogaas is virtually irresistible.

Having established the humanity of the narrator with a few adroit touches relative to his grief and his philosophy, Haggard very quickly engages the reader's imagination. He does this by presenting just enough information about Allan's situation when he writes the tale to make the reader curious. A number of intriguing questions are involved. Why is Allan seven thousand miles away two years after Harry's death? Why is he in pain? Why may he not live to finish his story? Mystery and the lure of distance and the unknown are important ingredients in the Haggard mixture. Again and again he uses the device of tantalizing the reader with a mere glimpse of the romantic territory to be explored.

Allan's grief having achieved the various purposes intended by the author, the emphasis very quickly changes from death to life. Reaffirmation of life is represented by a slight stirring--a robin sings, Allan takes food and walks up and down the vestibule. The author now deliberately chooses his details to stimulate the reader's imagination. The "bite of a lion" suggests exciting conflict. The horns, the rifles and the elephant gun have, in the context, the allure of enchanted weapons. The references reach a culmination in excitement and are historically based for the reader in the allusion to Dingaan and the battle of Blood River. With unobtrusive skill, Haggard has transformed the weeping at Harry's funeral into the romantic "Place of Weeping" in far-off, mysterious Africa.

The contrast between the "prim English country, with its trim hedgerows and cultivated fields, its stiff formal manners, and its well dressed crowds" and "the sight of Zulu impis breaking on their foes like surf upon the rocks" is a startling one.<sup>32</sup> The elements of that contrast are well calculated to awaken the adventurous spirit of the reader and to put him in a mood to enjoy, at least vicariously, a way of life alien to his experience. The "English" side of the contrast, it may be noted, concentrates on the very aspects of life that the romance reader is seeking to escape. The emphasis is on "prim," "trim," "cultivated," "stiff," "formal," "manners," "well-dressed"--elements of civilized living that boys with the proper spirit of adventure have proverbially rebelled against, and that even the most sedate male sometimes finds unbearable. They are, in short, elements directly antagonistic to what is normally regarded as the male principle. Haggard cleverly--apparently without ulterior motive--includes the adjective "prim," probably in this context more effective than all the other well-chosen descriptive terms. No self-respecting male wishes to be thought "prim." The language in which this side of the contrast is expressed is also quiet, measured, precise, adequate but unoriginal. It helps to convey the routine of everyday labour suggested by "cultivated fields" with a too formal break on weekends represented by "well dressed crowds"--a break that is really only part of the routine. In short it describes a life limited and parcelled out as the "hedgerows" limit and parcel out the fields. Now what do we have on the African side? First of all Zulu impis

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<sup>32</sup>Allan Quatermain (1926), p. 4.

dressed not in the stiff, dark formal attire of the nineteenth century Englishman, but in brief colourful, non-confining garments, perhaps including the skins of leopards or other beasts that they have killed, the teeth of the majestic lion, the flowing plumes of the ostrich, possibly even the bones of a human enemy slain in hand-to-hand combat. The imaginative effect of such a contrast in attire is unbounded, taking the reader beyond the Zulu impi into a whole new way of life. The principle of the attraction of opposites is a strong factor in romance. "Breaking" and "surf" suggest power and freedom impossible to one bound by the restrictions of civilized life. The seacoast image is associated in the reader's mind with both the holiday mood and the lure of far horizons. To emphasize the contrast, the African side is expressed in phraseology that in its rhythm imitates the build-up and progression of a wave. The whole contrast constitutes a superb example of Haggard's ability as a stylist.

Allan's shrewd comments on the so-called benefits of civilization are ironic enough to put those benefits in their proper place. The reader is quite willing to dispense with them in imagination, if not in reality. Allan makes the point that all the learned responses are useless to a human being in great grief or in any kind of personal crisis. The personal response to a crisis, he implies, is a primitive one. If one must depend upon savage emotions for help in sustaining a crisis, the reader argues to himself, why not enjoy the freedom and the joy of the untrammelled way of life that Allan's logic presents as a desirable thing? Allan deliberately makes his choice for life and adventure, rather than grief and stagnation, and the reader joyously makes it

with him.

Thus, in the introduction, Allan's shrewdness and commonsense, with the aid of a few expertly applied romantic touches, have persuaded the reader to accept the appropriate point of view. Romance has been rooted, as it must be if it is not to be regarded as fantasy, in everyday experience.

In Chapter I, the logical argument is further reinforced by the romantic. The heroically-proportioned Sir Henry Curtis helps considerably, especially when contrasted with Allan, "a small, withered yellow faced man of sixty-three." And since romance must not be too serious, there is Good, somewhat Falstaffian in appearance and manners, to provide comic relief now and then. The three questors, characterized respectively by courage and strength, wisdom, and goodwill each in his own way follows the will-o'-the-wisp gleam that constitutes his vision of a better world. Having three distinct types increases the possibility of incident. Other important characters are gradually introduced, but only after the personalities, backgrounds, and relationships of the three are firmly established in the reader's mind. In the true quest spirit, loyalty to an ideal is transferred to loyalty to other participants. This loyalty is represented particularly by the father-son relationship between Allan and Henry and the Knight-squire relationship between Sir Henry and Captain Good. Sir Henry, one notes, is always referred to by his title, but Good is sufficient for the captain.

After a few preliminary, rather prosaic, remarks, Allan takes the reader's mind far into the interior of Africa, a region where "no white man has ever been," and yet where, according to rumours, "a great



white race . . . is supposed to have its home somewhere," an almost irresistible combination of the quest motif with the lure of the unknown. Haggard's technique involves tantalizing the reader with a far-off view of a fascinating territory to be brought gradually nearer. Like the proverbial object of the quest it is seen in glimpses only until the appropriate moment. As a device for maintaining suspense it can hardly be surpassed.

The process of the involvement of the reader in the adventure is slow, but that gradualness prevents the reader from taking the adventure too lightly. Among the admirable aids to credibility are "much deliberation and inquiry" in planning the journey, the traveller's changing their minds about the starting point, the dirty German from whom they obtain information, and the stench of Lamu. Such realistic touches also remind the reader that a romantic quest is not necessarily all "sweetness and light" and valorous deeds.

The British Consul at Lamu confirms the rumour of the strange white race. A missionary has written him a letter about a traveller who had visited a country "where the people are white and live in stone houses." The traveller, driven out of that country, reached the missionary Mackenzie's plantation just before he died. Consul and missionary have an air of dependability, while the dying traveller adds an intriguing note in the midst of practicality.

The hazards of penetrating into the territory of the strange white race are hinted at in the forcible ejection of the white man who had intruded there. A long journey is yet to be undertaken, however, and those hazards are distant. Possibility of danger nearer at hand

is implied by the Consul's casual remark that "the Masai are about," which hints at danger to come but still permits the element of surprise. Death from fever, the reader is reminded, is also a possibility. Reference to the Wakwafi soldiers and to Jutson's exploratory journey around Kilimanjaro help to establish both the authenticity and the romance of the African scene.

As in King Solomon's Mines, Haggard is here using the traditional pattern of quest literature. He has chosen a worthy object, introduced the questors and convincingly motivated them, had them plan their undertaking and started them on their journey. That journey is important as an element of interest and preparation. The structure of Allan Quatermain takes the form of a series of four waves of action, each a little more forceful than the preceding. Three of those waves build slowly and break climactically during the journey. The fourth and greatest is reserved for Zu-Vendis, in terms of quest literature the country that the questors' efforts are to benefit. True to the quest pattern, the trials and conflicts associated with the ultimate accomplishment of the quest objective surpass those of the journey. The latter, however, must not lack significance, since a climactic effect must be achieved. Application of the method to the novel presents a considerable challenge, to which Haggard proves himself equal.

The introduction of Umslopogaas contains elements that both startle and intrigue the reader. His appearance is striking--"very tall, broad . . . gaunt, with lean wiry-looking limbs." The ring in his hair attests to his native dignity, which contrasts with the grotesque touch of a "great three-cornered hole in his forehead." His "humorous mouth,

a short woolly beard, tinged with grey, and a pair of brown eyes keen as a hawk" assure his humanity. The "strange tales . . . current" about him, and his nickname "the Slaughterer" add a touch of mystery. His remark, "I struck but three blows with this mine axe Inkosikaas . . . and yet I left three men dead," brings his strength into special prominence. His cutting off his unfaithful wife's head implies a savage moral code. His axe helps to convey symbolically both his status as a great chief and his determination to regain a lost glory. He satisfies, perhaps even more than Sir Henry, Frye's definition of the romantic hero.

In terms of the classic romance Umslopogaas and Allan have many prototypes. Like Hercules and Jason, or Achilles and Ulysses, they are mutually supporting heroes, each using his own enchanted weapon to great advantage. Their final heroic deaths are in the romantic tradition that includes King Arthur and Samson. Transference of the role of hero from Sir Henry to Umslopogaas and the emergence of the seemingly relatively insignificant narrator as hero is an ironic achievement not perhaps immediately apparent. In that manipulation of the leader-follower relationships Haggard satirizes both the Victorian concept of the romantic hero as strong and handsome, and the accepted belief in white superiority. Here a black man performs the amazing feats of strength, and an elderly white man of small stature, those of skill and endurance. As a new kind of romantic figure, given support by his racial difference and his mythopoeic qualities, Umslopogaas has an appeal to the imagination that far surpasses the more conventional Sir Henry's. Not a little of that appeal depends on his battle axe, which throughout the tale gradually gains the stature of the magic weapon par excellence. The value of

such a hero-identifying property to the romancer is almost incalculable and Haggard knows how to extract its full potential. A similar axe in the hands of Sir Henry in King Solomon's Mines was effective, but slightly incongruous. In the hands of a "ringed" chieftain the axe is superbly right. It becomes the weapon of a great epic hero.

The measured, almost Biblical cadences of Umslopogaas's speech, a splendid example of "the savage way of talking," appeal mythopoeically and provide a further aid to the reader's acceptance of a strange environment. Stimulated by the skill of a great story teller, he is more than willing to "go to hunt and seek adventures and new places," trusting all to fortune. In the spirit of Umslopogaas, what does the reader care "so that the blows fall fast and the blood runs red." Of course, the appeal of Umslopogaas's philosophy and person is an appeal to the primitive. The romantic is, on this level, the reawakening of man's dormant primitive instincts.

From the arrival in Africa Haggard has been busily preparing his first wave of action. By introducing the Masai, known through the account of explorers as one of the fiercest East African tribes, he provides a bridge from the commonplace to the exotic. Visits to ruined cities and Allan's philosophizing serve to support that bridge. The quarrel with the headman, who threatens to set the Masai on the travellers, and his desertion with the bearers help the sense of time passing. This desertion, by diminishing the party, provides a sense of intimacy that intensifies the action. A party of nine, of whom Haggard has already highly individualized four, puts no strain on the reader's capacity for complete visualization, and will be easy to break up into smaller

groups later.

The wave begins to accelerate as Haggard builds up to his first important scene. The travellers buy native canoes and travel by the Tana River. Lulling of the reader's senses by details of travel, hunting and camping, interesting enough to take his mind off impending danger, make the appearance of the solitary Masai warrior more startling. He is, too, the incarnation of fears planted in the reader's mind by the Consul's remark and the headman's threat. The description of the Masai, "enormously tall . . . and beautifully, though somewhat slightly shaped; but with the face of a devil" combines elements that are mythopoeic in their emotive power. The description is fairly accurate of a Masai warrior. The effect is of a fallen angel. Satan, too, was beautiful and towered above his fellow demons. The demon's dress harmonizes in savagery with his face; and the mythopoeic associations of his terrible spear, his sword and his knobkerrie--magic weapons with a triple potential for dealing death by stabbing, slashing and crushing, the three non-mechanical ways of killing a man in combat involving weapons--awaken fully the reader's apprehensions and primitive awareness of the situation. Paradoxically, the vanishing of the Masai without showing any sign of his intentions regarding the travellers, heightens the suspense. Allan succinctly remarks, "Those who see it do not often live to describe it," and the reader knows that the brief appearance of the Masai is only a foreshadowing of the nightmare to come.

Let us examine carefully this incident with the Masai in its totality as a piece of extremely effective thriller-writing. With that satanic face in mind, and those terrifying weapons, the reader will

make the appropriate response to the nightmare. But Haggard has other ways to increase the tension still further. Umslopogaas's report that the Masai have moved away has the immediate effect of slightly lulling the reader's senses, but only for a very brief interval. The latter notes that the travellers sleep in the canoes in mid-stream. Haggard is now in his element. He has played upon the emotions of the reader, raised those emotions to a very high pitch by means of visual images, and dissolved the suspense by the interpolation of a few prosaic details. He now develops an atmosphere of ordinariness which he merges into tranquillity to reawaken the fears of the reader, and shatters it at a blow when the reader is sufficiently receptive to a new climax. Realistic touches such as the mosquitoes and the smell of the Wakwafi restore the normal atmosphere of travel. Then an aura of romantic calm is cast over the scene. It is very quiet. The water flows smoothly, the wind sighs sadly, the moon shines brightly and the banks throw dark shadows. The usual night life of Africa is seen and heard. The reader's senses are soothed and his attention absorbed by the minute description, until suddenly Allan fancies that he "caught sight of a dark figure flitting between the tree trunks." The previously fully visible Masai becomes more terrible in the darkness, and all Allan's presentiments of evil become the reader's:

I would not give way to it, however, although I felt the cold perspiration stand out upon my forehead. I would not arouse the others. Worse and worse I grew, my pulse fluttered like a dying man's, my nerves thrilled with the horrible sense of impotent terror which anybody who is subject to nightmare will be familiar with, but . . . I lay quiet . . . only turning my face so as to command a view of Umslopogaas and the two Wakwafi

who were sleeping alongside of and beyond me.<sup>33</sup>

It is a nightmare in which the reader shares every sensation with Allan. It is adventure observed from inside. Every detail puts the reader in the middle of the experience. The splash of the hippopotamus, the hooting of the owl, the black cloud, the black water, the moaning of the wind, all contribute to the illusion.

Then the climax. The sensation of something moving the canoe. The black hand on the gunwale.

At the same instant a dim but devilish-looking face appeared to rise out of the water, and then came a lurch of the canoe, the quick flash of a knife, and an awful yell from the Wakwafi who was sleeping by my side . . . and something warm spurted into my face. In an instant the spell was broken; I knew that it was no nightmare, but that we were attacked by swimming Masai.<sup>34</sup>

"The spell was broken," but there is no sense of anti-climax. The fight and the bloody hand left behind are a fit ending for a scene that later proves to be only a kind of apéritif to the main action of the novel. The first wave of action has now broken, but will seem a mere ripple compared with the greater waves to come.

Gradual lessening of tension is again provided by the discussion and investigation of the incident and by a severe rainstorm. This interlude prepares the reader for the brief idyll of the mission station, where all is domestic, safe, even cozy--at least on the surface. Haggard's best effects are created with the aid of darkness; to such an extent, in fact, that the reader's memory of Haggard is often that of a world

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<sup>33</sup>Allan Quatermain, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

in which light seldom shines. In reality, Haggard uses light to make the darkness more effective, and Mr. Mackenzie's mission station is a world of sunshine and flowers. It is also a world that was fairly familiar to contemporary readers through the missionary books of the time, representing order in the midst of a chaotic natural environment and the haphazard existence of the native peoples. The mission station thus serves as one of Haggard's chief aids to credibility in the preparatory portion of his tale. With delightful reflections of the child's world of romance in the huge tree and the rope ladder, reminiscent of Swiss Family Robinson, it also provides an agreeable pause before the greater tensions to come. Alphonse's mock-pathetic experiences help to fill that pause.

Haggard makes this lull in the action serve several other distinct purposes. Mr. Mackenzie's retelling of the traveller's tale of the mysterious white race and his showing the strange gold-plated sword brought from Zu-Vendis by that traveller serve to stimulate the reader's appetite for the exotic and to remind him of the quest. Details of the guns carried by the adventurers add authenticity and foreshadow conflict. The description of Umslopogaas's axe is important to a full appreciation of the part that hero is to play in the dénouement.

The axe itself was made of the most beautiful steel, and very curiously worked . . . . It was not very heavy, the head weighing two and a half pounds, so nearly as I could judge. The cutting part was slightly concave . . . and sharp as a razor, measuring five and three-quarter inches across the widest part. From the back of the axe sprang a stout spike four inches long, for the last two of which it was hollow . . . in this respect it exactly resembled a butcher's pole-axe.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 41.



Such a visual presentation of the hero's weapon puts it on a par with the great weapons of legend such as Excalibur, and by implication suggests that it will function as an important agent in achieving the quest. "Made of the most beautiful steel, and very curiously worked," the axe is superior to ordinary axes, as Excalibur is to ordinary swords. The stating of the exact weight of the head and breadth of the blade suggests that the craftsman who designed it gave it the perfect proportion and balance necessary to its most efficient performance of the work for which it was intended. The concavity of the blade, possibly due to sharpening, the razor image (straight of course), and the simile of the "butcher's pole-axe," contribute considerably to the general effect upon the reader's imagination of that memorable weapon.

A description of Florence's flowers and Haggard's use of Mt. Kenya to symbolize the world of the spirit tie in with the quest theme. Umslopogaas's vision of his spirit being satisfied only by endless slaughter "in fair fight" reminds the reader of the part conflict is to play in the victory of spiritual over physical, and provides a prophetic glimpse of Umslopogaas's achievement of his personal quest in his glorious death.

Haggard's primary purpose during the lull in the action is, as usual, to build up to a coming crisis. There is no hurry and every detail is chosen carefully. Events are contrived so cleverly that there is no sense of their being contrived. The number of fighting men on the plantation has been reduced by means of the caravan to the coast with ivory and other trade goods--a touch that reminds the reader also of the everyday economy of such a plantation. Mr. Mackenzie's sigh of

relief when his spies report that the Masai can not be found eases the reader into the mock-heroic tale of Alphonse and his Annette. Alphonse's tale is immediately followed by Flossie's going to the hills to procure a Goya lily bulb for Allan, which causes some concern for her safety. Imminent action is implied by Umslopogaas's, "I smell blood," and his "sharpening, sharpening, sharpening at the murderous-looking axe."

Haggard's art involves keeping the reader in suspense by adroitly-spaced allusions, while postponing the promised excitement. Umslopogaas's frightening Alphonse with the axe, for example, is amusing, but in view of the former's savage impulse to kill, is also terrifying. The coming of darkness without Flossie's return is fraught with meaning for the reader, who no longer believes the spies' report that there are no Masai in the vicinity. Lurking in the shadows, the Masai are again a real, well-understood danger, and young girls should not be lost in the dark, savage African night. The bridge between the real Africa and Haggard's dream fantasy is again apparent: Flossie's innocent errand subjects her to real horrors that Haggard is using to prepare the reader for fantastic horrors to come. The reader's fears are not disappointed. In silence, solitude and darkness Allan sits in the veranda near a door in the wall. The reader sits there also, undergoing the same emotions.

I went on to the verandah and, having lit my pipe, sat down on a seat about a dozen feet from the right-hand end of the structure . . . opposite one of the narrow doors of the protecting wall that enclosed the house and flower garden. I had been sitting there perhaps six or seven minutes when I thought I heard the door move. I looked in that direction and listened, but, being unable to make out anything, concluded that I must have been mistaken. It was a darkish night, the moon not having

yet risen.<sup>36</sup>

As in the earlier Masai scene, the reader's senses are lulled and gradually alerted. He is held in suspense until exactly the right moment. The "something round [that] fell with a soft but heavy thud" at first suggests a ball of some sort. Hesitation and mystification heighten the shock of the revelation. The statement: "It was a newly severed human head!" is accepted by the reader as a logical outcome of the carefully presented preliminaries. Without that careful preparation the revelation would have been too crude. Now it provides a springboard for the action to accelerate.

The cautiousness that is an important element in the narrator's character contributes to the tension of the scene. Allan is noted for sleeping with one eye open, yet he is reluctant to admit the presence of danger until he is absolutely sure. This character trait adds credibility to a common trick of the thrill-writer--presenting the possibility in order to develop the necessary tension to a full emotive realization of the actuality. The reader's recognition of the danger while the narrator is apparently still wavering is flattering, also, to the former's ego, and thus adds to the total feeling of enjoyment. There is, of course, no diminution of the hero's reputation involved in this process. In fact, the greater the hero's reputation for sagacity, the greater the thrill afforded the reader in the feeling that he is one step ahead.

Having made sure of the reader's full attention, Haggard now

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

presents events in quick succession. The second wave of action is now gradually built up to its climax. There is a knocking at the door, and a terrified spy brings the news that Flossie is captured. A Masai herald arrives with Flossie's basket, in which a note is found. An offer is made to exchange Flossie for one of the white men, preferably Sir Henry, and Allan offers himself. Confrontation of Umslopogaas and the herald is, as is often the case in heroic narrative, a mixture of the humorous and the terrible. Haggard's imaginative grasp of the crucial situation never falters, but he avoids a premature climax. Flossie's courageous and pathetic note restores the comparatively controlled atmosphere necessary for planning the attack on the Masai, a daring solution to the problem. There will be excitement enough later. In the meanwhile tension is controlled for greater suspense, not eliminated. Umslopogaas's optimistic but bloodthirsty proposals for overcoming the enemy and Mr. Mackenzie's selecting his "carver" as a weapon help to keep the reader's mind on the coming conflict. The quest motif is very strong here also. The lady in distress, her symbol the lily, the exotic iron shirts, Mr. Mackenzie's prayers, even Alphonse's prayers "for the souls of those I shall slay tonight," suggest an incident on the Perilous Journey. The potent mixture includes idealism, mythopoeia, humour, exoticism and a touch of the bizarre. All of those ingredients help to maintain suspense and are firmly rooted in practical affairs.

Chapter VII, the crest of the second wave of action of the book, is suitably entitled "A Slaughter Grim and Great." It has been well motivated, but careful setting of the particular scene is still needed. Haggard concentrates primarily on atmosphere to create reader response

to the ordeal. The first three paragraphs of the chapter constitute what is essentially, in quest terms, the silent vigil. Chill, solemn silence broken by whispers, black shadows, slow setting of the moon, Umslopogaas's imperturbability thrown into relief by the apprehensions of the others, Mrs. Mackenzie's crying, are all important to the total effect. If the reader recognizes the atmosphere of certain incidents in Malory and Tennyson's Idylls of the King it may not be mere coincidence; Haggard is obviously inspired by a similar primitive urge to link the epic and the lyric into a romantic whole.

Now Haggard begins the slow movement. Details are necessary and fascinating but the reader is by now very much involved and craves action. The creation of suspense by a suspension of action is cleverly managed. The reader's nerves are as taut as Allan's, who can not bear the chattering of Alphonse's teeth. The reader is tantalized by the sentry's humming, his looking in the attacker's direction, his obvious suspicions, his advancing, pausing, throwing a pebble, the apparent lulling of his suspicions, the reverie that holds him still for three minutes, Alphonse's teeth chattering, Allan's perspiring, the sentry's turning to walk away. Then the tempo suddenly changes. With a snake-like glide and a spring Umslopogaas engages the enemy in conflict. "Then followed a convulsive twining of the two dark bodies, and in another second I saw the Masai's head bent back, and heard a sharp crack, something like that of a dry twig snapping, and he fell down upon the ground, his limbs moving spasmodically."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

The savagery of the moment is conveyed economically, yet so completely that the reader fully appreciates the imagery in "We [advanced] on all fours, like a colony of huge apes." Haggard makes full use of the shock effect of presenting impressionistically only what the observer perceives.

The glimpse of Flossie and the white donkey again lessens the tension and, symbolically, restores the human image. A pause is provided by the description of "the quiet dawn," the sunrise, the sky growing "tender as a mother's smile," the singing bird, the soft breeze, the sparkling dewdrops. Haggard's ability to use his setting is remarkable. In a single chapter he has first filled the peace and beauty of nature with brooding terrors and later made the same elements represent love and happiness. But the conflict is not forgotten, The soaring pinnacle of Kenya is "purpled with blood" and conflict rages in the heart of man.

Haggard's appeal on many levels is clearly demonstrated. The almost farcical humour provided by Allan's bringing the "butt end of [his] rifle down on to the pit of the Frenchman's stomach" in order to stop Alphonse's teeth chattering, and the latter's letting his gun off accidentally, is the signal for the terrible conflict that follows, which is characterized by yells, howls, curses, terror and fury and a "storm of bullets." Even Flossie's escape, stiff as she is from the ropes, is conveyed with speed.

But Flossie . . . could only go slowly, and as she went two Masai flying down the kraal caught sight of her and rushed towards her to kill her . . . . Up flashed the great spear, and as it did so a bullet from my rifle found its home in the holder's ribs, and over he went like a shot rabbit . . . . Flossie had scrambled to her feet and was facing the second

man, who advanced with raised spear . . . . Suddenly I saw a puff of smoke, and the man fell down headlong.<sup>38</sup>

The choice of words is important here, and Haggard is a master of his craft. The use of "flying," "rushed," "flashed," "like a shot rabbit," "scrambled," "puff of smoke," and "headlong," effectively create the necessary feeling of speed. After Flossie's rescue, soft feelings and philosophy are put aside. The description of the epic conflict that follows constitutes a magnificent wave crest of uninterrupted action that combines movement and lucidity. Suspense is supplanted by the joy of conflict. The reader, now with Good, now with Allan, now with Sir Henry, is kept breathless by the movement, noise and colour until the end of the chapter, when Haggard skilfully provides unity with earlier events by Umslopogaas's killing of the herald. After the bloody conflict, involving hundreds of people, the personal triumph of such a hero is particularly satisfying, both restoring the sense of intimacy and justifying the care expended earlier on the creation of that hero.

A lengthy pause is now filled with the humour of Alphonse's situation in the tree--ironic in the light of his earlier claims to courage--the pathos of Flossie's reaction after her ordeal, her mother's gratitude, the gloom of the battlefield, the hovering vultures, and the disposal of the corpses.

So far Haggard has generated as much excitement as is found in half a dozen so-called "thrillers" of the present day in a remarkably

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

convincing manner. Making use of a setting and events already fairly familiar to the average English reader of his time, and of a people whose savagery has become a byword, he leads the reader again and again from the commonplace into high adventure and almost unbearable suspense, and restores normality with a few touches of domesticity or humour. The three carefully-contrived climaxes, the lone Masai, the attack on the boat, and the battle, are so well-motivated and so unified that if the novel were to stop at this point the reader would be left with a sense of satisfaction and, with the deletions from the texts of forecasts of further excitement and of the larger quest motif, completeness. But, amazing as it sounds, Haggard's main story, the achievement of the objective of the larger quest, has not yet begun. The greater preparatory ordeals and the more "spiritual" struggle have yet to be endured. The mythopoeic terrors of trial by water and fire are needed to prepare questors and reader for the zenith of achievement of the combined forces of Umslopogaas and Allan--of black strength and skill, and white ingenuity and stamina.

The bridge into the purely romantic world of the author's imagination has, however, already been firmly constructed and the reader is ready to accept the wilder logic of that world. The building of that bridge involved a mixture of mythopoeia and realism, of appeal to the reader's knowledge and imagination, of fact and fancy. It involved the character of the narrator and the author's knowledge of the African countryside. Above all, it succeeded in merging all of those elements into a convincing whole. A very brief summing up will indicate the method. First, Haggard establishes the narrator as a person of humanity



and integrity. Secondly, he supplies a quest motif that has universal appeal--the quest for a better society. Thirdly, he uses realistic details: grief over a son's death, unpleasant smells of an African coastal town and of unwashed bodies, the economy of an African plantation. Fourthly, he uses adventure on a possible, not unusual, scale in Africa at the time, to prepare for the more fantastic adventure that his imagination builds on the actuality. Fifthly, he throws over the whole an aura of primitive romance that is the heritage of every school-boy. Now he can go beyond the territory of a Henty, attractive in its way but subject to precise limitations, into one that he makes peculiarly his own. The title of Chapter IX, "Into the Unknown," is a renewal of the earlier promise of exotic adventures. The author develops a sense of a new beginning, and establishes a justification of the "wild-geese chase" by reminders to the reader of what English adventurers have accomplished, and by the implication that "a mild form of lunacy" is necessary to the full savouring of life.<sup>39</sup> The addition of Alphonse to the party helps to establish the new atmosphere--an acceptance of adventure for adventure's sake, leavened by that other important spice of life, humour. The incongruity of the juxtaposing of Umslopogaas and Alphonse, of Henry and Good, is part of the method.

Establishing of the atmosphere of the traveller's tale necessary to the reader's acceptance of wonders to follow is accomplished by details of scenery, animals and arms. Reader interest is further stimulated by new tales of the strange white race. Reduction of the

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<sup>39</sup>Cf. R. D. Laing: The Politics of Experience.

party to the five main characters is well managed. This reduction adds to the reader's involvement by bringing him closer to those characters. The transition from the known to the unknown is natural--the shooting party on the lake, the effort of the Askari to retrieve the dead swan, his being sucked into a whirlpool, efforts to rescue him--and the reader suddenly finds himself on a rushing river in a dark cavern. It has happened so smoothly that there is no strain on the reader's credulity. He is now an eager participant in Haggard's third wave of action.

Haggard's ability to place his characters in a more critical situation as his tale proceeds is once again strikingly illustrated. In the earlier encounters with danger the adventurers were capable of fighting back--now they are completely powerless to change their situation. They are in the predicament of Sisyphus, Tantalus or Prometheus, completely subservient to the will of the gods. Darkness has again taken the place of light--a Stygian darkness without moon or stars--and Alphonse's ghostly howl of terror expresses both the unreality and the hopelessness of their situation. One of man's greatest horrors is to be deprived of the power to act, and a man so deprived is without hope.

When light is finally thrown on the scene by the lantern, it reveals their situation more clearly and helps Allan to reassure himself and the reader through a process of rationalization. Underground rivers are not, after all, so unusual, and classical allusions somehow put things in the right perspective. Nobody who can make comparisons with Greek mythology can be unduly scared. Moreover, Umslopogaas, seizing the opportunity to satisfy his hunger, is not at all concerned with Charon or the Styx. His, the reader feels, is the true spirit of

adventure.

Haggard does not allow the reader to remain in even that precarious state of well being very long. Classical allusions can be frightening. Why should it be getting so hot? The allusion to the infernal regions seems to be turning into a reality. The mercury at 123°, steam, a sense of suffocation, inertia, drying of the skin, a terrible throbbing of blood in the head, are sufficient horrors in themselves; they also prepare the reader's mind to accept the indescribably awful beauty of the pillar and the rose of white flame. This distortion of beauty into the horrific is even more effective than in earlier scenes, such as the appearance of the lone Masai, and the mission station incident, because of the allusions to hell.

Questions of reality are no longer relevant, since the reader has been lured into the acceptance of a different reality. His perception is heightened by the impact of the various stimulating influences on his senses, and Allan's observation of the veins of ore in the black rock seems quite natural. It also represents a desperate attempt on Allan's part to hold onto the actual world which is being rapidly supplanted. The falling into unconsciousness of all except Allan intensifies the reader's impression by focusing it solely upon, not the whole scene, but that part of the scene that riveted the narrator's attention. The concentration on the elemental, the cavern with its black rock sides and roof, the water, the fire; and on that one solitary human being contending with body and spirit against the massed forces of nature makes the scene one of Haggard's most imaginative achievements. Haggard's setting and the properties he places in that setting contribute greatly

to the success of his more fantastic adventures.

The following passage with its hurrying, insistent, rather jerky rhythms stresses the tension and the urgency of the moment:

He had gone too, and I was alone. I could not breathe; the fierce heat dried me up. For yards and yards round the great rose of fire the rock-roof was red-hot. The wood of the boat was almost burning. I saw the feathers on one of the dead swans begin to twist and shrivel up; but I would not give in. I knew that if I did we should pass within three or four yards of the gas jet and perish miserably, I set the paddle so as to turn the canoe as far from it as possible, and held on grimly.<sup>40</sup>

The suspense generated by the preceding paragraph reaches a climax with Allan's holding on to consciousness through the boiling water, past the roaring fire. It is quickly dissolved by Allan's re-awakening to cooler air and a light from above. But an aftermath of horror remains. As Sir Henry indicates, Haggard's details here and earlier are an extension of Coleridge's imaginative vision in Kublai Khan. Such details, however, can be traced back through Dante, Homer and ancient fertility rites until the archetype is lost in the mists of antiquity. They give form to man's subconscious, inherited fears and are thus more real than the terrors of man's more conscious existence. Haggard's details are singularly appropriate to conjure up those primitive fears. Using Coleridge's cliffs, he extends the metaphor of death suggested by the former's "sunless sea." "Here and there, however, grew ghostly patches of a long grey lichen, hanging motionless to the rock as the white beard to the chin of a dead man. It seemed as though only the dregs or heavier part of the light had sunk to the bottom of

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<sup>40</sup>Allan Quatermain, p. 111.

this awful place."<sup>41</sup>

It is impossible to discuss this segment of the quest journey without reference to Haggard's use of symbolism. We have already seen how Haggard bases his fantasy on reality. Now we become very much aware of the role that symbols play in the reader's acceptance of that fantasy. To support the spiritual quest theme Haggard raises fantastic setting and action to the level of the ideal by symbolism. His successful combination of the credible and the ideal is one of the factors that set his romances apart. In the preceding paragraph, the "ghostly patches of a long grey lichen" and "the dregs . . . of light," like the earlier black cliffs and rose of fire, help to convey symbolically the magnitude of this particular ordeal, Allan's physical and spiritual descent into hell.

The landing on the pebbly beach under the black cliffs, the horrible echoes of Good's laughter, the whispers, Umslopogaas's hint of the supernatural, and the ultimate horror of the giant crabs, constitute only a different level of hell. The stench and the struggle of the loathsome objects for the dead swan become highly symbolic. The earlier destruction of the beautiful swan, like that of the legendary albatross, has resulted in the substitution of a horrible ugliness. A symbol of life and beauty has been destroyed and the punishment for that particular sin is subjection to ugliness and the stench of pollution. The allegorical elements of the scene involve a kind of purgatory before the entry into the Paradise of Zu-Vendis. In retrospect the rose of fire can be

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 112-113.

seen as a purification, a burning away of dead flesh. But the lusts of the flesh remain and will eventually result in a terrible destruction.

The beginning of Chapter XI is beautifully evocative of a new order, and forecasts symbolically the success of the spiritual quest.

For an hour or more I sat waiting . . . till at length the east turned grey, and huge misty shapes moved over the surface of the water like ghosts of long-forgotten dawns. They were the vapours rising from their watery bed to greet the sun. Then the grey turned to primrose, and the primrose grew to red. Next, glorious bars of light sprang up across the eastern sky, and now between them the messengers of dawn came speeding upon their arrowy way, scattering the ghostly vapours and touching the distant mountain tops . . . . Another moment, and the golden gates were open and the sun himself came forth gloriously, with pomp and splendour and a flashing as of ten million spears, and covered up the night with brightness, and it was day.<sup>42</sup>

In this extremely lyrical passage, which expresses symbolically the glory of a daily event, Haggard uses images significantly to convey the joyous victory over evil that will result from the trials now endured by the questors. It is a glimpse of the Grail to give them the hope necessary to carry on. The message to the reader may well be that as man creates his own hell, he can also create his own heaven by a recognition of the beauty given freely for his solace. Here even the ghosts have become beautiful. The yellow and red that were so dreadful in earlier contexts are now glorious in their calm beauty. The arrows and spears of war have now become symbols of peace wielded by angelic hosts, their heralds messengers of hope. God, manifested by the sun-- "the golden gates were open"--has the power to efface the "thick layer of mist" of human error and suffering. After purification of a great

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 117-118.

trial, beauty can again exist, at least temporarily.

Haggard continues to weave the real, the fantastic and the symbolic into the structure of his romance to produce passing effects that contribute to the total impact of story and theme. The drowned body of the Askari, for example, is a real object, a property whose reappearance has a shock effect that restores the thriller atmosphere. Its reappearance at this time is both natural, since it probably travelled at the approximate speed of the canoe, and fantastic because it appears at just the right moment to provide a final horror to remind the reader that the new atmosphere represents hope, not fulfilment. As a symbol it forecasts dire events. Umslopogaas, having a primitive man's intuition, continues, realistically enough considering his character, to forecast evil; symbolically he echoes the laughter of fate. The aquatic birds are real objects. Symbolically they are a restoration of the dead swan and as the restored principle of life and beauty provide guidance to the wondrous city. The "great golden dome," not unlike that of St. Paul's, is "real," highly imaginative and allegorical. It is the heavenly dome that casts its shadow on the waters of life--now within our traveller's reach. To enter that heaven man must become totally transformed, as Good is when, after the removal of his soiled and worn garments and baptism in the lake, he dons his uniform. The dazzling whiteness of his shirt makes it symbolically a heavenly garment--but only for the moment. Good's pride negates that allegorical concept and becomes symbolic of human vanity in general, more difficult to shed than any physical garment. The encounter with the hippopotami again stresses man's destructive nature, another

obstacle to his attaining grace.

Haggard's third great wave of action has taken the reader from the comparative reality of the Masai incidents, through the horrors of the underground river, made more horrible by symbolic overtones, into the light of Haggard's fantasy world of Zu-Vendis, where the final struggle involved in the quest motif is to be endured. The sustained climax of that great wave included the action surrounding the rose of fire and the crabs. Now a new period of relaxed progression is necessary to maintain the rhythmic structure that Haggard uses so effectively. Before resuming the action, the author supplies more details to give his new setting solidity. Chapters XII and XIII are devoted mostly to the supplying of those details. The red granite city provides a magnificent stage for the working out of the author's romantic fantasy. The great staircase and hall of the palace, the splendid Temple of the Sun with its ingenious flower altar, natural scenery, agriculture, politics, religion, law, social system, are imaginatively conceived and realistically presented. The pace slackens, but the quality of description ensures that the reader's interest does not.

Various conflicts stem from the beauty of the two queens and the High Priest Agon's excessive power. Struggle for mastery between church and state is obvious from the beginning, and Nyleptha's signal in the temple alerts the reader to the imminence of danger to the travellers. The narrow escape from being catapulted into Agon's fiery furnace, the fight with the priests, and Sorais's turning Agon's words against him are a foreshadowing of the deadly struggle to come. Even the name Agon, in its original meaning of struggle as in "antagonist,"



and its suggestion of Dagon, dragon, even agony, is suggestive of evil. The struggle between state and church is essentially a struggle between good and evil and as such is used in the working out of the quest theme.

The casual tone used at the beginning of Chapter XV is delightfully ironic, much more subtle in its humour than such incidents as Good caught without his trousers in King Solomon's Mines. The irony, which helps to establish the external realism necessary for the reader to accept the more exotic elements of the tale, consists mostly in the clever use of contrast. Good dons his full-dress uniform to impress a special deputation. Later he discovers, after a number of Zu-Vendi appear at court in imitations of his dress, that he has entertained tailors unawares. The wound to his vanity is self inflicted, and his attempt to establish a social order based on just such vanities as they have left England to escape is not lost upon Allan. The latter's tongue-in-cheek remarks, such as "had a very good time" and "became quite the rage" are ironic both as an echo of his initial opinion of the well-dressed English crowd and as a contrast to the narrow escape from death in the temple. The travellers' situation is only on the surface that of favoured visitors at a foreign court. Their learning the language, visiting the mines, quarries and country estates, and engaging socially in the hunt are, however, all in keeping with that surface concept. Such details, echoing both such fictional tales as Gulliver's Travels and accounts of actual travellers to foreign lands, have the charm of half-remembered experiences and tend in their conformity with what is usual to reinforce the reader's sense of security and make him more susceptible to exciting events yet to be presented.

The largest wave of action in the book is, in spite of the surface calm, steadily growing. The reader views the love of both Nyleptha and Sorais for Sir Henry with a sense of uneasiness--an uneasiness reinforced by Good's love for Sorais and the latter's song with its reiteration of dawning and blood. The imposition of blood upon the dawn image, already developed as a symbol of hope, of the victory of peace, is particularly foreboding. Under the circumstances, the reader feels that the rendezvous between Nyleptha and Sir Henry is both ill judged and ill timed.

Chapter XVI opens: "It was night--dead night--and the silence lay on the Frowning City like a cloud." After this foreboding beginning, the atmosphere is maintained and enhanced by a compelling combination of setting and action.

Secretly, as evildoers, Sir Henry Curtis, Umslopogaas, and myself threaded our way through the passages towards a by-entrance to the great Throne Chamber . . . .

We gained the hall in safety. So empty and so still was it, that even when we had passed the sound of our footsteps yet echoed up the lofty walls, vibrating faintly and still more faintly against the carven roof, like ghosts of the footsteps of dead men haunting the place that once they trod.

It was an eerie spot, and it oppressed me. The moon was full, and threw great pencils and patches of light through the high windowless openings in the walls, that lay pure and beautiful upon the blackness of the marble floor, like white flowers on a coffin.<sup>43</sup>

First of all, in the context of jealousy and divided loyalty of this segment of the tale, the passage conveys an air of furtiveness and

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

intrigue, there is a taint of treachery to Good and Sorais that Allan engages in against his essentially open nature. He does not normally use a "by-entrance" and his sense of discomfort makes him more aware of the gothic atmosphere created by the combination of silence, moonlight and dark shadows. Realistic details such as the echoes quickly change to melancholy images which are both romantic and symbolic. The "ghosts" and the "coffin" suggest Allan's regret for the death of trust and loyalty which, like the moonlight "that lay pure and beautiful upon the blackness of the marble floor," contrasts with the hardness and darkness of distrust that has come to divided friends. The special blend of romance, mystery and pathos is much more subtle than a similar blend in Mrs. Radcliffe. In its imposition of human frailty and sorrow upon romantic incident it seems to have close affinity with Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" or some of the old English ballads.

The scene here and in its continuity shows Haggard's evocative powers at their best. In the description of the waiting in the partly moonlit hall and the whisper of Nyleptha's dress as she approaches, the reader can hear the quiet. The scene of romantic and courtly love between Sir Henry and Nyleptha exercises such a spell over the reader that it is with a sense of shock he is reminded by Umslopogaas of the practical and physical nature of love. It is not in the nature of things, the reader now feels, that such idyllic love should exist without obstruction. His fears are justified. Almost immediately, General Nasta proposes to Nyleptha and utters scarcely-veiled threats of what

will happen if she refuses him.

Haggard has now emotionally involved Nyleptha, Sorais, Sir Henry, Nasta, Good, and Agon--and the reader. Good's serenade is the only light touch in Chapter XVII--a chapter filled with passion, jealousy, misunderstanding, thwarted love, thoughts of revenge, attempted murder and auguries of war. Sir Henry's good looks, Sorais's and Nyleptha's beauty and their mutual jealousy, Agon's and Nasta's resentment, have all been manipulated to bring about the desired situation. The way has been prepared for the great climax of the book, and rising action is again in order.

The quickening of action begins by a ludicrous incident that provides an effective contrast to the context. Haggard is well aware of the heightening effect on humour of a dark background, and takes full advantage of it. Umslopogaas's humorous pursuit of Alphonse and its aftermath are made to serve a special purpose. By emphasizing the trouble brought about by a woman in Umslopogaas's past history, it leads naturally to the interview between Nyleptha and Sorais, the taking of sides, and the spilling of the first blood in the conflict between the sisters. The rather touching scene in which Nyleptha offers herself in marriage to Sir Henry is followed by a quick glimpse of Umslopogaas "whetting his axe . . . as a vulture whets its beak beside a dying ox"--a comparison that mixes the reality of death with the horror of the "vulture" image, also real enough in Africa, to indicate the bloody war to be fought before the lovers find the peace they desire. Their happiness is thus linked with the general happiness of Zu-Vendis and becomes an element in the quest theme. The reading of the English

marriage service and the use of Curtis's mother's ring serve both to emphasize the exotic background and to make it more believable. The marriage, thus placed in its proper perspective, becomes both "real" and a meaningful part of the total adventure.

Chapters XX, XXI and XXII are notable even in Haggard for sustained and gradually intensified action. Nyleptha and Sir Henry part with dignity and restraint. Massing of the opposing armies is described with convincing detail. Emphasis on Sorais's much greater force, night, waning watch-fires, silence, Allan's reflections, leaving "the issue in the balancing hands of Providence," create an atmosphere of impending peril. Then the awakening "with a clash and a roar," another long wait, and "that mighty, thundering shout . . . like the rolling of a thousand chariots." The earlier action pattern is repeated but this wave, the major and final sequence, is a much more powerful one. Soon the battle rages, giving Haggard the opportunity to exercise his special talent for describing such scenes. His simple, elemental images, most effectively placed, convey the sound and the fury. The enemy cavalry approaches "like flame from the cannon's mouth." There is "a crashing rending sound, like that of the breaking up of vast sheets of ice." "Hundreds of horsemen were thrown up . . . as the earth is thrown up by a ploughshare." As the cavalry sent out by Allan meet the enemy ranks, the latter twist "in agony, like an injured snake [trying] to protect its centre." The rhythm of the prose suggests movement, confusion and the observer's reactions to the awesome conflict.

Still farther in, by Heaven! right through, and so, amid cheer after cheer from our watching thousands, back again upon the severed ends, beating them down, driving them as a gale drives

spray, till at last, amidst the rushing of hundreds of riderless horses, the flashing of swords, and the victorious clamour of their pursuers, the great force crumples up like an empty glove, then turns and gallops pell-mell for safety back to its own lines.<sup>44</sup>

Every significant movement of the opposing forces is followed, in pages of exciting and seemingly-authentic description of the battle as seen through the eyes of an observer who is very much involved in the outcome.

The sudden appearance of Alphonse with the news of a plot to murder Nyleptha raises the action to an even higher emotive level as Allan and Umslopogaas undertake the hundred mile ride with only nine hours to achieve their purpose. The noise of battle is left behind, but an even greater excitement has been substituted. The two chief questors are now isolated to give greater intensity to the final trial. Speed, urgency, and the unfriendly night are conveyed in admirable prose:

Down the sides of slopes we galloped, across wide vales that stretched to the foot of the far-off hills. Nearer and nearer grew the blue hills; now we were travelling up their steep, and now we were over and passing towards others that sprang up like visions in the far, faint distance beyond.

On, never pausing or drawing rein, through the perfect quiet of the night; that was set like a song to the falling music of our horses' hoofs; on, past deserted villages . . . on, past lonely moated dwellings; on, through the white patchy moonlight . . . on, knee to knee, for hour after hour.<sup>45</sup>

It was a ride to match the deeds of Homer's heroes, of Arthur's knights, of the heroes of Norse mythology. The glorious strength

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

of Nyleptha's Daylight compensates for the sad failure of Allan's mare. In his "extraordinary running powers" Umslopogaas demonstrates the super-human element of the heroic and assumes the central role that he is to occupy until the end. The longed-for sight of the Temple of the Sun and Umslopogaas's gasped, "I reach it or I die" reaffirms the quest motif. The suspense is heightened as they reach the gate of the city, clatter through the streets and rush through the rooms of the palace in search of Nyleptha. Tension is expertly maintained through the wolfish snatching of food, the hurried preparations for defence, and Umslopogaas's prophetic dream.

Umslopogaas's holding the stair is as magnificently conceived as anything of its kind in romantic narrative. His "wild war-song" presages a savage conflict that in its rhythmic movement suggests a macabre dance of death.

Up rushed the assailants, one, two, three at a time, and as fast as they came, the axe crashed and the sword swung, and down they rolled again, dead or dying. And even as the fight thickened, the old Zulu's eye seemed to get quicker and his arm stronger . . . .

They hacked and hewed at him with swords and spears, wounding him in a dozen places till he streamed red with blood; but the shield protected his head and the chain-shirt his vitals, and for minute after minute, aided by the gallant Zuvendi, he still held the stair.<sup>46</sup>

Agon and Nasta have been triumphantly eliminated, but the great hero is badly wounded. His splendid, blood-marked progress to the altar, and his mighty blow annihilating altar, axe and himself is a fitting ending to a saga of which the chief motif has been blood. It is

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

moreover, the climax towards which the whole tale has been a preparation, the Heroic Death that ensures the achieving of the quest. The destruction of the Zu-Vendis religious symbol is the supreme blow against the corruption that was destroying the country. Allan's death parallels Umslopogaas's on a less spectacular level. Restoration by Sir Henry and Nyleptha is now a possibility.

The rest is a tidying up of a tale that in the creation of believable fantasy would be difficult to match. Haggard's remarkable skill in lulling the senses only to stimulate them more and more, each wave of action rising higher than the one before, has been extremely well exercised. His inclusion of so many exciting components of the romantic tale--attack by savages, rescue of distressed innocence, bloody battles, ride to rescue a main character, individual combat on which great issues depend--without wearying the reader and without obvious artificiality depends upon many elements in his writing not always present in the work of the romancer. Among them are spacing, careful motivation, engaging the reader's sympathy for the narrator and through him for the protagonists, symbolic connotations and the maintaining of imaginative fidelity by frequent links with reality. Most important, I feel, is Haggard's obvious belief in and enjoyment of a romantic adventure. Belief and enjoyment enable him to realize fully the details of the scene and to convey effectively the spirit of romance.

Imagination is the author's stimulant as well as the reader's. The more suspenseful the episode the more appropriate the style and the more imaginatively stirring the images become. The range of Haggard's



imagination is close to that of a great poet. The effective mixture in Allan Quatermain of such opposites as sorrow and joy, darkness and light, amity and enmity, action and philosophy, beauty and ugliness, mundane and exotic, good and evil, must surely be unmatched in a book of which the main purpose is to tell an entertaining story. This richly-woven texture, common in the author's best books, is possibly Haggard's main appeal to such writers as C. S. Lewis, George Orwell, and Graham Greene, who in their own writings demonstrate a sensitive awareness of the power of the imagination in the creation of a work of literature.

The structural plan of Allan Quatermain is a particularly good example of what Frye calls "The complete form of the romance [with] three main stages: The stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero."<sup>47</sup>

In mythopoeic terms Umslopogaas is the primitive hero on whose prowess the salvation of the tribe depends; Allan, the wise adviser, the soothsayer or the medicine man; Agon, the antagonist, the ogre, the dragon, even the devil himself in human form; Nyleptha, the beautiful princess to be rescued; Sorais, the sorceress, la belle dame sans merci; Sir Henry, the gentle knight; Good, the unfortunate lover; and Alphonse, the court jester. That their archetypes belong to different historical periods matters not at all, since having become part of the material

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<sup>47</sup>Anatomy of Criticism, p. 187.

on which the imagination of Occidental man is nurtured, they belong to all periods.

As an experiment in the elegiac, combining joy in life with resignation to life's troubles, Allan Quatermain is the fitting swan song of a romantic hero, with all the splendor and power of his life illuminated by a glorious death.

The book is unusual in its portrait of the "noble savage"--an essentially romantic concept. Although Haggard's concept is similar to Rousseau's, Umslopogaas is drawn from real life and is therefore much more than an embodied idea. Mrs. Aphra Behn's Oroonoko is also drawn from real life, but a white teen-aged girl could hardly have developed a close intimacy with her hero's prototype, an African chief in captivity. Chateaubriand attempted the concept in Atala, but his knowledge of North American Indians seems too superficial to enable him to paint a convincing picture, and perhaps the Christian theme is irrelevant. Fenimore Cooper's Chingachgook is a composite of all the Indian virtues rather than a fully-realized individual. Umslopogaas is a fully-developed character, possessing that mixture of nobility and savagery that Haggard himself observed in the African native. The linking of Umslopogaas's talents with Allan's to accomplish the dénouement in Allan Quatermain may imply the desirability of the fusion of the best primitive and civilized values. An examination of Haggard's structural technique in such books as King Solomon's Mines and Allan Quatermain reveals that he is at his best in the manipulation of events and the creation of a convincing atmosphere. His plots are episodic, the episodes constituting the quest structure, with waves of action

and fairly regular climaxes, culminating in the grand climax. His narrative is pictorial and scenic, but chronological rather than spatial. His time, partly because of his belief in reincarnation, includes the present, the past and the future. In King Solomon's Mines and She, for example, the combination of beauty and terror stems from remote times, ancient Israel and Egypt, respectively, involves the reader in events as they happen and forecasts events yet to come. Both Ayesha and Gagool depend upon age for their effect. There is usually a feeling of involvement with the past and a looking forward to a future when some of the ills of the past will be eliminated. The "better world of the future" theme is implied particularly in Allan Quatermain and Stella Fregelius, while a return to the past is the basis of The Ancient Allan and "Smith and the Pharoahs." Haggard's space is often enlarged by means of symbols, as in the description of the dawn in Allan Quatermain, to include the spiritual as well as the physical world.

Haggard's journey proceeds along such a narrow track that we are aware, at any one time, of only a very limited physical environment. This largely explains Haggard's success in involving the reader, who is forced to contemplate the few characters in a rather narrow environment, where every action has both greater magnitude and an especially intimate quality. This narrow track also causes important scenes to attain a particular vividness in contrast to the routine of the journey.

It is by means of the scenes or episodes that the story is developed, and it is the excitement of individual scenes and the building up to a climax that delights us. The panorama--the wilds of Africa,

ancient Egypt, or whatever the larger setting may be--is felt only as an atmosphere, based partly on what the reader knows or imagines and partly on details provided by the author. The panorama contributes to the imaginative truth of the plot, to the atmosphere of wonder that entices the reader into acceptance of the story and characters.

Haggard places his limited scene before us in such a way that our limited imagination can absorb it in its entirety, each scene, like an island, with clear physical limits. The narrowness of the scene, usually free from the inhibiting limitations of modern society, permits an intensification of emotions that would be stifled in a more complex setting. That intensification of emotion constitutes the greatest value of the novel of adventure. In a romance we escape temporarily from the restrictions of civilized life.

I have now illustrated Haggard's major talents as a romancer, but there are variations of effect and technique that can be best illustrated by a rather fragmentary commentary on various romances. This commentary is by no means intended to cover, or even mention, all Haggard's romances, but it will dwell at some length on those that are most worth the reader's time.

### 3

In Allan's Wife (1889), for example, we have an interesting demonstration of what is probably the greatest advantage of the autobiographical method of recounting romantic adventure, the providing of unity by means of the narrator. In previous tales Allan Quatermain, by setting his tale close to the time of writing, had established the imaginative truth of his own already fully developed character and of

his territory--the latter, as I have indicated, a careful extension of the elements of fact into those of fancy. What could be more natural than that the narrator, once stimulated to recount one of the more adventurous episodes of a long life in the wilder regions of Africa, should be gradually led into reminiscences of his youth?

Unity is provided in those reminiscences by the assumption that the earlier written and therefore basic tales, King Solomon's Mines and Allan Quatermain, are familiar and that Allan is an old friend of the reader. This was and is a fair enough assumption. Even today most readers of Haggard, for reasons that I have pointed out elsewhere, are likely to read King Solomon's Mines first in the Allan series and, because of the use of the narrator's name as title, go on to Allan Quatermain. The author's care in establishing the credibility of the narrator in those two books has already endowed Allan with a strong enough personality to convince the reader of the artistic truth of further narratives. Haggard adapts Allan's tales of his more youthful experiences to the narrator's character and life as already established. Each new reminiscence is, however, not only stamped with Allan's character as the reader knows it but is also made the basis for a natural broadening of that character. Although all of the Allan romances adhere roughly to the quest structure, the problem of structure is no longer important in one sense at least, as reminiscences are bound to be haphazard. Allan's own continuing quest for love, adventure, understanding, etc., may for many readers supersede the individual quest of a particular romance.

Problems of another sort do, however, arise. A picture of the

narrator has been carefully established, and in going back to an earlier age he must not only remain credible as a person but must also maintain reasonable consistency (allowing for changes brought about by time and circumstances) with what the reader already knows. Reminiscences of the elderly must also have a wistful sense of joy and beauty that can never be recaptured. There must also be a vagueness about certain details, not necessarily the least important, or apparently important. There can be no obvious selection of details for the sake of verisimilitude or a compact plot. If those factors are not present the narrative is not a true reminiscence. Haggard deals with the problems involved very competently in Allan's Wife.

The story deals with Allan's early life and a love affair that had a lasting effect upon him. The idyllic love affair of Allan and Stella has its beginning at Garsingham, Oxfordshire, which, as Morton Cohen points out, is the Garsington of Haggard's childhood. Setting and incident are well chosen to ensure the initial air of wistful nostalgia. The return to the simplicity of childhood with its honest urges and strong values is related to the primitive and as such is a strong factor in the creation of romance, a fact that R. D. Blackmore, Stevenson, even Dickens, seem to have been well aware of. It is unusual that Haggard, in contrast to Weyman, Quiller-Couch, Stevenson and other romantic writers of the time, avoided choosing a child as his romantic adventurer. Here and in Montezuma's Daughter Haggard shows himself capable of conveying the nature and atmosphere of childhood memories, perhaps by using his own. Childhood, it seems, appealed imaginatively to him in retrospect, and his accounts of childhood are

generally linked, at least in setting, with his own. Children like Flossie Mackenzie, in their rare appearances as part of the adventure, are functional rather than real characters.

The boy Allan is related to the man already known to the reader by his possessing the presence of mind and the courage to do the right thing when Stella's dress catches fire. The details of this first meeting with Stella, given dramatic intensity by an incident that could have been tragic, naturally stay in the narrator's mind. Otherwise Allan's memories of childhood have the appropriate vagueness and the seeming irrelevancy of all such memories. Passages such as the following are convincing because, as I have pointed out in Chapter I, they stem from Haggard's own memories:

It was an ancient long grey house, facing the road. There was a very large tree of some sort in the garden. It was hollow, and we children used to play about inside of it, and knock knots of wood from the rough bark. We all slept in a kind of attic, and my mother always came and kissed us when we were in bed . . . . There was a curious kind of pole projecting from the wall over my bed. Once I was dreadfully frightened because my eldest brother made me hang to it by my hands.<sup>48</sup>

The haziness of the "long grey house," "the large tree of some sort" and the "curious kind of pole" provides a striking contrast to the vividly remembered activities in the hollow tree, the mother's good night visits and the eldest brother's authority, strong enough to overcome Allan's fear. The latter are the kind of things that would leave the greater impression on a child's mind. Such normal memories of childhood are the basis-in-fact of the fantastic incidents of the tale,

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<sup>48</sup>Allan's Wife (1951), p. 12.

preparing for and contrasting with Stella's childhood adventures in Africa with the tribe of baboons and its lasting influence upon her life.

The developments needed to bring Allan and Stella together in Africa after the required lapse of time are convincingly contrived. Otherwise the book depends for its interest on well-chosen incidents rather than a structured plot. The device of the trading journey allows a variety of incident. The account of the fire-fight between Indabazimbi and a rival wizard captures something of the mystic terror felt by the superstitious natives for such wizards. Allan's disbelief is an attempt to evade the terror of the unexplainable. The story of Hans Botha and the attack of the Zulu impi is indicative of the horrors endured by the Dutch colonists of Natal in the time of Dingaan. The leader of the impi is suitably impressive. The preparations to resist the attack on the laager are given credibility by Botha's concern for his tiny daughter and by the predicament of the two women who were too fat to flee. The description of the terrified horse that runs through the fire in an abortive attempt to escape a lion is particularly effective. It is the mixture of the real and the fantastic with its accompanying touches of humanity that Haggard uses so skilfully--a mixture that adequately prepares the reader for the fantastic incident of Hendrika. Allan's memories of his own childhood, the excessive care for the Dutch child Tota and the favoured situation of Stella as the child of a white planter in Africa have the effect of making Hendrika's childhood experiences among the baboons particularly appalling.

Although the legend of the child brought up by wild animals



is not uncommon in the more sensational fiction of the time and has considerable basis in fact, Haggard's version is one of the most terrifyingly credible. It seems very likely too, that in Haggard's imagination Hendrika and the baboons became metamorphosed into the even more fantastic tale of Galazi and the wolves, a tale to which the creator of Mowgli acknowledged his debt. Such stories are, of course, mythopoeic, owing a great deal to the Greek tale of Jason and the centaur, the Roman tale of Romulus and Remus, and the medieval changeling myth. The best-known modern version of the myth, Edgar Rice Burrough's Tarzan, no doubt owes a great deal to Kipling and Haggard.

Hendrika's love for Stella is conveyed with imaginative truth and psychological insight. Haggard often makes use of a strong attachment of a person in an inferior position for a more highly-placed or highly-favored member of the same sex. Such a knight-squire relationship, rooted in the feudal tradition, is almost an essential convention of romantic literature, but in Haggard's hand it is given an intensity that raises it above a mere convention. Modern psychologists would probably find a parallel in Haggard's adoration of Sir Theophilus Shepstone. Allan remarks: "It is generally supposed that this passion only exists in strength when the object loved is of another sex from the lover, but I confess that, both in this instance and in some others which I have met with, this has not been my experience."<sup>49</sup>

Although generally in Haggard's stories such an attachment produces nothing but good (and often becomes a convenient device for

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

saving the hero or heroine in a crisis), in Allan's Wife the potential evil of such an unreasoning passion provides a striking contrast to the idealistic love of Allan and Stella and is responsible for the tragic dénouement.

Their union is brief, but lasting in its effect upon Allan. The special quality of that union is symbolized by Allan's vision of Stella at the end of the tale. This vision and the recurring references to Stella in later tales give the love story the lasting romantic glow associated with such immortal young lovers as Paolo and Francesca, Aucassin and Nicolette and Romeo and Juliet. Allan, like Thomas Wingfield in Montezuma's Daughter, was to love other women, but never with that pure idealized love he felt for Stella.

With Allan's Wife Haggard said good-bye to Allan for a period of more than twenty years. During that period his interest in far countries and remote periods supported various excursions into an extensive romantic territory, some of them eminently successful. After 1900, however, his African tales seemed to become fainter and fainter reflections of the Allan tales and the Umslopogaas-oriented Nada the Lily. His return to the adventures of Allan Quatermain in Marie (1912) marks the beginning of one of his best periods. Of the five Quatermain stories that he produced between 1912 and 1917, the two most typically romantic are The Holy Flower and The Ivory Child. In their presentation of the fantastic in a manner that appeals to the intelligence they are among Haggard's best.

The two romances are so interconnected that it is impossible to discuss one without the other, and although the plots are quite

independent, pleasure is added to the reading of the one by a knowledge of the other. The action of both stems from Allan's connection with Charles Scroope. Because of Scroope's illness, Allan accompanies him to England, where he meets both the orchid-fancier Stephen Somers, who finances the journey in search of the holy flower, and Lord Ragnall and Miss Holmes (later Lady Ragnall), two of the chief characters in The Ivory Child. Part of the action of The Ivory Child precedes the main plot of The Holy Flower, and the remainder follows it almost immediately. The two stories are set partly in England and partly in the same area of Central Africa. The Hottentot Hans, one of Haggard's best characters, plays a pivotal role in both, and some of the minor characters are the same. In spite of their bland titles, they are both extremely exciting, well-constructed stories that sustain and develop the character of Allan Quatermain and show great knowledge of African lore and topography. They both take Allan into unknown territory, they both have a captured Englishwoman as a white goddess of fertility,<sup>50</sup> and they both involve the killing of a terrible god. Good character drawing and attention to detail make the fantastic and too-similar plots convincing, while the quest themes raise the action to symbolic dimensions.

The following description of Brother John is illustrative of Haggard's power to make his readers see the creations of his fancy. He presents them in a visually effective manner and adds that touch of the

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<sup>50</sup>Haggard's white goddess stories may be based on Nina T\_\_\_\_\_, whose story is told by Trader Horn. Doubtless Haggard had also heard her story. Horn also encountered the White and Black Camma, a parallel to Haggard's White and Black Kendah.

bizarre so characteristic of his imagination. Such touches as the butterfly net delight because of their incongruity:

I saw a curious figure walking towards me in a slow, purposeful fashion. It was that of a man of uncertain age, for though the beard and long hair were white, the face was comparatively youthful, save for the wrinkles round the mouth, and the eyes were full of life and vigour. Tattered garments, surmounted by a torn kaross or skin rug, hung awkwardly upon his tall thin frame. On his feet were veld-schoen of untanned hide, on his back a battered tin case was strapped, and in his bony, nervous hand he clasped a long staff made of the black and white wood the natives call unzimbiti, on the top of which was fixed a butterfly net.<sup>51</sup>

In a Haggard romance each character is individual, and often memorable, because of the care taken in both the mixture of characters and the delineation of each. I have already pointed out that a group of not easily identifiable characters, such as a group of Askaris, chosen purely for utilitarian reasons, are dispensed with as early in a tale as possible. In Allan and the Holy Flower, the irrepressible Stephen Somers, Sammy the cook (a mixture of Malay, Indian, white and possibly Hottentot); Mavovo, Zulu warrior and witch doctor; Hassan the slave trader; Babemba, general of the Mazitu; and the shrewd and incorrigible Hans, constitute an assortment of characters that in their physical and mental variety and the interaction between them add much exotic flavour to the exciting action.

In these two romances, as in the Marie trilogy discussed elsewhere, there is much less dependence for effect on heroic character and spectacular setting. A change in plotting technique involves a less epic sweep of action with fewer "waves"; instead, there is a continual

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<sup>51</sup>Allan and the Holy Flower (1954), p. 14.

build-up towards the main climax with one or two exciting episodes to hold the reader's attention along the way. The English scenes at the beginning of The Ivory Child show Haggard's increasing ability to incorporate into a romance elements of the "novel," without detracting from--perhaps even enhancing--its total romantic effect. It is evidence of the fairly casual structure of the romance, and also of Haggard's skill as entertainer, that one is always interested in what he is doing at the time. Deciding whether a particular incident is relevant to the rest of the book concerns the critic, but has no place in the enjoyment of the absorbed reader.

Allan's descriptions of Lady Longden and of Jenkins the Keeper are almost Trollopian in their subtle acidity. The satire, coloured by Haggard's unresolved internal conflict between respect for tradition and democratic idealism, is fresh and lively. Rudeness, whether in a member of the aristocracy or in a keeper, Allan cannot tolerate. The pomposity of the butler, Mr. Samuel Savage, contrasted with the uncertainty of his h's, at first amuses Allan, but he later realizes that Savage has the qualities of a true gentleman. The artificiality of a society that enables a cheat like Mr. van Koop to buy a baronetcy shocks Allan. An implied comment on the artificial values of that society is inherent in the fact that, in Africa, Lord Ragnall and Savage occupy the same room without any apparent embarrassment.

The contrast between the quiet country setting and the mysterious visitors Harût and Marût, priests of the White Kendah, provides a good start for a very suspenseful plot. Miss Holmes's premonitions and memories, and the effects produced by the strange

drug, provide a bridge to the exotic, motivate the capture of Miss Holmes, which prepares the way for the quest theme, and eventually involve Lord Ragnall and Allan in the African adventure.

By the time they arrive at the border of the desert surrounding the Kendah country, suspense has been raised slowly, by Haggard's usual methods, to such heights that Babamba's accompanying the party to that point because he "wished to be the last to see [them] alive" seems a very natural thing to do. The chanting of the death song by the entire population of Beza-Town reflects quite suitably the feeling of foreboding that Haggard has induced in the reader. And the biggest factor in the growth of that atmosphere of suspense and foreboding is the god Jana.

The thought of Jana is planted in the reader's mind on the first page. Jana is an elephant god that may or may not be real. Jana is gigantic. He is connected with the religion of the Black Kendah, opposed to that of the White Kendah, the People of the Child, whose religion involves a certain amount of "magical skill." Jana nearly killed Allan. This telescoping process is just as effective here as in Allan Quatermain. It invests Jana with the terror of the supernatural long before Allan or the reader comes into close contact with him. Harût and Marût not only indicate the terror their people feel of Jana but connect him with the mysterious elephant cemetery. The vision that they conjure up of Jana in the cemetery at sunset killing the woman and the child serves to renew the initial effect. Hans later establishes a connection between Jana and the devil, and the Black Kendah who worship Jana become symbolic of evil. In contrast to the

Child, who gives good gifts , Jana "gives only evil gifts" such as "cruelty and war." Babemba assures Allan that no spear or bullet can harm Jana. Harût and Marût bring a force of two hundred men and two hundred camels to welcome the man who is, they think, destined to kill Jana.

From the first encounter with the people of the Black Kendah to the killing of the god Jana excitement is never allowed to lapse. The encounter at dawn with five hundred hostile soldiers of the Black Kendah, the bloody battle, the subsequent confrontation with King Simba, Allan's and Marût's captivity, the devastating storm, and their release as evil spirits, are only a build-up to the climactic meeting with Jana. The reader has been prepared psychologically for the terrors of that encounter, and the actual terrors of the scene are increased by the reader's acceptance of the elephant god as an embodiment of evil, an immortal elephant that can not be destroyed.

Now Haggard masses his Gothic forces. An owl that flies round them is "one of Jana's spies." The scene includes a stony plain with a "black, melancholy lake." The ground is covered with great boulders. There are thorns and rank grass. Behind scrubby bushes appears what looks like the trunk of an elephant. The reeds whisper in the night breeze like live things. Then suddenly there is the corruption of the decaying bodies of hundreds of elephants. Finally the horror of the dying elephant swaying to and fro leads slowly to the materialization of the "enormous, unearthly" Jana. Then the suspense is achingly sustained as Marût and Allan watch Jana, until the whole episode culminates in the killing of Marût and Allan's abject terror, shared

by the reader, in the following situation:

For quite a long while, it seemed more than a century, [Jana] stood over me, studying me as though I interested him very much, the water of the lake trickling in a refreshing stream from his great ears on to my back. Had it not been for that water I think I should have fainted, but as it was I did the next best thing--pretended to be dead. Perhaps this monster would scorn to touch a dead man. Watching out of the corner of my eye, I saw him lift one vast paw that was the size of an arm-chair and hold it over me.<sup>52</sup>

The suspense is prolonged through the elephant's slow feeling of Allan all over with his trunk, nipping his trousers and part of his skin, the realization of what will happen when the elephant sees blood, and Allan's prayer. The sudden rifle shot that relieves the tension is as welcome to the reader as to Allan.

Throughout the whole harrowing interlude Haggard's choice of details has been extremely important in limiting and holding the reader's attention. Having built his picture with the skill of an artist, each detail contributing to the total effect, he finally achieves his greatest effect by focusing the full attention of the reader on a single character in a tight situation. Once again an early promise to the reader has been kept in such a way as to more than fulfil the reader's expectations.

The killing of Jana by Hans rather than Allan involves a number of ironies. In the achieving of the quest, it is suggested, Hans's simplicity and innocence have more power than Allan's comparative sophistication. Jana was evil and although his magic was considered unconquerable it had to succumb to the greater magic of good represented

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<sup>52</sup>The Ivory Child (1958), p. 168.



by Hans's "little rifle Intombi." There is also, of course, the suggestion that the age-old superstitions of the African peoples are too strong for the white man and can only be overcome by the "white magic" of the natives themselves. Umslopogaas is the black man as universal hero; Hans, a "little yellow man, of whom they [the Black Kendah or forces of evil] took no account," is shown to be more powerful than Lord Ragnall and Allan. White technology in this case provides the magic weapon but native shrewdness makes it effective. The conflict between good and evil in The Ivory Child is worked out in terms of white and black. It may be significant that Jana is "grey-black" and that Hans is yellow. Good and evil, corruption and innocence, can not always be presented in absolute terms.

A quick look at some of Haggard's "magic weapons" and other "properties" will denote a rather subtle change in the concept of the former and the emotive effects of the latter. In earlier stories, for example, the magic weapon was much more distinctly mythopoeic. Typical are Sir Henry's battleaxe in King Solomon's Mines, which develops into Umslopogaas's similar but much more terrible weapon, and Eric's sword. There are, too, the "great sword Silence" in Lysbeth with the hollow hilt contrived to hold the executioner's drug that "makes a man happy" while he awaits his death, and the great sword that Rosamund gives Wulf in The Brethren, already associated with many brave deeds. Those weapons are romantically conceived and of the type generally associated with the romantic myth. Hans's "little rifle" is a much less romantic concept but it is clear that it serves a similar function. The personalizing by bestowing a name is a link with the remote past. More

broadly utilitarian, the rifle in Haggard is the modern secret weapon. Like the ancient sword it is especially chosen, sometimes especially made, to satisfy the personal requirements of the user. The principle of craftsmanship was in Haggard's time still involved in their manufacture and reflected in their use. Allan when ordering cartridges for the bird-shoot at the beginning of The Ivory Child specifies exactly what he wants. How much more important are the weapons on which the hunter's life may depend in the African bush. In Child of Storm the double-barrelled gun that Allan gives Saduko is bizarrely ironic in the hands of the noble savage, but it is particularly meaningful as an example of what a more technically advanced society has to offer in the way of magic weapons. To Saduko the rifle is a realization of all the magic weapons he has ever imagined. Symbolically Allan presents him with the white man's power.

A similar change has occurred in the use of the "property" or visual object. The horse, for example, is, in the earlier romances, the spectacular animal of mythology. There are Nyleptha's horse Daylight, the schimmel ridden so magnificently by Sihamba and later by Ralph in Swallow, Wulf's Smoke and Godwin's Flame in The Brethren. Frye points out how often the hero is associated with his horse. In the later Allan Quatermain romances the horse is still important, even sometimes suggestive of a status symbol, but it has lost the romantic magnitude it possessed in the instances I have mentioned. The centaur, hero-horse relationship is much less cohesive. Similarly the huge statues of King Solomon's Mines have been reduced to a child to be held in the arms, a symbol of peace, and Mr. Mackenzie's carving knife

in Allan Quatermain has been somehow metamorphosed into Brother John's butterfly net in Allan and the Holy Flower. Generally speaking Haggard has reduced Achilles's shield and the Ring of the Nibelung to everyday proportions.

There is also more emphasis on the realities of life, one of the major factors in Haggard's creation of believable fantasy. In The Ivory Child one exciting scene follows another, but attention is frequently drawn to the mechanics of travel. Riding a camel is uncomfortable no matter how important the quest, and even during the most pregnant interludes Haggard never forgets that meals have to be cooked and dishes washed. The importance of Allan's humanity as the basis of his appeal increases with each book. In the midst of danger he has time to remember his loneliness and to be concerned about his son's welfare. His description of Hans's death is both whimsical and touching but, sincere in his grief, he avoids sentimentality.

It is worthy of note, in closing this section, that with the exception of The Ancient Allan, which takes Allan back to former existences and has the effect of changing his established image and thus reduces the reader's belief in him as a person, all the Quatermain romances achieve an unmistakable air of credibility. Many of the other African romances such as Queen Sheba's Ring and The Yellow God seem to lack that link with normality provided by the common sense and experience of such a narrator.

## C. 'She' and Others

## 1

She, first published in The Graphic (1886-87) is probably, next to King Solomon's Mines, Haggard's best-known book. Appearing before the excitement over the latter had subsided, it was bound to receive a great deal of attention. Haggard was already famous, and reviewers devoted long passages to his new romance. In the main, they were either highly complimentary or extremely derogatory.

In the Saturday Review appeared:

How Mr. Haggard draws his owner of the elixir of life the reader must learn for himself from the pages of She, and he will have no cause to complain. It is a wonderful country 'She' lives in and inhabited by wonderful people. These Amahagger of hers are an artistic exaggeration of all the cruelty of Africa, the true servants of a sorceress. 'She' herself would be at home in the Arabian Nights . . . . There is something more striking than the usual marvels of old romance in this contrast between the almost infinite powers of the mind and the limitations of man's bodily powers . . . . 'She' herself, with all her years and her wisdom, is only an intensified woman, with a greater passion for love . . . a greater desire to rule, a keener hatred of rivalry, and smaller scruple in removing obstacles than the woman who has been limited to a merely human term of years . . . . Vanitas vanitatum, the moral is old like the essentials of the tale, but what is not old is Mr. Haggard's method of telling the one and preaching the other.<sup>53</sup>

In the Fortnightly, however, we read:

Speaking broadly, there are three means by which this writer produces his characteristic effects; and as these means are one and all eminently devoid of any such subtlety and complexity as might make the definition of them difficult, they can be specified and described with no less adequacy than ease. Firstly, there is the element of the physically revolting, as in circumstantial narratives of massacre, cruelty, and bloody death. Secondly, there is the element of the fantastic,

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<sup>53</sup>"She: A Review," Saturday Review, January 8, 1887, p. 44.

preternatural, and generally marvellous. Thirdly, there is that old and simple but infinitely variable expedient which may be described, metaphorically, as digging a hole in order that somebody may be helped out of it . . . . To say the truth, the secret of how to win aesthetical credence is one which Mr. Haggard has not discovered . . . . We fancy [She] is the most popular of this author's books, and we think it is the worst, its horrors being the coarsest, its artistic machinery the most lumbering and creaky, and, altogether, its monstrosities the most crudely monstrous that Mr. Haggard's writings can show.<sup>54</sup>

This reviewer seems to be attacking Haggard for using elements generally found in romantic writing. The early part of the review probably refers to King Solomon's Mines, in which there is less emphasis on "massacre, cruelty and bloody death" than in The Iliad, Beowulf or the story of Samson. The "element of the fantastic, preternatural, and generally marvellous" is also common in romance, from the Arabian Nights to modern science fiction. One of the strongest attractions of Haggard's writing is the way he uses that element. "Digging a hole in order that somebody may be helped out of it" is a necessary element of tales of chivalry, adventure and suspense. In digging his hole Haggard persuades the reader that the hole was there already and could not be avoided. It would be difficult to deny that She has faults, but the faults are not "its monstrosities."

Northrop Frye could be commenting on the same elements as this reviewer when he writes: "Romance, therefore, is characterized by the acceptance of pity and fear, which in ordinary life relate to pain, as forms of pleasure. It turns fear at a distance, or terror, into

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<sup>54</sup>"Novels of H. Rider Haggard: The Fall of Fiction," Fortnightly, 1888, pp. 324-325.

the adventurous; [and] fear at contact, or horror, into the marvellous."<sup>55</sup>

In King Solomon's Mines, the admittedly horrible witch-finding scene is an artistic recreation of reality. This scene and the death of Gagool are offset by the equally effective but more prosaic elements of the tale. In the description of the one battle there is little emphasis on the act of slaughter. In fact, both the battle and the Homeric duel between Sir Henry and King Twala are somewhat relieved from emphasis on "cruelty and bloody death" by the author's use of a mock-heroic tone that puts the whole episode on the level of an encounter in competitive sports.

Haggard's attitude towards such criticism is summed up in the following passage:

The history of literature and art goes to show that contemporary criticism seldom makes and never destroys a reputation; in short, that time is the only true critic . . . . The test of a work is whether it will or will not live; whether it contains within itself the vital germ necessary to a long-continued existence.<sup>56</sup>

At present, twenty-two of Haggard's works are in print, the best known in a number of editions, including the selective Modern Library.

To return to She, the book was applauded for its colour, splendour and passion, its freshness and strength, its spiritual and moral values. It was even regarded by some critics as an allegory of the church. It was castigated for lack of originality (the elixir of life

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<sup>55</sup>Anatomy of Criticism, p. 37.

<sup>56</sup>The Days of My Life, i, xxiii.

had been used by Bulwer Lytton, Godwin and others), bad taste, insincerity and immorality. Andrew Lang, having read the book in manuscript, was enthusiastic but pointed out certain faults:

I have just finished 'She' . . . . I certainly still think it the most extraordinary romance I ever read, and that's why I want you to be very careful with the proofs . . . . I nearly cried over Ayesha's end. But how did she come to Kor? There is a difficulty about Leo. He is not made a very interesting person . . . . Some of the chaff in awful situations lets one down too suddenly.<sup>57</sup>

The difficulties that Lang mentions I shall deal with in the appropriate place. The accusations of insincerity and immorality made by certain critics were based on standards that no longer apply, and like Lang's "I nearly cried" are better ignored.

Certainly the concept of a Place of Life that can be reached only through struggle and hardship is by no means an immoral idea; as a quest theme it is analogous to both the Grail legend and Pilgrim's Progress. The learned and disillusioned Holly, the young, handsome and carefree Leo and their honest, ignorant and simple servant represent humanity involved in the search for spiritual enlightenment, to be achieved only through courage and strength. The use of an extinct volcano as setting provides mystery and grandeur appropriate to such a theme, allows for that power of imaginative fantastic description that is such a talent in Haggard, and suggests symbolically that modern man has been deprived of that life of the spirit possessed by his ancestors.

The main problem with She seems to be that in choosing the

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., i, 247.

immense theme of immortality and presenting it in visual terms Haggard falls into a kind of artificiality. The heavenly goal is too earth-bound, too historically oriented. Such themes are handled, one notes, in the Allan stories, but remain philosophical concepts in Allan's mind and gain validity by means of his character. They are visionary rather than visual, which makes all the difference. In She Haggard does certain things magnificently. That he fails to do other things as well is perhaps excusable considering the magnitude of the undertaking.

Morton Cohen links 'She' with various goddesses and queens of ancient cultures. It can not be denied that she inspires the terror of Astarte, that she possesses the terrible beauty of Helen, or of the archetypal Aphrodite who "overcomes all mortal men . . . with desire."<sup>58</sup> She represents the great female principle of primitive folklore and religion, the nature goddess that destroys all that she creates. The "bewildering power, the sort one is accustomed to meet only in superior works of art such as 'Christabel' and some of Poe's masterpieces"<sup>59</sup> that Cohen ascribes to She is partly rooted in that concept of the heroine. The power of such writers as Poe and Haggard results from their ability to awake in modern man the primitive terrors that still slumber in his subconscious. Unreasoned fear must of necessity be "bewildering."

Cohen traces the origin of 'She' to an ugly rag doll, kept in

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<sup>58</sup>Homer, The Iliad, Book 14.

<sup>59</sup>Morton Cohen, Rider Haggard: His Life and Works, p. 102.



a dark cupboard. That dark cupboard could easily to the child's mind (close to the primitive) have possessed the kind of terror with which Haggard imbues the caves of Kôr.

Cohen sees the use of metempsychosis in She as an attempt to explain the mystery of life and death, a problem that gave rise to the ancient concept of the nature goddess. The extent to which Haggard was obsessed with that problem is indicated by the frequency of the theme in his novels.

The structural plan of She is basically similar to that of Allan Quatermain or King Solomon's Mines. Here the quest is really for life itself and requires lengthy motivation. The perilous journey is filled with symbolic rather than actual terrors. A degenerate world, lacking spiritual values, is presumably to be traversed to reach the Place of Life, and the harsh conflict between man and the physical world is made endurable only by the thought of that Place of Life (the gleam of the Grail). The quest, the journey into a far country, the surpassingly beautiful lady as inspiration for male courage, the elixir of youth, are all mythopoeic and have perennial appeal to the romantic imagination.

The book begins particularly well. Holly's description of himself and of the arrival of Vincey with his mysterious box is, in atmosphere at any rate, worthy of Poe. The reader is intrigued by Vincey's letter, the scarabaeus and the potsherd. In fact, very special care is devoted to the awakening of the reader's interest and the establishing of the credibility of the quest because of the fantastic nature of the theme to be worked out and the adventures to be encountered. The

multiplicity of Greek, Latin and Old English manuscripts and translations, with the subtle references to Hamlet and Erasmus's teacher, Gracyn, serve to establish an illusion of authenticity and an expectation of events raised considerably above the commonplace, while the imaginative value of such properties as the box, the letter and the scarabaeus is undoubtedly great.

The change to the coast of Africa is dramatic in its suddenness. A quick contrast with the quiet atmosphere of college life, the calm ocean, the full African moon, the gentle breeze filling the sail of the dhow--and the reader is involved in the adventure.

The night is quiet, so quiet that a whisper can be heard fore and aft the dhow; so quiet that a faint booming sound rolls across the water to us from the distant land.

The Arab at the tiller holds up his hand, and says one word: "Simba (lion)!"<sup>60</sup>

The sudden change from the tranquil to the ominous epitomizes Haggard's skill as an imaginative writer. He weaves his spell, and the reader is lost in a world that temporarily supplants reality.

The enchantment lasts during the storm, over which Haggard's descriptive skill casts a compelling sense of actuality. "It was a great field of twisting, spouting waves. Mahomed planted his foot against the seat before him, and, glancing at him, I saw his brown toes spread out like a hand with the weight he put upon them as he took the strain of the tiller."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>She (1948), p. 70.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

Here Haggard's choice of detail is unusual, but surprisingly apt. Except for the completely fortuitous rescue of Leo, which strains the reader's credulity for the moment, the storm generates a strong sense of terror.

Now arises a problem that does not arise in King Solomon's Mines or Allan Quatermain. In both of those the prime objective is to entertain. The quest is for an earthly objective, brotherly love and a corruption-free society respectively, and can be worked out in terms of man to man conflict. The symbolism is, in a sense, imposed upon the romance, which in turn is rooted in real life. She and the other romances in which Ayesha appears are, on the other hand, much more important on a conceptual, philosophical level than the Allan tales. In She, particularly, the symbolism is rooted in fantasy from the beginning and the human factor, strong in the Allan tales, is too weak to sustain the essentially human theme, a theme generally associated with internal rather than external conflict. As I have already demonstrated, Haggard is an expert at building and sustaining action. In She the danger is that too much incident would detract from the spiritual atmosphere that is the "heart" of this particular adventure.

In Allan Quatermain the long journey is packed with incident. Here Haggard deliberately avoids incident, and avoids it most imaginatively. As in the first three chapters he used his documents to focus the reader's attention on a period three hundred years before Christ and then to bring it gradually to the nineteenth century, he now cleverly uses the device of a symbolic journey backward through time.

The peak shaped like a negro's head provides a link with the

earliest document and confirms Amenartas's tale. The stonework and the mooring ring of the ancient wharf provide, in the light of Amenartas's story, a further step backward in time. The swamp into which the river has degenerated is the ultimate step backward, but it also suggests the spiritual condition of modern man. Now the reader is in a world where history no longer exists, a world where the most important things are the need for food, the stench of the swamp, the bites of the dreadful mosquitoes. It becomes a boundless world of dark, wet primeval slime, in which man struggles for existence, a world where beauty is destroyed by a maggot, where cruelty and beauty strive for mastery. Haggard creates a growing sense of removal from civilization, an involvement with nature, and finally a total immersion in a world of curiously primitive misery. Under such circumstances humanity is reduced to symbols, and Leo and Holly become respectively the folly and wisdom of man.

In this setting it is peculiarly fitting that Holly's dream of the death of "those . . . who would follow after myths and seek out the secrets of Nature" should be interrupted by the emissaries of 'She'--that the macabre imaginings of the nightmare should be transformed into nightmarish reality. The mixture of beauty and cruelty observed in the swamps is now transferred to the servants of 'She', with their beautiful bodies and evil faces.

Leo's dullness, which Haggard himself admits, may, if understood correctly, be fine artistry on the part of the author. Haggard, in extenuation of his creation, writes:

Ayesha, seeing further than we can see, perceived the germ and smouldering spark of greatness which lay hid within her lover's

soul, and well knew that under the influence of her gift of life, watered by her wisdom, and shone upon with the sunshine of her presence, it would bloom like a star, filling the world with light and fragrance.<sup>62</sup>

The mixed metaphor may, however, suggest a reflection in the book of uncertainty on Haggard's part of Leo's worthiness for such a destiny or his capability of achieving it, even with Ayesha's help.

The main difficulty seems to be that in She Leo is too young to appeal to Haggard himself, who obviously admires the older Holly. Leo is immensely improved in Ayesha, chiefly because his age allows Haggard to endow him with the heroic qualities that he found only in older men.

If the plot and characterization become static, Africa becomes almost a character. Haggard's own experience enables him to convey with superb skill her teeming life and exotic atmosphere. In such passages as the following, the beauty and mystery of Africa as experienced by the young Haggard are realistically captured:

He lifted the rifle, and the roan-coloured buck, having drunk his fill, raised his head and looked out across the river. He was standing right against the sunset sky on a little eminence . . . and there was something very beautiful about him . . . . To the right and left were wide stretches of lonely death-breeding swamp, unbroken and unrelieved so far as the eye could reach, except here and there by ponds of black peaty water that, mirror-like, flashed up the red rays of the setting sun.<sup>63</sup>

Her savagery is not forgotten:

The lion managed to get well on to the bank, the crocodile half standing and half swimming, still nipping his hind leg. He roared till the air quivered with the sound, and then, with

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. xxviii.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

a savage, shrieking snarl, turned round and clawed hold of the crocodile's head. The crocodile shifted his grip, having, as we afterwards discovered, had one of his eyes torn out, and slightly turned over; instantly the lion got him by the throat and held on, and then over and over they rolled on the bank struggling hideously.<sup>64</sup>

The pace of the story quickens during the hot-potting incident, which gradually reaches its culmination of horror and conflict, but becomes static again because of the passive nature of the Amahagger and the superabundance of caves. It is true that the caves symbolize both the darkness of man's mind and the unexplored regions of the spirit where ultimate truth may be found. The writer of romantic adventure must, however, maintain a rhythm of climactic events. Both the maintaining of suspense and the revelation of character through action demand those events. Atmosphere is necessarily a strong element in She, but the sacrifice of action to atmosphere results in anti-climax and constitutes a failure in technique.

The casual reader's reaction of course (as distinct from the critic's) depends on his particular kind of imagination. Many readers are willing to await events while appreciating the awe-inspiring atmosphere, and Haggard is always able to supply events that justify the careful creating of atmosphere. One of the most impressive aspects of his powers of imagination is that he can usually follow what he has done, however striking, with something even more remarkable. The element of surprise is seldom missing. Very few writers could, for example, continue without anti-climax after the death of Ayesha.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

Haggard finally provides the excitement that the reader has been led to expect: the mysterious veiled figure of 'She', the journey to the Place of Life, the crossing of the terrible chasm, the death of Ayesha and the almost insurmountable dangers of the return journey.

Besides awakening horror and fear, Haggard demonstrates his ability to portray real human emotion in his description of Ustane's defiance of Ayesha on Leo's behalf. The depth of her love is measured by her continued defiance after "that frightful piece of diablerie by which Ayesha left her finger-marks upon her rival's hair . . . . [That] swift, snake-like movement, and the instantaneous blanching of that three-fold line."<sup>65</sup>

Ustane is understandably more frightened by Ayesha's power to destroy her beauty than by any threat to her life. The reader, like Holly, is appalled by the unleashed power of Ayesha and by the greater power held in reserve. In its archetypal and demonic connotations the scene awakens primitive fears that Holly reveals unconsciously through his images. The reader's subconscious recognizes the evil involved in the snake image, the use of "blanching" suggests the leper and the tomb (whited sepulchre), the three-fold line the ancient practice of witchcraft and the talons of a bird of prey. All of those are combined with the primitive fear of the nature goddess, with her power to create and destroy.

In contrast to such magnificent moments, passages needed to fill in the intervals between exciting incidents are sometimes slipshod.

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

Such gross carelessness in sentence construction as is apparent in the following is common: "The blindfolding was performed by binding a piece of the yellowish linen tightly round the eyes whereof those of the Amahagger made their dresses who condescended to wear anything in particular."<sup>66</sup>

Haggard, as Stevenson pointed out, needed to "take more trouble with those parts that do not excite you."<sup>67</sup>

Faults of style are to be found in the dialogue of Ayesha and Leo. Since Ayesha spoke in either Arabic or Latin, the archaic phraseology used in what is supposedly a translation into English is unnecessary. It is also often ludicrous. "Wot ye why I have brought you here tonight, my Holly?"<sup>68</sup> she asks, and the reader is so repelled by the obvious imitation of grandeur that he has no interest in the question.

The silliness of Leo's conversation is surely unsurpassed. On his first official visit to the veiled and supposedly solemnly impressive Ayesha he babbles: "Humph! old fellow, the lady is very civil. We seem to have tumbled into clover. I hope that you have made the most of your opportunities. By Jove! What a pair of arms she has got!"<sup>69</sup>

Choosing the proper idiom for Ayesha must have presented a problem. Colloquial speech would have put her on an everyday level,

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>67</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 236.

<sup>68</sup>She, p. 270.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 225.



which did not fit Haggard's concept. Rooted in mythology, 'She' must, Haggard apparently felt, use the supposed phraselolgy of antiquity. That he later realized his error is indicated by the simple dignity of Ayesha's speech in subsequent novels.

It is possible that Leo is the undergraduate as Haggard saw him. After leaving school, Haggard was privately educated until, at seventeen, he went to Africa. In his middle thirties, when he settled in England, he was the wrong age to develop an intimacy with the seemingly carefree and immature undergraduate. Judging the individual by the mass, he must necessarily have formed a very superficial impression. Making allowances for such special circumstances, the reader can accept Leo as a caricature of the type rather than as an individual.

In spite of its faults, which by no means nullify its merits, most readers of She will agree with C. S Lewis that the book is "a fine exercise in the art of alluring." It is, Lewis says, "in touch with the permanent nature of our imagination; it leaves those who have read it richer."<sup>70</sup>

## 2

From 'She', a priestess of ancient Egypt, to Cleopatra seems a natural progression. In King Solomon's Mines and She, and less obviously in Allan Quatermain, Haggard had derived a great deal of romantic stimulation from myth. In Cleopatra, his first historical romance, he was to derive stimulation from mythologized history. It is perhaps characteristic

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<sup>70</sup>Rehabilitations and Other Essays (1939), pp. 100 and 102.

of the romancer to use the established myth of a particular historical character or episode and to build his romantic fabric around it. In Cleopatra (and in later romances such as Lysbeth and Moon of Israel) Haggard makes no attempt to re-evaluate historical characters or events. In Cleopatra, Lysbeth, and The Lady of Blossholme, however, he invades the historical novelist's territory to the extent that he recreates the details of life in a certain place during a certain period and the feeling of living under conditions imposed by that place and period, but the emphasis is generally on what happened rather than why, on effect rather than cause. In its attempt to analyse a period The Lady of Blossholme is probably Haggard's closest approximation to the historical novel.

In The Days of My Life, commenting on a suggestion that he had been an Egyptian and a Norseman in previous incarnations, Haggard writes: "However these things may be, with the old Norse and the old Egyptians I am at home. I can enter into their thoughts and feelings; I can even understand their theologies. I have a respect for Thor and Odin, I venerate Isis, and always feel inclined to bow to the moon."<sup>71</sup>

Nobody reading Cleopatra or Eric Brighteyes could doubt Haggard's interest in those ancient peoples. Giving the impression of absolute familiarity with their theologies, their daily habits and their histories, as far as they may be known, he creates an atmosphere that convinces through its wealth of detail. One feels that, given the surroundings and beliefs that Haggard so skilfully recreates, his Egyptian and Norse

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<sup>71</sup>The Days of My Life, i, p. 255.

characters would have acted as they do. Historical verisimilitude in the romance can accomplish no more than that.<sup>72</sup>

For the narrator of Cleopatra, first published in The Illustrated London News in 1889, Haggard chooses a priest and prince of the ancient royal family supplanted by the Ptolemys, well versed in the ancient theological mysteries. Haggard's imitation of what he conceives the style of such a narrator to be is, for the most part, majestic and colourful, often poetically beautiful, but unfortunately involves a discursiveness that somewhat retards the movement of the action.

Andrew Lang advised Haggard to cut out a great deal of the antiquarian detail in order to make the book more appealing to the public, but the author was naturally reluctant to waste material that he had spent so long assembling and that he felt was necessary to establish the external reality of his setting. In his preface note he says: "Unfortunately it is scarcely possible to write a book of this nature and period without introducing a certain amount of illustrative matter, for by no other means can the long dead past be made to live again before the reader's eyes."

He suggests that those who read for the story only should "exercise the art of skipping."<sup>73</sup> Very few readers, however, will be willing to take Haggard's advice, directed at critics who, he suggests, are proficient in that "art" and in no other. Those who do will deprive

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<sup>72</sup>Haggard dedicates Morning Star (1910) to Dr. Wallis Budge, Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum. Dr. Budge expressed himself quite satisfied with the Egyptian lore that forms so large a part of that book.

<sup>73</sup>Cleopatra (1889), pp. 7 and 8.

themselves of the added enjoyment given by the feeling of total immersion in an alien culture.

The language sometimes echoes Shakespeare, yet those echoes are given originality, as in the following: "How soft is the night air that flows from yonder casement heavy with the breath of lilies."<sup>74</sup> The remark may have been suggested by Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 2, but is really quite different.

Such echoes are an illustration of Haggard's technique of moving from the known to the unknown in order to involve the reader more fully.

The language of Cleopatra, in contrast to that of 'She,' has a dignity, and sometimes even a poetry, that are admirable. "They . . . call me wanton, who have never stepped aside save once, when I loved the greatest man of all the world, and at the touch of love my passion flamed indeed, but burnt a hallowed fire."<sup>75</sup> "Once more my star glows bright; tomorrow, set in the highest heaven, it yet may shine the lamp of Caesar down."<sup>76</sup> "For utter silence has a voice that is more terrible than any cry."<sup>77</sup>

In Cleopatra Haggard demonstrates his ability to give new life to old material by expanding the imaginative context. In telling the story of Antony and Cleopatra, Plutarch, as a historian, is concerned

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

only with setting down what he believes to be the facts. Shakespeare's and Dryden's incidents are necessarily limited by the dramatic form. The unity of his play demands that the dramatist be selective. The novelist has a great deal more freedom, and Haggard's imagination and research enable him to present a much more detailed picture of Cleopatra's Egypt. The details of a way of life so removed from the ordinary add a new dimension to scenes played against such an exotic background, and an aura of reality to characters involved in those scenes.

The introduction, in which Harmachis's mummy and manuscripts are found in an ancient tomb, seems as factual as genuine reporting. Haggard's adoption of the device of editor of ancient papers, a device that he also used successfully in The Virgin of the Sun, is never obtrusive and gives those papers a perspective that adds to their plausibility. In the incidents, as well as the language, there are echoes of Haggard's reading, that have the usual mythopoeic appeal. Archetypal echoes of Tennyson, Shakespeare and the Bible blend well with the style and the subject matter. The saving of the child Harmachis, for example, is reminiscent of the story of Moses and helps to establish the reader's belief in the setting; his training as a priest, of Samuel; his fight with the lion, of Samson; his interpretation of Cleopatra's dream, again quite appropriate to the setting, of Joseph; and his purity of heart, of Sir Galahad. The shipwreck has affinities with the story of Jonah, and the character of Eros owes something to Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. Most of those echoes, of course, help to establish the image of Harmachis as a romantic hero and quest figure. Strength, courage, virtue, even mystic knowledge, contribute

to the image established in the reader's mind. The beauty of Joseph, the majesty of Moses, the virility of Samson, the idealistic devotion of Samuel are all important to the composite image. Harmachis, driven inexorably to his doom through his love for Cleopatra, is extremely interesting as a tragic hero.

## 3

Montezuma's Daughter (1893), a romance of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, owes a great deal of its authenticity of detail to Prescott, but also bears witness to Haggard's closeness of observation during his visit in 1891 and the effect of that observation on his sensitive imagination. Dedicated to J. Gladwyn Jebb, with whom Haggard had planned to search for Montezuma's treasure, it illustrates the fact that for a person of Haggard's talents the treasure found in any unexplored territory is not necessarily gold and jewels.

The story is told by Thomas Wingfield, of the parish of Ditchingham, Norfolk, that Haggard knew so well, and the beautiful descriptions of the countryside reflect Haggard's own childhood memories. Like Allan Quatermain as narrator of Allan's Wife, Marie and other reminiscences, Thomas is an old man when he writes the book, and Haggard maintains the suitable tone of adventure, love and beauty idealized by memory. This dreamlike quality is heightened and given credibility by the frequent repetitions that characterize tales told by the old. At the same time, the book has an epic sweep and a tragedy as inevitably worked out as anything by the great Greek tragedians.

The romance of Montezuma's Daughter, like that of Cleopatra, Allan's Wife, Lysbeth and The Lady of Blossholme, depends a great

deal more on human emotions than the straightforward quest novels already discussed. The quest element is still present, but it takes the form of a quest for the ideal in human actions and relationships with the central theme of love between the sexes. In romantic terms, the lover may win or lose--the main concern is the effect of his love upon him and the approximation of his feelings to those that the reader has experienced or yearns to experience. The experience of love thus becomes the quest objective. The knight-squire relationship and the brothers-in-arms relationship are, of course, other forms of love that Haggard as a romancer idealizes.

To complement his sense of place and understanding of the romantic value of human emotions, Haggard has an excellent sense of period. He combines emotion with place and period in an opening paragraph that seems to reflect clearly the issues and the prejudices of the sixteenth century:

Now glory to be God who has given us the victory! It is true, the strength of Spain is shattered, her ships are sunk or fled, the sea has swallowed her soldiers and her sailors by hundreds and by thousands, and England breathes again. They came to conquer, to bring us to the torture and the stake--to do to us free Englishmen as Cortes did by the Indians of Anahuac. Our manhood to the slave bench, our daughters to dishonour, our souls to the loving-kindness of the priest, our wealth to the Emperor and the Pope! God has answered them with his winds, Drake has answered them with his guns. They are gone, and with them the glory of Spain.

The paragraph lives by virtue of its naturalness. It breathes the spirit of Protestantism, summarizes the contemporary situation in England and takes the reader's mind to the inquisition and the atrocities of Cortez in Mexico. It is filled with the noise of battle. It is a paean of thanksgiving for deliverance, in which the echoes of

Anglo-Saxon rhythms and the juxtaposition of God and Drake are eminently suitable. In its evocation of a romantic but terrible age, it is a microcosm of the whole book.

In Haggard's historical tales, history is coloured by imagination. Haggard's version is bound to be romantic. But it is the illusion that counts most, and Haggard is always capable of creating that illusion. He categorized Montezuma's Daughter as a romance, but it is romance superimposed on a solid structure of actuality, incorporating a thought-provoking analysis of why Cortez gained such an easy conquest in Mexico.

One feels the honesty and integrity of the narrator from the beginning, and through his eyes the reader follows the events of a remarkable tale that takes him from the quiet Norfolk countryside to Cortez's bloody rape of Mexico. Thomas narrates his tale with both vigor and charm, in a fashion leisurely enough to give substance to the intriguing plot. The reader is led gradually into the tale, and once involved, accepts the prejudices of the age as a reflection of the facts of Thomas's life.

Thomas, "being now of a great age and having only a short time to live," is persuaded by Queen Elizabeth to write his extraordinary story. With becoming pride he gives details of his ancestors, establishing the connection with Spain with such adroitness that, like a good many things in Haggard, its apparent ease is deceptive.

The matter of fact manner in which Thomas relates his tale makes it all the more convincing. The Spanish enemy of the Wingfields, with his "handsome face and a scar upon his temple" is described by Thomas's mother as "one to be dealt with otherwise than by blows."



The reticence, the seeming reluctance to stir up old and painful emotions, exerts a tremendous influence on the credulity of the reader. Of his early and apparently very intense feeling for Lily, Thomas writes:

But before I go further I must tell that Squire Bozard looked with no favour on the friendship between his daughter and myself--and this, not because he disliked me, but rather because he would have seen Lily wedded to my elder brother Geoffrey, my father's heir, and not to a younger son. So hard did he grow about the matter at last that we two might scarcely meet except by seeming accident, whereas my brother was ever welcome at the Hall. And on this account some bitterness arose between us two brothers . . . . For it must be known that my brother Geoffrey also loved Lily . . . and with a better right perhaps than I had--for he was my elder by three years and born to possessions.<sup>78</sup>

The passage combines the quintessential sadness of the younger brother with the respect for tradition that was the primary cause of such sadness. But it is a sadness remembered rather than experienced. This is the manner of an old man who no longer feels passionately, but who delights in reminiscing. The distinction involves, of course, the combination of two attitudes on the part of the narrator, present and past. The skill of developing the two attitudes side by side is one that Haggard employs often, especially in Allan Quatermain's recollections of past experiences. Being both outside and inside the action is a demanding but rewarding experience for the reader. Observing both objectively and subjectively, he creates out of the materials presented by the writer an even greater imaginative entity than that of the narrator, whose emotion is "recollected in tranquillity."

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<sup>78</sup>Montezuma's Daughter (1948), p. 27.

The intensity of love and hate, so essential to the tragedy, has no appearance of being contrived. Haggard's ability to concentrate attention on the emotions of a character in an intimate situation is nowhere more apparent. The innocent delight of first love as remembered in old age, for example, is conveyed in the following passage:

And now I took her in my arms and kissed her on the lips, and the memory of that kiss has gone with me through my long life, and is with me yet, when, old and withered, I stand upon the borders of the grave. It was the greatest joy that has been given to me in all my days. Too soon, alas! it was done, that first pure kiss of youthful love--and I spoke again somewhat aimlessly.<sup>79</sup>

Here are combined successfully, in a few words, the joy of youthful love, the reminder that all joy ends in death, the combination of joy and sadness in remembering, and the embarrassment of having committed oneself to the opposite sex for the first time.

The pastoral tone of such early scenes and the description of the Norfolk countryside provide a contrasting background and a frame of reality to the bloody battles and sacrifices of the Mexican scenes, while a bridge between the two is supplied by Spain and the Inquisition.

Not even in Poe is there a scene more terrible than the death of the nun Isabella de Siguenza, entombed alive with her baby in the walls of her convent.

On the threshold of the tomb Isabella de Siguenza paused and looked around wildly as though for help, scanning each of the silent watchers to find a friend among them. Then her eye fell upon the niche and the heap of smoking lime and the men who guarded it, and she shuddered and would have fallen had not those who attended her led her to the chair and placed

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

her in it--a living corpse.<sup>80</sup>

Haggard conveys with admirable economy Isabella's terror, the callousness of those around her, and her realization of absolute helplessness.

The shipwreck, Thomas's days in the hold of the slaver, and his landing on the shores of Mexico in a cask are narrated with the zest of Defoe or Marryat, while the contrast between the quiet, faithful Lily and the tempestuous, half-savage Otomie, their jealousy and their eventual acceptance of each other show considerable psychological insight.

In his depiction of Aztec civilization Haggard shows his usual understanding of exotic cultures. With him, the reader deplores some of the religious practices of the Aztecs, yet shares his regret at the wanton destruction of so much that was noble in their way of life. He ironically points out the faults of the Christian religion by comparing the sacrificing of human beings to Quetzal with a similar sacrifice to the Christian God by the Holy Office. His description of the forms and ceremonies of religion performed in sight of the battles raging within the city of Mexico is pointedly ironic.

The divided loyalties of the Mexican people are epitomized by Otomie, who tries to be faithful to her father Montezuma, to her gods (whose representatives both Montezuma and the Spaniards supposedly are), to her country and to her English husband.

Thomas's return to England and Lily is handled with an ironic

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

detachment that is almost a satire on the usual return of the hero of a romantic novel. Like Thomas himself, however, the reader is grateful that life grants the returned wanderer a certain measure of ease and contentment. Thomas, unlike Tennyson's Ulysses, accepts gratefully what he knows to be less than the ideal, and the reader feels that he is right in doing so.

The "quest for the divine" that Haggard saw as the centre of all romance involves the dual nature of man. The universality of the conflict between the spiritual and the physical, the romantic and the practical, in man himself, between man and man, or man and his social environment, sometimes gives Haggard's romances an appeal that transcends the excitement of stirring action and harrowing suspense. Man with all his spiritual, romantic aspirations must live in a physical world. In Montezuma's Daughter Thomas's idealized vision of Lily is supplanted at the end by the real woman, whose ideals and ideas are very much of the real world.

Similarly, in The Brethren, Godwin's vision of Rosamund as "a dream--a symbol of all that is noble, high, and pure" may be ideally romantic, but, paradoxically, in the end it is the more earthly Wulf who wins her.

The latter novel, directly inspired by Haggard's visit to the Holy Land in 1900, is not only one of his most exciting adventures but also throws further light on the inspiration that he found in books.

The story is associated with a line of sheiks who ruled the strong mountain fortress of Alamut in Persia from 1090 to 1255 and who all bore the name Al-Jabal. Their followers were known as the Assassins,

from hashishin or hashish, a drug that the sheiks apparently used to ensure absolute obedience. By the time of the Crusades, the Old Man of the Mountain had attained a half-legendary status, and for many of the crusaders represented all that was evil in the East and all that was to be feared because of its unfamiliarity. As such he became a powerful influence on the imagination of Western man.

The visit to the Sheik Al-je-bal's mountain fortress allows Haggard's imaginative gifts full scope. As usual, he prepares the reader for the unusual and holds out a promise of adventure ahead when he has Thomas of Ipswich say:

That man is the lord of death and magic. Strange things are to be seen in his castle, and about it lie wonderful gardens inhabited by lovely women that are evil spirits, who bring the souls of men to ruin. Also, this Old Man of the Mountain is a great murderer, of whom even all the princes of the East are terrified, for he speaks a word to his fedaïs--or servants--who are initiated, and they go forth and bring to death any whom he hates.<sup>81</sup>

The Old Man of the Mountain is obviously taken from Purchas His Pilgrimes. His garden, according to John Livingstone Lowes's reasoning in The Road to Xanadu, inspired the garden in "Kubla Khan." A close reading of Haggard's description causes one to wonder whether he was aware of this connection before Lowes presented his theory. The similarity between Haggard's and Coleridge's descriptions of the garden is striking, and proof of Haggard's familiarity with "Kubla Khan" can be found in Allan Quatermain.

Beautiful they were indeed, planted with trees, shrubs, and flowers such as are seldom seen, while between fern-clad rocks

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<sup>81</sup>The Brethren (1952), p. 99.

flowed rills which fell over deep cliffs in waterfalls of foam. In places the shade of cedars lay so dense that the brightness of day changed to twilight, but in others the ground was open and carpeted with flowers which filled the air with perfume.<sup>82</sup>

In Purchas the garden had "best trees and fruits." Such details as "cedars" and "rills" are found in Coleridge. In Marco Polo's Travels, about 1307, no particular plants or trees are named. There are palaces in abundance, but with no descriptive details, and streams of wine, milk, honey and even water.

The description of those under the influence of the magic drink (later identified as hachich) is reminiscent of Coleridge:

Yet these men appeared to be mad rather than drunk, for they walked steadily enough, but with wide-set, dreamy eyes; nor did they seem to sleep upon the rugs, but lay there staring at the sky and muttering with their lips, their faces steeped in a strange unholy rapture.

The woman serving the drink says to the brothers, "Soon you will be glad to drink and enter into Paradise"<sup>83</sup>--a remark at least vaguely suggestive of Coleridge's "And drunk the milk of Paradise."

Speculations as to sources, interesting though they may be, are, however, subordinate to the effect that the author produces. The appearance of Al-je-bal is by no means an anti-climax:

Between [the soldiers] was a black cushion, and on the cushion a black heap. At first, staring out of the bright sunlight at this heap in the shadow, the brethren wondered what it might be. Then they caught sight of the glitter of eyes, and knew that the heap was a man, who wore a black turban on his head and a black, bell-shaped robe clasped at the breast with a red jewel . . . . He looked like a coiled-up snake.

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

The aspect of this figure was so terrible and inhuman that the brethren trembled at the sight of him. They were men and he was a man, but between that huddled, beady-eyed heap and those two tall western warriors . . . the contrast was that of death and life.<sup>84</sup>

This description of the lord of the Assassins, combined with the description of the influence of the drink, enables the mind of the reader to accept Sinan's dais' obeying his command to jump into the abyss. Neither is it illogical in the context that when the fedaïs went out to commit murder for their lord there was no question of their changing their minds.

For the most part they came not back again; they waited week by week, month by month, year by year, till the moment was ripe, then gave the poisoned cup or drove home the dagger, and escaped or were slain. Death waited them abroad, and if they failed, death waited them at home. Their dreadful caliph was himself a sword of death. At his will they hurled themselves from towers or from precipices; to satisfy his policy they sacrificed their wives and children. And their reward--in life, the drugged cup and voluptuous dreams; after it, as they believed, a still more voluptuous paradise.<sup>85</sup>

In real life it would be logical to assume that the fedaïs, or at least some of them, would, during the long periods away from their terrible master's influence, and subject to other influences, turn their thoughts to another way of life. It would be logical to assume that when the effect of the drug wore off they would see their situation clearly. Perhaps some of them did in real life. But in the book it would not be logical under the ideal conditions that Haggard presents. It is to the creation of a logical whole from seemingly illogical

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

elements that Haggard owes his power to convince. He exercises imaginative conviction by his choice and combination of details. Nobody could better create the "effect of reality in visionary conditions." Readers of The Brethren would find it difficult to argue the judgement of the Atheneum's reviewer: "This book has the true stuff of romance . . . . It is a fine stirring tale . . . . Mr. Haggard has a bold imagination, and his historical details are sufficiently sound."<sup>86</sup>

## 4

No survey of Haggard's works, I feel, can be considered adequate without some mention of that admirable essay in the imaginative re-creation of English history, The Lady of Blossholme. Set in the time of Henry VIII, it deals with the power of the monks just before the dissolution of the monasteries.

The juxtaposition of the Abbot Clement Maldon, a Spaniard willing to commit any crime for the Church and, incidentally, for his own aggrandisement, and the noble and holy Mother Mathilda and her innocent nuns is admirably used to contrast the good and evil elements in the established religion of the time. The poetic justice of the Abbot's downfall is offset by the plight of the nuns, faced with the prospect of returning to the secular world with no means of making a livelihood.

Haggard uses his melodramatic plot to reflect the troubled and superstitious times and succeeds in making the belief in witches and the acceptance of the appearance of the devil completely credible.

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<sup>86</sup>The Atheneum, Nov. 19, 1904, p. 691.



In the midst of high drama such touches as the nuns' interest in Cicely's coming child, Jane Seymour's pique because Henry refused her the pearl, Henry's recognition of the loneliness inherent in a sovereign's position, and the divided allegiance of Brother Martin between church and country are reminders that the common emotions are of greatest importance.

The rich mixture of tragedy, pathos and humour is epitomized by the scene in which Thomas Bolle buries the supposed body of Sir Christopher Harflete. Musing on the passing of earthly grandeur and his amorous meetings with Emlyn, who is to be burned as a witch, he discovers that the body is that of drunken Andrew the Scotchman. The scene combines the tragedy of early death, the wistfulness of young love remembered, foreboding sorrow, and humorous bewilderment. In such scenes Haggard demonstrates his ability to combine many diverse elements into an integrated whole.

Haggard's medievalism is more thoughtful than Scott's. His feeling for the romance of the period does not blind him to its horrors, or to the motivating forces that gave rise to those horrors.

It was an awful night. Let those who have followed this history think of the state of these two women, one of them still but a girl, who on the morrow, amidst the jeers and curses of superstitious men, were to suffer the cruellest death for no crime at all . . . . Well, thousands quite as blameless were called on to undergo that, and even worse fates in the days . . . of chivalry and gallant knights, when even little children were tormented and burned by holy and learned folk who feared a visible or at least a tangible devil and his works.

Doubtless their cruelty was that of terror. Doubtless, although he had other ends to gain which to him were sacred, the Abbot Maldon did believe that Cicely and Emlyn had . . . conversed with Satan in order to revenge themselves upon him,

and therefore were too foul to live.<sup>87</sup>

Such concern for a true understanding of historical circumstances, and the strong forces that made men commit acts that under other conditions they would not contemplate, is rare in the historical romance. Although Haggard himself characterized this book and Lysbeth as romances, they are in scope and perception closer to what is normally regarded as historical novels.

Two other romances, although discussed elsewhere, must be mentioned briefly in this chapter--Eric Brighteyes and Nada the Lily.

In the introduction to Eric Brighteyes Haggard states that it is "a romance founded on the Icelandic Sagas." In his tale the author, in imitation of the composers of the Norse sagas, blends the everyday life of his hero with the superstitions that constitute the poetry of such tales as the Njal Saga. As Shakespeare uses the witches to represent visually and symbolically the evil that lies dormant in Macbeth's mind, Haggard uses animals and animal images to represent extraneously the traits and desires of his characters. This device, combined with the inexorable progression of the tragic plot towards its inevitable end, constitutes the power of Eric Brighteyes over the reader. Eric Brighteyes is a tale that uses the material of the sagas while avoiding their archaic language and prolixity of detail.

A brief examination of the more romantic elements of the book will suffice to indicate why for many readers it is one of Haggard's most attractive romances.

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<sup>87</sup>The Lady of Blossholme (1909), p. 190.

The setting is Iceland, and without using more description than is necessary to the plot, Haggard takes full advantage of the wild, rocky terrain in building his romantic atmosphere. The names are well chosen; Coldback, Horse-Head Heights, Mosfell, Sheep-saddle, Wolf's Fang and the Golden Falls are samples of a nomenclature strongly but primitively imaginative. Through association Haggard makes certain of those names more imaginative. Coldback becomes a place of death; Wolf's Fang, of danger; and Golden Falls, of great achievement in the name of love.

The characters are romantically rather than realistically conceived. They are strong individuals, in their hardness a product of their time and environment, but like the heroes and heroines of the Sagas, Homer and the Bible, they are controlled by and have some control over non-human forces. They are subject to the laws of logic only as long as it suits the author's purpose. When necessary, logical characterization is thrown aside and they become gloriously individualistic. Asmund Amundson was noted in youth for black and bloody deeds, but became Priest of Middalhof, wise, wealthy, kindly but "feared of all." The beautiful Swanhild is "open in her talk, [but] her thoughts were dark and secret. This was her joy: to draw the hearts of men to her and then to mock them."<sup>88</sup> Gudruda the Fair is no drooping lily, but a flesh and blood woman, merry, gentle and witty. The savage Skallagrim, revolting by any civilized standards, becomes Eric's loyal follower.

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<sup>88</sup>Eric Brighteyes (1949), p. 24.

Eric is "gentle and loving as a woman, [but] has the strength of two men." He is "strong and great of stature . . . and his grey eyes shone with the light of swords."<sup>89</sup> In moments of crisis he makes his appearance like an avenging angel:

Men turned and looked. They saw this: there on the threshold stood a man, glorious to look at, and from his winged helm of gold the rays of light flashed through the dusky hall. The man was great and beautiful to see. He had long yellow hair bound in about his girdle, and in his left hand he held a pointed shield, in his right a spear, and at his thigh there hung a mighty sword.<sup>90</sup>

Eric is glorious in battle for what he considers right, but his strength and principles prove his downfall.

Over the whole tale hovers the evil spirit of Groa the Witch, her daughter Swanhild's evil genius. Like Lady Macbeth she uses human emotions to incite to crime. She laughingly foretells evil, "Things will befall as they are fated; let them befall in their season. There is space for cairns on Coldback and the sea can shroud its dead!"<sup>91</sup> To Swanhild she says, playing on the girl's jealousy, "By thy side is a knife and in Gudruda's bosom beats a heart. Dead women are unmeet for love."<sup>92</sup>

The plot moves fast, with climax after climax, all well motivated and related with great vigour. Eric's descent of Golden Falls, his winning the sword Whitefire, a true Magic Weapon, his fight with

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

Skallagrim, the capture of the "Raven," the massacre at Gudruda's wedding feast, and the final conscience-induced vision on Mosfell are the stuff of which legends are made. The epic sweep of barbaric action involves Eric and Gudruda in a maelstrom from which there is no escape, and the reader is hurled along with them. Eric's struggle against fate is ended only by his heroic death.<sup>93</sup>

This chapter would not be quite complete without some reference to Nada the Lily, discussed at some length in Chapter V as part of Haggard's African series.

Like Eric Brighteyes, Nada the Lily is a primitive tale of love, struggle and death. The ancient narrator Mopo shares his memories with the reader, memories of his youth "before the Zulus were a people," of the young Chaka of the Amazulu and of his bloody road to power. From the saving of Chaka's son Umslopogaas by means of Mopo's clever substitution to the avenging of Nada's death, the tale never slackens pace or lacks exciting incident. The idyllic love affair between Umslopogaas and Nada is handled with great delicacy. The tale of Galazi and the wolves is one of the darkest and bloodiest examples of primitive fantasy in Haggard, almost magical in its power to evoke a time and a place that exist mostly in the author's imagination.<sup>94</sup>

Nada the Lily captures the wild romance of the days of Chaka when, in Mopo's words, "the rivers ran blood--yes, we had to look at the

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<sup>93</sup>The contribution of symbolism to the total effect of Eric Brighteyes is discussed in Chapter III.

<sup>94</sup>In editions of Allan Quatermain published after Nada the Lily, Haggard has Allan, quite appropriately, call upon Galazi when dying.

water to see if it was clean before we drank,"<sup>95</sup> and of the more perfidious but less glorious Dingaans. In the process it makes use of Zulu legend, mysticism and superstition to build a romantic fabric that, like Eric Brighteyes, captures the spirit of a setting peculiarly suited to Haggard's creative talents.

One might go on to discuss Lysbeth, Red Eve, Queen of the Dawn, The Virgin of the Sun, Heart of the World and other admirable works, but there is hardly need. Some of those are discussed under different headings, others may be left to the reader to discover. Haggard's versatility of intent is indicated by the multiplicity of his settings. Between 1899 and 1906, a short period in his writing career, he used South Africa, Holland, Palestine, England, Tibet, Egypt, Iceland, Spain and the half-legendary East of Saladin. After thorough research, often including a prolonged visit to the country he intended to write about, he combined personal experience with imaginative insight to produce exciting and convincing tales.

For a period of over forty years, struggling against much adverse criticism, often ignorant and malicious, Haggard helped to keep the romance alive. His writing, like that of Weyman, Kipling and Yeats, represents a losing battle against the growing materialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a materialism that the romantic writers recognized as an enemy to be overcome.

Haggard adhered to the components of romance established by the medieval romancers, realizing that the ideas of the quest and the struggle,

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<sup>95</sup>Nada the Lily, London (1949), p. 39.

the fight between good and evil, never lose their relevance. As long as there are evils to be overcome, the romantic must lead the way. The genuinely romantic quest may be regarded as a quest for a better world. The romantic engages, sometimes in actuality, and always in imagination, in that idealistic struggle, and provides a stimulus to the realist, who is inclined to accept the status quo. Writing such as Haggard's is therefore not to be regarded as inferior because it is romantic, but to be judged on its merits as a manifestation of man's continuing search for the highest goals his imagination can conceive.

#### D. Haggard's Style

In the discussion of the many and diverse elements that constitute Haggard's romantic novels I have sometimes had occasion to mention style in connection with a particular effect created in a particular novel. I feel that an attempt at a closer analysis of the author's style may be appropriate in this chapter.

It is neither difficult to find derogatory remarks on Haggard's style nor very puzzling to ascertain the source of most of them. Stevenson thought that Haggard should have taken more trouble over certain parts of King Solomon's Mines. Stevenson was and is regarded as a great stylist and therefore many critics of subsequent books by Haggard needed no more than Stevenson's remark to inspire similar comments. Those reviewers soon forgot Stevenson's glowing enthusiasm for the book and his commendation of Haggard's "fine poetic use and command of the savage way of talking,"<sup>96</sup> a remark that, in my opinion,

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<sup>96</sup>Haggard, Days of My Life, I, p. 632.

indicates what is perhaps the greatest of Haggard's stylistic skills, the ability to fit his style to narrator, subject matter and setting.

Very often an accepted view of an author saves a periodical reviewer a great deal of reading. Contemporary reviewers, except in the case of a few papers of long-established reputation such as the Athenaeum and the Scots Observer, were notorious imitators. Remarks of a reputed reviewer often became stock ideas, or even stock phrases, in the hands of reviewers of little talent and less time. One of those stock ideas was that Haggard's style is uneven, an idea that may be applied with truth to most writers. Even today one reads or hears similar observations on the style of a particular writer from people who have read very little of the author's work but who wish to appear well informed. Haggard's style is meant to be uneven. Many late nineteenth century reviewers, too, praised flamboyancy of style above all else; too often they equated style with "elevated" sentiments grandiloquently expressed. Their praise of the style of such writers as Marie Corelli, for example, is not to be taken seriously. In King Solomon's Mines Haggard indicates a conscious effort to avoid such a highly-coloured style, an effort that is apparent even earlier in The Witch's Head.

Allowing for deliberate changes of style that Haggard found expedient from book to book, it is safe to say at this stage that Haggard's style is really more "even" than not, more worthy of admiration than contempt, and more of an asset than a liability in the development of an exciting narrative. Although not a "literary stylist" in the manner of Henry James, Haggard uses style artistically to achieve particular



ends. Since what an author achieves is much more important than what he might achieve if he were possessed of someone else's talents, I shall call attention primarily to stylistic elements that contribute appreciably to the total effect of Haggard's work. The romances of Guy Boothby, Hall Caine, Hugh Conway and A. @ E. Castle were as popular as Haggard's, but their woodenness of style makes their exciting plots seem very thin today. Haggard, on the other hand, is extremely readable, a fact that owes a great deal to diversity of style.

To demonstrate Haggard's stylistic skill I shall confine my remarks to a few of his works, chosen more or less at random, but ranging over a time period of about forty years. Many of my observations will involve The Witch's Head, Haggard's first significant work of fiction. Compared with its predecessor Dawn, with most contemporary popular fiction, or even with some of Haggard's later work, The Witch's Head, 1884, has a surprisingly natural, economical and readable style. It is almost completely free from the melodramatic posturing that mars such novels as Jess and Beatrice.

Let us first examine Haggard's ability to combine setting with his characters' and his own emotional attitudes to elicit reader response. In the following passage the ancient Thomas Wingfield is recalling a long ago scene:

Doubtless it was fancy which plays us strange tricks, still but a year ago, having gone to set a springe for a woodcock, I chanced to pass by yonder big oak upon a November eve, and I could have sworn I saw it all again. I saw myself a lad, my wounded arm still bound with Lily's kerchief, climbing slowly down the hill-side, while behind me, groaning beneath their burden, were the forms of the four serving men. I heard the murmur of the river and the wind that seventy years ago whispered in the reeds. I saw the clouded sky flawed here

and there with blue, and the broken light that gleamed on the white burden stretched upon the door, and the red stain at its breast.<sup>97</sup>

Here we have the discursiveness and the preciseness of an old narrator, the gradual adding of essential details, and the unreality of a dream combined with the familiarity of setting both to author and narrator. The vividness of the childhood impression is given unity and clarity by the author's choice of words and phrases. The normal occupation of the old man contrasts well with the tragic event that he remembers. Phrases such as "climbing slowly down" and "groaning beneath their burden" contrast with "murmur of the river" and "the wind that . . . whispered in the reeds." The sky is "flawed . . . with blue," too bright for the mood of a child whose mother has become an object with a "red stain at its breast."

In The Witch's Head, many passages capture the odd mixture of joy and sorrow that life is for most people. Such a quiet scene as the following avoids sentimentality but is packed with emotion:

They were sitting side by side in the stern-sheets of the boat, and the sun was just dipping all red-hot into the ocean. Under the lee of the cliff there were cool shadows; before them was a path of glory that led to a golden gate. The air was very sweet, and for those two all the world was lovely; there was no sorrow on the earth, there were no storms upon the sea.

Eva took off her hat, and let the sweet breeze play upon her brow. Then she leaned over the side, and, dipping her hand into the cool water, watched the little track it made.

"Eva."

"Yes, Ernest."

"Do you know I am going away?"

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<sup>97</sup>Montezuma's Daughter (1948), pp. 42-43.

The hand was withdrawn with a start.

"Going away! when?"

"The day after tomorrow; to Guernsey first, then to France."

"And when are you coming back again?"

"I think that depends upon you, Eva."

The hand went back into the water. They were a mile or more from the shore now. Ernest manipulated the sail and tiller so as to sail slowly parallel with the coast line. Then he spoke again.<sup>98</sup>

The first paragraph in its choice of words and phrases does a great deal more than evoke the peace and beauty of the moment. The theme of the novel is that life is "bitter-sweet," consisting in about equal parts of "song and sorrow." Both Ernest and Eva's lives are to include extremely unhappy periods. Repressed emotions and a general feeling of unease are conveyed by the apparently simple style. The sun "dipping all red-hot into the ocean" is a rather startling image to end the soothing alliterative first sentence. The "cool shadows" are ambiguous. The "cliff" is menacing; the seemingly inviting "shadows" may be a foreshadowing of sorrow.

There is, however, nothing ambiguous about the rhythm of the sentence in which those images appear. The gentle motion of the boat in

Únder/the lee/of the cliff/there were cool/shadows/

is juxtaposed to the alliterative, almost unaccented line

before them was a path of glory that led to a golden gate.

The gentle cradle-like motion of

The air/was vé/ry swéet,/and fór/those two/  
all the world/was lovely/

both contrasts with and merges into the parallelism of

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<sup>98</sup>The Witch's Head C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., n.d., p. 77.

there was no sorrow on the earth,  
there were no storms upon the sea.

The ambivalence in the author's mind between the love of those two young people and what life was to do to that love sets up a tension that is reflected in the abrupt changes in style.

The simple rhythms and brief descriptive touches of the second paragraph emphasize the air of quiet intimacy and prepare the reader for the very natural but emotionally charged conversation. The short sentences and the pauses are realistic and effective. Eva's hand in and out of the water and Ernest's manipulating the sail and tiller are sufficient indications of stress. It is, in short, an admirably restrained passage that succeeds because of understatement.

Similar restraint on Haggard's part characterizes the lovers' parting:

O Ernest, Ernest, do be reasonable, there's a dear; what is the good of getting angry and making me wretched? Come and sit down here, dear, and tell me, am I not worth a little patience? There is not the slightest possibility of our getting married at present; so the question is, if it is of any use to trumpet out an engagement that will only make us the object of a great deal of gossip, and which, perhaps, your uncle would not like?<sup>99</sup>

The absence of the histrionics, even hysteria, that characterize similar scenes in most of Haggard's contemporaries and sometimes in his own writing, is praiseworthy.

In the opening paragraph of Chapter XIV Haggard, reverting to the contemporary manner, adopts a moralizing tone, but manages to avoid both the heaviness and the excessive length that the modern reader

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

generally associates with such passages in Victorian novels:

There are some scenes, trivial enough perhaps in themselves, that yet retain a peculiar power of standing out in sharp relief, as we cast our mind's eye down the long vista of our past. The group of events with which these particular scenes were connected may have long ago vanished from our mental sight, or faded into a dim and misty uniformity, and be as difficult to distinguish one from the other as the trees of a forest viewed from a height. But here and there an event, a sensation, or a face will stand out as perfectly clear as if it had been that moment experienced, felt, or seen. Perhaps it is only some scene of our childhood, such as a fish darting beneath a rustic bridge, and the ripple its motion left on the water. We have seen many larger fish dart in many fine rivers since then, and have forgotten them; but somehow that one little fish has kept awake in the storehouse of our brain, where most things sleep, though none are really obliterated.<sup>100</sup>

The passage escapes dullness because of the images. The broad view is presented by means of the sustained metaphor of the forest, which catches and holds the reader's interest. The specific idea is given intimacy by the closer view, including the "rustic bridge," "the fish" and "the ripple on the water." Haggard has few children in his novels but his own memories of childhood and the Norfolk countryside are fresh and vivid. The paragraph, by imposing upon the dullness of existence a little scene full of life and joy, has a romantic sadness peculiarly appropriate to the plot. The relative values represented by the big and little fishes are touched upon with both simplicity and charm.

Haggard's skill in relating description to incident is usually in evidence. Later a description of the parish church uses similar techniques:

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

Its tall tower, pointing like a great finger up to heaven, looked very solemn on that quiet September evening as the crowd of church-goers passed beneath its shadow into the old doorway, through which most of them had been carried to their christening, and would in due time be carried to their burial. At least so thought Eva and Dorothy, as they stood for a moment by the monument to "five unknown sailors," washed ashore after a great gale, and buried in a common grave. How many suffering, erring human beings had stood upon the same spot and thought the same thoughts? How many more now sleeping in the womb of time would stand there and think them when these two had suffered and erred their full, and been long forgotten!<sup>101</sup>

Here we have the spiritual strivings of man, the joys and the sorrows. Man has no more control over his life than the "unknown sailors" and we are all headed for a common grave. The destinies of Eva and Dorothy are skilfully related to the thought, which in spite of the Victorian rhetoric at the end, lingers with the accompanying images in the mind.

The exterior view of the church is reinforced by the interior in a paragraph in which the images evoke symbolically the part played by religion in the lives of those simple country people and, less directly, Eva's coming sorrow. The combination of images, the contrasts, the two long sentences, the alliteration and repetition and the solemn speech rhythms all contribute to the total effect:

As the service went on, the aisles of the great church grew dim except where the setting sun shot a crimson shaft through the west window, which wandered from spot to spot and face to face, and made them glorious. When it came to the hymn before the sermon, Eva could scarcely see to read, and with the exception of the crimson pencil of sunlight that came through the head of the Virgin Mary, and wavered restlessly about, and the strong glow of the lights upon the pulpit, the church was almost dark.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

The following passage in a letter from Ernest to Eva very poetically expresses the writer's sincerity and restrained passion:

Oh, my sweet, the troth we plighted was not for days, or years, or times--it was for ever. I believe that nothing can dissolve it, and that Death himself will be powerless against it. I believe that with each new and progressive existence it will re-arise as surely as the flowers in spring, only, unlike them, more fragrant and more beautiful than before. Sometimes I think that it has already existed through countless ages. Strange thoughts come into a man's mind out there on the great veldt, riding alone hour after hour, and day after day, through sunlight and through moonlight, till the spirit of Nature broods upon him, and he begins to learn the rudiments of truth. Some day I shall tell them all to you. Not that *I* have ever been quite alone, for I can say honestly that you have always been at my side since I left you; there has been no hour of the day or night when you have not been in my thoughts, and I believe that, till death blots out my senses, no such hour will ever come.<sup>103</sup>

Some of the elements that help to make the preceding paragraph a stylistic tour de force are the purposeful repetition of "I believe" and "I think" and the repeated parallelism. Added to those, the images in the long sentence beginning "Strange thoughts" capture the writer's mood and successfully equate the vastness of his love and the mystery of his thoughts with the veldt. The short sentence: "Some day I shall tell them all to you," is suitably emphatic and restores the personal note. The use of the italicized *I* and the natural but clever contrast that follows lead into the time image that echoes the opening sentence and gives unity to the whole paragraph. The reader soon becomes aware that Haggard's style is enriched by repetition of similar images throughout a book. In The Witch's Head, time, light and shadow are used repeatedly to remind readers of the theme.

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

The pathos in the following paragraph depends to a great extent on echoes of scenes and images to which I have already drawn attention. The church is the same, the darkness has become Ernest's blindness. Eva is out of Ernest's reach, and both he and Dorothy are compromising with life. Most ironic, Ernest in the process of being wed has a vision of Eva and Mr. Plowden at the same altar:

It [the vision] was gone, and he was married, and Dorothy his wife stood there wreathed in smiles and blushes which he could not see, and Mr. Halford's voice, now grown weak and quavering, was formulating heartfelt congratulations, which were being repeated in the gigantic echo of Jeremy's deep tones, and in his uncle's quick jerky utterances. So he took Dorothy his wife into his arms and kissed her, and she led him down the church to the old vestry, into which so many thousand newly married couples had passed during the course of the last six centuries, and he signed his name where they placed his pen upon the parchment, wondering the while if he was signing it straight, and then went out, and was helped into the carriage, and driven home.<sup>104</sup>

Reading such scenes as that, one feels that Haggard believes in those people, that he has become personally involved. He injects a wistfulness that is for the reader the essence of intimate moments half-remembered, but never to be wholly recaptured. The emotive effect of an intricate mixture of tradition, symbol and real experience is strong.

Up to this point I have illustrated the way Haggard uses stylistic devices to reflect tensions, conflicts and complicated emotions. He also knows when to use a simple style effectively. In passages such as the following Haggard's intuition seems to tell him that any decorative effects would ring falsely. Jeremy is noted for bodily strength rather than subtlety of character. Furthermore, he is

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 321.



engaged in a simple occupation:

But it was one night out duck-shooting that his great inspiration came. It was a bitter night, a night on which no sane creature except Jeremy would ever have dreamed of going to shoot ducks or anything else. The marshes were partially frozen, and a fierce east wind was blowing across them; but utterly regardless of the cold, there sat Jeremy under the lee of a dike bank, listening for the sound of the ducks' wings as they passed to their feeding-grounds, and occasionally getting a shot at them as they crossed the moon above him. There were not many ducks, and the solitude and silence were inductive to contemplation.<sup>105</sup>

The language fits both character and scene. The few completely concrete details suggest the comparative simplicity of life for someone like Jeremy. At the same time they are sufficient to bring the scene alive for the reader. The reader is convinced that Jeremy is a serious hunter.

An African scene involving the boy Roger is suitably portrayed in a semi-humorous style:

The lad did as he was bid. But in order to get well behind the covey of guinea-fowl, which are dreadful things to run, he made a little circuit through the thickest part of the clump. As he did so his quick eye was arrested by a most unusual performance on the part of one of the flat-crowned mimosa-trees. Suddenly, and without the slightest apparent reason, it rose into the air, and then, behold! where its crown had been a moment before, appeared its roots.

Such an "Alice in Wonderland" sort of performance on the part of a tree could not but excite the curiosity of an intelligent youth. Accordingly, Roger pushed forwards, and slipped round an intervening tree. This was what he saw: In a little glade about ten paces from him, flapping its ears, stood an enormous elephant with great white tusks, looking as large as a house and as cool as a cucumber . . . . He was now refreshing himself by pulling up mimosa-trees as easily as though they were radishes, and eating the sweet fibrous roots.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., pp. 222-223.

From "which are dreadful things to run," we have the ultra-conversational tones of a Bertie Wooster. Even the exotic touch of the mimosa tree, the reference to Alice in Wonderland and the "intelligent youth" become humorous. The conventional hyperbole "large as a house" and the change from "its" to "he" help to make the elephant a familiar, rather comic animal. "Cool as a cucumber" is humorous because it is so suitably inappropriate to elephants. The normally trite, because of the unexpectedness of its use in this context, is both surprising and comical. Such original use of comic contrast is not uncommon in Haggard. It is a distinctively English humour that he shares with Dickens and the best music hall performers.

How different from descriptions of elephants in the Allan Quatermain romances! Yet to convey the boy's dismay "flapping its ears," "large as a house" and "cool as a cucumber" are not inappropriate to the mood. It is almost as if Haggard is remembering with delight, now that it is over, one of his own early experiences. The main point is, of course, Haggard's fitting the style to the incident and the individual in order to evoke the desired response from the reader.

This skill, as I have pointed out elsewhere, applies particularly to Haggard's narrators.

Vrouw Botmar of Swallow in describing the coming of Ralph dwells on details that Allan would have omitted and moves quickly where Allan (or Haggard) as narrator would have lingered:

When it was near to the shore the boat was overturned, and some of those in it were drowned,<sup>107</sup> but Ralph and his mother were

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<sup>107</sup>cf. Passage from Benita, p.206.

cast safely on the beach, and with them others. Then one of the men looked at a compass and they began to walk southwards, hoping doubtless to reach country where white people lived. All that befell afterwards I cannot tell, for the poor child was too frightened and bewildered to remember, but it seems that the men were killed in a fight with natives, who, however, did not touch the women and children.<sup>108</sup>

This is the style of an old woman with very little imagination, a great deal of compassion, and some prejudice. She concentrates on mother and child, has no trust in unknown black people but trusts whites because they are white. Vague details such as "looked at a compass" and lack of curiosity as to why the natives spared the woman and children are stylistic touches that help to establish her character.

Similarly in Montezuma's Daughter the character of Thomas Wingfield is established and maintained partly by his style. Like Vrouw Botmar, Thomas is inclined to reduce the most exotic events to the commonplaces of his private world. He writes:

Never shall I forget my first meeting with this prince who afterwards became my dear companion and brother in arms. When the escort arrived I was away from the town shooting deer with the bow and arrow, a weapon in the use of which I had such skill that all the Indians wondered at me, not knowing that twice I had won the prize at the butts on Bungay Common.<sup>109</sup>

To a critic merely dipping into Haggard, the descent into bathos in the last sentence would be evidence of Haggard's lack of style. In reality it is proof of the opposite.

Hubert of Hastings, the 14th century Englishman who narrates The Virgin of the Sun also has a suitably simple style. Hubert's descriptive powers are adequate, but one must not expect him to express

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<sup>108</sup>Swallow (1926), pp. 21-22.

<sup>109</sup>Montezuma's Daughter (1948), p. 118.

himself either subtly or poetically. Enthusiasm, yes, as in the following:

Very glorious was the scene from that high point. All round me stood the cold crests of snow-clad mountains towering to the very skies, while between them lay deep valleys where rivers ran like veins of silver. So immense was the landscape that it seemed to have no end, and so grand that it crushed the spirit, while above arched the perfect sky in whose rich blue the gorgeous lights of evening began to gather as the great sun sank behind the snowy peaks.<sup>110</sup>

Here Haggard is writing down to Hubert, who, we feel, is inspired by the beauty of his environment to use phrases slightly above his every day language, e.g. "rivers ran like veins of silver," "crushed the spirit." It is the absence of figurative language that impresses when one compares with similar passages by Allan Quatermain, a far more imaginative narrator in spite of protestations to the contrary. The beginning of Chapter XI of Allan Quatermain quoted in my analysis of that novel, may serve as a striking example of the difference.

Hubert's loneliness is conveyed in his own terms. The single image of the eagle reflects the simplicity of his mind, the red light, his strong feeling:

Far up in the heavens floated one wide-winged bird, the eagle of the mountains, which is larger than any other fowl that I have ever seen, and the red light playing on it turned it to a thing of fire. I watched that bird and wished that I too had pinions which could bear me far away to the sea and over it.<sup>111</sup>

Haggard's style is often influenced, too, by the kind of story he writes. The sad rhythms of the scenes involving Ernest and Eva in

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<sup>110</sup>The Virgin of the Sun (1931), p. 182.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

The Witch's Head are influenced by the pathos of the tale. The grãdiloquent language of Harmachis, narrator of Cleopatra, suits his theme as admirably:

Soon the lights began to pale in the rolling sea of air. Great shadows shot across it, lines of darkness pierced it and rushed together on its breast, till, at length, <sup>1</sup> only was a Shape of Flame set like a star on the bosom of immeasurable night. Bursts of awful music gathered from far away. Miles and miles away I heard them, thrilling faintly through the gloom. On they came, nearer and more near, louder and more loud, till they swept past, above, below, around me, swept on rushing pinions, terrifying and enchanting me.<sup>112</sup>

Here the style is not only appropriate to the high-born narrator and to that of the ancient document of which the passage forms a part but is also adequate to describe this particular mystical experience. The "rolling sea of air," the "great shadows," the "bursts of awful music" culminate in the chaotic but climactic sentence ending "terrifying and enchanting me."

No Vrouw Botmar, Thomas Wingfield, or Hubert of Hastings could have written the preceding passage, any more than Harmachis could have written King Solomon's Mines. But Haggard could adopt an appropriate style for all of those and many more. It is not important whether Haggard's style is authentic or merely imitative. Most novel readers would not be capable of judging. It is important that by changing his style he appeals on different imaginative levels that approximate and reinforce the imaginative level of setting and action. To that extent he deserves recognition as a stylist.

In The World's Desire Haggard often catches the simple dream-

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<sup>112</sup>Cleopatra (1889), p. 62.

like quality of the folk tale. Even in exciting incidents such as the following he avoids injecting excitement into his narrative. The reader's senses are lulled into acceptance. Description, poetic phrases, smooth rhythms and striking contrasts exert their full appeal. Impersonal rather than intimate, the style involves the reader visually rather than emotionally:

So dark was the thick mass of flying fowl, that a flight of swans shone snowy white against the black cloud of their wings. At the view of them the Wanderer caught his bow eagerly into his hand and set an arrow on the string, and, taking a careful aim at the white wedge of birds, he shot a wild swan through the breast as it swept high over the mast. Then, with all the speed of its rush, the wild white swan flashed down like lightning into the sea behind the ship. The Wanderer watched its fall, when, lo! the water where the dead swan fell splashed up as red as blood and all afoam! The long silver wings and snowy plumage floated on the surface flecked with blood-red stains, and the Wanderer marvelled as he bent over the bulwarks and gazed steadily upon the sea.<sup>113</sup>

The long sentences allow the author to develop his scene detail by detail. The periodic sentence designed to fix the reader's attention on the swans is followed by two very loose sentences united by the rise of the arrow and the fall of the bird. The exclamation "when, lo!" again rivets the attention to a single spot. Colour is used both visually and symbolically, a common device in Haggard. The "snowy white" swans appear against the "dark . . . thick mass of flying fowl." Innocence and purity are juxtaposed to sorrow and evil. The Wanderer's killing the swan merges into the blood-red sea of the Biblical tale.

The poetic effect is skilfully maintained by the quiet, rather sad progression of well-chosen phrases that follows. For emphasis the

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<sup>113</sup>The World's Desire (1953), p. 35.

rhythm becomes more abrupt in "with frogs and locusts and lice." The repetition of "war" and "red" is effective. Parallelism adds to the total effect:

When the dead men were all cast overboard and the river was once more still, the Wanderer spoke, sick at heart, and inquired of the pilot why the sea had run so red, and whether war was in the land, and why there was night over all that country. The fellow answered that there was no war, but peace, yet the land was strangely plagued with frogs and locusts and lice in all their coasts, the sacred River Sihor running red for three whole days, and now, at last, for this the third day, darkness over all the world. But as to the cause of these curses the pilot knew nothing, being a plain man.<sup>114</sup>

Haggard's descriptive skill extends to his characters. Character traits are presented colourfully and sometimes with a trace of irony, as in the last line of the previous passage. In reading the following, one has the inescapable feeling that Haggard is describing an acquaintance, possibly one of his brothers:

Master James Plowden came about half-way down the family list, but he might just as well have stood at the head of it, for he ruled his brothers and sisters--old and young--with a heavy rod. He was the strong one of the family, strong both in mind and body, and he had a hand of iron.

For his misdeeds were his brothers thrashed, preferring to take those ills they knew of from the hands of the thrasher rather than endure the unimagined horrors brother James would make ready for them should they venture to protest.

Thus it was that he came to be considered par excellence the good boy of the family, and he was certainly the clever one, and bore every sort of blushing honour thick upon him.<sup>115</sup>

As an introduction to the pompous and cruel, but highly respectable and respected, Reverend James Plowden that could hardly be

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>115</sup>The Witch's Head, pp. 122-123.

better.

Thomas Wingfield's first sight of Juan de Garcia whets the reader's interest by means of precise details that contrast so strongly that they seem almost contradictory:

He was very tall and noble-looking, dressed in rich garments of velvet adorned by a gold chain that hung about his neck, and as I judged about forty years of age. But it was his face which chiefly caught my eye, for at that moment there was something terrible about it. It was long, thin, and deeply carved; the eyes were large, and gleamed like gold in sunlight; the mouth was small and well shaped, but it wore a devilish and cruel sneer; the forehead lofty, indicating a man of mind, and marked with a slight scar. For the rest the cavalier was dark and southern-looking, his curling hair, like my own, was black, and he wore a peaked chestnut-coloured beard.<sup>116</sup>

The youth's memory is overlaid with adult phrases such as "indicating a man of mind," but it remains the impression of a child, bewildered and frightened by the combination of evil and refinement. "Something terrible." "a devilish and cruel sneer" are intentionally vague, I feel, suggesting rather than defining a character yet to be developed through the action of the story. The resemblance to Thomas is a foreshadowing of the role De Garcia is to play in his life.

A narrator's description of himself will often help to reveal his character. Hubert of Hastings is a little vain, but he is properly reticent about his heroic qualities, and his sense of humour excuses his pride in his personal appearance:

My hair, which I wore long, was fair in colour and curled. My eyes, set wide apart, were and still are large and blue, although they have darkened somewhat and sunk into the head in this land of heat and sunshine. My nose was wide-nostrilled and large, my mouth also was over-large, although my mother and

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<sup>116</sup>Montezuma's Daughter, p. 29.



some others used to think it well-shaped. In truth, I was large all over, though not so tall, being burly, with a great breadth of chest and uncommon thickness through the body, and very strong; so strong that there were few who could throw me when I was young.

For the rest, like King David, I . . . was of a ruddy and pleasant countenance . . . and of an easy nature that often goes with health. I will add this, for why should I not-- that I was no fool . . . . Had I been a fool I should not today be the king of a great people . . . indeed, I should not be alive.<sup>117</sup>

Hubert is careful to present himself in a favourable light. The references to "his mother and some others" and the comparison with King David are particularly revealing, but it is the author's subtlety that is apparent. Hubert is too simple to realize that he is giving himself away.

Descriptions of minor characters are often very brief but usually very striking. Each is unique and can not be confused with any other. A slight grotesquerie helps. In Eric Brighteyes Groa describes Ospakar Blacktooth as "mighty in all things and blown up with pride," a description that, combined with the appellation Blacktooth, sets him apart. Asmund finds Groa on the sea-shore after a gale--"a beautiful woman, who wore a purple cloak and a great girdle of gold, seated on a rock, combing her black hair and singing the while; and, at her feet, washing to and fro in a pool, was a dead man."<sup>118</sup> In a saga brief descriptions suffice. Groa's dress and the strangeness of her occupation, which somehow suggests the supernatural, are no more important to an understanding of the woman's personality than the dead man at her feet.

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<sup>117</sup>The Virgin of the Sun, pp. 30-31.

<sup>118</sup>Eric Brighteyes, p. 16.

Martha the Mare in Lysbeth is one of Haggard's most vivid minor characters. She intrudes upon Lysbeth's happiness like a killing frost, and in her person foreshadows the horrors of the Inquisition and serves as an introduction to the villainous Juan de Montalvo:

She was a remarkable-looking woman of about thirty-five years of age, tall and bony in make, with deep-set eyes, light grey of colour, that seemed now to flash fiercely and now to waver, as though in memory of some great dread. From beneath a coarse woolen cap a wisp of grizzled hair fell across the forehead, where it lay like the forelock of a horse. Indeed, the high cheekbones, scarred as though by burns, wide-spread nostrils and prominent white teeth, whence the lips had strangely sunk away, gave the whole countenance a more or less equine look which this falling lock seemed to heighten. For the rest the woman was poorly and not too plentifully clad in a gown of black woolen, torn and stained as though with long use and journeys, while on her feet she wore wooden clogs, to which were strapped skates that were not fellows, one being much longer than the other.<sup>119</sup>

Haggard's description of Martha the Mare is the description of an author whose imagination is engaged. In contrast Harmachis's description of the priest Amenemhat is that of a narrator whose emotions are engaged:

The lamp was lit, for the darkness had fallen, and by its light I saw the old man seated in a chair of ivory and ebony at a table of stone on which were spread mystic writings of the words of Life and Death. But he read no more for he slept, and his long white beard rested upon the table like the beard of a dead man. The soft light from the lamp fell on him, on the papyri and the gold ring upon his hand, where were graven the symbols of the Invisible One, but all around was shadow. It fell on the shaven head, on the white robe, on the cedar staff of priesthood at his side, and on the ivory of the lion-footed chair; it showed the mighty brow of power, the features cut in kingly mould, the white eyebrows, and the dark hollows of the deep-set eyes. I looked and trembled, for there was about him that which was more than the dignity of man.

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<sup>119</sup>Lysbeth (1901), pp. 5-6.

Harmachis's style is the dignified style of an intellectual, but it is obvious that the description is not that of a mere observer. The old priest is very familiar, but the special setting raises his image above the ordinary. To Harmachis he is now wholly a priest, the incarnation of Osiris, and, as such, to be regarded with fear. The portrait is highlighted in the manner of Caravaggio.

How Harmachis might have described the "witch-doctress" Sihamba in Swallow is an intriguing question. It is certain that he would not have been satisfied with Vrouw Botmar's simple description. But Vrouw Botmar is neither an intellectual nor a very imaginative woman. She likes Sihamba and takes her strangeness for granted. Her description of Sihamba therefore leaves a great deal to the reader's imagination:

In appearance, Sihamba was very strange, for, although healthy, perfectly shaped and copper-coloured rather than black, she was no taller than a child of twelve years old . . . . For a Kaffir also she was pretty, having fine small features, beautiful white teeth, and a fringe of wavy black hair that stood out stiffly round her head something after the fashion of the gold plates which the saints wear in the pictures in our old Bible.<sup>120</sup>

Haggard's style here gains by understatement. In the tale, Sihamba is a strange woman who can see things happening in distant places, who can foretell the future and who wanders about in the moonlight gathering herbs for her medicines. From Vrouw Botmar, Haggard's imagination tells him, we would not get a reading of character in such a person's face. The description is therefore superficial and, compared to others I have quoted, almost inarticulate. The comparison with the

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<sup>120</sup>Swallow, p. 73.

pictures in the Bible is appropriate to Vrouw Botmar and suitably inappropriate to Sihamba, whose real character the old Dutch woman never understands.

The extent to which Haggard's style reflects the narrator and the setting seems to depend almost completely on how much his imagination is engaged. Passages used merely to connect exciting material are sometimes poorly written. In the following passage the necessity to get essential details over results in unevenness and clumsiness. Once the excitement develops, however, the author establishes a skilfully-evoked atmosphere:

The short twilight rapidly faded into darkness, or rather into what would have been darkness, had it not been for the half-grown moon, which was to serve to light them on their path. Then, a large fire having been lit on the site of the camp to make it appear as though it were still pitched there, the order was given to start. The oxen, obedient to the voice of the driver, strained at the trek-tow, the wagon creaked and jolted, and they began their long flight for life.

The uncertainty of the first sentence, the ambiguous reference of "it" in the second, are succeeded by the vividness and vigor of the third. Once underway the pace quickens and the narrative is filled with life and colour:

Now they bumped down terrific hills strewn with boulders, which would have smashed anything less solid than an African ox-waggon to splinters; now they crept along a dark valley, that looked spiritual and solemn in the moonlight, expecting to see Secocoeni's Impi emerge from every clump of bush; and now again they waded through mountain streams.<sup>121</sup>

The rapid improvement in style can sometimes be noticed even in the space of two sentences, as in the following, where the

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<sup>121</sup>The Witch's Head, p. 157.

unnecessarily meandering first sentence is succeeded by the eminently satisfactory second. The second, of course, is good because the author's imagination is captured by a spectacle he has seen in actuality or is seeing in his mind.

When Mr. Alston, Jeremy, and Ernest emerged from the back street in which was the house they had visited into one of the principal thoroughfares of Pretoria, they came upon a curious sight. In the middle of the street stood, or rather danced, a wiry Zulu, dressed in an old military great-coat and the ordinary native "moocha," or scanty kilt, and having a red worsted comforter tied round one arm.<sup>122</sup>

In describing action, Haggard's style is always adequate and often particularly effective. Short but vivid phrases in the following convey the action to the reader almost as quickly as it could happen:

Now Skallagrim knew him and the Baresark fit came on. His eyes rolled, foam flew from his lips, his mouth grinned, and he was awesome to see. He let fall the head, and, swinging the great axe aloft, rushed at Eric. But Brighteyes is too swift for him. It would not be well to let that stroke fall, and it must go hard with aught it struck. He springs forward, he louts low and sweeps upwards with Whitefire. Skallagrim sees the sword flare and drops almost to his knee, guarding his head with the axe; but Whitefire strikes on the iron half of the axe and shears it in two, so that the axe head falls to earth.<sup>123</sup>

The combining of the fast pace with the use of the present tense gives the passage the immediacy of a sports broadcast while it echoes the primitive enthusiasm for a good fight.

In the following the jerky abrupt movements are appropriate to the primitive feelings expressed, but it is in the style of an old man remembering action long since relegated to the realm of memory rather

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<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>123</sup>Eric Brighteyes, p. 77.

than experience. The language is both more dignified and more poetic than in the passage from Eric Brighteyes.

The men were running, two and two, with the length of a spear-throw between them. But of the first pair one was five or six paces in front of the other. This man shouted out loud and charged me, shield and spear up. Now I had no shield--nothing but the assegai; but I was crafty and he was overbold. On he came. I stood waiting for him till he drew back the spear to stab me. Then suddenly I dropped to my knees and thrust upward with all my strength beneath the rim of his shield; and he also thrust, but over me, his spear only cutting the flesh of my shoulder--see! here is his scar; yes to this day!<sup>124</sup>

To capture the spirit of the impis engaged in battle Mopo's style becomes much faster paced and climactic. The images of "river" and "gale" might also be used to suggest the effect on the reader. "There is a roar, a thunder of feet, a flashing of spears, a bending of plumes, and, like a river that has burst its banks, like storm clouds before the gale, we sweep down upon friend and foe."<sup>125</sup>

The almost breathless rhythm of the parallel phrasing capture impetuosity and savage joy in battle. Such passages are indicative of Haggard's ability to capture the excitement of combat and to involve the reader emotionally in the spirit activating the combatants.

The description of Umslopogaas's rescue of Nada from the mad woman is as graceful as a ballet. The rhythm subtly implies the youth and strength of the protagonist. At the same time it reflects the lack of sophistication of the oral folk tradition and of its aged narrator.

Then, lifting her spear, she struck at him, but he leapt aside.

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<sup>124</sup>Nada the Lily, p. 43.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

Again she struck; but he sprang into the air, and the spear passed beneath him. A third time the woman struck, and, though he fell to earth to avoid the blow, yet the assegai pierced his shoulder. But the weight of his body as he fell twisted it from her hand, and before she could grasp him he was up, and beyond her reach, the spear still fast in his shoulder.<sup>126</sup>

Haggard is equally adept in fitting his style to slow movement and conveying the feelings of those involved:

From noon till near sundown the long harassed line, broken now into fragments, struggled forward across the rough, stony plain, the burning heat beating upon their armour till the air danced about it as it does above a fire. Towards evening men and horses became exhausted, and the soldiers cried to their captains to lead them to water. But in that place there was no water.<sup>127</sup>

The selection of details in the midst of confusion has the effect of imposing order upon that confusion without negating its effect on the reader's mind. A good example is the description of the shipwreck in Benita:

When they were about twelve feet from the ship's side . . . there came a rush of people, disappointed of places in the starboard boats. A few of the boldest of these swarmed down the falls, others jumped and fell among them, or missed and dropped into the sea, or struck upon the sides of the boat and were killed . . . .

[On] the starboard side . . . they saw a hideous scene. Hundreds of people seemed to be fighting for room, with the result that some of the boats were overturned, precipitating their occupants into the water. Others hung by the prow or the stern . . . while from them human beings dropped one by one. Round others not yet launched a hellish struggle was in progress, the struggle of men, women and children battling for their lives, in which the strong, mad with terror, showed no mercy to the weak.

From that mass of humanity, most of them about to perish,

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>127</sup>The Brethren, London (1952), p. 231.

went up a babel of sounds which in its sum shaped itself to one prolonged scream, such as might proceed from a Titan in his agony.<sup>128</sup>

It is tempting to pursue this subject further, but the quotations I have selected are, I feel, sufficient to indicate that the most important consideration is how Haggard adapts his style to many purposes. He has not one style but many styles. The critics of his style must spread their criticisms over a selection of his writings in order to comprehend what he is doing. Without thorough knowledge of what the author is doing a critic may damn as poor style a very clever use of imitative language. Haggard is capable of using stylistic techniques that are eminently suitable to his subject matter, and that thus contribute to the total romantic appeal of the exciting tales he tells. His style at its best is like good background music in a motion picture, helping to maintain the dominant mood, and establishing an emotional bond between creator and observer.

How much of Haggard's writing may be regarded as poor in style depends upon both the reader's point of view and an understanding of what he is doing at a particular time. Parts of Beatrice, Jess, Cleopatra and She are, in my opinion, marred by too closely imitating the contemporary melodramatic mode. Such books as Queen Sheba's Ring, The Yellow God, and The People of the Mist, apparently written merely to satisfy the demand for the type of adventure Haggard supplied, appear to lack the imaginative stimulus that inspired Haggard's best stylistic effects. The pedestrian plodding of books written when he was old and tired, such as Mary of Marion

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<sup>128</sup>Benita (1965), p. 28.



Isle and Belshazzar is to be deplored. Haggard, like a great many other romancers, sometimes wrote what and when he should not have written. I would estimate that a good 75 per cent of his total output is worth the reader's and the critic's attention, a large amount of genuinely imaginative writing considering that Haggard attempted so much.

### III. HAGGARD'S SYMBOLISM

In discussing Haggard's use of symbolism the greatest problem is to isolate those portions of his work in which the emphasis becomes symbolic as well as social, philosophical or romantic. In many instances it is almost impossible to discuss any one element as a separate entity. Allan Quatermain, for example, is primarily a romantic adventure, but, as I have indicated in Chapter II, its full impact on the reader's imagination depends to a great extent on its symbolism. On the other hand, She may be regarded as primarily a symbolic novel with romance as the mere framework for symbolism. Certain lesser-known works such as Red Eve and The Mahatma and the Hare, particularly the latter, may be regarded as visionary novels in which the romantic, if present at all, is merely an appendage to the essential content.

At this point it becomes desirable to elucidate Haggard's symbolic content more clearly and to see it as a reflection of his philosophy, keeping in mind that his approach to social problems and philosophical concepts is coloured by his romanticism, which in turn is often raised into the realms of higher truth by means of symbolism. Such novels as She, Ayesha and Eric Brighteyes can be read on two levels, the romantic and the symbolic, and can be adjudged a success or a failure on either. Very often, however, descriptive passages including symbolic images contribute so much to the romantic atmosphere and even to the plot that any critical judgement must regard the elements as inseparable. Such, I feel, is the case with Ayesha and Queen of the

Dawn.

Haggard's symbolism is a reflection of the age in which he wrote. It represents a yearning for both a lost past and a spirituality impossible of attainment, a recognition and a turning away from the hard cold facts of a too-practical world. His symbols help him to convey the simple, the primitive, and the dangers of too much knowledge, particularly too much scientific knowledge, which he regarded as a corrupter of man's essential nature.

In discussing Haggard's symbolism one runs a risk of oversimplification, since during his long career as a writer, 1882-1925, the philosophy on which a great deal of his symbolism is based was bound to undergo changes in certain areas. Most important among the themes that he recurrently accorded symbolic treatment are the following: concern for man's spiritual being or imagination; the power of evil; the danger to man's soul of a mechanized, materialistic society; man's need for religion of some kind; the importance of nature as a bond between man and God; belief in reincarnation; the importance of love, and of woman as an inspiration towards a more spiritual life. All of those themes are related and are often interwoven inextricably in Haggard's work, and are all aspects of Haggard's quest for a greater understanding of man in the universe.

A close examination of Haggard's method reveals that he uses symbolism in at least four different ways, and by sustaining, alternating or mixing those techniques, achieves a rich and intricate symbolic fabric.

At the most easily recognized and perhaps the lowest symbolic

level, Haggard uses images to characterize individuals and to cause the reader to adopt specific attitudes towards those individuals. Certain images such as snake, fox, fire and gold are common, the first generally used in a description of some particularly repulsive character, the second to indicate untrustworthiness, the others with varying connotations. This method is mythopoeic in the sense that it recalls qualities associated in folklore with those animals, and seems particularly appropriate in a story of a primitive culture such as The Wanderer's Necklace or Eric Brighteyes. It may be depended upon to arouse primitive responses, and may be used to suggest a return to a savage state in which physical powers and uncomplicated reactions stood between the individual and destruction.

His second method is to use images to provide a more compact unity of expression than would otherwise be possible. In Wisdom's Daughter, for example, the statue of Moloch is economically used to suggest almost simultaneously evil, danger, and the ultimate triumph of good. With Sidon in flames, Ayesha asks Queen Beltis what is to happen now. The latter answers, "Death, I think . . . . Why cheat his jaws of their richest morsel?" As they endeavour to escape from the palace, Ayesha notices the statue of Moloch "grinning as though in unholy triumph," and the grinning jaws become the jaws of death. But "suddenly a pinnacle from the temple fell upon it, grinding it to powder."<sup>1</sup> In Beltis's mind death is identified with Moloch. The destruction of the god, symbolically, by the evil that he created

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<sup>1</sup>Wisdom's Daughter (1923), pp. 150-151.

both restores her courage and clears the way for the triumph of humanity freed from the crippling effects of a corrupt religion.

Haggard's third method is to imbue the speech and actions of his characters with a symbolic significance that produces a total effect greater than the sum of its parts, thus raising characters and action to a higher level. This is particularly true of such heroines as Ayesha, Stella Fregelius and Cleopatra, who are expressions of Haggard's ideal woman and also of the female or reproductive element in the universe; of such "golden figures" as Eric and Sir Henry Curtis, reflecting great heroes of mythology; and of such manifestations of the spirit of Africa or the "noble savage" as Umslopogaas, Nada and Mameena. Often such a character is related to an object of special symbolic significance, such as Umslopogaas's axe, Eric's sword and Ayesha's veil or fire.

Haggard also uses images to convey ideas. Spiritual aspirations and the mystery of the unknown are suggested by such symbols as gates, domes and other architectural features; a great road; a magnificent pair of wings; clothing of different styles and colours; or a statue.

Spiritual aspirations are also suggested by natural objects or phenomena such as cliffs, cataracts, rivers, mountains, the sun, the moon, the stars, clouds, and an intensification of light. Conversely the world of the body and both physical and spiritual death are suggested by swamps, caves, subterranean rivers and darkness. Haggard's obsession with caves, particularly in his early romances, may stem from his childish fear of the dark cupboard that Cohen mentions. The

"spiritual" group are mostly from a recurring dream or vision that Haggard had.

Haggard carefully manoeuvres his characters into a setting that can be used symbolically. This is particularly true in She, where he creates a symbolic landscape to suit both his theme and his romantic plot. Beginning with the river of life, he takes the reader back to the primeval swamp, then through the dark ages of man's history by means of the caves, to the fire of intelligence that ultimately destroys. In Ayesha, the deserts and the icy mountain ranges of this life are finally illuminated by the distant peak of enlightenment that lures man to a similar destruction. In Allan Quatermain, the underground river debouches into a kind of hell, through which man must make his way before he can achieve salvation.

To find parallels with Haggard's symbolic techniques, one should perhaps go to the visual arts rather than the contemporary romantic novel. Albrecht Dürer, for example, in his landscapes and studies of plants and animals often conveyed his deepest meanings symbolically. In his sketch of a rhinoceros brought from India to Portugal, he depicts the animal in what appears to be a suit of armour. At a surface level the armour emphasizes the animal's strength and bulk and reflects the sense of wonder Europeans must have felt at a first sight of a hitherto semi-legendary creature. Looking more closely at the animal's sad eyes, the expression of the mouth, and the lifeless stance, the viewer becomes aware that the artist is also depicting the mute endurance of a magnificent being deprived of the power and the freedom natural to him. The armour is then seen as a

grotesquely ironic superfluity.

William Blake in his painting of Isaac Newton uses a similar technique. Newton appears almost a protrusion of the rock on which he is sitting. That rock and the scientist's rocklike body convey the physical nature of Newton's research. By concentrating light on the head, however, Blake creates a kind of halo. The hand holding what is presumably a sextant also stands out against the surrounding darkness. The similarity of the unwound portion of the scroll to a snail establishes a delicate relationship between the scientist and nature that offsets the rock image. The whole depicts the delicate structure of man's brain pitted against the vast forces of nature. By the use of light and symbols the painter seems to spiritualize the purely physical.

Of lesser stature than Dürer or Blake, but closer in time and technique to Haggard, is Gustave Doré; whose symbolic mixture of black and white in illustrations of such books as The Ancient Mariner and Paradise Lost seems not only to reflect but also to reinforce the poet's imagination. In Doré's illustrations of the latter book, Michael and his angels appear as embodiments of pure light that glows from within. Satan is not merely black. He is the absence of light. Symbolic landscapes comprise jagged, twisted rocks; distorted or blasted trees; rivers in turmoil; and chaotic lightning-torn skies. Even the garden of Eden, in Doré's illustration, has ominous shadows not indicated by Milton's text.

Like Doré's, Haggard's use of symbolic landscape to combine atmosphere and theme is often extremely effective. In Ayesha, Chapter XII, he uses landscape very skilfully to prepare the reader's mind for

the meeting with the corpse-like Ayesha. The marshy land, the rising plain of "desert streaked with veins of rock," the broad donga "quite destitute of vegetation, of which the bottom was buried in lava and a debris of rock," the shadow thrown over the donga by the high cliff, symbolically convey both the harsh realities of life and the absence of life. The discovery that the white objects strewn over the valley are human skeletons is combined with the dilemma of the adventurers, who wander "disconsolately, seeking a path up the opposing cliff, and finding none," to portray the world as a "Valley of Dead Bones." The figure that arises from the top of a heap of bones "wrapped from head to foot in white and wearing a hanging veil"<sup>2</sup> is a natural extension of the ghostly landscape, as well as a quest symbol pointing the way beyond the wasteland to a more spiritual world.

The dreadful figure leads the adventurers out of the valley through a dark gorge, representing death, to the sight of the "far-off Peak." It is not incongruous that on that Peak Ayesha's dried "mummy-like shape is changed by means of fire to one of surpassing beauty, and that such a change should be accompanied by "wondrous music." The regeneration of nature, and of man through nature, is implied by the images. The voice of the restored Ayesha is "sweeter than honey, softer than the whisper of a twilight breeze among the reeds." Her breath is "fragrant . . . as roses."<sup>3</sup> Her body "gleamed like some white sea-pearl." Ayesha's temple is one in which the candles, a

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<sup>2</sup>Ayesha (1956), pp. 144-145.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 204-205.



symbol of the rejuvenating power of nature, never go out.

The whole incident, one feels, is designed to reveal nature awakened by the sun, and man's complete dependence upon nature for both bodily and spiritual sustenance.

In Child of Storm, Zikali foretells the downfall of both Saduko and the Zulu nation by means of a symbolic landscape involving two roads: the long Road of Medicine, to travel which requires both asceticism and loneliness; and the bloody and glorious, but short, Road of Spears. Saduko unfortunately chooses "the path of spears and the love and the sin and the unknown death."<sup>4</sup>

To suggest the conflict in the Zulu nature between love of bloodshed and innate intelligence, Haggard uses the symbolic landscape of Zikali's Black Kloof, "a vast cleft in which granite boulders were piled up fantastically," with "dark trees set sparsely among the rocks."<sup>5</sup> The lonely valley symbolizes the isolation of such an intelligent people among their African neighbours, while the setting sun and the "gigantic mass of rock that looked as though it might fall at any moment" foreshadow their end as a nation. The chattering baboons mock Saduko because he and his people have chosen the road to self-destruction.

As I have indicated here and elsewhere, the most ordinary landscape is often used by Haggard to create an atmosphere of peace or of war, of gloom or of happiness, of earthly suffering and spiritual fulfilment. The combination of symbolic landscape with exciting action

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<sup>4</sup>Child of Storm (1913), p. 21.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

is so effective that often the landscape remains in the reader's mind long after the plot has been forgotten. The dark landscapes cast even darker shadows.

Enriching the total fabric of the text and appealing to the emotions of the reader, Haggard's symbols have an aesthetic value over and above their possible meaning. Like the details of a painting or the phrases of a poem, they are an integral part of the total emotional atmosphere of the composition.

The statue of Truth in She, for example, is not at all necessary to the plot. Yet, whether consciously interpreted or not, it has a considerable impact upon the imagination of the reader as a visual image. In Eric Brighteyes the images drawn from nature and religion stimulate the imagination and enable it to accept a way of life in which primary emotions are strong because they are uncomplicated, and man's life is almost totally subject to his natural environment. Rooted in the primitive, such images compel a primitive response.

In their power to influence the imagination Haggard's symbols are a part of the total entertainment value. Specific interpretations must sometimes be based on feeling rather than reason and are therefore sometimes influenced by the personality of the interpreter.

In the trilogy Wisdom's Daughter, She and Ayesha, appropriate symbolism enables Haggard to combine many themes; chief among them, possibly, nature the restorer and destroyer. I have already indicated the use of symbolic landscape in this connection and shall discuss the symbolic development of the theme more fully in my section on Ayesha.

In She and Ayesha Haggard is also apparently attempting an

exploration in symbolic terms of the nature of love, power, beauty and truth. In pursuing this theme he makes effective use of concrete images to convey or reinforce ideas.

The chief motif in this symbolic pattern is love. In his love for Leo, Holly is the ideal father,<sup>6</sup> and as such not only acts as mentor but puts Leo's welfare before his own. His ugliness becomes symbolic when we realize that it causes him to suffer the feeling of rejection that Haggard suffered as a boy. Holly's rejection by women may reflect symbolically Haggard's rejection by his father. Since Holly is a father image the analogy seems particularly apt, suggesting poetic revenge.

Symbolic imagery enables Haggard to unite this motif with the man-nature theme. In the following passage, the images combine the evil nature of man with Nature as Nemesis, Nature as the generous mother bestowing her gifts on a well-beloved son, and mother love as a substitute for physical love.

Like Cain, I was branded-branded by Nature with the stamp of abnormal ugliness, as I was gifted by nature with iron and abnormal strength and considerable intellectual powers . . . . I was set apart by Nature to live alone, and draw comfort from her breast, and hers only.<sup>7</sup>

The irony of "gifted by nature" is given force by Holly's personal application of the mythopoeic anecdote Beauty and the Beast. Without love, as Vincey remarks, "Life is not worth the trouble of life."<sup>8</sup>

In Haggard a single image is often used again and again to

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. Frye's "true father" in Anatomy of Criticism, p. 199.

<sup>7</sup>She, p. 32.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

provide thematic unity. Those images have a cumulative effect on readers familiar with Haggard's philosophy and personal mythology. One of the commonest of such images is the star. Holly writes: "So I lay and watched the stars come out by thousands, till all the immense arch of heaven was strewn with glittering points, and every point a world! Here was a glorious night by which man might well measure his own insignificance."<sup>9</sup>

Out of context this has a very simple meaning, that man is insignificant in relation to the great universe of which he forms a tiny part. In the total context of Haggard's work, however, the star image is very complex and awakens numerous associations.

Haggard, like Tennyson, Arnold and many other men of sensitive imagination in the second half of the nineteenth century, was torn between allegiance to a faith that was already a "faith of our fathers" and the need for new religious concepts to meet the needs of a more scientific and materialistic world. Haggard accepted religious reassurance wherever he could find it. The stars were not only a reminder of man's insignificance, but also a reminder that the great intelligence that created man also created the stars; and that man was a part of the universe, however small. The star became to Haggard both the Zoroastrian God of light and good and the Star in the East that to the Christians heralded a rebirth of goodness in the world.

In Haggard the sun is the sublime star, the source of life and of good, but the sun is also nature that recreates and destroys. The

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

idea of the birth-death-rebirth cycle of nature is associated in Haggard with the idea of Karma, but the peculiarly Victorian mixture of faith and doubt causes him to wonder whether successive reincarnations of the human essence will result in beatitude or self-destruction.

Haggard's love and fear of nature as a representative of a higher power accounts for the ambivalence in "She." Ayesha is nature that destroys and recreates, but she is subject to the Fire of Life, or the sun, which in turn is subject to a higher power.

In Holly's and Haggard's philosophy the stars not only emphasize man's littleness, but also symbolize his great destiny. The question whether that destiny is to end in self-destruction remains unresolved.

The symbolic "immense arch" represents what man in his supposed littleness has achieved on earth, and also of God's promise to man that his "bow in the cloud [should] be for a covenant between [Him] and the earth."<sup>10</sup>

By means of the associations that Haggard's images awaken, the plot, characters and atmosphere of his romances are raised to a level not usually attained by such stories.

Repetition and the introduction of supporting images are used to confirm ideas presented in symbolic terms.

Above me, as I lay, shone the eternal stars, and there at my feet the impish marsh-born balls of fire rolled this way and that, vapour-tossed and earth-desiring, and methought that in the two I saw an image of what man is, and what perchance he may one day be, if the living force who ordained him and them should so ordain this also.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Genesis, 9.13.

<sup>11</sup>She, p. 136.

Again the images are skilfully chosen. The "eternal stars" represent man's spiritual nature, but he is impeded in his efforts to realize his spirituality by his physical being, born of the primeval slime and influenced by the devil ("impish marsh-born balls of fire"). Born also of the sun, or of good, he is a ball of fire, but he is "tossed" or tormented by the "vapours" of the swamp, or his physical being, which is "earth-desiring" because it exerts the stronger pull upon his emotions. There may be hope for the child, Haggard suggests, in spite of the incompatibility of the parents, but he lays down no hard and fast rules for man's salvation. Like Arnold, Tennyson and many other Victorian Romantics he is a seeker for truth, a man whose doubts are sometimes stronger than his faith, continually in need of reinforcement by imaginative and symbolic concepts.

It is perhaps strongly indicative of Haggard's religious and moral uncertainty, reflecting as it does the uncertainty of the age, that the allegory in She should be subject to various interpretations. Primarily, perhaps, it is an allegory of love. Ustane's love for Leo gives her the courage to defy Ayesha's terrifying unknown powers. Ayesha's love for Leo causes her to unleash her power against her rival, and to stoop from her high position to his level, as Haggard implies, woman does in an effort to redeem unworthy man. Later Ayesha exposes herself to the fire for love of Leo, and what Holly calls the "bubbles" dear to man, ambition, wealth and wisdom, become nothing beside "love which makes all things beautiful."<sup>12</sup> Ayesha's great love has apparently redeemed the imperfections of her life.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

Those imperfections, however, are many and great, and are related here and to a greater extent in Ayesha to nature as destroyer and saviour and to the birth-death-rebirth cycle of ancient fertility cults. Ayesha is unpredictable, sometimes senselessly cruel, but she is an eternal law unto herself. The source of her energy, the Fire of Life, is hidden from man, and attempt to control that source on man's part is a crime to be visited by untold sufferings. As a person Ayesha in this connection is used to symbolize modern scientists, of whose achievements nineteenth-century Englishmen were both apprehensive and proud.<sup>13</sup> The knowledge that enables her to control the Fire of Life leads ironically to her dreadful and final obliteration.

Both interpretations reflect Haggard's search for truth. The unresolved question is whether ultimate truth is found in ideal love and beauty or in the dangerous unveiling of Nature's secrets. Haggard prefers to believe that the mysteries of nature should remain hidden, that in her unrevealed stage she is a guide to the spiritual. Man's pride in scientific achievements must not lead him into thinking otherwise. Ayesha's reference to the Actaeon legend and her comparing her beauty to the lightning, which destroys, is a warning to man not to seek knowledge to his own destruction. The crime of hubris is always punished by the higher powers. Ayesha is well aware of her punishment. "Passion leads me by the hand--evil have I done, and with sorrow have I made acquaintance from age to age, and from age to age evil I shall do,

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<sup>13</sup>cf. Lytton's Zanoni, Mrs. Shelley's Frankenstein, Tennyson's dreadful vision in Locksley Hall of a "ghastly dew" and the early H. G. Wells.

and sorrow shall I know till my redemption comes."<sup>14</sup>

On different levels then, Ayesha represents woman as inspirer, nature as inspirer, man out of tune with both nature and God in his quest for the wrong kind of knowledge, and the redeeming force of love. In using "woman" as the "heart" of his romance Haggard gives valid though chaotic expression to his own hopes, doubts and fears. She is therefore truly representative of Haggard's concept of the romance as "the quest for the divine."

The statue of Truth helps to unify the various symbolic meanings by tying together in one figure the ideas of love, beauty and truth. The figure is exceedingly beautiful and her whole attitude is an expression of love, but her face is veiled. The inscription reminds the reader of the dangers inherent in the search for ultimate beauty and knowledge. The irony of existence is that man is driven to search for truth, but his search must be for truth's sake, not his own, and then only in death, which reunites him with nature, can he find it.

The hermit Noot "by purity and abstinence, and the contemplations of his innocent mind, had worn thin the veil between that which we see and the great impossible truths." But Noot "had all life at his command and for his conscience' sake would have none of it."<sup>15</sup> Ayesha, who has grasped truth for selfish purposes, exists in misery and can be redeemed only by love.

In the presence of the Fire of Life, symbolizing ideal beauty,

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<sup>14</sup>She, p. 172.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 286-287.



perfect love and ultimate truth, Holly and Leo feel that the spirit is "free to soar to the empyrean of its native power."<sup>16</sup> But nature, internal and external to man's own being, only grants a vision of such fulfilment, never its actuality. The power of perfect love is too great to be granted to imperfect man:

Ayesha strong and happy in her love, clothed in immortal youth, goddess-like beauty, and the wisdom of the centuries, would . . . perchance have changed the destiny of mankind. Thus she opposed herself against the eternal law, and, strong though she was, by it was swept back to nothingness--swept back with shame and hideous mockery.<sup>17</sup>

The reader is left with the final message that truth, beauty and love are indissolubly connected as objects of man's eternal quest. Man is allowed only his due proportion of the trinity. It is presumptuous and evil to seek more. Not recognizing a higher power, Ayesha is content to live by feeling, but following her passions, ignoring the limitations imposed by that higher power, she realizes, demands a price. In her pride, however, she is sufficient unto herself. "The religions come and the religions pass [she says] and naught endures but the world and human nature . . . . [man] is there, and within him is the breath of life and a knowledge of good and evil as good and evil is to him."<sup>18</sup>

This existentialist doctrine neither Holly nor Haggard can accept. Haggard continually insists that man must have some guiding principle outside himself.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 300-301.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

In retrospect, the swamps and caves now serve to remind the reader that even limited spiritual and aesthetic values are attained only after a long and arduous struggle. The Amahagger, physically perfect but passive and melancholy, could be taken to symbolize that segment of mankind oblivious to spiritual values and therefore incapable of genuine human emotions. Holly, in his physical ugliness, finally realizes that beauty is of the spirit, and, in covering up the ugly body of Ayesha, protects her spirit from the still physically-orientated Leo. Ayesha's redemption will not be accomplished until, in Ayesha, she follows Leo into the world of the spirit.

In his introduction to the Macdonald edition of She, Malcolm Elwin refers to The World's Desire as an "allegory illustrating man's eternal search for ideal beauty, the world's desire, and the inevitable thwarting of success in his search by his acceptance of counterfeit beauty."<sup>19</sup>

In She the theme grew out of the story. In The World's Desire Haggard set out to write what he considered a poetic novel. In a letter to Andrew Lang, his half-hearted collaborator on the book, he talks about "the quest for the divine, which must (for the purposes of story) be symbolized by woman. You see the thing must have a heart."<sup>20</sup>

The triangle consisting of man, woman and man's concept of the ideal woman, who exists only in his imagination and is therefore never attainable, holds possibilities for symbolic treatment. Odysseus,

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. xviii.

<sup>20</sup>The Days of My Life, ii, 77.

Queen Meriamun of Egypt and Helen of Troy seem to be ideal representatives of such a concept. The continuing of the story of Odysseus where Tennyson left off seems a promising idea. The reader soon feels, however, that the ground is too familiar, that Homer and Tennyson said everything worth saying about Odysseus. This may be due to the difficulty of collaborating with Lang on such an imaginative project, or it may, of course, indicate that Haggard is not capable of working out this particular theme.

The book's main faults are repetitiveness, too many over-long grandiloquent speeches, and a repellent coldness in the characters that deprives them of the necessary semblance of reality. Haggard fails to reconcile his specific and symbolic content. He implies possibly too strongly that he conceives Helen as merely a personification of a dream that all men have of the ideal woman. As such she can exist only in the mind of man. The problem arises when, as a character in the book, she must feel passion for Odysseus. Her physical role in the novel is incongruous with her symbolic meaning. Ideal Beauty, rather than an earthly being, she negates the physical love that Odysseus is supposed to feel for her, with the result that the reader, ironically, is forced to develop a sympathy for the more earthly Meriamun. "But when any man would have come nearer and embraced her, there was that about her which drove him back, and if he strove again, behold, he fell down dead."<sup>21</sup>

Like Stella Fregelius, Helen as a character is weakened by

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<sup>21</sup>The World's Desire (1953), p. 76.

the qualities that give her significance as a symbol. She is every-man's dream and manifests herself to every man in the image of that dream; but forced to become more than an ethereal vision, she is merely a frigid woman.

Eric Brighteyes (1891) is an admirable example of the poetic novel that Haggard failed to write in The World's Desire. Haggard's definition of poetic in this context seems to be a successful amalgam of romantic adventure and symbolism. In Eric Brighteyes the success of plot, character and atmosphere is almost completely due to the symbolic imagery. This reinforces the concept of Eric as a great romantic hero engaged in the battle against evil forces, too strong for him it is true, but which can destroy but not defeat him. Like Umslopogaas, in his seeming defeat he is a glorious example of that element in mankind which is eternally unconquerable.

Founded on the Icelandic Sagas, particularly the *Njála*, which it sometimes echoes, the book gives Haggard the opportunity to write about the ancient Norsemen he admired. In expanding the material of the sagas, he imbues his characters with extraordinary life and vim, while working out a highly-structured allegory of good and evil, of man caught up in the dilemma of life and forced to accept it on its own terms. Fate has mapped out his course and he cannot alter it.

As an exercise in the symbolic use of thematic imagery the novel is outstanding. Images from nature are used as an aid to characterization, a foreshadowing of tragic events, and an artistic device to unify the action and to raise it above the commonplace.

The tragic and symbolic atmosphere is established by the dream

of Asmund the priest that provides an allegorical framework for the novel. He dreams that his wife bore a dove with feathers of silver and that Groa the Witch bore a golden snake. A great white swan with a sharp sword for its tongue loved the dove and drove away the snake. An eagle that came from the north and loved the dove was killed by the swan, but the snake eventually killed the dove and clung around the swan's neck until they both fell into the sea.

The book is a masterly working out of the dream in human conflict and suffering. Asmund's daughter, Gudruda the Fair, has the gentle nature of the dove and the ethereal beauty suggested by the silver image. "Her hair . . . was golden, and she was white as the snow on Hecla." Swanhild, the daughter of Groa the witch, was "dark of hue, having eyes blue as the deep sea." Her nature was dark and her thoughts were deep. Like gold, she had the power "to draw the hearts of men to her and then to mock them."<sup>22</sup> Eric, the swan, who "was strong and great of stature . . . and [whose] grey eyes shone with the light of swords,"<sup>23</sup> loves Gudruda and resists the advances of the snake-like Swanhild. Ospakar Blacktooth, the eagle, is eventually conquered by Eric with the sword of the dream, while Swanhild works the doom of both Gudruda and Eric.

As everything is foreshadowed by the Norns, the whole plot is foreshadowed by the dream and worked out inexorably. The animal images not only suggest the animalistic nature of man, whose fate is governed

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<sup>22</sup>Eric Brighteyes (1949), p. 24.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

by that nature, but also provide, by means of mythopoeia, the necessary emotional atmosphere.

Over all hovers the vulture-like horror, Groa the Witch.

In the snowstorm on Coldbeck, Gudruda's fear brings on a vision of her death, in which she is lying by Eric's side and sees Swanhild approaching with outstretched hands. Eric dismisses it as "an untimely dream that comes before the sleep,"<sup>24</sup> but their closeness to death in the snowstorm foreshadows Gudruda's death at Eric's side, and the snow that holds them captive symbolizes the circumstances of their lives, from which there is no escape.

When Swanhild, struggling through the drifts, cries out in fear, Gudruda's remark, "It was but a nighthawk screaming," is more significant than she realizes. When Swanhild kisses her she notices that "her eyes burned like fire" and "her lips were cold as ice."<sup>25</sup>

Image follows image, each skilfully chosen to convey a special symbolic meaning. Groa's saying that the wolf (Eric) must be fenced from the lamb (Gudruda), startling in its apparent incongruity, implies the fierce courage of Eric, the gentleness of Gudruda, and the idea that Gudruda is to be sacrificed. Swanhild is a wildcat; Eric and Gudruda are "birds at nesting time;" Eric is a troutlet, presumably to be caught by tickling; Groa's thrall Koll, who looks like a fox, plays a fox's part.

The images of gold, the rainbow and the stone are used throughout

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-31.

the book to symbolize the love of Eric and Gudruda. Eric refuses Asmund's gold arm-ring because Asmund has said that Gudruda is destined for "some rich and noble man," but he undertakes the passage over Golden Falls to prove his love. The golden helmet and the sun become effective symbols of love in such passages as: "Gudruda sat on the shore watching till, at length, the light faded from Eric's helmet . . . and the world grew dark to her."<sup>26</sup>

Blacktooth, whose lust is not love, is a "Gold-scatterer."

The rainbow image is first suggested by the division of the waterfall around Sheep-saddle. Seeing the rainbow in the spray, Eric notices that "one end of it lit upon him, and the other, like a glory from the Gods, fell full upon Gudruda."<sup>27</sup>

The outcome of their love is suggested by the stone. Eric "seemed but as a big white stone hurled down the face of the arching waters," while Gudruda's face "was set like a stone with doubt and anguish."<sup>28</sup> Later the stone represents Eric's sin when he succumbs to Swanhild's temptation.

The sacrifice of the ox at the Yuletide feast, the holy altar ring and the holy fire are linked to the sword Whitefire and the doom that Eric's love for Gudruda will bring upon him. The sound of waters in Eric's ears takes us back to the falls and suggests that he has not won the battle of love, but will be a sacrifice on love's altar. Even

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

the descent, rather than ascent, of the falls has significance.

Ospaka Blacktooth is the Wolf's Fang that caused Eric so much trouble in the Golden River. His habitation Swinefell, and the fact that his limbs are covered with black hair like those of a goat suggest his nature.

When Eric "girt Whitefire round him and set upon his head a golden helmet"<sup>29</sup> to go against Skallagrim, we are reminded of his oath to fight the Baresark sworn upon the holy stone, and the images of sword, stone, and helmet give a special mythopoeic significance to the coming battle, which takes on the semblance of a quest.

The name Skallagrim, in its closeness to "grim skull" is a foreshadowing of death. The repetition of the lamb image in the Baresark's arrival at Eric's house with a lamb under his arm and the new name Lambstail bestowed upon him by Eric foreshadow the part that he will inadvertently play in Gudruda's death. Skallagrim is a cave-dweller in actuality and in his mind until "a last ray from the sun," his love for Eric, shines upon him.

Benita (1906) is neither so structurally complex nor so poetically convincing as Eric Brighteyes, but on a rather unpretentious scale is a similar allegory of man's continuing battle against evil.

In the first chapter Benita's remark, "I feel as though we were all of us upon the edge of some dreadful catastrophe--as though there were about to be a mighty change, and beyond it another life, something

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 72.



new and unfamiliar,"<sup>30</sup> suggests that this is to be a story in which at least some of the meaning is below the surface.

It is clearly implied that evil is inherent in the occult powers of the Jew Meyer. Evil is inherent also in Benita to the extent that, as a clairvoyant, she is subject to Meyer's domination and against her true nature becomes an instrument in his evil designs.

Man's grosser passions are again represented by animal images. Meyer has sight like a hawk's. His eyes are compared to a panther's or a lion's. He has the ferocity of a panther. He moves like a cat. His downfall is foreshadowed when he leaps "from rock to rock like a frightened buck."<sup>31</sup> The foreshadowing of the appearance of the Matabele by the howl of a hyena provides a subtle comparison between Meyer and that savage people.<sup>32</sup>

Molimo promises Benita: "Love shall take you by the hand, till at length he leads you through life's dark cave to that eternal house of purest gold which soon or late those who seek it shall inherit."<sup>33</sup>

Gold, which has so many symbolic meanings in Haggard, here becomes a symbol of heaven--to be attained only by love--and the cave becomes earthly sorrow and privation. In the dénouement Meyer's schemes to overcome Benita's better nature culminate in the betraying kiss of Judas, revealing symbolically the nature of the man's soul. By clasping

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<sup>30</sup>Benita (1965), p. 12.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>32</sup>cf. Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 159.

<sup>33</sup>Benita, p. 229.

the feet of Christ, Benita is released from the darkness of the tomb, while Meyer, because of his antipathy towards and fear of Christ, dies a madman. Man's nature, the reader infers can be redeemed through the love that Christ symbolizes. In The Wanderer's Necklace (1914) is found one of the most moving examples of Haggard's symbolic use of images from nature. After Olaf's beloved foster brother has been sacrificed to Odin we are shown "the spring sunshine shining quietly over all, and, running past the place, a ewe calling to the lamb that it had lost." When Olaf defies Odin, the powerlessness of the god and the indifference of nature to man's sufferings are symbolized by "a wren [that] settled on the head of Odin and twittered there, then flew off to its nest in the thatch."

In She Haggard's quintessential woman appeals to the imagination because of her mystery and because of the unique setting in which he places her. In the sequel Ayesha he does not have that advantage. Therefore at the beginning of the novel he places her at the centre of a philosophical allegory. She still appeals romantically, but for readers of She, Haggard seems to realize, something more is needed. In the introduction to Ayesha he clearly implies the importance of the symbolic content.

In She much of the symbolism of the story depends on the reader's interpretation of the dénouement. Haggard regards Ayesha as "the conclusion of an imaginative tragedy," and assumes that the reader is familiar with the early part of that tragedy. With due consideration for any difference between the reader's interpretation of She and the meaning of Ayesha that, as her creator, he has evolved over a twenty

year period, he has Holly wonder: "Who and what was Ayesha, nay, what is Ayesha? An incarnate essence, a materialized spirit of Nature the unforeseeing, the lovely, the cruel and the immortal; ensouled alone, redeemable only by Humanity and its piteous sacrifices."<sup>34</sup>

Since the question is led up to by a warning that the discoverer of even "some part of Ayesha's might" should beware how he uses it, the reader accepts it as rhetorical.

Having established Ayesha's symbolical nature, Haggard uses both speech and action to raise his romantic content to a symbolic level. I do not believe that he expects his readers to recognize each symbol as they read. He is more subtle than that. Possibly the symbols are important to the reader only as they contribute to the total effect rather than as separate entities. Their contribution to the total "flavour," however, is a tremendously important factor in Haggard's appeal.

Having established the symbolic level, Haggard now works on that level. He now meets the reader on an imaginative plane in which objects and actions have special significance. The matter-of-fact general practitioner who attended Holly in his last illness repeats the house-keeper's diagnosis "that he was very ill with his heart." The illness is obviously not ordinary heart disease. This strange illness is juxtaposed to a mention of a long mysterious journey, and followed soon by a description of a special beauty that shone in Holly's ugly face, "not like the face of any ordinary mortal."

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<sup>34</sup>Ayesha (1956), p. xiii.

On the level that Haggard has established, ideas are conveyed symbolically. Holly's inability to bring himself to burn the manuscript suggests that once discovered, Nature's secrets are discovered for all time. They can be neither hidden again nor ignored. The naked footprints, the fir grove, and the miniature Stonehenge known as the Devil's Ring take the reader's mind back to earlier times when man possessed a strong fear of nature. Symbolically they suggest that that fear, now considered superstition, was really a natural instinct that served as a protection. That the revelation of nature's laws results in death is symbolically conveyed when Holly sees Ayesha's radiant figure, falls "through it," and dies. Ayesha's sceptre is, however, the Crux ansata, a symbol of life. Paradoxically, nature is both life and death. The music of the silver bells that hang from the sceptre is "a sweet faint music like to that of chimes heard far away at night in the silence of the sea." It is a beautiful music, the lure that nature extends to man to explore her secrets--a mysterious urge that cannot be put into words. Heard from afar, it suggests the music of the sirens, and "night" and "silence," in Haggard's mythology, represent death.

The uncomfortable feeling that man was delving too deeply into the secrets of nature was, of course, not new with Haggard. It is a reflection of Tennyson's vision of planes raining "a ghastly dew," which in turn reflects the apprehensions of a time when scientific investigations were beginning to accelerate. Haggard suggests symbolically that nature protects man from his own inquisitiveness. Man's littleness and loneliness are conveyed by means of the stones reaching

towards "the star-strewn sky," but nature, like Ayesha, reveals half-truths "as mere veils to hide the truth which it was her purpose to reveal at last in that song she never sang."<sup>35</sup> Haggard's reticence may suggest that the full revelation of nature's secrets could be the end of man.

It is curious that in his introduction to Ayesha Haggard's incidents are the usual ingredients of a ghost story. Holly is haunted by Ayesha, she comes for him, he dies. But Haggard makes this standard incident much more appealing to the intelligence than does the ordinary writer of the ghostly tale. Holly, like Haggard, is haunted by fears and by ideas, and those fears and ideas are conveyed to the reader by images that his mind transforms into something much more profound.

Having introduced the symbolic content, Haggard now begins to develop the adventure, but he keeps the reader reminded of the spiritual nature of the quest. The opening of Chapter I reinforces the symbolic theme. The adventure begins with Leo's Vision and ends in "soul shaking wonder and amazement." The capitalized noun suggests more than a mere apparition. Early man's vision of nature produced various intricate mythologies that both inspired and limited his achievements. The replacement of man's imaginative vision by a physical vision of nature as a source of power (coal, gas, oil, electricity and the atom) has released much more destructive forms than nature herself revealed. Man's true relationship with nature is, Haggard affirms, a spiritual one and Holly desires "to pursue the quest in other realms."

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. xviii.

Symbolically Holly is mankind seeking his true identity in his relationship with nature. He yearns to worship "not with the flesh," but with "the will and soul which animate a man throughout the countless aeons of his being. The flesh dies . . . but that other passion of the spirit--that longing for oneness is undying as [nature] itself."<sup>36</sup>

Holly speculates on death--"that black and terrible Gate"--and implies that it is man's physical dissolution that finally effects the ultimate union with nature. The physical part of man dies but the spiritual lives on. As nature is periodically restored, so is man. Leo's hair has once again turned from grey to the gold of the sun or of wheat. The light in Leo's dream provides inspiration and represents the life force that brings man out of darkness or nothingness. Ayesha is man's recognition of that life force. She is Persephone, Christ, reincarnation. She is, above all, Nature's power to reproduce.

In symbolic terms Haggard in Ayesha shows man wandering "among the icy hills and deserts" of this world. The Messenger, or the inspiration that he receives from nature, leads him to the Mountain of further understanding, and up the Mountain to the Shrine at the top, where he finds the Spirit, or "oneness" with nature. In that total unity his physical being is destroyed, but in the course of time, as happens to Leo "upon the desolate sea-shore of Cumberland," is restored again. The time span of She represents one physical manifestation of a human soul; that of Ayesha, another. The period in Cumberland represents the death of the physical man, during which the soul enters

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

into nature and becomes rejuvenated, as Holly implies when he wonders about his own death.

It is clear that Leo's strong compulsion to commit suicide results from his alienation from nature. His physical malaise, his "torn flesh and quivering nerves," represent the dilemma of modern man. The vision shared by Holly and Leo at the end of Chapter I involves the fire and the cloud by which God manifested himself to the Israelites, but it also involves the male and female sexual symbols, thus uniting in nature's regenerative force the spiritual and the physical.

In Chapter II the choice of Tibet as a setting is not only an aid to the development of the romantic adventure but also enables Haggard to pursue his theme in symbolic terms. His use of symbolism to interweave theme and plot enhances both. After sixteen years "searching for that mountain peak shaped like the Symbol of Life," the wanderers' "true adventures" begin with Leo's first sight of the Monastery of the Mountain. Satisfying the monks that they have gained the necessary esoteric knowledge through suffering, they are permitted to enter the Monastery of the Mountain from the Monastery of the World, "where folk grow hungry." After a symbolic bath, or baptism, they convince their hosts that "their feet are in the Path." They instruct the monks in the ways of the world, which may help them in future incarnations. In return the monks tell them about the "priestess called Hes or the Hesea, who is said to reign from generation to generation."

Haggard's symbolic content is so finely adjusted to the adventure that there is no sense of heaviness. The action keeps moving. Often the most symbolic passages are the most exciting, notably Holly's

death, the shared vision, Leo's first sight of the Monastery of the Mountain, and the distant appearance of the crux ansata, which apparently gives them the courage to undertake a series of almost impossible feats of strength and endurance. The long period of time that Haggard allowed to elapse before the publication of "the conclusion" of She enabled him to plan for the book some of the most amazing ingredients in adventure fiction, while his greater maturity enabled him to interweave a deeper philosophy and a more intricate symbolism than he had used in earlier novels. In its grasp of a magnificent quest theme and in the scope and magnitude of its action it is among Haggard's best.

The wanderers now move through a series of physical dangers from the spiritual level of the Buddhist lamasery to an even higher spiritual level, the presence of Ayesha. The abbot Kou-en remembers Ayesha from a previous incarnation, and the effect of her beauty upon him and the sense of sin that makes him reluctant to talk about her has the effect of raising her above the physical.

Intrigued by a strange glow in the eastern sky, Leo and Holly climb a higher mountain, from which they see a distant peak in the shape of the crux ansata, now illuminated by volcanic fires. The cumulative effect of the increasing height of the mountains to be scaled in man's striving for spiritual being contrasts effectively with the swamps and caves in She, and we begin to comprehend why Haggard insists that Ayesha is a continuation. Mankind has come a long way from his primeval ignorance, but there are still great heights to be scaled.



Through the perils of the journey the reader feels the inevitability of the quest and identifies himself with Holly when he says: "But I knew then, as I know now, that we were players in some mighty, predestined drama; that our parts were written and we must speak them, as our path was prepared and we must tread it to the end unknown."<sup>37</sup>

The drama is that of all humanity struggling to achieve spiritual perfection through nature.

Ayesha's appearing as the aged hag she became in She is a test of Leo's love for her, which must be of the spirit rather than the flesh. The power of love is symbolized by the restoration of all Ayesha's transcendent beauty as a result of Leo's faithfulness, and her willingness to suffer the ills of prolonged existence in order to be with him. Through love, Holly is granted the illumination that gives him such joy before his death.

In his insistence on the spiritual bond between man and nature Haggard is in the tradition of the Romantic poets, but, as I have indicated elsewhere, his response to nature is complicated by the fear of the change in the man-nature relationship that scientific discoveries may bring about, a fear that is partly responsible for the ambiguities in his philosophy.

The conflict between man's spiritual bond with nature and his exploitation of natural resources is symbolized by the great battle between the followers of Ayesha and Atene, denizens of the mountain and the plain. The love allegory is blended with the nature allegory when

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

Leo tempts Ayesha to kiss him. The selfish desire represents man's delving too deeply into the secrets of nature, a symbolic betrayal of the source of his happiness. Leo's death as a result of that betrayal suggests not only the self destruction that may result from man's tampering with nature's physical being, but also that only in death and dissolution can man find his ultimate union with nature. On a different plane of existence to which death provides entry, the love of Ayesha and Leo will achieve the complete spiritual fulfilment that earthly existence denies.

The greatest danger of man's interference with nature, Haggard suggests, is not physical but spiritual. "But if this veil is lifted [Oros says] it may chance also that you will find what shall send your souls shivering to despair and madness."<sup>38</sup>

In his use of imagery Haggard is almost as complex in Ayesha as in Eric Brighteyes. As a symbol, Ayesha embraces more meanings than in She. At different times and different levels she represents spiritual love, the universal mother, artistic inspiration and the supreme manifestation of the power and endurance of nature. Her symbol, the crux ansata, the Symbol of Life, becomes the symbol of spiritual as opposed to physical existence. As the spirit of Nature she "might be wicked as we understand it, and was certainly terrible, but she was never either coarse or vulgar, any more than lightning is."<sup>39</sup>

The spiritual is also evoked by the mountain, the great beam

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

of light, the pillars of fire that lit the vast cave (the world), the river that brought fertility to the People of the Plain, and the statue representing Humanity saved by the Divine. Holly and Leo, priests of the world, are granted only a partial vision, in contrast to the priests of the mountain, who are capable of a total vision.

Haggard's insistence on the mountain as a symbolic goal is reminiscent of Arnold's lines in "Rugby Chapel":

We, we have chosen our path--  
Path to a clear-purposed goal,  
Path of advance!--but it leads  
A long, steep journey, through sunk  
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow!

Ruskin equates love of mountains with love of liberty. Speaking of nineteenth-century painters, he writes: "And it is eminently noticeable, also that this pleasure in the mountains is never mingled with fear, or tempered by a spirit of meditation . . . but is always free and fearless, brightly exhilarating, and wholly unreflective."<sup>40</sup>

There is no doubt that Haggard, like the painters of the period, takes a special pleasure in the contemplation of mountains. There is no doubt that the visual image is "brightly stimulating" to his imagination. Haggard's contemplation of mountains is, however, often "mingled with fear [and] tempered by a spirit of meditation." The mountain as a symbol of man's highest aspirations is important in Haggard and represents both hope and fear for the destiny of mankind.

Frye points out that the mountain is one of the common symbols for "the point at which the undisplaced apocalyptic world [myth] and

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<sup>40</sup>Modern Painters, iii, ch. 16.

the cyclical world of nature come into alignment."<sup>41</sup> In Haggard, it is a link between the spiritual and the physical, which is in accord with Frye's definition.

In certain later books Haggard, apparently in an effort to synthesize his ideas regarding the nature of man, life, love and religion, tends to use his plot almost solely as a vehicle for ideas. In Wisdom's Daughter (1923) and Queen of the Dawn (1925) the symbolic content used to convey ideas constitutes the plot. A kind of summing up of Haggard's personal beliefs, they repeat certain earlier ideas, enlarge upon them and combine them with other ideas that may help to clarify them. The emphasis seems to be placed particularly on man himself, rather than on man in relation to the universe.

In Wisdom's Daughter, Haggard returns to the problem of what he calls in his introductory note the "eternal war of the spirit and the flesh--of Isis and Aphrodite." The tragedy of the young Ayesha consists of the effort to reconcile those warring elements.

As a priestess of Isis, Ayesha is at first spirit, content with Isis's offer of "wisdom and hope beyond the grave." But Aphrodite offers "sweet love and joy in which for a little while all fears are forgot."<sup>42</sup> Ayesha succumbs to the flesh in her love for Kallikrates, and her human vanity causes her to seek eternal youth.

Now she is no longer above the world but of it. She deludes herself in her stated intention of using the world as a ladder to climb

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<sup>41</sup>Anatomy of Criticism, p. 203.

<sup>42</sup>Wisdom's Daughter, p. 19.

nearer to God. She uses the world to rule the world. The historical role she plays becomes a personal one. Her spiritual nature is prostituted to the physical. The use of the Eternal Fire is prompted by Amenartas's taunt that she is losing her beauty.

Having deluded herself into thinking that her acceptance of the worldly is for the world's good, having rationalized her desire for the delights of the flesh, she hears Aphrodite's laughter, which, Noot tells her, is "that of the evil in your own heart, mocking and triumphant. Such laughter doubtless you will often hear, but while you can hear it and repent, be not dismayed. When the ears of the soul . . . are open, hope remains."<sup>43</sup>

Ayesha's earthly immortality is incompatible with heavenly glory. Of the earth, she must suffer the pangs of the body. "In loneliness, in remorse, in utter desolation you must endure till the Fire dies that cannot die while the world is; seeking, yet never finding, or finding but to lose again."<sup>44</sup>

Through suffering, she is brought to recognize the power of the flesh and finally enabled to gain a victory over it.

Noot, as the principle of wisdom, tries to reconcile the spiritual and fleshly urges of man. But it is not in accordance with Haggard's philosophy that he do so. As in Stella Fregelius, Haggard demonstrates that ambivalence of attitude that he can not reconcile in his own mind. What is probably the most reiterated problem in his work

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

he knows he cannot solve;

All these stories do not agree together, since often I spoke them as parables . . . to hide my mind for my own purposes. Yet in every one of them lay hid something of the truth, a grain of gold in the ore of fable that might be found by him who had the skill and strength to seek.<sup>45</sup>

The optimistic message of the book is that man's possession within himself of the urge to higher things is the controlling force of events:

Always there is the eternal Good . . . and . . . it is called Ammon or otherwise . . . . Always the stained soul of man seeks redemption and he who saves is called Osiris or otherwise . . . . Always the great world that will not die, strains and pulses to new life and the Life-bringer is called Aphrodite or otherwise . . . . Where man is, again I say, there was and is and will be God, or Good--the spirit named by many names.<sup>46</sup>

Kipling was impressed with the book. He wrote:

The more I went through it the more I was convinced that it represented the whole sum and substance of your convictions along certain lines . . . . The whole book is miles and miles above the head of the reader at large. It will not come to its own for a long time, but to those to whom it is a message or a confirmation it will mean more than the rest of your work.

Haggard replied:

In that book is my philosophy . . . . The eternal war between the Flesh and the Spirit, the eternal loneliness and search for unity, which is only to be found in God, and when wrongly aimed blinds the eyes and seals the soul to light, which (I think) is the real sin unforgivable.<sup>47</sup>

In Queen of the Dawn (1925) the characters are almost completely subsidiary to the message. Here Haggard is more concerned with the

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>47</sup>Lilias Rider Haggard, The Cloak that I Left (1951), Chapter XX.

unreal than with the real, but he demonstrates symbolically that one cannot exist without the other.

Queen Rima's remarks on visions set the symbolic keynote:

A dream is a dream and of no account, but a vision seen with the naked eye is another matter, something that springs from madness--or perchance from truth . . . . How can I be sure that you are not mad, as indeed the wise men of my country say that most of us are in this way or in that?

Here we have the symbolists' belief that the real truth is found in the realm of the imagination but must be based in reality--the vision must be really a new vision of what actually exists in order for the imagination to grasp the truth. This is merely an extension of Haggard's belief that the imagination must be rooted in reality.

Kemmah's answer, "Because . . . every nation . . . clothes God in its own garments; aye, and every man and woman also,"<sup>48</sup> is close to Kierkegaard's belief that God exists within and involves a "leap of faith."

Rima's refusal to accept what she considers the new gods of Egypt and her wish to return to the familiar Babylonian gods reflects the dilemma of twentieth-century man, who has lost the old faith and finds nothing to replace it.

The Dawn is a symbol of that inner light which enables man to act in seeming darkness, feeling instinctively that he must act in a certain way. This nineteenth-century ideal of faith merges with the Existentialist doctrine which insists that man finds his identity in action. Ian says:

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<sup>48</sup>Queen of the Dawn (1925), p. 29.

Pharoahs are served, which is why they are often so blind and so satisfied . . . and are themselves the slaves of slaves. With him who serves it is otherwise, for, setting aside self-seeking and ambitions, he works humbly for that which is good and in the work finds his reward.<sup>49</sup>

Ian goes on to say that man finds God in his own heart "but what his name may be I cannot tell you. Some call it Justice, some call it Freedom, some call it Hope, some call it Spirit."<sup>50</sup>

The Existentialist belief that man's freedom of choice necessitates suffering is given an optimistic note by Nefra's: "Suffering that has purpose, or that bears fruit, even though we know not the purpose and never see the fruit, may be borne almost with joy."<sup>51</sup>

Haggard interprets the ancient Egyptian idea of Ka as "an invisible something that is stronger, purer, more enduring" than man himself, the true reality that man senses in life, rooted in his own being but transcending the physical man.

Although faith in its irrationality is akin to madness, love is based on faith. The Spirit of the Pyramids, which drives men mad, is love. Nefra's conquest of the pyramids thus becomes an allegory of love. Her love for Khian will present many difficulties to be overcome. A practical person, in order to experience love she will have to experience some of Khian's impracticability. The union of the two symbolizes the human being who has found his true identity.

When Khian decides to climb the Pyramids, Ru's remark, "Surely

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 99.



such folly must have a meaning, for among my people, the Ethiopians, they say that the maddest are always the most inspired,"<sup>52</sup> links the belief of modern psychologists such as R. D. Laing that only in madness can the truth be found to the ancient belief that the mad were to be revered because they were especially chosen by the gods.

Happiness, the book implies, is the successful combination of the outer and inner reality that is man's true identity. Man's irrationality is subject to the rational world in which he lives. Fire, Earth, Air and Water, the four Brethren of the Dawn who enable Khian to escape from the Shepherds, symbolize that world.

Similarly, Temu's faith does not work by itself. It is assisted by the rock which is close to hand when he needs a weapon. Both the faith and the rock are necessary. Khian acts by faith when he surrenders to the Shepherds in the hope of saving his friends, but is himself saved by the rational act of the Vizier Anati, who in killing Apepi takes Fate into his own hands.

The prophet Roy's parting words to Nefra sum up the philosophy of the book:

We are tied together by the bond of love, which, did you but know it, is the one perfect, eternal thing in Heaven and earth . . . . Only love is real, and only love endures. For love is God . . . who in the end will conquer all and make of hate a footstool and of evil the oil within his lamp.<sup>53</sup>

Only after man has achieved his real identity, Haggard implies, can he love his fellow man and find joy in purposeful suffering.

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

In addition to the instances of sustained symbolism that I have discussed, there are other isolated examples that should be cited. Some of those are particularly effective in their context.

One of the earliest and most striking instances is found in The Witch's Head. The introduction of the head into the story is at first dismissed by the reader as pure sensationalism, puzzling in its seeming unreason. It becomes fascinating when recognized as the symbol of evil that it is, both in its resemblance to Florence and in the part it plays in the denouement.

The ironic denouement of Swallow is highly symbolic. The half-breed Swart Piet, as the final result of his love for the white Suzanne, hangs desperately to the body of a black girl to save himself from death. When Ralph cuts the rope binding her to her rock chair, Piet and the dead girl plunge into space.

Here Haggard highlights the plight of the coloured people of South Africa, alienated from both black and white. Ralph severs Piet not only from Suzanne but also from his uncertain relationship with his black connections, who, as the rock suggests, are rooted in the soil of Africa. The futility of his clinging to the black girl's body implies that there is no hope for his kind in the ancient beliefs that give a sense of identity to the black race. The practice of cruelties taken for granted by his black ancestors could, for him, end only in death.

In the semi-visionary novel Red Eve (1911) Haggard uses the terrible figure of Murgh to represent the Black Death. As the story progresses the concept of Murgh enlarges, transcending both the period and the disease that it originally represents to become death itself.

Kipling's enthusiasm for Murgh is understandable. Lillias Rider Haggard very competently expresses the effect that Murgh has upon the reader. She refers to him as

the mighty lord whose names were Death and Pestilence--Murgh the Second Thing created, who was also called the Gateway of the Gods. The Helper of Man whom in their foolishness men fear, the Looser of Burdens whom all are bound to obey; that tremendous figure which moves through the book like a roll of drums behind the blare of a brass band and lifts it above the rut of the ordinary historical romance.<sup>54</sup>

The white and the black doves representing birth and death, the black road to death and the black temple are admirably conceived. Death itself is, however, not entirely grim. Murgh helps Hugh de Cressi and his servant Grey Dick on occasion. Death is, after all, no more than a necessary part of life. Murgh comments:

Well, life and death are one, and you and I are one with the moon and the stars above us, and many other things and beings that you cannot see. Therefore the begetter and the begotten are one in the Hand that holds them all.<sup>55</sup>

In the completely visionary novel The Mahatma and the Hare, also published in 1911, Haggard's obsession with the inevitability of death and his awareness of the vanity of material things are conveyed by his vision of the Great White Road of death. The change from the black to the white road is quite in keeping with Murgh's comment on life and death. Haggard writes:

Occasionally when I am in deep sleep, some part of me seems to leave my body and to be transported quite outside the world. It travels, as though I were already dead, to the Gates that all who live must pass, and there takes its stand, on the

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<sup>54</sup>The Cloak that I Left, p. 212.

<sup>55</sup>Red Eve (1911), p. 190.

Great White Road, watching those who have been called speed by continually. Blinded by their pomps and vanities, they cannot see, they will not see it always growing towards the feet of every one of them.<sup>56</sup>

Thomas Hardy thought The Mahatma and the Hare "a 'strangely attractive book' and was 'much moved by it.'"<sup>57</sup>

In Nada the Lily, Haggard successfully combines the images of woman as spirit, white and black as good and evil, and the gates of salvation and damnation in Mopo's dream of Inkosazana-y-Zulu:

Now the figure of the glorious woman held a rod in either hand, and the rod in her right hand was white and of ivory, and the rod in her left hand was black and of ebony . . . . And with the wand of ivory she pointed to the gates of ivory, through which came light and laughter, and with the wand of ebony she pointed to the gates of coal, through which came blackness and groans.<sup>58</sup>

Although symbolism in Haggard is not always as obvious as the examples I have considered, his best work is seldom completely free of it. In Child of Storm, for example, Mameena may be seen as a symbol of the Zulu nation, which brought about its own destruction by the very qualities that made it great. While the cruel, passionate, courageous, loyal, ambitions and unpredictable Mameena includes all of those qualities, other characters symbolize specific characteristics of the race: Zikaldi, their lust for blood; Umbezi, their greed; Saduko, their treachery; and Mazupo, their arrogance.

Rarely does Haggard's symbolism become too laboured. The latter

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<sup>56</sup>The Mahatma and the Hare, p. 26.

<sup>57</sup>Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard, p. 70 (note).

<sup>58</sup>Nada the Lily (1949), p. 99.

portion of The Ghost Kings is, I fancy, spoiled for many readers by the obvious fantasy of the Ghost people. After the careful verisimilitude of the early episodes such a complete change is difficult to accept. Nevertheless, regarded solely as a symbolic presentation of the oppression that sorrow brings to the spirit it is admirable.

In When the World Shook (1919) the figure symbolizing life is far too detailed, and the "struggle for Life-water" by the "Sons of Wisdom, Sons of the Nations" is a cumbersome restating of the struggle between the physical and the spiritual handled much more originally in earlier novels. It is not surprising that the Glittering Lady is a ludicrous burlesque of Haggard's idealized woman. Such women, regarded symbolically (Helen, Stella Fregelius, Mea, etc.), are always ironic in their juxtaposition to such "real" women as Meriamun, Mary and Edith. The Glittering Lady may be interpreted as realization that the ideal woman is an impossible dream, and that even the dream is coarsened by the attempt to express it in logical terms. Ayesha herself, one remembers, is an ironic example of the dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical. A supreme example of symbolic grandeur, as a woman she cannot escape human pettiness.

Haggard's use of symbolism not only reflects his personal view of life but is also representative of a period of searching for new values to replace those that, in the light of scientific and psychological advances, have been found untenable.

Aware of the problems of life, Haggard never allows himself to fall into the grimness and hopelessness typical of much of the realistic writing of the period. He continually stresses the idea that hardships

and complexities are necessary to the achievement of the true life, which is largely spiritual, and expresses a firm belief in the supernal and eternal destiny of man's spirit.

Henry Miller points out the importance of writers such as Haggard:

Rider Haggard is one of those imaginative writers who undoubtedly fed from many streams. We think of him now as a writer of boys' books, content to let his name fade into oblivion. Perhaps only when our scientific explorers and investigators stumble upon the truths revealed through imagination will we recognize the true stature of such a writer.<sup>59</sup>

To Miller, Haggard's books in "glorifying man glorify the whole universe."

What is the subject of these oft despised books? [Miller asks] Briefly, the web of life and death; the pursuit of identity through the drama of identification; the terrors of initiation; the lure of indescribable visions; the road to acceptance; the redemption of the creature world and the transformation of Nature; the final loss of memory in God. Into the texture of such books is woven all that is symbolic and everlasting.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>The Books in My Life, p. 84.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 144-145.

#### IV. HAGGARD AS A NOVELIST OF AFRICAN LIFE

In Haggard there are two Africas--the Africa that he experienced and heard described by acquaintances and the Africa that his imagination created. The reader senses that Haggard uses the real Africa only as a starting point. The author's imagination soon transforms or extends the real into a dark brooding, sometimes symbolic, region of romance. In Africa, Haggard, like other explorers, discovered the cruel, the weird, the fantastic, the incomprehensible. The reality fed his imagination. If such were to be found within the accessible regions of the continent, what wonders might not exist in the remote interior? His imagination supplied the answer.

Building on rumours, folk tales, fact and distortions of fact, Haggard extended the known landscape into the realms of fancy, and created suitable inhabitants to occupy the new territory.<sup>1</sup> When the inhabitants of the real Africa move to the unreal, or when the inhabitants of the unreal are found in the real, the two territories merge. It is in this merging that Haggard often achieves his greatest imaginative effects, achieving verisimilitude by means of a judicious mixture of fact and fancy. As I have already demonstrated, this is particularly true of King Solomon's Mines, Allan Quatermain and She.

There can be little doubt that Haggard contributed immeasurably

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<sup>1</sup>cf. The Valley of Bones in Finished with the same valley, used symbolically in Ayesha.

to the special aura of mystery and romance that, for most people, surrounds Africa. Most people's impression of Africa has been formed either directly from Haggard's novels, from writers such as Edgar Rice Burroughs who were to a great extent influenced by Haggard, from various ephemeral imitations of Haggard in magazines and boys' papers, or from the great imitator and synthesizer Hollywood. Such an influence is difficult to measure. The fact that Haggard made the world aware of the romantic possibilities of Africa cannot be disputed. Haggard's Africa exists as Marco Polo's Cathay or King Arthur's England exists. It has become a part of the dream world that helps to keep the human imagination alive.

The dream, for most men, has more substance than the reality. Kôr, Kukuanaland and Zu-Vendis are Haggard's version of the dream, more vivid in the reader's mind than Natal or the Transvaal can ever be. The real territory of Swallow and Jess is coloured by that dream. In Haggard, as in most of us, it is impossible to say where reality ends and the dream begins. Many young readers of Haggard have been stimulated by their reading to seek an impossible fulfilment of their dream. Graham Greene writes:

If it had not been for that romantic tale of Allan Quatermain, Sir Henry Curtis, Captain Good, and, above all, the ancient witch Gagool, would I at nineteen have studied the appointment list of the Colonial Office and very nearly picked on the Nigerian Navy for a career? And later, when surely I ought to have known better, the odd African fixation remained. In 1935, I found myself sick with fever on a camp bed in a Liberian native's hut with a candle going out in an empty whisky bottle and a rat moving in the shadows . . . . There is not much in common between the land of the Kukuanas . . . and a tin roofed house on a bit of swamp . . . but the two belonged at any rate to the same continent, and, however distantly, to the same



region of the imagination.<sup>2</sup>

Since I have already dealt with Haggard's imaginative extension of Africa, this chapter will be concerned primarily with certain of his romances as a commentary on African life, people and politics, and secondly the success of those books as fiction. Haggard's romantic imagination encompasses "the tin roofed house" as well as Kukuanaaland. His imaginative use of Africa did not, however, prevent him from exercising shrewd judgement on African affairs, or his using his romantic material to present that judgement to the public. Like his friend Kipling, with whom he also shared literary tastes and aspirations, he felt that the English had certain responsibilities towards the native peoples within the empire, not the least of those responsibilities being respect for their cultures as peoples and their rights and identities as individuals. The real Africa was tremendously important to him. His understanding of the mental and moral characteristics and the culture of certain African races enabled him to see them as adult human beings rather than children or creatures of an inferior species. The sense of empathy that he shows towards all life enabled him to put himself imaginatively in their position. His work in South Africa during a crucial period gave him an insight into contemporary problems, while his imaginative interest in the past enabled him to dig out the roots of those problems and gave him a fair basis for comparison.

Haggard objected strenuously to mismanagement of African affairs

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<sup>2</sup>Graham Greene, Collected Essays (1969), Chapter I: The Lost Childhood.

--English, Dutch or negro. In his interpretation of the way of life of the peoples of South Africa, he implied certain general principles for mutual understanding between the white and the black races. In retrospect, his advocacy of the welfare of national groups and his opposition to those who used Africa as a political football or the means to achieve personal satisfactions seem based on true foresight. His novels reflect the serious research and the political common sense that characterize his historical writings.<sup>3</sup>

When Haggard arrived in South Africa in 1875, the problems of the area were already deeply rooted. Problems arising from the relationship between Boers and natives were acute in the Cape before the British conquest: the slaves far outnumbered their masters and were difficult to control; interbreeding between native races and casual miscegenation between white men and slave women had resulted in a polyglot sub-race with no distinct culture; and continual troubles with tribes on the borders of Dutch territory made life dangerous and the economy uncertain. Further complications arose following the British conquest in 1795. Unsettled relations between British and Boers resulted in serious native uprisings. In 1803 the Cape was handed back to the Dutch, but their efforts to solve the worst problems were frustrated by British recapture of the Cape in 1805. The British instituted a cautious policy of reform, but the Boers resented interference with their treatment of the slaves. Troubles continued with native tribes, and new British settlers

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<sup>3</sup>In Cetywayo and His White Neighbours (1882), The Last Boer War (1899), and The New South Africa (1900), Haggard adopted the role of historian in order to correct certain misapprehensions of the British public regarding South Africa.

discovered that British liberties and institutions had not been introduced into the new British territory. Missionaries with the best of aims helped to foment troubles between the British and the Boers, between whites and natives, and between masters and slaves. Gradual freeing of the slaves irked the Boers and was one of the causes of the Great Trek. The growth of the Afrikaner republics and the settlement of British immigrants in Natal led to encounters with the Zulus and the Basutos, strong tribes with a fierce martial spirit.

As secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, governor of Natal, Haggard became very much aware of both contemporary problems and their roots in the past. The white population of Natal had become predominantly British but a stable government brought an influx of Africans who soon far outnumbered the whites. Sir Theophilus Shepstone's policy of placing the Africans on adequate reserves, where they could maintain their customs and economy, was very unpopular because it made native labour difficult to obtain. As secretary for native affairs Shepstone had also to deal with the Zulus, into whose psychology he apparently had remarkable insight.

Haggard's period in Africa, 1875-1879, was a crucial one in British-Boer-Zulu relationships and Haggard was directly involved and keenly interested. For some time a member of Shepstone's staff, Haggard observed his expert handling of the very ticklish Zulu relationship, and his efforts to mitigate the problems of the Boers, steadily growing more complicated.

Anti-British feeling was very bitter in the Transvaal. President Burger's efforts at social, educational and religious reforms were no

more successful than his efforts to build a railway that would free his country from dependence on British trade routes. At the request of Paul Kruger and his supporters, Shepstone was commissioned by Lord Carnarvon to annex the republic.

Gladstone's ministry failed, however, to bring about reforms promised by Disraeli. Sir Bartle Frere ignored Cetywayo's just claims as to the boundaries of Zululand and imposed harsh controls on his military organization. The Zulu war resulted in the defeat of the British at Isandhlwana, and the Transvaalers rebelled and defeated the British at Majuba. The retrocession of the Transvaal in 1881 caused great hardship to loyal British settlers in the colony.

As secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, as a member of Shepstone's staff, as master and registrar of the high court of the Transvaal, and as a farmer in Africa, Haggard was close to many of those events or learned of them from people who had participated in them. In such novels as Jess he speaks with authority.

He felt that a proper understanding of the situation in the Transvaal would have prevented much of the hardship to British and less radical Dutch settlers in that territory, and that fair treatment of the Zulus based upon an understanding of their history and culture would have prevented the Zulu war. Able administrators like Shepstone, he felt, given the requisite freedom to institute policy and backed up by the British government would eventually bring about conditions in Africa that would ensure the best interests of English, Boers and natives.

The role of the Englishman in Africa is a recurrent theme in

Haggard. Whether administrator or farmer, the type of Englishman needed in Africa, Haggard insists, must have certain inherent qualities. Most important among those qualities seem to be self-respect and respect for other human beings. The Englishmen in Jess are not only gentlemen, according to Haggard's definition of the term, but also maintain their dignity while doing their share of the necessary labour. Silas Crofts remarks: "Now, where one has Kafirs to deal with . . . you must have a gentleman. Your mean white will never get anything out of a Kafir; that's why the Boers kill them and flog them, because they can't get anything out of them without."<sup>4</sup>

To Haggard, Silas's attitude is not only humanitarian. It also reflects good common sense.

Haggard comments in his autobiography: "One of the curses of South Africa is, or used to be, the universal habit of relegating all manual toil, or as much of it as possible, to Kaffirs, with the result that it came to be looked upon as a more or less degrading occupation only fit for black men."<sup>5</sup>

Haggard is implying that the black man's feelings must be respected. The natives already held the view that manual labour was degrading. How much more degrading to their feelings of self-respect must it have been to have that degradation imposed upon them by masters who, their intuition told them, were in no way superior to themselves. The participation of the white man in the work would, conversely, remove

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<sup>4</sup>Jess (1913), p. 29.

<sup>5</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 196.

the sense of degradation.

Haggard continually emphasizes this theme:

White settlers . . . are too apt to hate, despise and revile the aboriginal inhabitants . . . . Often this is because they fear them, or even more frequently because the coloured people, not needing to do so, will not work for them at a low rate of wages . . . .

Also many white men have, or used to have, a habit of personally assaulting natives, frequently upon quite insufficient grounds . . . . Where Zulus are concerned at least, a great deal depends upon the person in authority over them. No race is quicker at discovering any alloy of base metal in a man's nature. Many who are called "gentlemen" among us on account of their wealth or station will not pass as such with them . . . . Like others, savages have their gentlefolk and their common people, but with all their faults even those common people are not vulgar in our sense of the word. In essential matters they still preserve a certain dignity.<sup>6</sup>

F. C. Selous, one of the best-known African travellers and hunters, expresses a similar view of the type of "young Englishman one wants in a new country--good-tempered and forbearing with the natives, not afraid to soil their hands by handling axe or spade, always ready to set an example of hard work, conscientious and intelligent, and taking everything as it came without grumbling."<sup>7</sup>

Selous might have been describing John Neil of Jess, or, with slight modifications, Ernest Kershaw of The Witch's Head. Selous's requirements are Haggard's, except that the use of "forbearing" rather subtly implies that the natives are somehow inferior. Haggard sometimes allows Allan and other characters to adopt a rather high-handed attitude towards certain individual natives as a matter of policy, but

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>7</sup>F. C. Selous, Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa (1893), pp. 9-10.

the reader senses that the same attitude would be adopted towards a person of the white race under similar circumstances. In Haggard's code, only the "mean" white regards the native as inferior, and further demeans himself by doing so. In Cetywayo and His White Neighbours, he objects strenuously to the granting of so much power to John Dunn, who, he implies, is not a gentleman and therefore incapable of dealing with Zulus.

Allan Quatermain, in his dealings with Africans, illustrates the knowledge, tact, firmness and understanding that Haggard felt necessary requisites for any Englishmen in Africa. Allan obviously accepts the African native as he is, understanding the circumstances of culture and history that have formed him. He recognizes the good in the Zulus, for example, as good in their terms. He admires their loyalty and courage, but expresses no regrets that they love war rather than peace and that they lack certain social graces. He recognizes, too, that individual characteristics are not swallowed up by the national: Zikali and Umslopogaas both demonstrate national characteristics, but they are also both strong-minded individuals. Neither does he lump the tribes together. Hans's virtues are not the virtues of a Zulu, but they are equally admirable. Allan's powers of discrimination are based upon intimate knowledge and natural tact, the knowledge and tact that Haggard apparently saw Shepstone demonstrate. In certain incidents, romantic but no less valid as a statement of opinion, Haggard demonstrates the wonders to be wrought by a union of the talents of black and white; e.g., Allan and Umslopogaas saving Zu-Vendis, and Allan and Hans defeating Jana. Apparently at first impressed by the admirable

qualities of the Zulu warrior, portrayed imaginatively by Umslopogaas, Haggard was led to think of the less spectacular qualities that he incorporated in Hans. It may be noted, too, that knowledge of native peoples necessarily involves knowledge of bad as well as good qualities. Cruelty and rapaciousness may be quite natural to a Zulu in the light of his history, but they are to be guarded against; and Allan, in return for fairness and consideration to the natives, demands that they treat him with respect.

There is no doubt that Haggard admired Sir Theophilus Shepstone, Sir Melmoth Osborn, and the Zulu Border Agent Mr. F. B. Fynney for the specialized knowledge they had gained over the years of the Zulu people, and their ability to put that knowledge to good use. He gives due credit to those men in his autobiography and in various prefaces. They are the sort of men Africa needs, he keeps insisting. In Allan he presents their qualities indirectly to the reader, particularly in Child of Storm and Finished, two books that endeavour to determine the causes of the Zulu war, and suggest lack of understanding and mismanagement on the part of unsuitable white administrators as not the least important among those causes.

Haggard looked upon the missionary as a kind of minor administrator, just as much in need of special qualities and knowledge as estate owners and government officials. Christianity, even saintliness, is not sufficient by itself. He does not, however, object to missionaries per se and is willing to admit that many of them are extremely admirable in both motives and performance. He felt strongly, however, that in his time the native peoples of Africa were not ready for missionaries.



In Cetywayo and His White Neighbours he writes:

We must civilize first and Christianize afterwards. As well try to sow corn among rocks and look to gather a full crop, as expect the words of Grace and Divine love to bear fruit in the hearts of a people whose forefathers have for countless generations been men of blood, whose prized traditions are one long story of slaughter, and who, if they are now at peace, are, as it were, only gathering strength for a surer spring.<sup>8</sup>

In support of his views on the missionary, Haggard gives us a number of romantic, humorous and realistic portraits. There are many types of missionaries, he implies: some hypocrites, others sincere. Although he sometimes adopts an ironical tone towards the missionary he gives credit where it is due. In Haggard there is none of that castigation of the missionaries that one finds in Mrs. Millin, William Plomer and their contemporaries. Mr. Mackenzie in Allan Quatermain is one of the most capable. He combines the roles of estate manager and spiritual guide, and is not above engaging in savage warfare on behalf of his people. The reader notes that the emphasis in Allan Quatermain is on his role as estate manager. Allan's father, the missionary, is, according to the little one learns about him in Marie, a very good man. He remains, however, a shadowy figure that exists for the most part in Hans's memory, and through Hans's eyes seems to have been rather hard and cold, with a strict sense of duty and a strong English pride. As a figure in Hans's memory he often provides humour, which might be Haggard's way of indicating his ineptitude in the face of a culture that was much too strong for him to influence. There is no doubt at all that his preaching simply served to confuse Hans, and possibly most

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<sup>8</sup>Cetywayo and His White Neighbours, p. 64.

other native auditors.

Haggard continually makes the point that the strength of native customs, particularly polygamy, was sufficient to defeat the efforts of even the most determined missionaries. His missionaries are well-meaning men, not particularly aware of the nature of the obstacles, engaged in a self-defeating task.

In Thomas Owen of The Wizard (1896) Haggard depicts a man who believes he is bidden by God to undertake a mission to an African people known as the Sons of Fire:

How or in what seeming that summons came Thomas Owen never told, and we need not inquire. At the least he heard it, and, like the Apostles, he arose and girded his loins to obey. For now, in the hour of trial, it proved that this man's faith partook of the nature of their faith. It was utter and virgin; it was not clogged with nineteenth-century qualifications . . . . In his heart he believed that the Almighty, without intermediary, but face to face, had bidden him to go forth into the wilderness there to perish. So he bowed his head and went.<sup>9</sup>

Thomas Owen gives up a comfortable benefice in England to go among the heathen. He is determined to demonstrate the strength and sincerity of the Christian religion, and by exercising shrewdness, will power and faith, he succeeds in his purpose. The witch-doctor Hokosa, symbolizing all the power of native tradition, is won over only after a long struggle during which the missionary burns himself out. When the defeated Hokosa asks to be shown Owen's magic, the missionary remarks: "This then is my magic: To love God and serve man; to eschew wizardry, wealth and power; to seek after holiness, poverty and humility;

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<sup>9</sup>Black Heart and White Heart and Other Stories (1903), p. 241.

to deny your flesh, and to make yourself small in the sight of men, that so perchance you may grow great in the sight of Heaven and save your soul alive."<sup>10</sup>

In this magnificent tale of "a Faith which triumphed over savagery and death," Haggard shows expert knowledge of the physical and psychological problems of a missionary and great admiration for such men as Owen. Walter Besant remarked in The Queen: "It is only a short tale--too short--but it shows imaginative power that makes it worthy to follow after 'She.'"

In its imaginative recreation of the life of a missionary, it has a value far beyond its romantic appeal.

The missionary of The Ghost Kings (1908) is not nearly as sure of his ground as Thomas Owen. Owen recognizes the strength of the opposition; Reverend John Dove apparently fails to understand that a problem exists.

As a missionary the Reverend John Dove was not a success. The Boers . . . did not appreciate his efforts to Christianize their slaves. The slaves did not appreciate them either, inasmuch as, saint though he might be, he quite lacked the sympathetic insight which would enable him to understand that a native with thousands of generations of savagery behind him is a different being from a highly educated Christian, and one who should be judged by another law. Their sins, amongst which he included all their most cherished inherited customs, appalled him, as he continually proclaimed from the housetops.<sup>11</sup>

Haggard casts doubt on the validity of Mr. Dove's willingness to become a martyr when, in the process, he subjects his wife and daughter to the same martyrdom. Mr. Dove's obvious blindness to Ishmael's true

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>11</sup>The Ghost Kings (1908), pp. 4-5.

nature, due to the latter's flattering him into believing that he is saving him from his sins, shows that even a saintly man can be imposed on through his vanity.

When Mr. Dove reproves Ishmael's wives (an instance of his misunderstanding what suits the nature of the native people), the head wife answers:

Teacher, why do you call us bad names? We are respectable women, the wives of one husband, as respectable as your own . . . . We hope that when she comes, the Inkosazana, your daughter, will not be as rude as you are, for if so, how shall we love her as we wish to do?<sup>12</sup>

But Mr. Dove continues blindly denouncing their customs until "with native politeness, they concluded that he spoke thus rudely because he did not understand."<sup>13</sup>

Mrs. Dove, more realistic about native customs, believes that the practice of polygamy "was one which suited [the Kaffirs] very well, as it had suited David and Solomon, and even Abraham."<sup>14</sup>

The following passage suggests that the missionary could be a trouble maker:

Of these, on the whole, worthy folk [the Boers], he formed the worst; and in the main a very unjust opinion, which he sent to England to be reprinted in Church papers, or to the Home Government to be published in Blue-Books. In due course these documents reached South Africa again, where they were translated into Dutch and became incidentally one of the causes of the Great Trek.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

Although Mr. Dove failed to convert the natives to Christianity, he did achieve some good. He "imported ploughs and taught them to improve their agriculture," and thus, in contributing to their physical well being, somewhat redeemed his errors. The natives, like Haggard and the reader, recognize his innate goodness and continue to forgive him.

"Little Flower" is an ironical study of a missionary who combines the insensitiveness of Mr. Dove with the determination of Mr. Owen, and becomes a minor Don Quixote in the process. Thomas Bull, "by nature a really religious man and, owing to the balance of his mind, not subject to most of the weaknesses which often afflict others, very early in his career . . . determined . . . that as Eternity is much longer than time, it was wise to devote himself to the spiritual and leave the temporal to look after itself."<sup>16</sup>

Thomas's stubbornness and his obliviousness to the harm it is doing his wife and daughter are expertly handled. Haggard remarks:

Missionaries, however good, may not always be wise folk . . . . In nothing perhaps do they show their heroism and faith more greatly than in their persistent habit of conveying women and young children into the most impossible places of the earth, there to suffer many things, not exclusive, occasionally, of martyrdom.<sup>17</sup>

Haggard's irony is allowed great play in the description of the pains Thomas takes to learn native languages and the importance he ascribes to such knowledge. But Thomas

took no interest . . . in the history of the natives, or their

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<sup>16</sup>Smith and the Pharaohs and Other Tales (1920), p. 139.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

peculiar forms of culture . . . . All that was done with, he said, a turned page of the black and barbarous past . . . . Perhaps it was for this reason that Thomas Bull never really came to understand or enter into the heart of . . . any dark-skinned man, woman, or child.<sup>18</sup>

So Thomas Bull becomes a bull in a china shop, while Dorcas, who has mastered no languages, reaches the people by her acceptance of their ways; and Tabitha (Little Flower), by her love for all living creatures.

Dorcas tells her husband: "They have all sorts of fine ideas which we don't understand, and are not so bad in their way, only you must find out what their way is."

But Thomas can see only the evil of their way, and "he set to work to save them with fearful vigour."<sup>19</sup>

He determines to "fashion his own wheel and grind the witch-doctor with his following to dust beneath its iron rim."<sup>20</sup>

Even the witch-doctor shows more understanding than is possible to Thomas. He remarks: "I see that you hate me, Teacher, and though I do not find the gentleness you preach, I do not wonder; it is quite natural. Were I you I should do the same."<sup>21</sup>

Haggard is not unfair to Mr. Bull, who thinks he is doing God's work. Kipling, respectful of native cultures and wary of substituting the less desirable for the already tested, wrote Haggard: "I like

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

'Little Flower' for its power and justice and humanity . . . it is the amazing freshness of the work that always hits me between my envious eyes."<sup>22</sup>

The justice and humanity that Kipling commended extend to both Thomas and the witch-doctor, while compassion and understanding are extended to the long-suffering wife and daughter, and to the natives, who possibly deserve them even more than the others.

If Haggard's view of morality involved acceptance of, even respect for, native customs that would be abhorrent to an Englishman in England, it did not tolerate the exercise by Englishmen in Africa of vices that would either lower their practitioners in African eyes or undermine in any way the welfare of the native peoples. The pseudo-gentleman, whose presence in Africa Haggard deplored, plays a shabby role in many Haggard romances. Mr. H. A. Marnham of Finished, for example, is of good family and has had all the supposed advantages of culture and refinement, yet he uses his considerable intelligence to undermine British stability and native morale by selling guns and ammunition to Sekukuni's Basutos and by engaging in illicit diamond buying. References to social position become rather ironic, as in this context Haggard no doubt means them to be.

In his numerous portrayals of Englishmen in Africa Haggard implies that the decent Englishman was not uncommon. His definition of the type of man needed was no doubt based on his observation of that type of man in a real situation. Selous too must have observed many

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<sup>22</sup>Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard, ed. M. N. Cohen (New Jersey, 1965), p. 115.

struggling young Englishmen trying to establish themselves in a new country. It may be reasonably assumed that the urge to become a pioneer depends upon certain qualities in the individual that would fit him for the hardships of a pioneer existence. Otherwise he would probably not remain in Africa long enough to do much harm. English settlers in Africa immigrated to that country as a matter of choice. The choice was often dictated by a sense of adventure and a particular interest in the country--important factors in determining the type of young man attracted to Africa.

Of course there were exceptions, as Haggard indicates. And there were those who would have lived perfectly respectable lives in England who succumbed to the temptations of Africa as a compensation, perhaps not entirely satisfactory, for the lost joys of a more familiar way of life. Alston of The Witch's Head is in many ways an admirable character. Haggard uses him to indicate how often an upright Englishman, because of his adoption of a different set of values in his dealings with the natives, allowed himself to fall into a moral laxity that created one of the chief problems of South Africa in the hybrids now referred to as the "coloureds."

Alston advises Ernest to forget Eva "and go in for an Intombi [Kafir]." That such a fault was common is implied by the staff officer who suggests, "Come with me this afternoon, and I will introduce you to two charming specimens of indigenous beauty [mother and daughter] . . . who waste their sweetness on the desert air."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>The Witch's Head, pp. 192-193.



Sarah Gertrude Millin in God's Step-Children, which deals with the relationship between the white and coloured population of South Africa from 1821 to 1890, demonstrates the result of such moral laxity. Haggard, writing much earlier, showed his acute awareness of the problem in the character of Swart Piet of Swallow and that of Inez of She and Allan, whose father's morals place her in such a position that to enter a convent seems to be the only hope of a worthwhile life. Haggard suggests that Captain Robertson and his half-breed children lower the British in the estimation of the natives.

Haggard implies that the problem of the "coloureds" involves far-reaching complications. He is perhaps concerned more with the implications for the individual rather than the group and goes beyond the problems of the "coloured" individual to those of the white father and white brothers and sisters emotionally involved with blood relations whom society stigmatizes as inferior. Situations such as that of Captain Robertson are to be avoided at all costs. As Hans remarks, "A man may be rich in things he loves and yet does not want, which makes him poor in other ways."<sup>24</sup>

No Englishman writing about South Africa during Haggard's time could fail to adopt an attitude towards the Boers. Haggard's early opinion of the Boers was doubtless influenced by the prevailing attitudes of Englishmen in South Africa during his period of residence there. In Cetywayo and His White Neighbours he writes:

None of the refinements of civilization enter into the life of

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<sup>24</sup>She and Allan (1921), p. 67.

an ordinary Transvaal Boer. He lives in a way that would shock an English labourer at twenty-five shillings the week, although he is probably worth fifteen or twenty thousand pounds. His home is but too frequently squalid and filthy to an extraordinary degree. He himself has no education, and does not care that his children should receive any . . . .

He has no romance in him, nor any of the higher feelings and aspirations that are found in almost every other race; in short, unlike the Zulu he despises, there is little of the gentleman in his composition, though he is at times capable of acts of kindness and even generosity.<sup>25</sup>

Strained relationships between English and Boers over the annexation and retrocession of the Transvaal no doubt contributed to such an obviously subjective judgement of a people.

In The Witch's Head, Haggard describes a Boer woman who screams, "Cut the liver out of the black devil! . . . but mind you don't hit his head, or he won't be able to go to work afterwards. Never mind about making the blood come; I have got lots of salt to rub in."<sup>26</sup>

The incident, with the giant Boer wielding the whip, his compatriots standing round laughing, and the rescue of the mistreated Hottentot by an English "gentleman," is typical of Haggard's early attitude. The depiction of such incidents became common later, particularly during the Boer War, when they contributed to war propaganda. Haggard depicts a well-defined conflict between Englishman and Boer at least fifteen years earlier.

Haggard's impression of the coarseness of the Boers is conveyed by his description of their eating habits. Their dinner is eaten with

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<sup>25</sup>Cetywayo and His White Neighbours, pp. 98-99.

<sup>26</sup>The Witch's Head, p. 163.

"the gory head and skin of a newly killed ox" lying on the floor beside the table.

Selous received a different impression. In 1893 he wrote:

"The greater part of the Boers I have known have been kind masters to their servants, though they are severe with them if they offend. They treat the natives, as do all colonists, as an inferior race, not as equals, and there can be no doubt that they are perfectly right in doing so."<sup>27</sup>

But Selous was not as sensitive as Haggard. His use of "inferior race" and "they are perfectly right in doing so" represent an unbridgeable gulf between the two writers. Perhaps the truth of the Boer-native relationship lies somewhere between the widely-differing pictures presented by the two authors. Haggard admitted, at any rate that the more settled Boers of the Cape were a superior class, and was later to modify his opinion of the people as a whole.

There is no reason to doubt that the Boers were excessively harsh to their slaves. In 1754 a very stiff slave code was introduced by the Dutch and another in 1809 by the British, apparently before British settlers were officially introduced. A certain amount of harsh treatment was probably necessary for farmers who were responsible for maintaining discipline on their farms and a workable relationship with native tribes without the backing of a strong government. If the British were less cruel, a fact generally conceded but no doubt allowing for the usual exceptions to the rule, it may have been because of the

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<sup>27</sup>Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa, p. 9.

strength of British official organization and the insight of Sir Theophilus Shepstone and other administrators. The British, too, had more experience in dealing with natives in their colonies and had no doubt learned a great deal from that experience in India and elsewhere.

In Jess (1887) Haggard's view of the Boers has not changed. They are hypocritical, arrogant, stupid and cruel; in fact, the people of whom he commented in Cetywayo:

They are very religious, but their religion takes its colour from the darkest portions of the Old Testament . . . . They think they are entrusted by the Almighty with the task of exterminating the heathen tribes around them, and are always ready with a scriptural precedent for slaughter and robbery.<sup>28</sup>

Haggard's opinion that the weakness of the Boers could be attributed to a general unwillingness to accept authority is given weight by his portrait of the sycophantic Hans Coetzee and his stubborn, stupid and phlegmatic wife Frau Coetzee, around whom Haggard creates delightfully humorous scenes by depicting her as a composite of many undesirable qualities, is a striking contrast to the dignified matriarchal Vrouw Botman of Swallow.

Although Haggard's early Boer portraits may be criticized for highlighting the worst characteristics of that people, reducing the whole to a common denominator, he was not the only novelist to highlight the Boer's cruelty to the natives. Later writers paint a similar picture. A good example is found in Sarah Gertrude Millin's God's Step-Children, when Kleinhaus, who is almost white, presumes to help a Dutch girl find a stray goat and is beaten almost to death by her

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<sup>28</sup>Cetywayo, p. 96.

relatives:

His struggling arms were held fast while a thong of ox-hide-- a reim--was tied about him. Then the father of the girl took his whip and beat Kleinhaus till he fainted; after which they loosened him, and the man who had hit him on the mouth gave him a kick for good measure. "That will teach you to speak to white girls," he said. "Verdamde Bastaard."<sup>29</sup>

In his autobiography (1926), in discussing cruelty to the natives Haggard refers to "white men," including, one assumes, Englishmen; and in The Ghost Kings (1908) he refers to biased accounts of the Boers sent home by missionaries. In Swallow (1899) Haggard, in his narrator Vrouw Botmar, depicts a Boer woman whose prejudices in no way detract from her value as a human being. In spite of her prejudices, she treats Sihamba as a member of the family rather than a servant. Through the mouth of Vrouw Botmar, Haggard makes it quite comprehensible that the Boers had reason to dislike the English.

In its sympathetic picture of the Boers as a people, Marie (1912) is a book that Haggard could not have written in his early years. Now, as he says in his preface, he knows that most of the trouble between the Boers and the English was due to "mutual misunderstandings." He hopes that under the English flag "all ancient feuds and blood jealousies [may] be forgotten." The prejudice against the Boers, the prejudice of a young patriotic Englishman towards a national enemy, has gradually given way to the tolerance that peace and greater knowledge bring. Perhaps if Haggard's spirit had been applied more wisely, South Africa would have fewer problems today.

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<sup>29</sup>God's Step-Children, p. 96.

When Allan's father "declaimed . . . loudly about the bad behaviour of the Boers, who hated and traduced missionaries, loathed and abominated British rule and permanent officials, loved slavery and killed Kaffirs whenever they got the chance," Allan "knew that there was another side to the question, namely, that the missionaries sometimes traduced them . . . and that . . . party government played strange tricks with the interests of distant dependencies. That permanent officials and impermanent ones too . . . often misrepresented and oppressed them. That Kaffirs, encouraged by the variegated policy of these party governments and their servants, frequently stole their stock; and if they found a chance, murdered them . . . . That British virtue had liberated the slaves without paying their owners a fair price for them, and so forth."<sup>30</sup>

Haggard--the "gentleman" that he wanted other Englishmen in Africa to be--writes rather regretfully in his autobiography:

I did not like them much at the time--few Englishmen did--but I can see now that I ought to have made more allowances. The circumstances of their history and their upbringing account for that which was repellent both in their actions and their character . . . . Now I know that there is much to admire in the Boer character, also that among them were many men of real worth.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps Haggard's change in attitude was partly the result of pro-Boer and anti-war feelings that developed in England during the South African War, 1899 - 1902, which seems to have brought out qualities of courage and determination in the Boers and placed Britain

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<sup>30</sup>Marie (1912), pp. 63-64.

<sup>31</sup>The Days of My Life, i, p. 78.

somewhat in the position of an oppressor. Haggard was always willing to take up for the underdog. He could not retract opinions published earlier but, always valuing fairness and honesty, he could and did present the other side of the picture. Understanding of alien cultures and respect for ethnic groups were important elements in Haggard's personal dream of a better world. A step towards that better world was, of course, the establishment of satisfactory conditions within an Empire comprising many races and cultures.

Among the most important elements in Haggard's African novels is his attitude towards native peoples, particularly the Zulus. In Haggard's *Umslopogaas* one senses the true noble savage, in whom is found the embodiment of the best qualities of the Zulu race, qualities that with proper guidance from their English overlords might have made them both a great nation and a great stabilizing force in Africa.

The phrase "Noble Savage" was first used by Dryden in his Conquest of Granada (1670), but it is significant that Dryden's savage was of the nobility. No doubt seventeenth-century readers felt sympathy for Mrs. Behn's *Oroonoko*, but that romantic hero was an African prince. Rousseau's romantic concept was merely a formula on which to base a theory; Chateaubriand one suspects, had little knowledge of the American Indian of whom he made a Christian hero; Cooper, Mrs. Stowe and other American writers sentimentalized Indians and negroes. Blake's "The Little Black Boy" (about 1785) shows great sympathy for the inferior position of the negro in a foreign environment, but the boy's vision of heaven, in which he sees himself becoming like the English boy and gaining his love, is an indication of Blake's acceptance of the

inequality of the two.

In the name of justice many eighteenth-century literary figures, including Steele, Pope, Sterne and Johnson, protested against slavery, but it was not until 1807 that a bill was passed providing for the abolition of the slave trade. In 1811 it was necessary to pass a new bill declaring the traffic to be a felony punishable by transportation to the colonies.

It is true that Wordsworth establishes a kind of equality with Toussaint L'Ouverture in his sonnet addressed to the captured Negro leader, but he, too, merely recognizes the nobility of a person rather than of a race.

Haggard's recognition of admirable qualities in the native African peoples that put them on a level with the white man is not based on idealistic doctrine but on the reality. Like Kipling he admires the native in his own culture and on his own terms, not patronisingly as capable of rising to standards established by a white society or adopting so-called Christian values, but even capable of contributing behavioural concepts that may enrich the white man's way of life. Kipling's natives were for the most part, however, much more sophisticated than Haggard's. Melville's *Queequeg* may be a closer parallel. Without belittling the admirable qualities of the British, Haggard is concerned with the qualities of native peoples to be cherished as an asset to the Empire.

Laurens van der Post, in his introduction to the 1965 edition of Turbott Wolfe, remarks that Haggard

was the first to find the black man romantic. He did not do



this at long range, from Europe. Haggard found the black man a subject of romance and wonder as a result of daily contact with him, and on a scale and with an intensity that no one had ever done before . . . . To know human beings through the sense of wonder they provoke is, I believe, the beginning of grace on this earth. To continue in this wonder, despite one's increasing knowledge, and carry through with it to the end, is the true fulfilment of grace . . . . How great was his achievement in this respect can perhaps be best measured by the fact that even today most white people in South Africa are incapable of experiencing a sense of wonder about the black people. If only we could begin to wonder, to take them into the light and shelter of our living imagination, the barriers that divide us so sharply would soon crumble.

As early as the thirteenth century, Europeans traded with various African peoples for gold. Other commodities were gradually added, ivory, diamonds, ostrich feathers and slaves, until by the nineteenth century the continent was thought of as a huge treasure house. In the scramble for territory, trade was the main incentive. The slave trade and the trade in weapons and liquor were most disruptive to the way of life of the natives, and it is not surprising that many explorers reported a state of chaos among tribes that over a long period had developed a settled and satisfactory mode of existence. Very few people, however, worried about the natives. They were animals to be trained to behave in an acceptable manner and to contribute to the welfare of the white invaders, or children to be clothed and trained, but too irresponsible to be granted more than a minimum of independence.

Most people, even journalists and novelists, still seem to think it complimentary to regard the African as a child, lovable but rather stupid. Haggard's finding the black man with whom he came in contact romantic caused him to develop a more penetrating observation.

To him they are human beings with different codes of behaviour and different traditions, which in many cases are more admirable than our own. Alan Sandison notes Haggard's

determination to stress the similarity [of Zulu and European social organization] and by doing so to challenge his society's cherished cultural exclusiveness . . . .

Conversely he was quite well aware that to compare them in equal terms with the civilized world was not always to flatter the native race, which had, more often than not, frequent cause for regretting its contact with the imperial power.<sup>32</sup>

Native races in Africa today have learned or are rapidly learning that they have very little to gain from association with the white race, a fact that Haggard very reluctantly recognized. Problems inherent in their way of life most African peoples had already solved. Problems arising from the invasion of Europeans they lacked the sophistication to solve, while the sophisticated invaders were interested for the most part in exploitation.

In the African portion of The Witch's Head, Haggard not only began to explore his real literary territory but also to use his considerable knowledge of Africa and her people as an element in his fiction. He had already written African history and political commentary in Cetywayo and His White Neighbours. Views that he had stated very emphatically in Cetywayo were now to reach a much larger public.

Haggard's sympathy towards the Zulus and his understanding of their nature is apparent from the beginning. In Cetywayo he wrote:

The average white man . . . detests the Kafir, and looks on him as a lazy good-for nothing, who ought to work for him and

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<sup>32</sup>The Wheel of Empire, Chapter II.

will not work for him, whilst he is quite incapable of appreciating his many good points. It is an odd trait about Zulus that only gentlemen, in the true sense of the word, can win their regard, or get anything out of them.<sup>33</sup>

He sees hope for a good relationship with the Zulus in the liking and respect they have for Englishmen, and reminds his readers "that when once they have found their master, there exists no more law-abiding people in the world than the Zulus, provided they are ruled firmly, and above all justly."<sup>34</sup>

He understands why the Zulus had to make war. Of Cetywayo's warriors he writes: "But even a Zulu must have some object in life . . . . Home he had none, religion he had none, mistress he had none, but in their stead he had his career as a warrior, and his hope of honour and riches to be gained by the assegai."<sup>35</sup>

A main theme in Haggard's African novels is the "many good points" of the Zulu, while often he ironically juxtaposes the gentlemanly Zulu to the scoundrelly or incompetent white man. In The Witch's Head it is obvious that Shepstone has gained the respect of the Zulus by fairness and firmness combined with an understanding of their humanity. Both Ernest and Jeremy demonstrate marked sympathy and respect for the natives. Mazooku is as much friend as servant to Ernest, as, one assumes, Haggard's servant of that name was to him.

The reader feels that Haggard, like Ernest, objects to the word "nigger" because it connotes an inferior race. Very emphatically

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<sup>33</sup>Cetywayo, p. 68.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

he corrects possible misapprehensions:

For there are lessons to be learned even from Zulu "niggers," and among them we may reckon those taught by a courage which laughs at death; an absolute fidelity to those who have the right to command it, or the qualities necessary to win it; and, in their raw and unconverted state, perfect honesty and truthfulness.<sup>36</sup>

In The Witch's Head the relationship to Ernest and Mazooku and that of Shepstone and the Zulu people are important in the working out of his theme, but the qualities necessary to command the respect of the Zulus are by no means confined to the white race, as Haggard makes clear in later books.

Alston, expresses the typical feeling of the Englishman of the time that the Zulus were a benighted race, characterized by nasty customs and necessarily envious of the superior qualities of the white men: "They would have skinned us, and made our hearts and livers into 'mouti' (medicine), and eaten them to give them the courage of the white man."<sup>37</sup>

Haggard points out, however, that after the Battle of the Little Hand, apparently upon orders from Cetywayo, the victorious Zulus refrained from molesting the white settlers. Later, in Finished and other tales, he indicates that Cetywayo was often more of a gentleman than those Englishmen who dealt with him.

Comparing the Englishman in his club to the Zulu, he remarks:

But as a matter of fact the difference is of a most superficial character, bearing the same proportion to the common

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<sup>36</sup>The Witch's Head, p. 280.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

substance that the furniture polish does to the Table.  
Scratch the polish and there you have the best raw Zulu  
nature.<sup>38</sup>

An example of the Zulus' admiration for the best type of  
Englishman is given in the speech of the "praiser" Goza in honour of  
Shepstone:

Listen to the foot of the great elephant Somptseu . . . . Feel  
how the earth shakes beneath the tread of the white t'Chaka,  
father of the Zulus, foremost among the great white people.  
Ou! he is coming; ou! he is here. See how the faces of the  
"Amaboona" (the Boers) turn pale before him . . . . Oh, he is  
great, the lion; where he turns his eye the people melt away,  
their hearts turn to fat.<sup>39</sup>

The flattering comparisons of Shepstone with the elephant and  
the lion and with Chaka are Haggard's recognition of Zulu values, with  
their emphasis on strength, power and purpose rather than the more  
domestic virtues. Why should the Zulus look upon any white man as  
greater than one of their own race? Zulu values may be different, but  
they are clear cut and often admirable, even according to the white  
man's morality. In She and Allan, Allan is incensed with the half-  
breed Thomaso's referring to Umslopogaas as "that nigger." Captain  
Robertson, incapable of recognizing the superiority of Umslopogaas,  
merely laughs. In the same book Hans confesses "that white people  
are always so ugly that it makes me feel ill to see them undressed,  
also . . . they smell."<sup>40</sup> The natives too, Haggard suggests, may have  
prejudices to overcome. The importance of honesty between the races

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>40</sup>She and Allan (1960), p. 31.

is reiterated. In Finished, Goza's absolute faith in Allan's promises extricates the latter from a position of great danger. "In dealing with natives," Allan remarks, "I have always made it a point of trying to fulfil any promise or engagement made for value received."<sup>41</sup>

In "Black Heart and White Heart" (1900) Haggard cleverly contrasts a white and a black man of roughly equivalent rank in their respective societies. The Englishman, Philip Hedden, "was of gentle birth . . . and it was said that he had received a public school and university education in England."<sup>42</sup> The Zulu captain Nahoon was "a savage gentleman of birth, dignity and courage."<sup>43</sup>

Haggard uses the struggle between the two to demonstrate the depravity of Hedden and the moral superiority of Nahoon. The story is therefore both a tribute to the nobility that Haggard's experience assured him was possible to the so-called savage and a protest against the type of Englishman that sometimes found his way to the colonies. The names Black Heart and White Heart for Hedden and Nahoon respectively symbolize the nature of the two men in an ironic contrast to their skin pigmentation.

The heroine Nanea, Haggard implies, is in many ways superior to white women, especially in her attitude towards love:

I am the wife of Nahoon [she tells Philip]--I belong to Nahoon; therefore, I cannot look on any other man while Nahoon lives. It is not our custom, Inkoos, for we are not as the white

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<sup>41</sup>Finished (1962), p. 155.

<sup>42</sup>Black Heart and White Heart and other stories (1903), p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

women, but ignorant and simple, and when we vow ourselves to a man, we abide by that vow till death.<sup>44</sup>

"Black Heart and White Heart" is an effort to see the world from the native point of view, showing some of the insight into the Zulu mentality that characterizes Nada the Lily and Child of Storm.

Lest Haggard seem patronizing in his use of such words as "decency" and "gentleman," one must remember not only the different connotations those words had for Victorian readers, but also the importance of such concepts in terms of the Englishman's status throughout the Empire. The Englishman's reputation in the eyes of a particular native people depended on the behaviour of all Englishmen connected in any way with that people. The image could easily be tarnished, and, as Haggard well knew, the collective image in the native mind often meant the difference between life and death to an individual Englishman in a tight spot. Haggard's use of "decency" and "gentleman" in the context of English-native relationships, however, involves more than a matter of policy. It has no connection with priggishness or class distinctions, and involves good breeding only in Haggard's very limited understanding of the term. Perhaps an interpretation as "common humanity" would come close to Haggard's meaning, and would prevent the reader from receiving a false impression of Haggard's apparently extremely unassuming personality.

A comparison between Haggard's attitude towards the natives and those of other Englishmen in Africa in the latter years of the

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

nineteenth century reveals how unusual his attitude was.

F. C. Selous, for example, is willing to admit "that certain Kafirs are better men than certain white men, [but] as a whole, the Kafirs are an inferior people, and in their present state of development are with some very few exceptions only fit to be hewers of wood and drawers of water."<sup>45</sup>

Selous, too, points out the necessity of keeping bargains in order to keep the respect of the natives. But it is clear that he is interested in the welfare of the native mainly as a matter of policy. He suggests that the British open up Eastern Mashonaland, "pour in men and machinery, and at the same time establish cattle and agricultural farms. In a word, work the gold, and open up and occupy the country."<sup>46</sup>

Selous's attitude is typical of the British Imperialist of the time, interested only in exploiting the continent, and often forgetting the existence of the natives.

In his portraits of African natives Haggard never suggests that all their characteristics are admirable. Nowhere is his attitude towards the avarice, cruelty and superstition that he finds in the majority of nineteenth century Zulus different from his attitude towards the same faults in Europeans of a few centuries earlier depicted in such books as Montezuma's Daughter and The Lady of Blossholme.

His interest in the African as a person is really the important

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<sup>45</sup>F. C. Selous, Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa, pp. 9-10.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 311.



thing. In his autobiography he writes:

Then there were the Zulu Kaffirs living in their Kraals filled with round beehive-like huts, bronze-coloured, noble looking men and women clad only in their moochas, whose herds of cattle wandered hither and thither in charge of a little lad. From the beginning I was attracted to these Zulus, and soon began to study their character and their history.<sup>47</sup>

Haggard expanded his initial pastoral view of the Zulus both imaginatively and factually. In books such as Maiwa's Revenge (1888) and Nada the Lily (1892) Haggard merges true anecdotes, legend, myth and dream to evoke the total consciousness of the primitive mind. Unlike King Solomon's Mines and She, which are romantic from the white man's point of view, and the later historically based Marie trilogy, those two books in particular seem to stem from the black consciousness. To the student of Haggard they represent a vast stride into the reality of the African continent.

Maiwa's Revenge is, within the limits set by its length, one of Haggard's triumphs. Here he avoids the polemical to tell a story that in its starkness and simplicity seems to capture the spirit of the primitive mind. Imitating the oral tradition of the folk tale, it omits everything except the main elements of the story. The reader, like the uneducated listener to such a tale, is required, even compelled, to use his imagination to fill in details.

The preliminary boasting and exaggeration in the anecdotes regarding the prowess of the hunter lead naturally to the sudden appearance of Maiwa, and help to give verisimilitude to her rather

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<sup>47</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 52.

startling story. Maiwa's producing her dead child's hand establishes her primitive nature.

While the childish and cowardly cruelty of Mambe is left mostly to the imagination, thus becoming more terrible, the very real pathos of Maiwa's emotional state is economically conveyed:

See where this dead hand rests against my side; so once it rested when alive. And now, though it is dead, now every night it creeps from its nest and strokes my hair and clasps my fingers in its tiny palm . . . . Oh, my child! my child! ten days ago I held thee to my breast and now this alone remains of thee.<sup>48</sup>

Since Maiwa is a tragic heroine seen from the primitive point of view, Haggard avoids endowing her with the sensibilities and taboos that govern the actions of more civilized women. Her love for her dead child is sufficient motivation, however, to assure her actions universal acceptance. Like her male counterparts (Umslopogaas, Saduko, Zikali) she represents a great vitality that, once given a worthwhile objective, can accomplish almost impossible tasks. Such energy once channelled into the right track, Haggard's story suggests, might solve many African problems. The strength of black courage, loyalty, endurance and native intelligence, Haggard repeatedly demonstrates, is an asset that white people in an integrated society must not regard lightly.

Maiwa's moment of greatest splendour comes when she leads her people against Wambe's soldiers:

And with one long cry she leapt from the wall as leaps a stricken antelope, and holding the spear poised rushed right

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<sup>48</sup>Maiwa's Revenge (1965), pp. 71-72.

into the thickest of the fray. The warriors saw her, and raised such a shout that it echoed like thunder against the mountains. They massed together, and following the flutter of her white robe crashed into the dense heart of the foe. Down went the Matuku before them like trees before a whirlwind.<sup>49</sup>

Here we have unleashed emotion conveyed with the briefness of the oral rather than the written tale, with images appropriate to the primitive imagination.

The poetic justice of Wambe's falling into the lion trap he had used to torture so many, including his and Maiwa's child, is a most satisfying conclusion. Stripped of all power and dignity, he must endure Maiwa's taunts. Dashing the dead hand into his face, she is finally released from the driving force that has governed her actions, and falls in a faint.

Nowhere has Haggard captured so well the sheer force of emotion acting on the uncomplicated mind of the untutored savage. It is an indication of his skill that the supposedly civilized reader, whose every action is regulated by the conventions and taboos of society, and who has been educated from birth to do what is acceptable rather than what is natural, can identify with Maiwa.

In Nada the Lily, Haggard succeeds in putting himself inside the primitive mind of his narrator, the witch doctor Mopo, and recreates the life and thought of the Zulus before and during their first encounter with the white man. The stark, but often poetic style is eminently suitable, enabling the reader to accept a time, a place

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

and a mental attitude almost as remote from his experience as life on another planet. As Haggard states in his preface, he had to "forget his civilization, and think with the mind and speak with the voice of a Zulu of the old régime."

It is significant that Haggard dedicates the book to Sir Theophilus Shepstone, whose understanding of the natives gave him such an influence over them. The author also gives credit to those other men whose intimate acquaintance with Zulu "history . . . heroes, and . . . customs" had such an effect on his youthful imagination. The passing on of the traditions of a pre-literary society is one of Haggard's most creditable achievements.

In Nada the Lily and the Marie trilogy, ending with Finished, Haggard uses the most exciting period of South African history.

In those books we see Chaka make himself king of the Zulu nation, build up a strong military organization and systematically conquer Natal by a process of depopulation of other tribes. We see him murdered in 1828 as the result of a conspiracy by his half-brothers Dingaan and Mhlangena. Dingaan subsequently murders Mhlangena and becomes an even bloodier king than Chaka.

We become familiar with the reasons for the Great Trek of 1835, and sympathize with a people harassed by the freeing of their slaves, the pilfering of their possessions by wandering bands of Hottentots, and the often unwarranted antagonism towards their way of life.

We are shown the perfidy of Dingaan, who pretended friendship towards the white races, allowed missionaries to establish stations in his territory, received Piet Retief and his trekkers, and murdered

both trekkers and missionaries.

We are present at Andries Pretorius's great victory over the Zulus at Blood River in 1838. Dingaan is overthrown and succeeded by the weaker but more trustworthy Panda. Natal is annexed as a British colony in 1843, and the British make a treaty with Panda; but Cetewayo's reign again brings war.

In depicting the character of Chaka, Haggard shows us not only his cruelty but also the tremendous power over his people that enabled him to create a nation. The amazing military organization that Chaka created by combining practical common sense with methods that Hitler would have understood can be appreciated by readers of Nada the Lily.

As narrator Haggard chooses Mopo, contemporary of Chaka, who tells his story in a tone and idiom admirably adapted to convey a sense of life and values under the man who made the Zulus a nation. Mopo's life having spanned the rise of that nation and the beginning of its decline, his narrative captures both the glory and the pathos of Zulu history under Chaka and Dingaan. Pride and sadness are mixed in the telling.

Haggard uses actual history where known, but the spirit that governed the Zulu nation, brought it to greatness and helped to destroy it is more important in Nada the Lily than facts. Mopo remarks:

There are great names in the story, my father. Yes, many have heard the names: when the Impis roared them out as they charged in battle, I have felt the mountains shake and seen the waters quiver in their sound. But where are they now? Silence has them, and the white men write them down in books.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Nada the Lily, p. 22.

The various appellations given to Chaka by his admiring followers, the names of his generals, the names of the great fighters he conquered, have become only a memory, like the spirit that brought glory to the Zulu nation. There is regret here on Haggard's part for that departed glory, a regret that he expresses more precisely in his preface;

Then [during Haggard's period in Africa] the Zulus were still a nation; now that nation has been destroyed, and the chief aim of its white rulers is to root out the warlike spirit for which it was remarkable, and to replace it by a spirit of peaceful progress. The Zulu military organization, perhaps the most wonderful that the world has seen, is already a thing of the past.

Such a force as that which made the Zulus great, Haggard repeatedly implies in his books, must exist as an independent force. It may eventually be directed to other purposes than war and conquest, but to subjugate it is to lose it. He leaves no doubt in his readers minds that Cetwayo in a black coat, whom he shows us at the end of Finished, is a decline from Chaka in skins and feathers, and that the precious human qualities of a unique race can not be made over. In order to show the greatness of the Zulus, Haggard must show them as a savage people, since they have not had time to progress beyond savagery, but he indicates qualities that under different conditions might have subjugated that savagery. His Zulu stories are permeated with a sense of regret that the great potential of that people was smothered by an alien culture.

Mopo's story begins "before the Zulus were a people." His mother has a dream that forecasts Chaka's role as the guiding principle of the Zulu race, mighty and terrible:

I dreamed that I saw the boy Chaka . . . grown like a giant. He stalked across the mountains and the veldt, his eyes blazed like the lightning, and in his hand he shook a little assegai that was red with blood. He caught up people after people in his hands and tore them, he stamped their kraals flat with his feet. Before him was the green of summer, behind him the land was black as when the fires have eaten the grass.<sup>51</sup>

This vision is inspired by fear, and Haggard makes it clear that Chaka's influence over a savage people depended initially on the fear that he continued to inspire. An important element in that fear was a fear of disgrace, which replaced fear of death. His peculiar ways of punishing those who failed to achieve victory involved disgracing them in the eyes of their fellow soldiers. In a death-oriented soldiery, disgrace before death was the real punishment;

He spoke to them gently, gently. He thanked them for their service. He said it was natural that "girls" should faint at the sight of blood . . . and he covered his face with his blanket. Then the soldiers killed them all, nearly two thousand of them--killed them with taunts and jeers.<sup>52</sup>

Mopo makes it seem somehow that Chaka's covering his face, regarded by his men as their final casting aside, not even worthy of contempt, is the most telling blow to their pride as Zulu soldiers.

But there is a great deal more than fear, Haggard reveals, in the relationship between Chaka and his soldiers. Mopo pinpoints what seems to be the most important element in that relationship when he remarks, "They were but boys, but they were the children of Chaka." They were boys looking for a cause, for glory, for recognition of what they could do best, which was to fight. To distinguish oneself

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

in conflict was one of their greatest values; Chaka knew how to make use of it. In the father-son relationship that he cultivated with them, he mixed fear and love. "Suddenly Chaka was seen stalking through the ranks, followed by his captains . . . . He walked along like a great buck; death was in his eyes, and like a buck he sniffed the air, scenting the air of slaughter. He lifted his assegai, and a silence fell."<sup>53</sup>

His pride appeals to his men's pride, his primitive masculinity to theirs, and his obvious courage inspires emulation. He engages in a shouted question and answer formula to incite his men against the enemy and sends them into battle as his children. "Go my children! . . . There is the foe. Go and return no more!" The psychological hold that his knowledge of their values enables him to exercise over them ensures enthusiastic obedience. And those who falter in the reality of battle know that the alternative to a glorious death is an ignominious one.

For most of them, Haggard indicates, the battle itself is a sustaining force:

Ah! the battle!--the battle! [Mopo reminisces] In those days we knew how to fight, my father! In those days the vultures would follow our impis by thousands, the hyenas would steal along our path in packs, and none went away empty.<sup>54</sup>

Haggard captures the hysteria of enthusiasm that drove them on, an irresistible elemental force;

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 48.



There is a roar, a thunder of feet, a flashing of spears, a bending of plumes, and, like a river that has burst its banks, like storm-clouds before the gale, we sweep down upon friend and foe. They form up to meet us; the stream is passed; our wounded rise upon their haunches and wave us on. We trample them down. What matter? They can fight no more.<sup>55</sup>

Their mystical devotion to Chaka and their acceptance of death in battle as zenith of earthly bliss are captured in the following:

Up over the shoulder of the hill came the sun of Slaughter; it glowed red upon the red shields; red grew the place of killing; the white plumes of chiefs were dipped in the blood of heaven. They knew it; they saw the omen of death, and, ah! they laughed in the joy of the waking of battle . . . . Was it not well to die for the king? Death was the arms of Victory. Victory should be their bride that night, and oh! her breast was fair.<sup>56</sup>

The touch of the sun seems to sanctify their lust for blood, which Haggard equates with both a sacrament and a sexual experience. The collective impact of his descriptive passages convinces the reader of the strength of feelings which the soldiers themselves could probably not have put into words.

"We are the king's kine, bred to be butchered, you too are one of us!" they chanted, expressing a sense of belonging that the aged narrator fondly remembers. "Such were our battles in the days of Chaka!" he gloats.<sup>57</sup>

Haggard presents Chaka as a leader characterized by the evil and cruelty of a savage nature, yet possessing the purpose, intelligence

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 49 and 51.

and courage of great military leaders throughout history. Mopo, who was close to Chaka and has no reason to love him, interprets acts that are extremely cruel by English standards as expedient under the circumstances. He points out that Chaka was fair and gave respect where it was due. According to Mopo, the king "would always save the life of a brave man if he could do so without making his word nothing."<sup>58</sup> As a strategist, too, Chaka was great. Haggard gives due weight to force of numbers and enthusiasm in winning battles, but the king is giving well-deliberated commands. "Now he whispers a word to the indunas. The indunas run; they whisper to Menziwa the general and to the captains; then two regiments rush down the hill, two more run to the right, and yet another to the left."

He has plenty of men and he knows when to sacrifice them as a matter of policy. After sacrificing two regiments to give the powerful enemy host too much confidence, even allowing the battle to turn against his own soldiers, he finally releases his full force:

Then again Chaka speaks a word. The captains hear, the soldiers stretch out their necks to listen.

It has come at last. "Charge! Children of the Zulu!"<sup>59</sup>

In Child of Storm, set during the reign of Panda, Haggard shows the Zulus in "their superstitious madness and bloodstained grandeur," but he also calls attention to their virtues:

If they were fierce, they were loyal, and feared neither wounds nor doom; if they listened to the dark redes of the

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

witch-doctor, the trumpet-call of duty sounded still louder in their ears; if, chanting their terrible "Ingoma," at the king's bidding they went forth to slay unsparingly, at least they were not mean or vulgar . . . . These qualities belong to the safe and crowded haunts of civilized men.<sup>60</sup>

Saduko says, "The Zulu nation was not fashioned from nothing. First Chaka had to come."<sup>61</sup> It is clear that Chaka's influence is still an inspiration. Mameena, in her role as a symbol of the Zulu nation, assures Saduko that she will love him if he becomes another Chaka. But by that time, Haggard implies, the force represented by Chaka has been dissipated by internal strife and external interference. Panda is more "civilized" in English terms, and therefore is easier for the English government to control, but he lacks the strength that made the Zulus a nation. Mameena maintains that they are still capable, with suitable leadership, of regaining their past glory, and perhaps at that time they were. Their reduction to the status of a dependent power, to Haggard the final degradation of a proud people, was still to come.

Mopo's comments in Nada the Lily reveal his own absolute mental subjugation to Chaka in anything that he regards as a matter of expediency. Expedient is his false mourning for Chaka's mother, whom the king has murdered, and his killing without question those whom Chaka has singled out as his enemies. Haggard's capturing the sense of values of a highly-placed and, according to his lights, thoroughly-respectable savage is extremely perceptive. Mopo's code of behaviour causes him to be averse to Chaka's killing his children for fear that

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<sup>60</sup>Child of Storm (1913), p. vi.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

they would grow up to kill him in order to occupy his throne, and to circumvent the killing of Umslopogaas by passing him off as his own child. He is revolted at the capricious slaying of his father Makedama and his people the Langeni, whose only fault is that they have arrived late at the mourning for Unandi because of the long distance they had to travel. We feel that if there had been a good reason for the slaying of his people Mopo would have accepted it.

Through Mopo's eyes we see life under Chaka as it must have been, with the shrewdness, courage, generosity and cruelty that made the king so powerful becoming more credible as the story unfolds. Dingaan is portrayed as just as cruel as Chaka, but without the latter's redeeming qualities. In the novel, as in reality, he is a far less imposing figure than his predecessor. His treacherous slaughter of Retief and his men epitomizes his character.

The mysticism of the primitive mind, the extra sense that modern civilization has crowded out, is conveyed by Mopo's visions of Inkosazana-y-Zulu, the Queen of Heaven, and by the belief in the Amatonga, the people of the ghosts. Mopo's ability to live on a spiritual and a physical level at the same time--an ability that all religions seek in one form or another--is, Haggard suggests, an asset that supposedly more civilized men may well envy.

In the trilogy Marie, Child of Storm and Finished, Haggard continues to capture the spirit of "the old wonderful unknown primitive African life," but that life is now undergoing a process of change because of European influences. The four books, Nada to Finished, constitute a loosely-connected tetralogy that reproduces the atmosphere

and events of Zulu life up to the time of Cetuywayo as no history book could be expected to do. Where Haggard's events and persons are fictional they are usually based on anecdotes that he heard in Africa and are certainly in their essentials not beyond the realms of possibility.

Marie (1912) begins in Dingaan's time. The young Allan, son of the predicant Quatermain, is allowed to study at the home of Henri Marais, a Boer of Huguenot extraction, under Marie's tutor. Because of the stupid shooting of the son of Chief Quabie by the drunken tutor, Marais's home is attacked by Kaffirs, which results in Marie and her father's joining Retief. They separate from Retief's party, however, to settle in the fever-ridden area of the Crocodile River. A desperate message from Marie brings Allan to the rescue of the starving Boers and eventually in contact with Dingaan and Retief during the events surrounding the massacre at Weenen.

The events of the plot allow Haggard to incorporate observations on both daily life and political considerations. The early part of the book wanders intimately over life in South Africa, particularly of the descendents of the Huguenots who found their way to the Cape after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Although like the Boers in their stern religious views, they were, Haggard indicates, much more cultivated, and in a century and a half had still not lost their national identity. "Indeed, from father to son, they kept up some knowledge of the French tongue, and among themselves often spoke it after a fashion. At any rate, it was the habit of Henri Marais . . . to read his chapter of

the Bible . . . in good old French."<sup>62</sup>

Henri Marais's home is similar to that of a Boer householder but a little superior, one gathers, to the average, and far above that described by Haggard in earlier romances. Allan describes one of the sitting rooms, of which the house "boasted" two:

I remember that the floor was made of daga, that is, ant-heap earth mixed with cow-dung, into which thousands of peach-stones had been thrown while it was still soft, in order to resist footwear--a rude but fairly efficient expedient, and one not unpleasing to the eye. For the rest, there was one window opening on to the veranda, which, in that bright climate, admitted a shaded but sufficient light, especially as it always stood open; the ceiling was of unplastered reeds; a large bookcase stood in the corner . . . . I recollect also a coloured print of the great Napoleon . . . and near the window, hanging to the reeds of the ceiling, the nest of a pair of red-tailed swallows.<sup>63</sup>

The bookcase, the picture and the birdcage set the Huguenots apart from their Boer neighbours. A tutor for Marie Marais from France must have appeared the height of affectation.

The difficulties of travel in Africa in the early nineteenth century were extreme, Haggard shows us. Allan has to ride one hundred and twenty miles, with perhaps a river "to swim," in order to catch a boat from Port Elizabeth to Delagoa Bay. If he missed that boat "it might be weeks or months before any other ship sailed for Delagoa Bay." After four days of pitching and rolling they reached Port Natal, where they spent two days. From there to Delagoa Bay the passage took three more days. On leaving Allan at Lorenzo Marquez, "Captain Richardson

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<sup>62</sup>Marie (1959), p. 18.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

said that he might be back . . . in two or three months time, or he might not."<sup>64</sup>

Details of life at Dingaan's Great Kraal seem as factual as in an actual travel journal:

The next day was Sunday. In the morning I went to call upon the Reverend Mr. Owen, the missionary, who was very glad to see me. He informed me that Dingaan was in good mind towards us, and had been asking him if he would write the treaty ceding the land which the Boers wanted. I stopped for service at the huts of Mr. Owen, and then returned to the camp. In the afternoon Dingaan celebrated a great war dance for us to witness, in which about twelve thousand soldiers took part.

It was a wonderful and awe-inspiring spectacle, and I remember that each of the regiments employed had a number of trained oxen which manoeuvred with them, apparently at given words of command.<sup>65</sup>

Subsequent events, however, reveal that Dingaan was busily playing off the Boers against the British, whom he knew to be the stronger people and had no wish to offend.

Mutual fear and distrust of Zulu and British are suggested with Haggard's usual economy in conveying attitudes. Allan's Kaffir servant reflects the fear of his white employers and his peers when he exclaims "We are dead!" upon the Zulus' appearance; and the Zulus themselves are in awe of a "child of George [Englishman] . . . a terrible man who would kill us unless we killed or bound him first."<sup>66</sup>

Vrouw Prinsloo's chasing the lion with the dishcloth, "which

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-101.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 142-143.

in those days was but a common incident of travel," typifies the combination of the domestic and the hazardous that Haggard captures in the lives of the Boers in South Africa in the first half of the nineteenth century:

The action of Child of Storm revolves around the struggle between Cetewayo and Umbelazi for the Zulu throne, a struggle that culminated in the battle of the Tugela.

Haggard depicts Panda, through Allan's eyes, as a well-meaning, good-natured prince but too weak to handle either his two fierce sons or the Zulus chafing for a reason to fight. The sons are "both fine young men," but Cetewayo seems the more aggressive:

Cetewayo, however, had the stronger countenance. It was said that he resembled that fierce and able monster, Chaka the Wild Beast, his uncle, and certainly I perceived in him a likeness to his other uncle Dingaan . . . . He had the same surly eyes and haughty bearing; also, when he was angry his mouth shut itself in the same iron fashion.<sup>67</sup>

Umbelazi, called by the Zulus "The Handsome" was, Allan implies, a more agreeable person. It is clear that he is Panda's favourite.

Each of the sons had a powerful following and Panda kept aloof from their quarrels until in a moment of crisis during the civil war between them Panda sent a regiment of veterans, too late, to aid Umbelazi.

Using the facts of the quarrel as he learned them from Fynney, Osborn and others, Haggard traces the bloody conflict to its dénouement. Osborn had been a witness to the final battle, which Haggard describes

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<sup>67</sup>Child of Storm, p. 145.



in some detail. John Dunn is sent from Natal to make peace but "his small force" becomes involved in the battle on Umbelazi's side. The two armies are almost equally matched and there is apparently some doubt as to what the outcome will be, until, possibly because of Umbelazi's being slain the victory falls to Cetewayo.

Haggard's account, based on Osborn's, is concerned, unlike accounts of battle in earlier works, with the facts rather than the spirit of the conflict.

Step by step John Dunn and his people were thrust back, fighting gallantly against overwhelming odds . . . . They were pushed past us. They vanished among the bush behind us . . . .

Now, the horns having done their work and wrapped themselves round Umbelazi's army . . . the Usutu bull began his charge. Twenty or thirty thousand strong, regiment after regiment, Cetewayo's men rushed up the slope, and there, near the crest of it, were met by Umbelazi's regiments springing forward to repel the onslaught and shouting their battle-cry of "Laba! Laba! Laba! Laba!"<sup>68</sup>

It is a work of fiction, however, and Haggard attributes Umbelazi's defeat and death to fictional circumstances that tie in with the events of his romantic plot. Since the exact circumstances could not be ascertained, for the sake of his story he found it necessary to invent them.

The trial of Saduko for desertion of Umbelazi and other supposedly subversive acts indicates that Zulu law was as Allan remarks "intricate and well-established." Haggard uses the trial to present Zulu qualities such as fairness and shrewdness that he feels are as worthy of attention as their courage and prowess in war. Such qualities,

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

he indicates, are in continual conflict with native superstition. Cetewayo's immediate sentence of death pronounced against Umbelazi's slayer indicates a state of mind similar to that of Elizabeth of England when faced with the dilemma of Mary of Scotland. Allan comments that "Cetewayo . . . did not think it wise to let it go abroad that the royal blood might be lightly spilt."<sup>69</sup>

Finished is in part a continuation of Child of Storm. Each volume of the trilogy emphasizes one of the chief national groups in South Africa. Marie is told from the point of view of the Dutch; Child of Storm, of the Zulus; and Finished, of the English.

The first part of Finished describes the annexation of the Transvaal (April, 1877), and Haggard himself appears as a minor character. Allan's description of Shepstone is Haggard's tribute to a beloved superior, who, he felt, was later treated very unjustly by the English government. Allan describes Sir Theophilus as "a stout man of medium height with a very clever, thoughtful face." He regards him as "one of the greatest of African statesmen," a man of "caution and appreciation of danger derived from long experience of the country." Mentioning "the sternness he sometimes affected which could never conceal his love towards his friends," he continues:

Oh! There was greatness in this man, although they did call him an "African Talleyrand." If it had not been so would every native from the Cape to the Zambesi have known and revered his name as perhaps that of no other white man has been revered?<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>70</sup>Finished, p. 23.

The account of the reading of the proclamation of annexation at Pretoria and the dangerous mood of the more radical Boers is actual reporting. The meeting of the Zulu council to help Cetewayo decide whether war should be declared on the English, and the supposed appearance of Inkosana-y-Zulu, are based on first-hand information.

In dealing with Cetewayo, whom the British made a puppet ruler and a pawn in party politics, Haggard is both sympathetic and perceptive. In Cetywayo he had expressed some very strong objections to the policy of the English towards the Zulus. He saw the regulations to which Cetywayo was required to agree on his coronation as "a laudable attempt on the part of the Natal Government to keep a restraining hand on Zulu cruelty, and to draw the bonds of friendship as tight as the idiosyncrasies of a savage state would allow."

But he emphatically avers: "The Government of Natal had no right to dictate the terms to a Zulu king on which he was to hold his throne. The Zulu nation was an independent nation, and had never been conquered or annexed by Natal."<sup>71</sup>

Haggard implies doubt whether the war against Cetywayo was a just one. In Cetywayo he holds Sir Bartle Frere responsible, but gives him credit for acting in what he considered the best interests of the Imperial Government. In The Witch's Head, Ernest, in an after dinner speech "rapidly sketched the state of political affairs, of which the Zulu war was the outcome, and, without expressing any opinion on the justice or wisdom of that war, of which, to speak the truth he had

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<sup>71</sup>Cetywayo and His White Neighbours, p. 12.

grave doubts."<sup>72</sup> In Finished, Cetewayo (spelling used in this novel) tells Allan:

The Great Queen's man . . . threatens me with war because two evil-doing women were taken on the Natal side of the Tugela and brought back to Zululand and killed by Mehlokazulu, being the wives of his father, Sirayo, which was done without my knowledge. Also two white men were driven away from an island in the Tugela River by some of my soldiers.

He goes on to say that he is accused of permitting practices that in reality he is endeavouring to stamp out, and that to submit to Sir Bartle Frere's demands to disband the army and entertain a "Queen's man . . . to be the eyes and ears of the English Government and have power with me in the land" would make him a "petty kraal-head."<sup>73</sup>

Lilias Rider Haggard quotes her father on the subject of Sir Bartle Frere:

He looked upon the Zulus as though they had been some Indian tribe whom he had only to lift his hand to sweep away in the interests of the mighty dominion whom he served--he saw the Zulu war cloud looming on the frontiers of Natal, and determined to burst it even if it should rain blood. . . . His Indian traditions dominated his mind. Yonder was a savage people who threatened the rights of the Crown--let them be destroyed.<sup>74</sup>

Haggard sees Cetewayo as a tragic figure caught in a dilemma from which only the understanding and help of the English authorities could extricate him. He knew the power of the British. He also knew that if he gave in both he and his people were finished. To exist as an army his warriors had to fight. If he did not provide a foreign

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<sup>72</sup>The Witch's Head, p. 250.

<sup>73</sup>Finished, pp. 169-170.

<sup>74</sup>The Cloak that I Left, p. 82.

enemy, they would welcome a pretender to the throne as an excuse for civil war.

In The Witch's Head, Haggard is scornful of the English who, expecting to meet the Zulus in battle, take along their cricket bats and wickets and camp on an exposed plain. In his account of the Battle of Isandhlwana, he gives equal credit to the courage of the English and the Zulus. He attributes Cetewayo's failure to invade Natal after his victory to his wish not to irritate the white men. Cetewayo, he points out, did no more than defend his country.

In Finished, by contrasting Cetewayo's feeling of responsibility towards his people and his obvious wish to keep peace with the English with Dingaan's attitudes, Haggard suggests that if handled properly the Zulus might have developed into a strong, stabilizing force in Africa.

In an official report he wrote:

In the case of the Zulus, civilization has one of its greatest opportunities, for certainly in them there is a spirit which can be led on to higher things. My earnest hope is . . . that this opportunity may not continue to be neglected in years to come. If so it seems to me that we shall incur a heavy responsibility towards a bewildered people, that we have broken and never tried to mend, and suffer evils to arise of which the effects will not be endured by them alone.<sup>75</sup>

Finished is both a lament and a record of mismanagement. Allan sadly records the destruction of the Zulu army at Ulundi, "where they hurled themselves by thousands upon the British square, to be swept away by case-shot and the hail of bullets," where "they dashed their naked bodies against a storm of lead and fell in heaps," where "perished

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

the Zulu kingdom which was built up by Chaka."<sup>76</sup>

He records succinctly:

Sir Garnet Wolseley set up his Kilkenny cat Government in Zululand, or the Home Government did it for him, I do not know which. In place of one king, thirteen chiefs were erected who got to work to cut the throats of each other and of the people.<sup>77</sup>

Most ironic and most pathetic is Allan's vision of Cetewayo in London:

Often I have thought of him dressed in a black coat and seated in that villa in Melbury Road . . . . A strange contrast truly to the savage prince receiving the salute of triumph after the Battle of the Tugela in which he won the kingship, or to the royal monarch to whose presence I had been summoned at Ulundi.

The reader, like Allan, is glad that Cetewayo is permitted even a limited rule and "freed from the strangling embrace of the black coat."<sup>78</sup>

The reason for the annexation of the Transvaal (the starting point of Finished), later to be so misunderstood, is stated very clearly in Cetywayo:

Information of Cetywayo's doings and of his secret plans [to invade the Transvaal] reached Pretoria shortly before the Annexation, and confirmed the mind of the Special Commissioner [Shepstone] as to the absolute necessity of that measure to save the citizens of the Republic from coming to a violent end, and South Africa from being plunged into a native war of unexampled magnitude.<sup>79</sup>

As a member of Shepstone's staff, Haggard speaks from a personal

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<sup>76</sup>Finished, p. 261.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>79</sup>Cetywayo, p. 27.

knowledge.

In The Witch's Head and Finished, Haggard maintains that the opposition to the annexation that was made so much of later came from a small radical group of Boers. "The long expected annexation came off successfully, to the intense joy of all the Englishmen in the country, and to the great relief of the vast majority of the Boers."<sup>80</sup>

Jess is most remarkable for its intimate glimpses of the life of the English in Africa preceding and during the Boer rebellion in the Transvaal in 1881.

Haggard cannot hide his disgust with the way the British government handled the affairs of the Transvaal. "The other party is in power now in England, [Jess says] and one does not know what they may do . . . . They might give us up to the Boers. You must remember that we far-away people are only counters with which they play their game."<sup>81</sup>

After the retrocession the loyal inhabitants of the Transvaal were forced to move out, having lost everything they had invested in the new country. English officials were dismissed. The loyalty of those people, Haggard points out, had been their ruin. Moreover, the British had suffered a serious loss of face in the eyes of both Boers and natives.

On being informed by a Boer of the surrender of the Transvaal, Silas Crofts exclaims:

It is a lie! a cowardly lie! Whoever says that the English

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<sup>80</sup>The Witch's Head, p. 186.

<sup>81</sup>Jess, p. 59.

have given up the country to a few thousand blackguards like you, and deserted its subjects and the loyals [Boers] and the natives, is a liar.

His informant answers:

It is no lie, Silas Crofts, and the cowards are not we Boers . . . but your soldiers, who have done nothing but run away, and your government, that follows the example of your soldiers.

The description of Silas "hurling execrations at his beloved country and the name of Englishman, and the Government of Britain that had deserted him, till . . . he fell in a fit, there, in the very shadow of his dishonoured flag"<sup>82</sup> is a striking illustration of Haggard's own feelings.

Even the detestable Frank Muller reflects Haggard's views when he says:

Don't you know that a government is like a woman who cries "No, no, no," and kisses you all the time. If there is noise enough your British government will eat its words and give Wolseley, and Shepstone . . . and all of them the lie.<sup>83</sup>

Haggard comments ironically:

But after all, what does it matter?--a little square of graves at Bronkers Spruit, a few more widows and a hundred or so of orphans. England, by her Government, answered the question plainly--it matters very little.<sup>84</sup>

Of Jess he says:

The thing is a living record of our shame in South Africa, written by one by whom it was endured.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 266-267.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>85</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 265.



He could not forget what he regarded as "The great betrayal, the bitterness of which no lapse of time ever can solace or even alleviate."<sup>86</sup>

A letter from Lord Carnarvon shows that Haggard was not alone in his dissatisfaction with the way affairs in the Transvaal had been handled: "The English public was so deceived by misrepresentation of the annexation of the Transvaal that the real history was never understood; and the humiliating surrender of it was accepted in partial ignorance at least of the facts."<sup>87</sup>

In placing the blame for conditions in South Africa on the authorities, Haggard includes Paul Kruger. In Jess he is depicted as half-educated and hypocritical, willing to condone murder to achieve his personal ambition. Commenting on the shooting of the English General Colley, who approached the Boers with a "white handkerchief in his hand," Kruger remarks: "The stars in their courses have fought for us. The English have paid our debts, they have eaten up the Zulus, who would otherwise destroy us, and they have let us beat them . . . and . . . I shall be the first President."<sup>88</sup>

In Swallow, which is not primarily a historical or political tale, Vrouw Botmar comments on the reasons for the Great Trek:

We were robbed, we were slandered, we were deserted. Our goods were taken and we were not compensated; the Kaffirs stole our herds, and if we resisted them we were tried as murderers; our

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>88</sup>Jess, p. 189.

slaves were freed, and we were cheated of their value, and the word of a black man was accepted before our solemn oath upon the Bible.<sup>89</sup>

Besides the light that Haggard throws on African history, his books have value for their pictures of everyday affairs. Details of farming, of trekking, of animals, of scenery are interspersed between exciting incidents:

Ah! I tell you, my child, the veldt in those days was different indeed from what it is now. The land itself remains the same except where white men have built towns upon it, but all else is changed. Then it was black with game when the grass was green; yet, at times I have seen it so black for miles that we could scarcely see the grass. There were all sorts of them, springbucks in myriads, blesbok and quagga and wildebeeste in thousands, sable antelope, sassaby and hartebeeste in herds, eland, giraffe and koodoo in troops; while the forests were full of elephant and the streams of sea-cow.<sup>90</sup>

Haggard sometimes simply shares his own memories with the reader, as in the following passage from The Witch's Head:

All business was suspended; women were standing about on the verandas hugging their babies and crying, or making preparations to go into laager; men were hiding deeds and valuables, or hurrying to defence meetings on the market-square, where the Government were serving out rifles and ammunition to all able-bodied citizens; frightened mobs of Basuto and Christian Kafirs were jabbering in the streets, and telling tales of the completeness of Zulu slaughter, or else running from the city to pass the night among the hills.<sup>91</sup>

The confusion and fear of the people of Pretoria on hearing of the supposed approach of the Zulu impis are admirably conveyed by one who closely observed the outward expression of emotion.

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<sup>89</sup>Swallow, p. 228.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>91</sup>The Witch's Head, p. 245.

Haggard's concern for Africa and Africans is obvious. In a sense, he is paying a debt. He exists as a novelist because of his African experiences. Without the stimulus provided by those experiences he might have written a few novels like Dawn, imitating the popular domestic novel of the time, but it is not likely that he would have written anything of lasting interest. Writing fiction was, for Haggard, an escape from the dullness of everyday life. Without the memory of a more exciting life in Africa he might have taken that dullness for granted.

Malcolm Elwin points out that Africa even played a large part in influencing Haggard's style.

The fanciful improbabilities of Haggard's romances derive from the habit of imaginative speculation developed during his years in Africa. Native history depended on oral tradition; legend and superstition afforded only the vaguest outlines to be embellished by imagination's most lavish colourings in an effort to visualize the immense panorama of Africa's history.<sup>92</sup>

Certainly without those "fanciful improbabilities" that contribute so much to the enduring fascination of his best books Haggard must have been an inferior writer. In this chapter I have endeavoured to demonstrate that Haggard paid his debt to Africa.

In the romances discussed in this chapter, whether based on oral tradition like Maiwa's Revenge and Nada the Lily--or on partly ascertainable historical facts, such as the Marie trilogy and Jess, Haggard's methods of involving the reader in the tale are those that I have already indicated in Chapter II. A few brief observations on the romantic content may, however, indicate values that a purely historical

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<sup>92</sup>Introduction to She (1948).

approach may omit.

Nada the Lily must primarily be regarded as a saga of heroic action and bloody conflict, relieved somewhat by the idyllic love affair of Umslopogaas and Nada, and conveying a sense of the important contribution of the occult and the esoteric to the Zulu way of life. As an indication of its romantic content may be mentioned Umslopogaas's fight to win the axe Groan-Maker, the characteristic all-conquering weapon of folklore. The conflict demonstrates Umslopogaas's possession of the cunning and the courage that are developed more fully in Allan Quatermain.

Now the word was given, and Jikiza rushed on Umslopogaas, roaring, for his rage was great. But Umslopogaas did not stir till his foe was about to strike, then suddenly he leaped aside, and as Jikiza passed he smote him hard upon the back with the flat of his axe, making a great sound, for it was not his plan to kill Jikiza with this axe. Now a shout of laughter went up from the hundreds of the people, and the heart of Jikiza nearly burst with rage because of the shame of that blow. Round he came like a bull that is mad . . . . Then of a sudden, just when the great axe leapt on high, Umslopogaas uttered a cry of fear, and, turning, fled before the face of Jikiza. Now once more the shout of laughter went up . . . . So cunningly did Umslopogaas run, that, though he seemed to reel with weakness . . . yet he went even faster and faster . . . .

Then it came about that Jikiza, rushing on blindly, caught his feet in the shield and fell headlong to earth . . . . Before men could so much as think [Umslopogaas] had seized the axe Groan-Maker . . . and sprung back, holding the great axe aloft . . . . Now, the watchers saw all the cunning of his fight, and those of them who hated Jikiza shouted aloud. But others were silent.<sup>93</sup>

Such exercises in the primitive show Haggard's perception of the motives that impel men to action. Desire, pride, fear of shame

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<sup>93</sup>Nada the Lily (1949), pp. 146-147.

are amongst the strongest. Those who did not hate Jikiza, and were therefore not swayed by their emotions, are silent in contemplation of both the greatness and the shame to which man's humanity can bring him. Civilized society, Haggard often suggested, is also governed by such emotions, but they are buried beneath a "veneer" of sophistication. In Nada the Lily Haggard removes that veneer from his own consciousness to present raw mankind as it existed in Africa before it became complicated by the artificial values of Western civilization.

In Nada the Lily ordinary human emotions are intensified beyond the ordinary. The jealousy of Zinita for Nada, the close friendship between Umslopogaas and Galazi, Mopo's love for his sister and his daughter, and Nada's love for Umslopogaas, that shines steadily amid the darker components of this saga of blood and carnage, are elements as important to a novel of a primitive society as such elements are to a naturalistic novel of civilized life. In rating Nada the Lily "A1," Stevenson showed excellent judgement of what constitutes the genuine in literature, romantic or otherwise.

An achievement in the primitive on a rather special level is the tale of Galazi and the wolves. Here Haggard captures both the primitive superstitious fear of nature and the mystic communion with her that, he often suggests, man's soul needs to be healthy. The distortion of human values involved in the wizards' using the wolves to hunt those who have established that mystic communion by means of the wolves repeats the Ayesha theme that certain great secrets of nature are best hidden from fallible man. Beyond salvation comes ruin, and man in his search for knowledge is ever going beyond the point of

no return.

The story of Galazi and the wolves adds dimensions of romance and horror reminiscent of the aura that surrounds Gagool in King Solomon's Mines. The story of the man who died in the cave just out of reach of the wolves provides one of the most compelling scenes in Haggard. Such sustained nightmarish horror is difficult to forget.

As I watched [the wolf] drew back nearly to the mouth of the cave, then of a sudden he ran forward and bounded high into the air towards the withered foot of that which hung from the cleft of the rock. His pads struck upon the rock here where it is smooth, and there for a second he seemed to cling, while his great jaws closed with a clash but a spear's breadth beneath the dead man's foot. Then he fell back with a howl of rage, and drew slowly down the cave. Again he ran and leaped, again the great jaws closed, again he fell down howling. Then the she-wolf arose, and they sprang together, striving to pull down him who sat above . . . . Night upon night they had leaped thus against the wall of the cave, but never might their clashing jaws close upon his foot. One foot they had, indeed, but the other they could not come by.<sup>94</sup>

Before dying, the man on the ledge had eaten part of his hide moocha and had bound a band of leather around the region of the eyes, "as though to hide something from their gaze." The blade of his broken spear is now rusty, only his bones and blackened skin remain, the wolves have worn the rock smooth, but they continue to leap in turns. The reader is well prepared for the supreme moment of climax when the huge he-wolf becomes aware of Galazi and "making no sound, he sprang straight at my throat." He is well prepared, too, to accept the wolves as ghosts of dead men, who carried the evil of humanity into the world of spirits.

Kipling acknowledged a debt to Haggard when he wrote: "It was

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 116-117.

a chance sentence of yours in Nada the Lily that started me off on a track that ended in my writing a lot of wolf stories. You remember in your tale where the wolves leaped up at the feet of a dead man sitting on a rock? Somewhere on that page I got the notion."<sup>95</sup>

The "lot of wolf stories" was The Jungle Books.

Of Nada it might be said, as Turbott Wolfe says of the girl Nhliziyombi:

She was an ambassadress of all that beauty (it might be called holiness), that intensity of the old wonderful unknown primitive African life--outside history, outside time, outside science. She was a living image of what has been killed by . . . our obscene civilization that conquers everything.<sup>96</sup>

Malcolm Elwin comments:

Today . . . Nada the Lily survives to remind its readers of the native race that preserved traditions of a tribal savagery --sombre in its crudity yet resplendent with a poetic and romantic dignity--untouched for centuries before its sudden submersion beneath the civilization of modern South Africa.<sup>97</sup>

Marie, Child of Storm and Finished, incorporating as they do so much African history and lore otherwise available only in rare documents or obscure publications, have special value for the student of Africa, but it must not be forgotten that they were written as romances. As such they are superb entertainment.

I shall touch very briefly on only a few of their merits, since the methods that contribute to their success have been illustrated from many other romances.

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<sup>95</sup>The Cloak that I Left, p. 147.

<sup>96</sup>William Plomer, Turbott Wolfe (1965), Chapter I: 6

<sup>97</sup>Introduction to She (1948), p. vii.

Marie has special interest for admirers of Allan Quatermain as a more detailed account of the years merely hinted at in Allan's Wife. A tale of his "first love and of the adventures that are grouped around her beautiful and tragic history," it combines the idyllic and the quest motif with historical fact. Allan undertakes the hazardous journey to rescue Marie, and Dingaan makes an excellent dragon figure. The Portuguese Hernando Pereira, who plots with Dingaan against British and Boers, is the typical wicked knight of myth.

Supporting characters are well motivated. Notable among them are the half-mad Marais, who because of his hatred of the English and his love for his daughter, refuses to let her marry Allan; and Vrouw Prinsloo, who "judged of moral codes by the impulses of her heart, and was quite prepared to stretch them to gain an end."

Although the reader may miss Haggard's usual massing of details to achieve particular effects, he will find the tale an engrossing one. Dingaan's systematic wiping out of whole families whose property he coveted, and the horror of the ring of vultures to which Allan is forced to expose Hans supply the occasional Gothic touch;

Here he settled, tilting forward in that odd way which vultures have, and scrambling a few awkward paces until he gained his balance. Then he froze into immobility, gazing with an awful, stony glare at the prostrate Hans, who lay within about fifteen feet of him. Scarcely was this aasvogel down, when others, summoned from the depths of sky, did as he had done. They appeared, they sank, they wheeled, always from east to west, the way the sun travels . . . . Soon there was a great ring of them about him, all immovable, all gazing, all waiting for something.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Marie (1959), p. 163



Child of Storm is more typically Haggard than Marie. The struggle between Cetewayo and Umbelazi gives it epic proportions. Mameena is a Zulu Cleopatra, a beautiful, tempestuous woman, who is the centre for intrigue and the target for the kind of human emotions that great beauty in a woman seems always to stir up. The characters of Saduko, Mameena, Zikali and the members of the Zulu Royal House admirably illustrate Allan's theory that in the primitive is found "nakedly and forcibly expressed . . . those eternal principles which direct our human destiny."<sup>99</sup>

In the delineation of the subtleties of Mameena's character, and in the imposition on that character of the symbolic image of the Zulu race, Haggard shows psychological insight not often associated with romantic writing. In her unscrupulous use of her beauty to achieve power, her clever fomenting of strife, and her cruelty, she is symbolic of the worst aspects of the Zulu nature, but in her strivings for the "something better" that she senses in life, she often gains the reader's and Allan's sympathy. The grandeur of her death adds validity to her stature as a woman who under different circumstances might have achieved greatness. "When your watcher sowed my seed . . . " she says, "he sowed the dreams that are part of me also, and I shall only bring him back his own, with the flower and the fruit by way of interest."<sup>100</sup> Like the Zulu nation she was born in a storm, she had a dream but methods of realizing her dream were limited and crude, and she died because

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<sup>99</sup>Child of Storm (1913), p. 2.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

those who could have helped her failed to understand the forces that motivated her actions.

Brooding over the emotionally-charged conflicts of the book and taking advantage of them when possible is the evil dwarf Zikali.

In this novel and Finished, Zikali's role is analogous to that of Fate as a puppet master pulling the strings that cause men to dance to their own destruction. His position as councillor to kings provides the opportunities. The course of history has often been influenced by such personal factors as Zikali's machinations to bring about the downfall of the House of Sinzangakona to avenge the wrongs they have inflicted upon his family.

The Black Kloof helps to establish the strange, eerie atmosphere that pervades the book. Zikali is invested with the kind of terror that surrounds Gagool, an aura that owes a great deal to his appearance and the setting with which he is associated:

What a man he was, if indeed he could be called quite human. His stature, though stout, was only that of a child, his head was enormous, and from it plaited white hair fell down on to his shoulders . . . . There he sat, red in the red light, perfectly still, and staring without a blink of his eyes at the furious ball of the setting sun, as an eagle is said to do.<sup>101</sup>

Injecting humour through such scenes as the accident to the ear of Umbezi's wife, the "Worn-out-old-Cow," and the delightfully ironic meeting of Mameena, Masapo, Saduko and Nandie, Haggard shows us how closely the sublime and the ridiculous are associated in the lives of such a childlike people. He soon restores the essentially foreboding

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p.29.

atmosphere, however, and maintains it by means of the dilemma of the weak but kindly Panda, whose love for Umbelazi precipitates the dreadful slaughter at the Tugela River. It is easy to understand why Kipling thought Child of Storm "as terse and strong as a Greek play, not a word that could be improved on or cut out."<sup>102</sup>

Finished, Haggard's last significant book about South Africa, links the consummation of Zikali's vengeance against Chaka and his heirs with Cetewayo's downfall and death. With the actual historical events beginning with the annexation of the Transvaal and ending with the Zulu king's death, Haggard merges the fictional tale of Maurice Anscombe and the beautiful Heda Marnham. In one of the most exciting incidents, the latter impersonates the white Inkosazana-y-Zulu, the strange "traditional Guardian Angel" of the Zulu, at Cetewayo's great council.

All things considered, Nada the Lily and the Marie trilogy are closer to the reality of Africa than King Solomon's Mines, Allan Quatermain and She, but they are no less admirable products of Haggard's imagination. As examples of his romantic use of the reality of Africa rather than his personal dream of the more mysterious regions of that continent, they should by no means be missed. Providing an in-depth view of African life, customs and beliefs, they also provide exciting plots that make the assimilation of rather specialized knowledge the kind of pleasure that a connoisseur of the genuinely romantic can not fail to relish.

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<sup>102</sup>Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard, pp. 74-75.

## V. HAGGARD'S CHARACTERS

### 1

Most of Haggard's major characters seem to fit into five categories, each of which represents a particular attitude of the author.

The first category includes those that in their particular view of life are to some extent a projection of Haggard himself. Among them may be listed Ernest Kershaw, Allan Quatermain, Holly, and Henry Graves.

The members of the second group embody those characteristics that, for Haggard, constitute the ideal man. Leo Vincey and Henry Curtis are good examples of this type. Beginning as stock figures, they sometimes, as in the case of Leo, develop some little complexity.

The third category, including Angela, Cleopatra, Ayesha, Jess and Helen, reflects Haggard's ideal of woman in all the splendour and mystery with which his imagination surrounds her. Those women may be regarded as glorified types, but are usually more complex than the ideal men. Although Ayesha is included in this category, she often moves into the first or the fourth, and sometimes transcends categories altogether.

The fourth category represents, according to Haggard's view of humanity, the best and the worst traits of mankind, notably renunciation, spiritual aspirations, materialism, fleshly passions and consummate evil. Into this category would fall such diverse characters as Rupert Ullershaw, Stella Fregelius, De Garcia, Gagool, Mr. Meeson, Sir Robert Aylward and

Meriamun.

Finally there are those characters, such as Umslopogaas, Hans, Alston, Vrouw Botmar and Squire de la Molle, who, though coloured by Haggard's imagination, are obviously drawn from real life. They establish themselves in the reader's mind as individuals and become more convincing with familiarity.

Occasionally a character may fit into more than one category. Allan, for example, may be regarded as a projection of Haggard and an example, in the later books at any rate, of the "ideal man." Stella Fregelius in her symbolic role as spiritual aspirations may be regarded as one aspect at least of Haggard's ideal woman.

## 2

Haggard's first successful male character, Ernest Kershaw of The Witch's Head, obviously belongs in the first category. He is raised above the stereotyped hero of the popular romantic novel only to the extent that he reveals Haggard himself as a young man, possibly idealized but recognizable in essentials. Like Haggard, he is handsome and has a charm that causes him to be liked by everyone with whom he comes into contact. His experiences in Africa are similar to Haggard's. His attitudes towards African natives and African problems are Haggard's. His unhappy love affair and his eventually finding a kind of happiness with a good but comparatively unglamorous woman parallel the author's own experience. That this relative happiness is only a compromise, for Haggard as well as for Ernest, is indicated by the author's poignant observation:

And yet, though he learned to love Dorothy so dearly, it

cannot be said that he forgot Eva, because there are things that some men can never forget, since they are a part of their inner life, and of these first love is unfortunately one.<sup>1</sup>

Compared with Allan Quatermain, Ernest is, of course, of minor importance, but in a study of Haggard's characters his identification with Ernest is of tremendous importance. Haggard, although not always present as a commentator and seldom obtrusively so, continually reveals his personality, beliefs and experience through the attitudes and observations of certain characters. Such characters are sometimes pivotal to the plot, but often (as in the case of Holly and Vrouw Botmar) play a minor role. It is through their eyes, however, that events are given perspective. Haggard's best narrators, moreover, such as Allan, Holly, Thomas Wingfield, and Harmachis, are given a convincing verisimilitude by means of the similarity of their personality and philosophy to their creator's, and because of that similarity give a special unity to the stories they tell.

Haggard excels in the achievement of the necessary balance between author and narrator. He has the ability to imagine himself in the particular situation and with the particular background of his narrator. This imaginative ability to live vicariously finds its chief expression in Allan Quatermain, one of the best narrators in romantic fiction. Allan as narrator maintains the objectivity of the observer, even while playing an important part in the action. The language and the tone are the narrator's, but the point of view often stems from the real or imagined experience of the author. Even when, in the later

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<sup>1</sup>The Witch's Head, p. 344.

romances, Allan becomes protagonist, it is possible for him to maintain that objectivity, since he is recalling events and emotions of many years before.

It would be unfair to Haggard to judge his creation of the character of Allan on a single book, or even two or three. Allan begins as a simple type, but through successive stories becomes more complex; from functional narrator through romantic hero, he gradually develops into one of the best-rounded characters of romance. Technically, Haggard uses Allan to perform a number of functions, but the evolution of Allan as a character is not purely a technical matter, as I shall endeavour to demonstrate.

In The Witch's Head Haggard had dealt with the Africa of his real experience. In King Solomon's Mines he deals with the Africa of his imaginative experience. For his plunge into the dream world of the latter book, Haggard seems to have realized the importance of choosing a narrator who would be consistent with the careful establishment of verisimilitude he considered necessary. His bizarre plot needed more or less grotesque characters and a stock hero, but it also needed an unequivocally equable, experienced and fairly unobtrusive narrator. As a matter of technique, and also of economy, the unromantic narrator was to become involved in the action as a peripheral figure only, an observer whose ordinariness would contrast effectively with the exotic elements of the tale. Specifically the narrator must be thoroughly familiar with the African setting, but must also be a man in whom the romantic ideas of youth may reasonably be expected to have been replaced by more serious considerations.

Allan's role in King Solomon's Mines is merely functional. He provides the first person limited point of view necessary to give unity to the strange plot. Technically, he is used as an aid to conviction and requires only slight characterization for that purpose. At the beginning of the book he gives his age as over sixty, an age when a man has learned to take himself and his emotions for granted, and when the imagination is not easily stirred. His natural modesty, one is led to believe, prevents him from talking any more than is necessary about himself. He makes it clear that he is a plain, blunt man, not subject to flights of the imagination, and not easily impressed by events that would amaze one who has lived a more sedentary life. A fatalist, he has learned to accept the inevitable. A very practical man, he is extremely serious in his concern for prices.

With economy of detail, he convinces us that his life has not been easy. It soon becomes evident that he has developed a rather ironic humour, often directed against himself, as a device to protect the kindly, vulnerable, visionary nature buried under his apparently tough exterior.

His expert knowledge of African life is demonstrated by his ability to assess the qualities of the native races and his thorough preparations for the long journey.

Commonplaces such as his reaction to being overcharged at the hotel in Cape Town, and his ironic reference to the New Houses of Parliament are the kind of touches that make a character believable. His observation on the oxen that lost their tails as a result of inoculation--"a tail without an ox is not much good, except to dust with"--indicates a sense of humour.

He is quite honest about what he regards as his timidity (which the perceptive reader redefines as intelligent caution), but is extremely



courageous in tight situations such as the eclipse incident. He admires the big, the handsome, the blond, and the strong (here represented by Sir Henry) probably because he is thin, short, dark and generally insignificant in appearance. Rather prim, he objects to Good's swearing.

Most of those character traits are necessary to his function as narrator, the more personal idiosyncrasies serving to support the essential. His timidity in particular makes him a good foil for Sir Henry. Just before the great battle in which Sir Henry is to distinguish himself, for example, Allan confesses to being "in a condition of pitiable fear." When trapped in the underground treasure chamber, Allan lays his "head against Sir Henry's broad shoulder [and] burst into tears," as a contrast to Sir Henry's unfaltering courage.

In addition to his major function as narrator and his minor function as foil, he is also a medium through which Haggard's attitudes are sometimes reflected. Close to his experiences in Africa, Haggard has not yet resolved his own feelings about the negroes. Allan's dislike of the word "nigger" no doubt reflects Haggard's emotional attitude towards his servant Mazooku, but also indicates his attitude towards natives in general. The Englishman in Haggard is, however, reflected in Allan's refusing to accept native advice and his objection to what he considers the familiarity of a native addressing a white man by a Kafir appellation.

One of the main problems in assessing Allan's character is to determine with reasonable satisfaction how the staid old hunter, likely to be remembered by the reader merely as the "old fellow" who told the story, evolved into the vital, complex character that he becomes in the

later romances.

The most obvious answer is that, having fulfilled his function in King Solomon's Mines, Allan becomes much more to Haggard than just a convenience in a single novel. To begin with the name Quatermain honours a friend of Haggard's lonely childhood whom he still remembers with affection. Secondly Allan's knowledge and skills are those of certain hunters whom Haggard admired greatly as a young and impressionable man in South Africa. Thirdly, Haggard in allowing Allan to express certain of his own feelings and attitudes finds himself, as he admits elsewhere, identifying with him rather than with the more outwardly heroic Sir Henry. And last, as the father figure that Haggard needed, Allan was too important psychologically to thrust aside.

In Allan Quatermain the narrator becomes much more of a participant in the action and is often at the centre of it, sometimes even alone, as in the first encounter with the Masai and in the incident of the severed head. At the beginning of the novel, a new dimension is given to the plain, blunt hunter by his account of his grief over the death of his son. In the evolution of Allan's character, Harry's death is much more important than it appears in relation to the plot of the novel. Haggard has had time to equate his personal image of Allan with his ideal father figure, and the tension generated by the difference between Allan and Haggard's own father becomes an important factor in what the former is eventually to become. The killing of Harry, then, is a ritual in which Allan as the father mourns for Haggard the son as his own father, he feels, never would. This substitution is a sublimation of the common adolescent fantasy of the father being sorry when the child dies, a

fantasy that may help to explain why so many children tend to substitute danger, (running away from home, drugs, etc.) for an unsatisfactory relationship with their parents.

Having disposed of Harry, who in a sense is Haggard's rival (one notices that he was never allowed to become a real person), the author is now free to relate to Allan as he never could while Harry was in the way. He lingers over Allan's grief, which is Haggard's unsympathetic father grieving for him, but by a process of rationalization becomes William Quatermain's regard, Shepstone's affection, Holly's ideal love for Leo, etc., and finally the grief of one on whom Haggard can expend all his pent-up filial affection. Allan has now become a real character.

In retrospect the Allan of King Solomon's Mines was a character trying to emerge. The student of Haggard remembers Allan's permitting himself as a special treat to include a hunting yarn in Chapter IV. He remembers other slight but significant glimpses of the real Allan, such as his anger at missing the running man "in public," an anger that caused him to feel delight when his marksmanship was vindicated by his killing the man by a second shot, and his ironic recognition of the "brute" in himself.

For the most part, however, in King Solomon's Mines Haggard depicted the exterior man, as he had been formed by events that could be readily dismissed because they were in the past. In a sense, Allan as yet had no real past. That was to come through a greater identification of the author with his character, and his use of that character to work out his own dreams of love and adventure.

Allan Quatermain begins with an event that affects Allan deeply and thus reveals the greater reality of the interior man. The reader, already familiar with certain aspects of Allan's character, vicariously shares his grief as if it were the grief of a friend. Once freed from Harry, however, Allan quickly forgets his grief in the joy of adventure. He obviously delights in freedom, and even in moments of stress reveals an effervescent sense of humour by actions such as ramming the butt of his rifle into Alphonse's stomach when the latter, in great fear, cannot control the chattering of his teeth. This is hardly the man who cried on Sir Henry's shoulder.

Although Allan has not yet attained those dimensions of character that he achieves in the Marie trilogy, he is essentially what the reader of those later books would expect him to become as an elderly man.

His comments on the relative values of civilization and savagery are both perceptive and ironic;

I say that as the savage is, so is the white man, only the latter is more inventive, and possesses a faculty of combination; save and except also that the savage, as I have known him, is to a large extent free from the greed of money, which eats like a cancer into the heart of the white man. It is a depressing conclusion, but in all essentials the savage and the child of civilization are identical . . . .

Do not let me, however, be understood as decrying our modern institutions, representing as they do the gathered experience of humanity applied for the good of all. Of course they have advantages--hospitals for instance; but then, remember, we breed the sickly people who fill them.<sup>2</sup>

Very subtle characterization is in evidence here. In his

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<sup>2</sup>Allan Quatermain, pp. 4-5.

recognition of the equal worth of the black man, Allan reflects not only his own views as a fictional creation, but also Haggard's. As an individual he is free to express individual opinions on the matter, but he is also a white man and capable of feeling depressed that his race is not, after all, superior to those of a darker skin who do not even possess the white man's supposed hereditary advantages. One notices, too, that in his contacts with strange natives Allan makes a point of staying on his horse until he has established his position as an Englishman worthy of their respect.

This attitude, which he himself attributes to British pride, could be interpreted, of course, as a matter of diplomacy based upon a fine understanding of native ways. It could also be a matter of personal pride, since Allan was always conscious of his small stature and insignificant appearance, and the horse helped him to maintain a more desirable image than that he knew he presented on foot. One feels that in describing Allan initially as a small man in order that he might better fulfil his functions in King Solomon's Mines, Haggard set up tensions between his conscious and subconscious image of Allan and that the effort to resolve those tensions makes Allan a much more complex character than he would otherwise have been. The continuous effort to overcome the physical characteristics that the author has accidentally bestowed upon what has now become an ideal, accounts for much that is puzzling in Allan's character. The modesty that was necessary in King Solomon's Mines continually wars with the pride that Haggard takes in Allan's achievements, until to the reader the modesty has the same effect as bragging. It calls attention to Allan's

achievements.

Allan is no more consistent than a person in real life. He upholds certain attitudes strongly when those attitudes may be in question or when he is deliberately assessing his own views, but even in regard to those in which he is usually most emphatic he sometimes has minor lapses. His pride as an individual, and as an Englishman, for example, sometimes conflicts with his professed views on the equality of black and white. In the following passage from Treasure of the Lake both personal pride and national consciousness seem to be reflected: "Now for a minute I was indignant at Kaneke's impudence. It seemed outrageous that he or any native African should presume to put me, Allan Quatermain, under his orders, to go where he liked and to do what he chose."<sup>3</sup>

Such lapses are, however, quickly overcome.

Another matter in which Allan is not entirely consistent also reflects a kind of vanity. In King Solomon's Mines he pretends that his reading is confined to the Bible and The Ingoldsby Legends but a quotation supposedly from the latter is from Sir Walter Scott, and the reader feels that Allan knows the difference. In Allan Quatermain unconscious comparisons with Greek mythology indicate that Allan is more cultured than he pretends. In Child of Storm he admits that he has read Homer in translation. In Marie he studies under a French tutor and shows considerable knowledge of French history. In She and Allan he finally emerges as what the reader has suspected for some time

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<sup>3</sup>Treasure of the Lake (1926), p. 102.

--a man of considerable erudition.

At the end of Allan Quatermain, during that famous ride, Allan achieves the stature of the hero that Haggard so badly wants him to be. The heroic image now conflicts with the actual. It seems as if further references to appearance are an ironic lament that the author failed to create his hero in the ideal image of a Sir Henry or a Leo. Haggard's attitude now involves both rationalization and retribution. After Allan's death, Sir Henry's eulogy has the effect of implying that here too was a great man, even the greatest, and that his greatness consisted to a great extent in self-effacement. It also suggests Haggard's reluctance to let his hero die. He cannot recall all that Allan has said of himself, but he implies that a great deal of it need not be taken seriously. Commenting on Allan's supposed timidity, for example, Sir Henry remarks that "though very cautious, he possessed a most intrepid spirit, and what is more never lost his head."<sup>4</sup> Ambiguously, the only weakness Sir Henry attributes to Allan is a slight jealousy, which makes one wonder whether Allan was jealous of his much-extolled Sir Henry or whether Haggard recognized that trait in himself. Certainly his upbringing would make it excusable.

As the reader becomes more familiar with the character of Allan in the later romances, the conflict between Allan's seemingly prosaic and timid nature and the heroic status that he achieved at the end of Allan Quatermain is gradually resolved. His overcoming his imperfections, in fact, becomes an important element in his metamorphosis from narrator

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 374.

to hero. It is a curious fact that the hero in English literature is not always a "golden figure," but rather is often a man with physical, social or environmental handicaps. Tom Brown, Oliver Twist, John Halifax and Nicholas Nickleby are heroically conceived Victorian characters who are not flamboyant in person or actions. The self-effacing, sensitive, but brave and efficient male, seems to fit the English concept of hero-- a concept that is broad enough to encompass the admirable in character and personality as well as the physically impressive.

Haggard may even for a while have held two ideals of the hero simultaneously, the ideal hero of romance and the ideal English hero, endowed with no outstanding "heroic" qualities but winning against great odds by means of his determination to oppose to the death anything that interferes with his right to live according to personal ideals. The difficulty with the ideal hero of romance seems to be the impossibility of maintaining him as a person. Haggard seems to have become aware of this early in his career. In The Witch's Head, for example, Alston remarks: "Something gone wrong with 'the ideal', I should say . . . that is the way of ideals."<sup>5</sup>

The creation of a "real" hero is much more difficult than that of the stock "golden figure," but once established he is easy to maintain, since his heroism can be brought out by everyday, as well as extraordinary events. The reader, too, finds it possible to identify himself with the everyday hero in a way that is impossible with the ideal hero of

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<sup>5</sup>The Witch's Head, P. 193.



romance. Haggard being a fairly ordinary and rather humble person must, too, have derived a great deal more satisfaction through identification with Allan Quatermain than with Vincey or Curtis.

In the dedication of Allan's Wife and Other Tales to his friend Arthur Cochrane, whose native name Macumazahn he borrowed for Allan, Haggard says, "Allan has become as well known to me as any other friend I have." Allan's boyhood memories are to a certain extent Haggard's own, but Allan is allowed to distinguish himself in a way that Haggard as a boy never could. Allan is granted a fulfilment of his love for Stella that was denied to Haggard in his first love affair, and his memories of Stella serve as a kind of substitute for the love that the author had dreamed of experiencing.

That Stella was not Allan's first love comes as rather a shock to the reader of Marie, but he soon realizes that Allan's nature is large enough to include more than one love, that the outwardly phlegmatic Allan of the early novels is a passionate man. Thus the mind is prepared for Allan's love-hate relationship with Mameena and his strong attachment to Lady Ragnall. Both of those relationships help to satisfy the vanity that Allan tries to hide, and also, one would suppose, help Haggard to sublimate urges towards a more adventurous and stimulating life that might otherwise be uncontrollable. Certainly his permitting Allan to reach such a familiar status with Ayesha that he was granted the supreme favour of looking upon her unveiled face as he conversed with her as an equal is a fulfilment of Haggard's own fantasy of finding the ideal woman he so often depicted. Allan's looking upon Ayesha's face without coming to harm seems to be a final affirmation that as

Haggard's ideal hero he has supplanted such "golden figures" as Leo. Allan's death after the battle is characteristically non-melodramatic; yet, in its own way, it matches the impressiveness of Umslopogaas's end. It is possible that Haggard allows Allan to die at the end of Allan Quatermain because he cannot tolerate the idea of having him live a life of ease and luxury among the Zu-Vendis. If so, it indicates the extent to which Sir Henry and Allan have reversed roles. To Allan, such a life would be a life of stagnation--the kind of life that Haggard escaped from in his writings. On the other hand, in keeping with the elegiac quality of epic romance, death resulting from brave deeds increases Allan's heroic stature.

Possibly as Haggard grew farther away from his African experiences, he unconsciously grew to identify himself more with Allan. As he himself confessed, Allan gradually became his alter ego. Perhaps Allan's death is a symbolic burying of the author's own urge for romantic adventure. But to a great extent Allan has now become Haggard and, having killed him, the author finds he cannot exist without him. He solves this problem by taking us back, in subsequent stories, to Allan's early life. Maiwa's Revenge and Allan's Wife and Other Tales are tributes to a character who refuses to die. Allan's Wife, one notes, was to be "his last tale."

So far Allan had been presented to the reader as an elderly man. In Allan's Wife the character expands in time as well as in amplitude and incidentally becomes more closely identified with the author. His relationship with Stella and, in subsequent books, with Marie, Mameena, Lady Ragnall and Ayesha, may be interpreted as a

working out of Haggard's own dream fantasies. On the other hand, though serving more and more as a vehicle for Haggard's thoughts and desires he remains partly independent, and in becoming more vital, he becomes more complex. He is like a friend who shares the author's interests, but sometimes disagrees on points of judgement. In the matter of Sir Bartle Frere, for example, Haggard is adamant in his condemnation, but Allan expresses sympathy for the man, speaking of him as "poor Sir Bartle Frere." One must remember, however, that Haggard writes both and is possibly not characterizing Allan at this point, but giving a second viewpoint of his own on Frere. It is typical of Haggard's humanity that he can pity the man whose actions he condemns.

As Haggard puts more and more of himself into Allan, the character broadens and deepens until it becomes one of the most credible in the literature of adventure. In his autobiography Haggard writes: "I always find it easy to write of Allan Quatermain, who, after all, is only myself set in a variety of imagined situations, thinking my thoughts and looking at life through my eyes."<sup>6</sup>

In Maiwa's Revenge Haggard uses his position as editor to give a third-person view of Allan's character, enabling him to point out small peculiarities that Allan was probably not aware he possessed. For example, we see Allan as naïvely proud of his ability as a sportsman. With great satisfaction he tells the doubting Jeffries: "You see that pollard about one hundred and forty yards off? Well, there should be

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<sup>6</sup>The Days of My Life, ii, 85.

another woodcock down in a line with it, about sixty paces out in the field."

Although shrewd, and even hard, in the matter of a bargain, he is too trusting and lacks business foresight. He foolishly invests his money in a partnership to run a store in Pretoria. "The arrangement was [he says] that I should find the capital and he the experience . . . . At the end of four months my partner had the capital and I had the experience."<sup>7</sup>

We are again reminded of his determination, courage, and acceptance of things as they are:

All the same, Wambe or no Wambe, I determined to hunt elephants in his country. I never was afraid of natives, and I was not going to show the white feather now. I am a bit of a fatalist, as you fellows know, so I came to the conclusion that if it was fated that Wambe should send me to join my old friend John Every, I should have to go, and there was an end of it. Meanwhile I meant to hunt elephants with a peaceful heart.

When, out of fear of Wambe, Allan's head man Gobo expresses his intention of returning to the coast, Allan threatens to shoot him. But Allan is extremely self-conscious in the best as well as the worst sense of the word. This self-consciousness enables him to have particular insight into the feelings, motives and rights of others. He reflects:

I had no real right to kill Gobo or anybody else because they objected to run the risk of death by entering the territory of a hostile chief. But I felt that if I wished to keep up any authority it was absolutely necessary that I should push matters to the last extremity short of actually shooting him.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Maiwa's Revenge, pp. 18-19.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 21-22.

How different Allan's attitude is from that of the usual hero of African adventure stories may be seen by a comparison with Edgar Wallace's Commissioner Sanders, who, significantly enough, is one of the most popular. Sanders understands the natives politically, and is in many ways a good official, but clings to the British official state of mind. It would be impossible to imagine Allan leading the terrified boy king of a native tribe (whose father has been killed and his city reduced to rubble by five British war ships) "back to the city by the ear." Sanders's idea of punishment when the natives get out of hand is expressed by his request that the Administration send him "a bundle of rattan canes."<sup>9</sup> He is so busy undermining the dignity of the native rulers that he is incapable of seeing they have any. His assistant Bones, like Allan, understands the natives imaginatively, but the taboos imposed upon him by his position as a British official make him a comic figure.

Allan detests cruelty. Of the man who sneeringly suggests that he will end in Wambe's lion trap he says: "Next day it so happened that I shot this man, and, so you know, I think that he is about the only human being who has come to harm at my hands for whom I do not feel sincere sorrow and, in a degree, remorse."<sup>10</sup>

He has the thought of putting strychnine into the carcasses of the elephants to poison Wambe's men and gain time to escape, but changes his mind. Haggard, as editor, remarks: "I smiled, knowing that old

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<sup>9</sup>Sanders of the River (1933), Chapter I.

<sup>10</sup>Maiwa's Revenge, p. 95.

Allan could never have resorted to such an artifice, however severe his strait. But that was his way; he always made himself out to be a most unmerciful person."<sup>11</sup>

× He agrees to help Nala attack Wambe on condition that he be allowed to claim Wambe's stockade of elephant tusks, but the reader knows that his real motivation is his concern for John Every, Wambe's captive. He also stipulates that no women and children be killed. He has great love for children, and cannot bear to talk about the slaughter of Maiwa's child in the lion trap.

In Marie, when an old Zulu mistakenly assumes that Allan is responsible for Dingaan's condemnation of himself, his son and his grandson to death, he broke in "almost with tears" to assure the old man that he had nothing to do with it.

In Child of Storm his ideas of proper treatment of the Zulus as a basis for a good relationship with them are very prominent, and involve both humanity and diplomacy. He recognizes the fact that to the Zulus the behaviour of the white man is often incomprehensible, and sees nothing to resent in Umbezi's exclamation: "Oh! Why can I not remember that you are quite mad and therefore that it must not be expected of you to act as though you were sane."<sup>12</sup> He urges tolerance, therefore, for behaviour on their part that is not in keeping with the white man's code, and stresses the importance of keeping even "half-bargains" with them.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>12</sup>Child of Storm, p. 138.

That the Zulus have implicit trust in Allan is implied by the confidence placed in him by Zikali, Mameena and Cetewayo. In Finished he inadvertently enters Cetewayo's presence with a pistol in his pocket. Although "it is death to appear before the king armed," Cetewayo forgives Allan, with the observation, "I know that you are not one who stabs in the dark, even when our peoples growl round each other like two dogs about to fight."<sup>13</sup>

The reader cannot doubt the genuineness of Allan's feelings towards Hans, Umslopogaas, Mameena and other natives whom he knows well. In spite of the Englishman's embarrassment at treating natives as equals (an embarrassment that Haggard himself possibly felt at times), Allan manages to express that regard in ways that a native appreciates. As Hans's care for his master is often disguised as impudence, Allan's reaction to a special mark of consideration is often one that Hans, except for the special relationship that exists between them, might well resent. In return for Hans's bestowing upon him a prized charm in order, as the former thinks, to ensure his master's safety, Allan, very moved by the gesture, responds "Get out of the road, you dirty little scoundrel, and stop your impudence." He lifts "his foot suggestively," but he wears the charm. An exhibition of white man's politeness, one gathers, would have been both terribly embarrassing for Allan, and much less in keeping with native ways of expressing appreciation and affection.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Finished, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup>She and Allan (1960), p. 31.

Allan's fine perception of native manners is demonstrated again and again. He is quite willing to resort to Mavova's magic, and admits that, even though he cannot believe in it, it is not necessarily wrong. He wonders whether "we educated people have got hold of the wrong end of the stick altogether,"<sup>15</sup> and sometimes feels that the only reality is found in "those things which we cannot see or touch or hear."<sup>16</sup> Native manners differ according to circumstances, however, and the deference granted a dignified magician would not always be appropriate. He knows when to use both badinage and bluff. In an encounter with an outpost of Sekukuni's in Finished he asks where the "fat captain" is, and sends a message to Sekukuni that the English will return and "he will cease to live and his town will be burnt and his tribe will no more be a tribe."<sup>17</sup>

Allan's caution is apparent, however, in his dealings with strange natives, and in his care not to lose his dignity, he often assumes a superiority he does not feel;

I told [the head man] to sit down, and then abused him roundly. "What did he mean," I asked, "by disturbing me in this rude way? How did he dare to cause a person of my quality and evident importance to be awakened in order to interview his entirely contemptible self?"

I spoke thus because I knew it would produce an impression on him. Nobody, except a really great man, he would argue, would dare to speak to him in that fashion. Most savages are desperate bullies at heart, and look on insolence as a sign of power.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Allan and the Holy Child, p. 130.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>17</sup>Finished, p. 124.

<sup>18</sup>Maiwa's Revenge, p. 40



In The Holy Flower we find that Allan's liking for other people no more depends upon their admirable qualities than upon their colour or status in society. He becomes strongly attached to the somewhat naive and feckless Stephen Somers, but is repelled by the cold materialism and pomposity of the extremely respectable Sir Alexander. In The Ivory Child he resents the attitude of a pompous gamekeeper and delights in taking him down a peg. He also remonstrates with his friend Lord Ragnall for accepting social values that permit him to entertain the spurious Sir Junius Fortiscue (alias Van Koop).

He excuses Hans's faults, not just because they share old memories, but because of the value that he places on his friendship. He does not suffer fools gladly, but his hot temper soon cools and he holds no malice. Hans and Sammy are often sore trials, but his outbursts contain nothing that might humiliate them. He treats them as he would treat a white companion of comparable mentality. The very special nature of his friendship with Hans is shown in such passages as the following:

Well, I gave him the tot . . . although it was against my principles, and locked up the bottle afterwards. Also I shook the old fellow's hand and thanked him, which seemed to please him very much, for he muttered something to the effect that it was nothing, since if I had died he would have died too, and therefore he was thinking of himself, not of me. Also two big tears trickled down his snub nose, but these may have been produced by the brandy.<sup>19</sup>

Capable of deep emotion, Allan prefers not to show it or to take it too seriously in others. When Hans dies at the end of

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<sup>19</sup>Allan and the Holy Flower, p. 106.

The Ivory Child, Allan's expression of grief is a model of understatement. He remembers little about the journey home, "For oh!" he remarks, "my heart was sore because of Hans." Like those of his creator, Allan's friendships were rare, but strong and lasting, leaving an indelible imprint upon the memory.

The more closely one examines Allan's character the more aware one becomes of his similarity to his creator. Allan's realization that adventure has become a necessity to him provides both a link with Haggard and a point of departure. Haggard's adventure is lived in imagination through Allan. His daily life, except for the few brief years in Africa, has been relieved now and then by a formal journey to a foreign country and by the temporary excitement of public adulation, but on the whole it has not been the life he would have chosen. In his freedom to experience adventure and his encounters with romantic characters like Mameena, Zikali and Ayesha, Allan freely exercises such qualities as courage, wisdom and loyalty, that Haggard's life tended to circumscribe, and through the exercise of those qualities gains fulfillment that Haggard, except vicariously, through his hero, was denied. In character traits and philosophy Allan grows more like Haggard in successive books; in his role as hero he lives what is for Haggard merely a fantasy.

Allan's ambiguity is a strong element in his appeal. As Haggard he is philosophical, platitudinous, mystical, depending on the author's mood. As a narrator he is a mirror that reflects events and other characters from an angle that makes them at once more believable and more fascinating. His similarity to Haggard helps to ensure his own

credibility, but as a character who seems to have grown haphazardly, he is often delightfully unorthodox and has a freshness and vitality that appeals even on short acquaintance.

To the Haggard enthusiast, Allan exists not merely because of characteristics that can be isolated and analysed, or even because of shades of thought and gestures that have become familiar, but also because of his ability to surprise. He is like a friend that one trusts intuitively because he has been there such a long time that a sense of closeness exists independently of reason. Yet one feels that he has depths not yet revealed. One's admiration has been tempered by his failings, but his failings no longer matter one way or the other. If justification for admiration is needed, however, it can be found in the observations of others. In Treasure of the Lake, for example, White-Mouse comments:

I have heard that he is generous and great-hearted; one who never goes back upon his word, a staff to lean on in the hour of trouble, a man who does not refuse the prayer of those in distress; brave, too, and a lover of adventure, if a good cause may be served, a great one whom it pleases to pretend to be small.<sup>20</sup>

Possibly most important for many readers is the fact that Allan, like themselves, is merely groping in the dark in matters of religion. He expresses adherence to no particular creed, but is willing to accept comfort from any source. He believes in some kind of after life, and regrets that his weaknesses prevent him from being wholly good. He knows that man's physical nature is strong, and that any victory of the spiritual is the result of hard fighting, but he is a fatalist and is quite willing to leave the matter of salvation in the capable hands

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<sup>20</sup>Treasure of the Lake, p. 54.

of God. Identification of author and character in seeking rather than advocating religious philosophy is an important factor in Allan's success, forming at least a partial basis for identification of reader and character. Allan's seeking with a sense of humour gives the kind of spice to religious musings that tie them in with his character as a plain, blunt man and make them very palatable to the reader.

In contrast to Stevenson, Quiller-Couch, Stanley J. Weyman and other romantic writers, Haggard often chooses as his hero a middle-aged or even old man. His vision of the excitement that the world holds for the lucky ones came from older men who combined a sense of adventure with wisdom and experience. The heroes of Treasure Island, Deadman's Rock and The House of the Wolf, reflecting as they do the fantasies of childhood, appeal to the adult because they awaken memories of a dream world. Haggard appeals on an adult level. Even the young Allan is seen through the eyes of the elderly man he eventually became. Haggard found romance in escape from a dull and often unhappy childhood, rather than in a return to childhood, and his imagination is attracted towards such father figures as Allan Quatermain and Holly.

Holly is a more cultured Allan. Like Allan (and Haggard) he is an essentially lonely man. His friend Vincey tells him, "You are not fit to mix with the world--it would only embitter you."<sup>21</sup>

He is even more conscious than Allan of his personal appearance, and has failed to develop Allan's protective shell. His sensitiveness to the world's hurts is Haggard's own. His one experience of women

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<sup>21</sup>She, p. 37.

has been disastrous, but in Leo he has found an outlet for the great love of which he is capable.

His endurance, shrewdness, and essential goodness make him a very attractive character, while his sense of humour helps the reader to see people and events in their true perspective. His gentle satire is extremely effective. "I . . . ran my eye through the will, which appeared, from its utter unintelligibility, to have been drawn on the strictest legal principles."<sup>22</sup>

In spite of his very natural jealousy, which he has the will-power to overcome, his understanding and sympathy embrace Ustane and Ayesha. Although captivated by Ayesha's beauty, he is never blinded to her evil. Yet he has a great tolerance that excuses the cruelty that, his understanding tells him, stems from her suffering. His final gesture of pity in covering up Ayesha's shrivelled body epitomizes his humanity.

In the final débâcle in Ayesha, Holly is spared. Later he is granted his vision of Ayesha, a vision that Haggard implies is a greater fulfilment than that of Leo. Like Allan, Holly seems to have evolved into a hero. Leo's love for Ayesha is physical, and further refinement is apparently needed in the world where his spirit joins Ayesha's. Holly, on the other hand, worships with the spirit. His ugly body debars him from physical love, but during a life limited by the consciousness of that ugliness, he develops compensating qualities. His final vision of Ayesha is a completely satisfactory spiritual union with her,

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

the glorious vision at the end of a perilous journey. A modern Grail hero, he is granted a spiritual rather than a physical reward, and is quite aware that the former has the greater value. "The flesh dies," he says, "or at least it changes, and its passions pass, but that other passion of the spirit--that longing for oneness--is undying as itself."<sup>23</sup>

The choice of such a man as Colonel Quaritch as the hero of a novel may be regarded as Haggard's protest against the flamboyant heroes of Ouida and George Alfred Lawrence, so popular at the time. Not quite an anti-hero in the modern sense, Quaritch is, nevertheless, as close to that concept as one could reasonably expect the hero of a Victorian novel to be. "A peculiar and rather battered looking individual, apparently over forty years of age,"<sup>24</sup> in retirement on half-pay, he is certainly not what the novel-reading public expected in a hero. Quaritch possesses, however, sterling qualities of character that compensate adequately for his lack of glamour. He gains the sympathy of the reader, as Haggard probably intended, by means of his prosaic personality.

It is a curious phenomenon in Haggard that the characters through whom he expresses his own personality and ideas have no physical resemblance to him. Although Haggard possessed his own share of physical beauty, there is no evidence that he valued it unduly. He may even have held in contempt the physical beauty that attracted others to him as a

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<sup>23</sup>Ayesha, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup>Colonel Quaritch, V. C., p. 1.

young man, longing instead for certain qualities that might have impressed his father. His substitution of Allan, Holly and Quaritch as heroes for Vincey and Leo, may have particular personal significance. Haggard may have recognized in himself one of his own "golden figures," a young man of good stature and pleasing appearance who, in Africa (Haggard's world of romance) gained the regard of very reputable people, notably, according to his autobiography, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, but who, in England (Haggard's real world) was regarded as a nonentity. Haggard's most rewarding friendship was possibly that with Kipling, a meeting of similar tastes and ideas in which the "golden figure" image played no part. The quiet depth of that friendship may account for his tortuously but surely establishing Allan and Holly as heroes par excellence, subtly overshadowing the more obviously heroic deeds of the more flamboyant heroes. It may account, too, for his treating his "golden figures" with an irony that prevents their being taken altogether seriously. The reader is impressed with the person and prowess of the "golden figures," but they remain for him figures of romance, imaginatively stimulating, but, on consideration, quite separate from his own being. On the other hand, the reader tends to forget very soon the appearance of Holly, Allan and Quaritch, identifying himself with them mentally rather than physically.

Quaritch, like Haggard, feels that he has somehow missed the good things of life. He realizes that, for him, the excitement is already in the past, and that he has to content himself with the routine of living in a rather humdrum environment. His experience with women is Haggard's:

Men of the stamp of Harold Quaritch [and Haggard] generally pass through three stages with reference to the other sex. They begin in their youth by making a goddess of one of them, and finding out their mistake. Then for many years they look upon women as the essence and incarnation of evil and a thing no more to be trusted than a jaguar.<sup>25</sup>

The third stage, for both Quaritch and Haggard, is to find a measure of contentment in a relationship with a good woman.

Henry Graves, the hero of Joan Haste, has many affinities with Haggard, particularly in his memories of childhood:

Henry was left very much to his own devices. He said nothing, and he was too proud to be jealous, but nobody except the lad himself ever knew what he suffered under this daily, if unintentional neglect. Though his constitutional reserve prevented him from showing his heart, in truth he was very affectionate, and almost adored the relations who looked on him as a dullard, and even spoke of him at times as "poor Henry," as though he were deficient in intellect.

Like Haggard, Henry was driven by a need to impress:

He was a hard-working man, so hard work was thrust upon him; and he never shirked it, though often enough others got the credit of his efforts. [He] could never forget the slights that he had experienced as a child, and he was animated by a great but secret desire to show the relatives who disparaged him . . . that he was made of better stuff than they were disposed to believe.<sup>26</sup>

The same motive might equally well account for Haggard's writing too fast and too much, and for his willingness to serve on so many committees.

### 3

Haggard's second group of characters, the "golden figures" so common in his work, are men of action rather than of ideas. Purely

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>26</sup>Joan Haste, p. 29.



visual concepts, they raise the action to a level that invites admiration rather than emulation. Their troubles, if they have any, are physical rather than mental. In their purely physical being they are bothered by Circe and the Sirens and, ironically, struggle blindly to be free from the too-constricting bonds of love that their nature invites. On the side of law and order, they are nevertheless largely subject to their emotions and have to be managed by some mentally-stronger character such as Allan or Holly.

The strong, blond and handsome Sir Henry Curtis of King Solomon's Mines provides a fitting protagonist in the epic conflict with King Twala, but it is Allan who is involved in the more terrible but subtler struggle against the evil represented by Gagool. This might account for Allan's excessive fear. In Allan Quatermain, Curtis again plays a key role in the action and is a complicating factor in the love interest, but, curiously enough, he is not so well remembered as either the less romantically-conceived Good or the clownish Alphonse.

Physically, Leo Vincey is the archetype of the golden figure but without the dignity that usually makes such a figure imposing. As a reincarnation of Kallikrates, of course, he has to epitomize the beauty and strength implied by that name, but his vapidness of character tends to negate the effect of his personal appearance and lessen his value even as a symbol. Holly's remark in Chapter II--"As for his mind, he was brilliant and keen-witted, but not a scholar. He had not the dullness necessary to that effect"--<sup>27</sup> becomes, in retrospect,

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<sup>27</sup>She, p. 45.

humorously ironic.

There is the implication, of course, that 'She' loves Holly for his mind and Leo for his physical attributes only; but such a juxtaposition of great intellect and the apparent total lack of intelligence is hardly necessary to convey that impression.

Whether Haggard improved the character of Leo in Ayesha because he was dissatisfied with his earlier creation or as part of the symbolic content of that novel remains a problem. In Ayesha Leo is no longer the bumptious schoolboy of She, but a mature gentleman, whose courage and common sense, gained through years of great hardships, make him an authentic golden figure. The new Leo can be seen as the result of the elevating force of love. This "meaning" of Leo conforms to the symbolic meaning of the two books.

It may be quite unfair, of course, to judge Leo as a "creation" at all, since in She, at any rate, he is merely a stock figure, functional to the working out of the plot. Eric Brighteyes seems the most splendid of Haggard's heroes, but in reality he too is no more than a stock figure. It is the grandeur of setting and plot that invests him with a special quality. The symbolic conflict of which he is the protagonist has the effect of increasing both his stature and his meaning for the reader. The fact that the effect on the reader of Leo in Ayesha is greater than that in She may very well be due to his becoming more distinctly symbolic.

The list of "golden figures" would include the heroes of such novels as Montezuma's Daughter, The Wanderer's Necklace, and The Virgin of the Sun. Sometimes as in the case of Thomas Wingfield, the

"golden figure" exists as a "real" character, partly in Thomas's case because he is also the narrator. As narrator, he cannot fail to acknowledge his physical attributes, since they are important to the plot, but the reader identifies himself with him by sharing his intimate thoughts and feelings. It is Thomas's humanity, rather than his stature as a hero, that matters most in the end, when the reader's sympathy for Thomas's losses has forged a stronger bond than admiration for his physical feats.

The golden figure is not, however, always the main character, although usually involved in, and often important to the plot. A striking example of the "golden figure" as a minor character is Arkle of Treasure of the Lake, "a splendid-looking man . . . a perfect example of the Anglo-Saxon race."<sup>28</sup> Allan's stature as hero prevents Arkle from playing the dominant role that he would probably have in a book written near the beginning rather than the end of Haggard's career.

## 4

Like the male "golden figures," Haggard's ideal woman stems from romance rather than real life. She is both the surpassingly beautiful "lady fair" of medieval romance, and the "good and pure" creature who guided the footsteps of the erring Victorian male back to a path of righteousness; at the same time she is the "belle dame sans merci" whose beauty leads men to destruction. Much more complex than her male counterparts, she bears little resemblance to a creature

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<sup>28</sup>Treasure of the Lake, p. 38.

of flesh, but is a product of Haggard's imagination that has her archetypes in myth and legend and her roots in man's failure to understand aspects of the feminine nature that are different from his own. One of the main difficulties that Haggard continually experiences is that of reconciling Circe and the Victorian ideal. The "decent" Victorian male was supposed to worship woman for her goodness. Her natural estate was a high one, as is suggested by the phrase "fallen woman." In The Witch's Head, Ernest knows that he is "growing coarse" when he "no longer prayed, he no longer revered woman," an accepted Victorian attitude. Yet Haggard's ideal woman must, he felt, while including the concept of woman as an object of reverence, be large enough to include woman as seducer and destroyer. Those different attributes of different women--of womankind rather than any one woman --are impossible to portray in a single character, as Haggard found. There are reminders too, particularly in the type of woman whom the protagonist is forced to "live happily ever after with"--e.g., Thomas Wingfield, Ernest Kershaw--that Haggard could not accept either the classic or the Victorian ideal Woman because he knew that women in real life, although capable of admirable qualities, were no more perfect than men.

In contrast to the woman of sterling but unromantic qualities who secures the hero's affections in the end, it is the Ideal who occupies space in the tale. She is "Woman" rather than "a woman," and in her most idealized form becomes a symbol, usually of man's quest for ideal beauty and truth, or of the spirit in conflict with the flesh. Unpredictable, she is capable of both extreme cruelty and

transcendent love. Like the golden figures she is impressive to observe, but, unlike them, very difficult to understand. Such a view of woman is expressed by Sepa in Cleopatra:

For Woman, in her weakness, is yet the strongest force upon the earth. She is the helm of all things human; she comes in many shapes and knocks at many doors; she is quick and patient, and her passion is not ungovernable like that of men . . . . And thus Woman rules the world. For her are wars; for her men spend their strength in gathering gains; for her they do well and ill, and seek for greatness, to find oblivion. But still she sits like yonder Sphinx, and smiles; and no man has ever read all the riddle of her smile, or known all the mystery of her heart.<sup>29</sup>

Such a visionary view of woman is not calculated to produce verisimilitude. Unfortunately, Haggard's striving to give substance to what is only an ideal often results in over-dramatization or sentimentalization or both. Either robs the character of the dignity such a concept of woman should possess. After having endowed his character with certain attributes of the superwoman, he fails to maintain her on the level that he has established, and succeeds only in making her ridiculous.

Angela, the heroine of Dawn, is Haggard's first attempt to depict the mystical and all-pervading female figure that Jung calls the "anima" and that to Haggard was to become the symbol of unattainable beauty. Angela is supposedly possessed of physical, intellectual and even spiritual beauties; but she impresses the modern reader only as an over-muscular, priggish and boring child-woman. Her actions are often inconsistent with her character as the author has presented it.

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<sup>29</sup>Cleopatra, p. 45.

Inspired by a beautiful stranger that Haggard saw at church, she remains a stranger to the reader, mainly because she is never fully realized by the author.

An examination of Angela and the role she plays in Dawn may help to indicate what Haggard attempted and how he failed. Even as a child, Angela is exceptional. She goes at night to the churchyard where her mother is buried even though the people of the village say "that the ruins are full of spirits." She hopes to see those spirits, and likes it dark and quiet so that she can hear things "that other people do not hear." She is glad that there is no wind and rain to kill the things of nature, so that they can "die softly without any pain." She sees a cloud as "a shadow of an angel carrying a baby home." She combines with a dreamy, introspective, mystical nature, qualities of extreme hardihood, climbing fifty feet to a raven's nest in a tree, and in spite of the ravens' picking at her till they left scars, taking away two young ravens as pets. She wants to learn "the languages that other nations, nations that have passed away, used to talk, and how to calculate numbers and distances," having outstripped her governess in ordinary branches of knowledge "two years ago." In the opinion of the latter, she "sees things." The child loves storms, in spite apparently of what they do to the things of nature, and is discovered once

out there at the end of the wall, and tied to the ring by a scarf passed round her middle . . . . She was standing there, her back against the post, right in the teeth of the gale, with the spray dashing over her, her arms stretched out before her, her hat gone, her long hair standing out behind straight as an iron bar, and her eyes flashing as though they were on fire, and all the while there were the great trees crashing

down all round in a way enough to make a body sick with  
fright.<sup>30</sup>

A truly unusual child in her tenth year, who, the reader is justified in expecting, will grow into an exciting woman. We see her again ten years later, when Mr. Frazer, "a master by no means easily pleased, expressed himself unable to teach her any more." She uses an algebraic formula that had not occurred to her teacher to solve a problem that he had puzzled over for two days, evidence of both brilliance and an original mind. She enjoys her knowledge but is not vain because of it. In Mr. Frazer's opinion, she "could . . . take a double first at the University," but knows little of English literature and history and less of "a woman's ordinary accomplishments, such as drawing, playing, singing." Her mind, "on the other hand, has been daily saturated with the noblest thoughts of the intellectual giants of two thousand years ago." Mr. Frazer has endeavoured at all times to "teach her mind to follow the secret ways of knowledge."

Both the description of Angela's childhood propensities and the emphasis on her education, it seems to me, are designed to remove her as far as possible from the Victorian woman of fiction, if not of real life. She is gradually becoming the "remarkable woman" that, one assumes, is going to accomplish remarkable deeds, an example of what woman, freed from the smothering effects of Victorian convention, might become.

A female "golden figure" she is "tall beyond the ordinary height of woman, and possessed unusual beauty of form . . . . Her

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<sup>30</sup>Dawn, pp. 79-82.

complexion . . . was of a dazzling fairness . . . . The face was rounded and very lovely . . . whilst her hair . . . was of chestnut gold."

But beauty alone is not enough to satisfy Haggard's concept. He increases Angela's "promise" by the addition of a special aura that raises her beauty far above mere "physical" attractions:

There was more, much more, in it than that. But how is it possible to describe on paper a presence at once so full of grace and dignity, of the soft loveliness of woman, and of a higher and more spiritual beauty? There hangs in the Louvre a picture by Raphael, which represents a saint passing with light steps over the prostrate form of a dragon. There is in that heaven-inspired face, the equal of which has been rarely, if ever, put on canvas, a blending of earthly beauty and of the calm, awe-compelling spirit-gaze--that gaze, that holy dignity which can only come to such as are in truth and in deed "pure in heart"--that will give to those who know it a better idea of what Angela was like than any written description.<sup>31</sup>

The paradox in Dawn is that Angela after such careful preparation remains in practice the prim Victorian miss. Arthur assures her that with other women "love is an affair of passion or amusement, of the world and the day, but yours gazes towards Heaven, and looks to find its real utterance in the stillness of Eternity."<sup>32</sup> Readers may here see a prosaic statement of the She-Leo relationship, but Angela's blushes and head-hangings lack the dignity that one associates with a love removed from earthly considerations. It is as well that Angela is kept in the background throughout a great deal of the story. Completely passive, she is forced into a marriage with George Caresfoot, whom she detests, and falls ill when she finds the circumstances of her life

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 85-88.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 165.



too difficult to cope with. Mr. Frazer's dream of Angela as "a great woman" rising "like a star upon this age of insolence and infidelity" has evaporated and he is forced to admit to her that "great gifts like yours partake of the character of an accident in a woman; they are not natural to her, and she does not wear such jewels easily--they put her outside of her sex. It is something as though a man were born into the world with wings . . . . If a woman had all the genius of Plato or all the learning of Solomon, it would be forgotten at the touch of a baby's fingers."<sup>33</sup>

If this is Haggard's considered view of the matter and the theme of Angela's story, it is a view that conflicts with his romantic concept of "Woman." Otherwise he could hardly in the characters of Ayesha, Jess, Cleopatra, Beatrice, Stella Fregelius and others have continued to try to demonstrate the opposite. But here, as is usually the case in Haggard, he juxtaposes to his superwoman a woman without physical, mental or mystical qualities above the normal, and it is a curious fact that the more ordinary woman gains the reader's sympathy. Mildred Carr's love for Arthur, presented as simple love without spiritual or mystical connotations, is the reader feels, deep and sincere. When Mildred refuses Arthur on the grounds that she will always take second place in his heart, the reader senses her true nobility. Arthur's leaving Mildred for Angela, free to marry him at the end of the tale, seems a forsaking of the substance for the shadow, an irony that Haggard himself seems to realize. He emphasizes that Arthur will never forget

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 354-355.

Mildred "lying in the sunlight." After Arthur's glorious reunion with Angela, stately and radiant, appearing in a beam of sunset light that "might well have been the first ray of a resurrection morn breaking in upon the twilight of the dead," Haggard gives the reader a final glimpse of the less radiant but perhaps more truly noble Mildred, who "lay there . . . and sobbed till the darkness of the night covered her."<sup>34</sup> The reader understands that Mildred loses Arthur because her love derives its "strength from earth alone," and Angela's love is triumphant because it is "pure" and celestial, but the ironic ending is too right to be completely fortuitous. The fault with Haggard's superwoman seems to be that in practice she often falls below the "ordinary."

Ayesha, on whom Henry Miller comments very favourably in the following, is the greatest of Haggard's superwomen. She is, in essentials, an intensification of Angela with symbolic status added.

Ayesha . . . occupies a position . . . comparable to the Sun in the galaxy of immortal lovers, all of them cursed with a deathless beauty . . . . Helen was never real to me. Ayesha is more than real. She is super-real, in every sense of the maligned word. About her personage the author has spun a web of such proportions that it almost deserves the appellation "cosmogonic". . . . She is of the dark mothers, of which mysterious race we get hints and echoes in Germanic literature.<sup>35</sup>

The web of which Ayesha forms the centre is indeed a very intricate one. As the symbolic centre of that web--Woman rather than a woman --she is magnificent. The difficulty arises because of the unbridgeable gulf between Haggard's conception of the quintessential Woman and his

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 371.

<sup>35</sup>Henry Miller, The Books in My Life, Chapter IV.

presentation of her in human terms.

As a silent, mysterious veiled figure Ayesha in She grips the imagination. As a symbol of nature in all her unrevealed and awful powers, she establishes an impressive image that is developed more fully in Ayesha. On the other hand, regarded merely as a woman, as she must be primarily regarded in her love for Kallikrates, and later for Leo, she is almost a complete failure. Haggard's concept of Ayesha as symbol seems to be in conflict with his presentation of her as Woman. By consciously trying to make Ayesha very feminine through inconsistency, vanity and coyness, influenced no doubt by the Victorian sentimental view of the "child woman," he continually detracts from the dignity with which he initially invests her. She is too concerned with the effect of her beauty, and has too much human pettiness. She is too much a mixture of coyness and wisdom, of good and evil, to be imaginatively satisfying. Her philosophy is often trite, and her long speeches merely soporific rather than sublime. As a character (divorced completely from her meaning as a symbol) she is effective only in her jealousy of Ustane, terrible in its manifestation and quite in keeping with Ayesha as originally presented to the reader, and in her death scene, a suitably magnificent end that fulfils the inherent promise of the original concept.

Haggard seems to have resolved the various concepts of Ayesha into distinct components at a later stage. The young, troubled, tragic Ayesha of Wisdom's Daughter is much more appealing as a character, while as I have demonstrated elsewhere, the Ayesha of Ayesha is more successful as a symbol. Readers of those books may regard the Ayesha of She as

in an intermediate stage between woman and symbol, and as such find her more easy to understand.

Jess, like Angela, fails to satisfy the reader's expectations. Her strange beauty, her intellect, her mysterious reserve and her wonderful singing voice, create an illusion of a woman far above the ordinary, and she is intriguing until she falls in love. The intensity of what Haggard, in Victorian melodramatic style, considered her passion causes her to deteriorate into the posturing heroine demanded by Victorian melodramatic fiction. The idea of Jess's wanting to die with her lover rather than give him up to her sister is acceptable enough. Her character has prepared us for that. It is in the treatment that the whole love complication becomes nauseating to the modern reader. Such observations as, "Oh, that she had died then with his kiss upon her lips! Why had he not let her die?"<sup>36</sup> have an unpleasantly spurious air. For the modern reader, the sublime Jess has been reduced to the level of a schoolgirl.

This habit of "heightening" speech to the point where it becomes ludicrously melodramatic to the modern reader is, of course, not confined to Haggard. Dickens yields many examples, as:

O, look at her, look at her! . . . Look at her, so hard and thankless, on the hearth where she was reared! Where I took her into this wretched breast when it was first bleeding from its stabs, and where I have lavished years of tenderness upon her.<sup>37</sup>

She ran in, and was running out again when she saw me.

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<sup>36</sup>Jess, p. 313.

<sup>37</sup>Great Expectations, Chapter 38.

Ah, my angel girl! the old dear look, all love, all fondness, all affection. Nothing else in it, no, nothing, nothing!

O how happy I was, down upon the floor, with my sweet beautiful girl down upon the floor too, holding my scarred face to her lovely cheek, bathing it with tears and kisses, rocking me to and fro like a child, calling me by every tender name that she could think of, and pressing me to her faithful heart.<sup>38</sup>

Lesser writers were inclined to be even more melodramatic.

S. R. Crockett, usually fairly restrained, has the dignified, almost cold Marjorie Kennedy, after a secret tryst with a lover whom her code prevents from accepting as husband, cry aloud: "I love him! I love him! . . . Oh, that he might trample me, that his hand might slay me, so that in death he might lift up my head and say once again, 'I love you!'"<sup>39</sup>

It is not the fact that Haggard uses a style commonly used by contemporary novelists that I am objecting to. It is the effect created by the use of such a style by women already effectively presented as superior. Haggard seems to have recognized the falseness of the style. He avoids it throughout whole romances, but, as in the case of Jess, sometimes allows it to detract from the dignity of a character already established by more effective and less obvious means. Admittedly, however, the modern distaste for such effects is in conflict with the taste of the time. The Philadelphia Times commended Haggard for "his fertility of invention . . . romance, movement, action, color, passion."<sup>40</sup> It is ironic that the melodramatic elements that we deplore

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<sup>38</sup>Bleak House, Chapter 36.

<sup>39</sup>S. R. Crockett, The Gray Man (1896), p. 111 (Chapter XIV).

<sup>40</sup>Quoted from an advertisement.

today (the "passion" noted by the Philadelphia Times reviewer) helped to make Jess the popular success it was. As Gissing points out in New Grub Street, people in novels had to be of supposedly "finer clay" to appeal to the public imagination.<sup>41</sup>

In Cleopatra Haggard is much more successful, partly perhaps because his image of that particular heroine is rooted in tradition. But even Cleopatra sometimes falls from the high level that the author's concept demands. After she has drugged Harmachis and secured the dagger, for example, her exclamation, "I've won! I've won!"<sup>42</sup> puts her on the level of a rather vulgar woman at the card table. Her observation on envious people "whose heart's quest it is to drag down the nobility to the level of the groundling and the fool!" to "find impurity in the whitest virgin's soul,"<sup>43</sup> is decorated with too many flourishes that do not bear examination. One wonders whether a particular virgin's soul is whiter than another's, and, if so, why. The theatricality of her phrases spoils their effect, while the use of the anachronism "groundling" undermines the edifice of verisimilitude so carefully erected, and makes more apparent the already too obvious imitation of Shakespeare.

I am not arguing that Haggard's ideal woman should be either completely consistent or completely original. In fact to satisfy his definition she must be somewhat mythopoeic and sometimes inconsistent.

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<sup>41</sup>George Gissing, New Grub Street, Chapter XXXV.

<sup>42</sup>Cleopatra, p. 152.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

Allowing her to lapse into what he himself terms the "coarse and vulgar" is, however, inconsistent with the ideal woman of his conception. This may, of course, represent Haggard's unresolved conflict between the spirit and the flesh, between the dream and what he finds to be the reality. Such a dichotomy can hardly produce full conviction on the part of the reader.

None of Haggard's ideal women is entirely satisfactory as a character. Beatrice is beautiful and has advanced ideas, but she never really achieves the status of character. Helen is almost pure symbol, and incapable, the reader feels, of the love for Odysseus that the plot demands. Stella Fregelius belongs to the spiritual rather than the physical world and therefore cannot really be regarded as either Woman or a woman. The closest he comes to realizing his ideal is in the creation of Mea. Charming and beautiful, Mea is capable of great love and loyalty, and of really unselfish devotion. She is a nicely balanced mixture, one feels, of the spiritual and the physical. Her denying the physical as a matter of principle has the effect of making her more "ideal" because the physical is so obviously a part of her nature. Unfortunately, the finely realized Mea is marred a little for the reader by a minor technical error, her use of the kind of broken English that sounds like baby talk.

Haggard's most convincing women are found among those characters drawn from real life such as Joan Haste and Vrouw Botmar. These will be discussed in my fifth category.

The male character that seems to represent best those qualities that for Haggard constituted the highest to be found in mankind (my fourth category) is Rupert Allershaw of The Way of the Spirit.

When Rupert is shocked into illness by the death of Clara Devene, his mother advises, "Set another ideal before your eyes, my son, that of renunciation, and learn that when you seem to renounce you really gain. Follow the way of the Spirit . . . . Self-denial is not really difficult, and its fruits are beautiful; in them you will find peace."<sup>44</sup>

In rigidly following the way of the Spirit, Rupert gains the reader's respect, admiration and pity. Even though one knows that Edith married him only for his money, the author presents the depth of his love so convincingly that one suffers with him when, immediately following the marriage ceremony, he is obliged to leave on an urgent diplomatic mission to Egypt. When he is captured by the Sheik Ibrahim, has one foot cut off, one eye put out and is temporarily blinded in the other the reader, already persuaded by Haggard's sympathetic, restrained treatment of the theme to identify himself with Rupert, shares his agony of body and spirit.

His love for Mea, who nurses him and loves him in spite of his mutilation, is very convincing; but because of the value that he places on her love and his feeling of responsibility towards Edith, the relationship must remain unconsummated. Haggard's sincerity not only

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<sup>44</sup>The Way of the Spirit (1906), p. 20.



makes the spiritual relationship believable but also makes the reader sense the rarity and beauty of such an experience, or at any rate of Haggard's concept of it.

Rupert is never mawkish. He has sound common sense and develops a profound and sustaining philosophy that strengthens the theme. The East has a great effect upon that philosophy. At Abou-Simbel he

thought of his petty strivings for personal advancement, and a smile grew upon his face like the smile of the god-king above him. Through the waste of all the weary ages, how many men, he wondered, even in this desolate spot, had brooded on the hope of such advantage, and gone forth, but few to triumph, the most to fail, and all of them to learn within some short years that failure and success are one when forgetfulness has covered them.

Rupert is aware that all life has value and all suffering has a purpose. He feels "that no life . . . was devoid of purpose or barren of result; that chance and accident did not exist; that every riddle had its answer, and every pang its issue in some new birth."<sup>45</sup>

He is also very much aware of the practical world, and shows his concern for others in his strong political feelings. He is "a Liberal; that is to say, like most good and earnest men he desired the welfare of the people and the promotion of all measures by which it might be furthered." He is "an Imperialist, believing in the mission of Britain among the peoples of the earth, and desiring the consolidation of her empire's might because it meant justice, peace and individual security."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

In contrast to Rupert Ullershaw, De Garcia in Montezuma's Daughter is one of the best examples of Haggard's belief in "the existence of an embodied evil,"<sup>47</sup> a belief that is largely responsible for his delineation of some of the most credible and fascinating villains in fiction. As an embodiment of evil De Garcia becomes so convincing that when, after losing the final struggle with Thomas on the rim of the volcano, he falls into the flames, one feels that he has returned to the hell from which he came.

De Garcia's archetype is the wicked knight of romance who represents Satan on earth and of whom no good is possible. In the struggle between good and evil his main function is to present a challenge to the hero. "He had an evil fame . . . but he was handsome in person, set high in birth, and of a pleasing manner."<sup>48</sup> In spite of the smile that replaces the "devilish and cruel sneer" on his face when he appears in the tale, both Thomas Wingfield and the reader recognize the disposition towards evil that is his ruling trait. The initial impression is soon confirmed by his vicious attack on Thomas, who is forced to defend himself against Toledo steel with nothing more than a cudgel. His murder of Thomas's mother as an act of revenge, and his deceiving and deserting Isabella de Siquenza, are quite in character. The latter's love for him in the midst of despair is an indication of the charm he can exert over women.

Thomas's evil genius, de Garcia uses every possible means to

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<sup>47</sup>The Days of My Life, ii, 249.

<sup>48</sup>Montezuma's Daughter, p. 46.

bring about his destruction. In Mexico, his machinations against Thomas include the use of the latter's love for his wife Otomie, whom he threatens to torture as he has tortured Thomas. His hatred of Thomas is mixed with the "nameless terror" of a fiend for the forces of good. The final conflict between the two is on a heroic scale, a fitting climax to a conflict that during the course of the action transcends that of a personal conflict between individuals, to become an epic conflict between the powers of good and evil, with Thomas's destruction of de Garcia a most satisfying outcome of the romantic quest.

De Garcia is matched by many other characters in Haggard's novels. They are, however, far from stereotypes, as each has his own peculiar characteristics, and each is motivated by a different force. The Count de Montalvo of Lysbeth, "a clever and utterly unprincipled man with a sense of humour and a gift of bonhomie which made him popular in all places,"<sup>49</sup> is one of the most original. Montalvo dislikes cruelty for its own sake but can be exceedingly cruel when it suits his purpose. Having no strong religious principles or prejudices, he uses the Inquisition for his own advancement. To secure the means of gratifying his luxurious tastes, his raison d'être, he is willing to go to any lengths, and is extremely vindictive towards those who thwart his schemes.

In the creation of a thorough villain Haggard equals, and sometimes excels, his favourite authors, Payn and Blackmore. Parson Chowne

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<sup>49</sup>Lysbeth, p. 52.

of Blackmore's The Maid of Sker and Payn's Sir Massingberd are equalled in villainy by De Garcia and Montalvo, while Caryl Carne of Blackmore's Springhaven pales into insignificance beside Haggard's villains.

The success of Haggard's villains depends to a great extent on his strong belief in the existence of evil, which gives conviction to the strength of the motivating force of a particular villain. He also, except where a character becomes a symbol of evil itself, is perceptive enough to indicate the existence of evil in conjunction with more ordinary and less powerful emotional drives. The obvious authenticity of Montalvo's good fellowship and the strength of Frank Muller's love for Bessie have the effect of making their villainy more believable. In his villains, Haggard often achieves a successful surface combination of the grotesque with the "real." He makes no attempt, however, to delve deeply into the psychology of his villains. The attributing of love to Frank Muller is partly, one feels, an exigency of the plot, and Montalvo's bonhomie a matter of verisimilitude, since personal popularity enables him to impose upon others. As symbols Haggard's villains convince externally, and in their limited way are completely satisfactory.

Gagool is Haggard's most striking example of the "existence of an embodied evil." She is described as having the countenance of

a woman of great age so shrunken that in size it seemed little larger than the face of a year-old child, but made up of countless deep and yellow wrinkles. Set among these wrinkles was a sunken slit that represented the mouth, beneath which the chin curved outward to a point. There was no nose to speak of; indeed the visage might have been taken for that of a sun-dried corpse, had it not been for a pair of large black eyes, still full of life and intelligence, which gleamed and played under the snow-white eyebrows, and the projecting

parchment-coloured skull, like jewels in a charnel house. The head itself was perfectly bare, and yellow in hue, while the naked, wrinkled scalp moved and contracted like the head of a cobra.<sup>50</sup>

The horror of Gagool is both the result of the ravages of time and a symbol of the accumulated evil of time. The description reminds us that her long life has resulted only in an evil intelligence that shines "like jewels in a charnel house." The cobra image contrasts the evil of which man is capable with the Biblical account of his innocence in the Garden of Eden. Such "flashes of a fine weird imagination," admired by Stevenson, are among the richest things in Haggard. The image of Gagool haunts the memory like a nightmare.

The character of the evil and megalomaniac Frank Muller of Jess is one of Haggard's strongest creations. Muller is modelled after a Transvaal lawyer who "became notorious in connection with the treatment of the loyal prisoners at the siege of Potchefstroom. He was fond of music, and it is said that before two of these unfortunate men were executed, or rather murdered, he took them into a church and soothed their feelings by playing the 'Dead March in Saul' over them."<sup>51</sup>

The fictional character is as bizarre and ambivalent as the original. His apparently sincere love for Bessie does not prevent him from deliberately torturing her with threats on her beloved uncle's life in order to gain her acceptance of his offer of marriage. In capturing such anomalies of human behaviour Haggard excels.

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<sup>50</sup>King Solomon's Mines, p. 123.

<sup>51</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 108.

Haggard sometimes gives particular force to his delineation of an evil character by associating that character with some repellent object. In The Witch's Head, for example, his use of the head to synthesize Florence's nature is particularly interesting as an example of what Northrop Frye designates as "demonic imagery." In Florence "the demonic erotic relation becomes a fierce destructive passion that works against loyalty [and] frustrates the one who possesses it."<sup>52</sup>

Evil in Haggard is not, however, always so obviously portrayed. The insidious evil of materialism in society is represented by such characters as Mr. Meeson and Sir Robert Aylward. Mr. Meeson represents materialism in the arts; Sir Robert, in business. To Haggard, materialism that preys on the artist's imagination is as reprehensible as that which preys on the labourer's body.

Such characters as Meriamun of The World's Desire and Mary Porson of Stella Fregelius represent the coarser elements in human nature, the physical urge rather than the spiritual aspiration, the bodily hungers, including sex, that call for satisfaction. Haggard's ambivalent attitude towards them is an indication, possibly, that he recognized the coarser aspects of life as also having their value in his comprehensive vision of creation. Lilius Rider Haggard suggests that Haggard's reticences were a concession to contemporary mores:

One wonders if . . . Rider . . . really believed that those truly remarkable women--his Beatrice, Jess, Stella and Mea--could, in reality, have withstood the assaults of those natural passions of which he knew the power. Perhaps not, but undoubtedly he liked to think they would. Also it must be remembered

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<sup>52</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (1957), p. 149.

that Rider was very definitely of the day when self-respecting novelists drew a hard and fast line which must at all costs terminate "compromising situations." Heroes and heroines, in however desperate a state, had to be snatched from a possible infringement of the Seventh Commandment.<sup>53</sup>

In spite of Liliias's opinion, it seems that the "infringement of the Seventh Commandment" is what Beatrice and Joan Haste are all about. Unlike Liliias, I feel that Haggard's reticences stem from a very personal view of life that set up tensions within him because it failed to conform to contemporary mores. His "novels" represent successive attempts to resolve his own internal conflict.

In theory, Haggard accepted the expressed attitude of the majority of his contemporaries in his social class, and regarded women as ideally pure and of a nature and appearance especially designed by God to have an ennobling influence on men, whose characters could be determined by observing their treatment of women. His portraits of women demonstrate that, romantically at any rate, he envisaged women properly educated and accorded their rightful status as men's equals capable of occupying exalted stations and accomplishing great deeds. But he was also well aware of contemporary reality. He knew that the practice of behavioural rules regarding men's treatment of women was usually confined to people of a certain social eminence, and such rules were not meant to be applied to social inferiors. He was well aware, too, that women, like men, are governed by earthly concerns, that they are more physical than spiritual, and that their frailties must be judged on the same basis as those of men. Genuine, honest emotions,

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<sup>53</sup>Liliias Rider Haggard, The Cloak that I Left, P. 185.

he feels, must not be subjugated to social taboos, and the physical expression of real love is as honourable under certain circumstances as the sublimation of love to a spiritual level under others. The conflict between his romantic view of women and what his experience of women and of society assured him was the truth takes fictional form both in the conflict between the "ideal" and the "ordinary" woman and in the composite "ideal" woman like Ayesha, in whose being the physical and the spiritual are continually at war.

The characters I have discussed up to this point represent in greater or lesser degrees Haggard himself, his ideal hero, his ideal heroine, or the various components of his total view of humanity.

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My last category includes those characters that, in spite of any function they may serve, ultimately exist in and for themselves. They are modelled either on actual persons whom Haggard knew or on types with which he was familiar, and therefore may be regarded as characters used rather than created. In a literal rather than a literary sense they are his "real" characters. Many of them (Joan Haste and Vrouw Botmar, for example) become real in the latter sense as well.

To begin with, the character of Alston in The Witch's Head is based on that of Sir Melmoth Osborn, Haggard's superior and friend in Africa, whom he describes as "shrewd, kindly, honourable, the truest of friends, the bravest of men."<sup>54</sup>

Mazooku of the same novel is Haggard's own native servant, who

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<sup>54</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 172.



saved his life and whom he regretted he could not take to England with him. Mazooku's loneliness and homesickness in the novel are a justification of Haggard's leaving the real Mazooku in Africa. Of his servant, Haggard writes:

He was a very brave and faithful fellow, and, as this story shows, much attached to me . . . . The vituperation of Kaffirs is a common habit among many white men, but in difficulty or danger may I never have a worse friend at hand than one like the poor Kaffir who is prepared to die for the master whom he loves.<sup>55</sup>

The relationship of Allan Quatermain and Hans owes a great deal to that of Haggard and Mazooku--a master-servant relationship with no suggestion of a colour barrier to understanding.

The foundations of Hans's character are well laid in Marie. He is devoted to Allan's father, the missionary, and struggles manfully to reconcile Christian and primitive values. In his dilemma he usually compromises by adapting his moral values to the needs of the moment. His curiosity, his ready excuses for misbehaving, his love of arguing and his insistence on love before duty are all facets of his attractive personality, and the basis of Allan's understanding him as a human being. On the hurried journey to find Marie and her friends after the massacre of Weenen, Allan carries the exhausted Hans on his horse rather than leave him behind--a strong indication of his acceptance of the native as a friend and equal, since, as I have pointed out, the horse represents both security and status to Allan.

Hans's courage, shrewdness and incorrigible impudence are

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., i, 140.

allowed greater scope as his character is developed. In The Holy Flower, it is Hans who, after the gorilla god has been destroyed, remembers that crocodiles hide during a thunder storm, and so enables Allan to swim the river and kill the guard. It is Hans's setting fire to Beza town that enables Allan's small force to defeat the slave-traders. Similarly, in The Ivory Child, disaster is narrowly avoided by Hans's shooting out the elephant Jana's left eye, by his killing the snake with arsenic crystals, and, in the final crisis, by his killing Jana.

Haggard allowing Hans to attain hero status may be regarded as another step in his acceptance of the African native as an equal. In Allan's case, however, it may be more subtle than that. Allan's pride may permit him to recognize superior qualities in Hans solely because he is a lowly Hottentot and can never really rise to the white man's level in Allan's private estimation. On the other hand, Allan's careful recognition of Hans's achievements may be the master's pride in a beloved pet's response to training.

In his treatment of the relationship between Allan and Hans, Haggard shows an acute awareness of the problems inherent in such a relationship. Allan tolerates Hans's impertinence because he knows it is natural for him to be impertinent. He excuses his weaknesses. He indulges his love of argument. He is careful not to offend his prejudices. He refuses to be shocked by Hans's obvious relish of such exotic foods as maggots. In short, he recognizes and accepts different, though not necessarily inferior, racial characteristics.

In She and Allan, Heu-Heu and Treasure of the Lake, the

delightful mixture of shrewdness and impudence that is Hans continues to endear him to the reader. It would not be exaggerating to say that Hans is responsible for any life that Heu-Heu or Treasure of the Lake possesses.

Absolutely unscrupulous where Allan's safety is concerned, in Heu-Heu Hans suggests substituting the "older and not quite so nice-looking" Lady Dramana, whom they are supposed to be rescuing, for the beautiful Lady Sabeela, who is being offered as a sacrifice.

In Treasure of the Lake, Hans proves himself a shrewd reader of character when he says of Kaneke:

This Kaneke is not one man, he is two. The first Kaneke is a tyrant, one full of plots who would like to rule the world, a lover of liquor, too, which he drinks in secret, fierce, cunning, cruel. The second Kaneke is one who dreams, who hears voices and sees things in the sky, who follows after visions, a true witch-doctor, a man who would seek what is afar and who, living in this soft place, is like a lion in a cage.

Hans's theology and morals are unorthodox and more complicated than they appear. On the surface, Hans provides an ironic example of the influence of the early missionaries on the mentality of primitive people, a ludicrous contrast to the solemnity of the missionary dream. To him Allan's father, the "Predikant", has become a kind of god, who sends him messages from heaven to govern his conduct. He wants to live according to the "Predikant's" teachings in order to join him in the place where the fire never goes out, and where he looks forward to burning "for always." "A good Christian like Hans," he says, "has nothing to fear from spooks whom he can tell to go to hell, as your

reverend father did, Baas,"<sup>56</sup>

The reader suspects that Hans's seeming obtuseness about religion is pretended, that he takes delight in playing the part of a very clever clown in this respect, and that he is quite willing to score over supposedly more clever people by playing a role.

When Allan asks him how he has picked up so much information, he admits that he has gained some of it through Kaneke's supposed wife, White-Mouse. "The rest [he says] I picked up here and there when I seemed to be asleep, or when I am asking that old fellow who is called a Mullah to teach me the religion of Mohammed, which he thinks I am going to adopt."<sup>57</sup>

His vanity causes him to think that White-Mouse is in love with him when she is using him only for her own purposes. His shrewdness and impudence generally enable him, however, to have the last word.

"Hans," I said, for there was no one else to talk to, "I did that business very well, did I not? Take a lesson from me and learn always to strike when the iron is hot. Tomorrow Kaneke might have changed his mind and offered much less."

"Yes, Baas, very well indeed, though often if the iron is too hot, the sparks blind one, Baas. Only I think that tomorrow Kanake would have offered you double, for I know that he has much more ivory buried."<sup>58</sup>

Hans began, I feel, as Haggard's portrait of the plebeian native, but, like Allan, he grew into a believable character. In him Haggard seems to sum up all that he finds amiable and amusing in the native

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<sup>56</sup>Treasure of the Lake, p. 25.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

character. He has elements of the ideal, but develops complexities that give him an existence in the reader's mind as an individual as well as a member of his race and class.

Umslopogaas must be regarded as Haggard's picture of the African gentleman--the "noble savage" given greater credibility because of Haggard's first-hand knowledge.

The account of the real Umslopogaas shows, once again, how Haggard's imagination was stimulated by his African experiences. His fictional Umslopogaas is a supreme example of his ability to convey those experiences imaginatively to the reader.

There was another individual attached to the Commission of whom I must give some account. He was Umslopogaas . . . who acted as a kind of head native attendant to Sir Theophilus. Umslopogaas, then a man of about sixty, was a Swazi of high birth. He was a tall, thin fierce-faced fellow with a great hole above the left temple over which the skin pulsated, that he had come by in some battle. He said that he had killed ten men in single combat, of whom the first was a chief called Shive, always making use of a battle axe.<sup>59</sup>

It is mainly because of that battle axe that Umslopogaas is regarded by many readers as Haggard's most fascinating character. The battle axe is not only a symbol of power that sets him apart. It also has tremendous mythopoeic appeal, rooted in man's subconscious memory of the traumatic experience of being attacked by the magical stone on a stick. It has that mystical quality with which man's imagination surrounds Excalibur or the sword of Beowulf. Even in the humorous scene where Umslopogaas deliberately frightens Alphonse the reader cannot avoid a sense of terror of that dreadful weapon. In the last

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<sup>59</sup>The Days of My Life, i, 74-75.

great conflict the axe is no less "awful" and "glorious" than its owner. In that final "almost superhuman" blow the "circle of flaming steel" ceases to exist, but in being destroyed with Umslopogaas the axe fulfils its purpose in the true epic style. It brings crashing down the false values of Zu-Vendis. In the statues of Allan and Umslopogaas that represent the new value structure, it is worthy of note that Allan's white face is idealized a little, but there is no question of idealization in Umslopogaas's case.

Umslopogaas, in his courage, fairness, loyalty and instinctive sense of the proprieties, has the qualities of a natural gentleman whom Allan can meet on his own level. Haggard does not, however, make the mistake of giving him the graces dependent upon education. He has observed his model too closely to err in that respect. Umslopogaas is, in his love of fighting, his veneration for his axe, his vanity, and his crude sense of humour, a fictional symbol of the primitive mind and morality.

Having established the character in Allan Quatermain, Haggard (as he did in the case of Allan) takes us back to Umslopogaas's youth in Nada the Lily and convincingly portrays the early life that produced the old warrior whom we already know. The circumstances surrounding his birth, his youthful prowess, the intensity of his love for Nada, his loyalty to Galazi, the epic conflict for the axe Groan-Maker, and the part he plays in the battle against Dingaan's men are all appropriate to the Umslopogaas of the former novel.

It is essential to Umslopogaas's character that he remain above the petty prejudices and fears that often motivate the actions of

ordinary people. It is true that in She and Allan he shows a certain animosity towards Hans, but it is the natural animosity of one human type towards another with whom he is not yet familiar. Similarly, his fear of being trodden underfoot by the hippopotami is his fear of an ignominious death rather than of death itself. It is also partly the result of his reluctance to engage in a battle that he knows can only end in disaster. The juxtaposing of his picking flowers for Inez and his gloating over the opportunity to cover his axe with blood effectively conveys the extremes that meet in his nature and reflects the practices of medieval chivalry. In She and Allan Umslopogaas's peculiar mixture of pugnacity, gentleness, superstition, revengefulness and innate nobility contrasts well with the shrewdness, amorality, impertinence and amiability of Hans.

One of the greatest tributes to the credibility of Haggard's portrait of Umslopogaas was paid by Umslopogaas himself. On being shown the pictures in an illustrated edition of Allan Quatermain "the old man's interest in them was extraordinary, especially when he saw himself holding the stair--when he jumped up, seized his axe and acted the whole scene. He sent Rider a message saying: 'Tell him that though I am old I remember, and that my heart is white towards Lundunda.'"<sup>60</sup> On being asked whether he liked being in a book, Umslopogaas (in keeping with both his real and fictional character) answered that he was glad the way of life of his people would not be forgotten.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>The Cloak that I Left, p. 224.

<sup>61</sup>Malcolm Elwin, Introduction to She (1948), p. vii.

Haggard's best example of the English gentleman is Squire de la Molle of Colonel Quaritch, V. C., who struggles valiantly to uphold the old traditions in the face of the new values of an industrialized society. The conflict between his love for his daughter and his equal love for his ancestral estates sets up tensions that he is unable to dispel.

Haggard condones and makes comprehensible the Squire's sacrifice of his daughter's happiness to the perpetuation of the family honour. To him, the family is not just himself and Ida, but an entity that stretches back to the Norman conquest. In the Squire, apparent selfishness becomes a virtue. Haggard writes: "For manliness, for downright English God-fearing virtues, for love of Queen, country, family, and home, they may search in vain to find his equal among the cosmopolitan Englishmen of the dawning twentieth century."<sup>62</sup>

Haggard convinces us that what are now regarded as the faults of the Squire's Forsytian world have been replaced by greater faults, and that the values of his world have a universal relevancy.

Haggard's most genuine women characters are those whose lives are so completely occupied by the routine of living that they have no time for the spiritual strivings of a Stella Fregelius.

Joan Haste, supposedly illegitimate, has ideals and aspirations far above her class. Educated beyond what was considered appropriate to her social position, she has no hope of moving out of the rough milieu where circumstances have placed her. She cannot even escape

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<sup>62</sup>Colonel Quaritch, V. C., p. 337.



from the vulgar companionship of her aunt and uncle except by marriage to some man of her social status, which could hardly improve her situation appreciably.

How well Haggard understands the feelings of a girl of Joan's education and natural refinement forced to associate daily with people so much her inferior is shown by such observations as the following:

To be different from our fellows, to look upwards where they look down, to live inwardly at a mental level higher than our circumstances warrant, to desire that which is too far from us, are miseries petty in themselves, but gifted with Protean reproductiveness.<sup>63</sup>

This typically Gissingesque theme of the "genteel" personality in poor circumstances, associated unavoidably with vulgar companions, Haggard, like Gissing, elevates to the rank of tragedy.

Accidentally thrown into contact with Captain Henry Graves, Joan succumbs to her love for a man who is in every way her equal. After becoming pregnant, Joan becomes aware that Henry's future prospects depend upon his marrying a rich wife, and refuses to accept a proposal that will cut him off from both family and friends.

She accepts the baby as a proof of Henry's love, but is aware that love will not extricate her from her dilemma. Her inherent honesty, too, makes her conscious that the blame is hers as much as Henry's. She is capable of seeing the situation realistically, and perceptive enough to realize that there is something wrong with a moral code that would stigmatize her as a sinful woman.

Was it so wicked to become a mother? [she wonders] According

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<sup>63</sup>Joan Haste, p. 4.

to religion and custom, yes--that is such a mother as she will be--but how about nature? . . . At least she might plead that she loved this man, and there were many married women who could bear their children without shame, and could not say as much. Yet they were virtuous and she was an outcast--that was the rule.<sup>64</sup>

Joan, besides presenting a view of the betrayed female far more advanced than that usually found in Victorian fiction, is equally advanced in other matters. With unusual insight she realizes that Samuel Rock's love for her, distorted and evil though it becomes, is the result of forces beyond his control. When Joan's attempt to secure her future by marrying Rock ends in tragedy the reader feels that a girl of Joan's character could not, in any incident of the story, have acted differently.<sup>65</sup>

Vrouw Botmar, the narrator of Swallow, is Haggard's attempt to present the Boer woman without prejudice.

She is a woman of almost no education, but with great experience of living and a great deal of common sense. Naturally phlegmatic, she nevertheless shows the real strength of her feelings in her admiration for what her husband Jan has been and her pity for what he has become. Her narrow religious and moral values and her prejudices against what she considers the idiosyncrasies of others are clearly realized. She dislikes the tutor because he plays the flute, and will not allow him to teach the children knowledge of the stars because she thinks such knowledge is impious and close to witchcraft. She feels that the heathen Kaffirs, like the animals, were given to the white race for

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>65</sup>See Chapter I, D, for a discussion of Joan as an example of the "new woman."

their use and comfort, and doubts whether they have souls.

Her dislike of witchcraft and her contempt for the Kaffirs do not, however, prevent her from accepting Sihamba the female witch-doctor as a fellow human being. Similarly, she overcomes her very understandable hatred of the English in the case of the few English who have given her reason to respect them.

She regrets neither the hardships of her early life nor the fact that she has not long to live. A narrow sense of propriety and a contempt for a more sophisticated way of life make her especially tactless in the use of her tongue. Her wit and her quickness of tongue, which she regards as a virtue, are pleasing characteristics; and her slighting comments on the beauty of her great-grandchild, who acts as her amanuensis, quite in character.

The coming of Ralph's cousin and his lawyer gives Vrouw Botmar the opportunity to demonstrate both perception and wit in one of the most delightful scenes in Haggard, but she knows she is doing wrong in hiding the boy's identity and hears a "sound of laughter echoing in the air."

Because of the broad basis on which Haggard constructs the vrouw's character, the reader finds himself excusing her faults and admiring her virtues. Haggard convinces us that she is a product of her environment, and considering the circumstances of her life an admirable one. In the details of the vrouw's life and character he demonstrates that the accepted view of the Boers needed modification, and without eliminating faults that had been exaggerated into myth, he persuades his readers that such faults were a kind of protective armour against the harsh

realities of existence. In her diversity of traits the vrouw transcends racial characteristics and becomes the individual that the member of any race essentially is. It is an indication of Haggard's narrative skill, that both characters and incidents in Swallow are coloured by the personality of the vrouw, whose strength and solid matter-of-fact acceptance of the worst life can inflict make the almost incredible incidents of the plot quite credible when seen through her eyes.

Here, as in Joan Haste, Haggard's intimate knowledge of the physical environment and the social mores of that environment contributes considerably to the validity of his portrait. Both Joan and Vrouw Botmar struggle to achieve individuality against a strongly-inhibiting social milieu, and Haggard's knowledge of the intimate details of their backgrounds and the limitations imposed by those backgrounds establish the credibility of those characters. They are representative of the few women in Haggard for whom the physical world presents the whole challenge to their proving their worth as women.

Rachel Dove of The Ghost Kings is admirable for many reasons, not the least the way she adapts herself to the African environment.

With all the natives from her childhood up, Rachel was on the best of terms. She was never familiar with them indeed, for that is not the way for a white person to win the affection, or even the respect of a Kaffir. But she was intimate in the sense that she could enter into their thoughts and nature, a very rare gift.<sup>66</sup>

Rachel's resourcefulness and courage make her one of Haggard's most intrepid heroines. She does not hesitate in killing the Zulu to save her friend Noie. Where there is no law, such a killing, to Rachel,

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<sup>66</sup>The Ghost Kings, p. 29.

is an act of justice. "Of only two living things was she afraid--the snake and the crocodile . . . because being cursed they have no sympathy or gentleness."<sup>67</sup> Rachel's sympathy and gentleness are shown by her relationship with her rather pathetic missionary father.

Other heroines who deserve notice for their strength and courage in adversity are Cicely Foterell of The Lady of Blossholme, Red Eve Clavering and Lysbeth. Being historical characters, however, they lack the extreme verisimilitude that Haggard's knowledge of their environment imparts to Joan Haste, Vrouw Botmar and Rachel Dove.

In Haggard the role of each character is limited, and functional to the forwarding of the plot. The narrator is endowed with the knowledge and the wisdom to understand events and how they affect others, or how they affected him at an earlier age. The hero is handsome, strong and courageous, but usually subject to his emotions. His main function is to overcome obstacles. A servant or companion capable of an enduring friendship often acts as the deus ex machina in a crisis, and is often sacrificed in the process. The women's physical charms or spiritual qualities create internal conflict in the hero by competing for his love on different levels. The villain exerts every conceivable effort to prevent the hero from achieving his objective.

Yet, though their functions remain the same, Haggard's characters are often remarkably distinctive, as I have endeavoured to show. In their diversity and vividness, I feel, they constitute a gallery of memorable figures seldom excelled in popular fiction.

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have discussed various aspects of Haggard's work, particularly his romances. The feeling remains that the essence of Haggard can not be expressed in critical terms. Appreciation and enjoyment of Haggard seems to involve acceptance much more than interpretation.

Not the least factor in the appreciation of Haggard is the knowledge that his writing reflects a life in which the personal quest for the ideal had to be imposed upon the sad realities of existence. A most unsatisfactory relationship with his father and the abrupt end of a first love affair were saddening influences. The death of his mother in 1889 and of his son in 1891 severed his closest human ties, and in a sense isolated him abruptly from personal past and future.

It is indicative of Haggard's courage that he repeatedly rose above frustration and despair. Criticized destructively and at great length, accused of plagiarism and of gross ignorance, he continued to write tales of romance that have proved much more enduring than the works of many authors praised by the critics who condemned him. It is quite understandable that Haggard developed the facility to feed on his imagination and to create from a chaotic mixture of romantic images gathered from reading and experience an integrated whole in which those images achieved a new and more vivid existence.

In much of Haggard, spontaneity results in a style that contemporary critics found too raw. Examined today, that "rawness"

sometimes becomes a virtue. As Haggard seems to have recognized almost instinctively, the language of a saga has nothing in common with that of a drawing-room comedy. Giving Haggard credit for qualities that very few contemporary critics recognized, modern critics are inclined to think more highly of Haggard than did those of his day. Peter Porter, for example, believes Nada the Lily to be "one of the finest novels of the nineteenth century." In his opinion, that novel "suggests what the Aegean spies might have been like if they had not been polished by Homer. Haggard's Zulus have more in common with Homer's Achaens than Virgil's trudging Trojans have."<sup>1</sup> The unpolished version may in its own way, Mr. Porter implies, have at least as much merit as the version which imposes an unnatural polish on the essentially unrefined.

It may be said of Haggard that the total effect of his work (or of even a single work) is much greater than a critical examination of the various elements would lead one to suppose. After the plots, the illumination of history, the philosophy and the symbolism are forgotten, there remain vivid impressions of the unique world that Haggard created.

It is a vast, mysterious, slightly distorted world in which, as in the maps of the ancient cartographers, wonders appear side by side with actualities and are as readily accepted, a world of light and shadow in which horror and beauty continually merge. Reading Haggard is analogous to watching exciting action on a large screen, as in cinemascope, on which people and objects are larger than life; but unlike the cinema, Haggard's world is mostly realized in black and

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<sup>1</sup>Times Literary Supplement, July 7, 1972, p. 774.

white, with occasionally a splash of barbaric colour that becomes all the brighter for the sombre background.

On that screen, certain characters appear so vividly that they become a permanent part of the reader's imaginary world. Some, such as Vrouw Botmar, Hans, Allan, Thomas Wingfield, Joan Haste, are accepted by the reader and remembered as real people, products of a world that once existed and that still exists vividly in the reader's imagination. The exotics, Sorais, Nyleptha, Nada, Mameena, and above all She, take their places in the reader's imagination beside Guinevere, The Faery Queen, Circe, and Isolde. The grotesque Gagool's horrifying image lingers in the mind like one of the most vivid tales of the Brothers Grimm.

Perhaps the reader's longest memory of Haggard will be of a particular scene. The mythology that Haggard has created for his readers with all the romance of his special world may be summoned up by remembering or rereading the account of the witch-finding scene or Gagool's death in King Solomon's Mines, Allan's encounter with Jana, Eric Brighteyes descending the falls or his battle with Skallagrim, Maiwa's revealing her dead child's hand, Galazi and the wolves, or the underground river in Allan Quatermain. Above all towers the never-to-be-forgotten figure of Umslopogaas wielding his gleaming axe, a figure that epitomizes the appeal of heroes through the ages, and that possibly more than anything else conveys the magic created by Rider Haggard.



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