

# Imagining Empire's Margins: Land in Rider Haggard's African Romances

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To a criticism concerned with mapping the exclusions and affirmations of an imperialist culture whose legacy has still not been spent, these same texts can be made to reveal both imperialism's grandiloquent self-presentation and those inadmissible desires, misgivings, and perceptions concealed in its disclosures (Parry 1993:238).

Is it possible that landscape understood as the historical 'invention' of a new visual/pictorial medium, is integrally connected with imperialism? (Mitchell 1994:9).

To understand how a culture imagines its world both 'home' and 'away' one looks to its literature. In late nineteenth century England, at the height of Empire, with a third of the world's lands under its domination, literature was for most Europeans the only way to visualise the heat and dust of India, the snows and icebergs of Canada, the game-filled plains of Africa; in other words, Empire's margins. Together with other post-colonial theorists, Edward Said has commented on the interconnectedness of nineteenth century British culture and the policies of imperialism, and since the novel was the dominant literary form of the time, it became central to an understanding of both. Said writes:

... the novel, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other ... imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other (Said 1994:84).

What is interesting for the post-colonial critic in making a study of a writer of Empire and how s/he imagines his or her world, both familiar and foreign, is to study the subtext, the slippages and cracks that underlie the superficially seamless surface of imperialist discourse:

What criticism can recover, through dismantling the plural discourses and reconstructing the displacements and erasures, is the effaced historical context and unrehearsed enunciations of the anxieties in the conquering imagination, both necessarily repressed by the exigencies of ideological representation (Parry 1993:224).

It is in the revealed anxieties that the dynamics of power can be traced: in the repeated need to reconfirm dominance over the Other in narratives of the time, to proclaim success over foreign peoples and lands, to achieve one's goals—material or psychological—and to return home.

The lands of Empire, the 'rival geographies' as Said (1994 xxii-xxiii) names them, act as screens on which to project these anxieties and desires that underlie the dominant discourse of Empire. If the novel is central to nineteenth century English culture, so is land—both physical and imaginary—to imperialism. At a fundamentally basic level, imperialism is about the invasion, conquering and securing of land belonging to or settled by others. Land, arguably even more than its indigenous inhabitants, acts as the imaginative arena within which the imperial drama is played out. For those at 'home' in England, novel writers had above all to represent a localised landscape which helped their readers move from a vague perception of space to a recognisable place on the map of their imagination.

The facilitators of such a process were the explorers and scientists who were the first Europeans to gaze upon these foreign lands in the years prior to their assimilation within Empire, but in the late nineteenth century it was popular novelists such as Henry Rider Haggard, the subject of this paper, who crystallised the representations or 'word pictures' of the imperial landscape for the domestic market. Their task was to bring the 'ideological geography' of these distant lands 'into the boundary of the known and the British' (Hofmeyr 1980:200). Rider Haggard, son of Empire and popularly known as the 'Kipling of Africa', captured in his romances more than any other writer of his time, the quintessential British image of Africa's lands.

All his life, Haggard, the son of a Norfolk farmer and subsequently a farmer himself, placed his faith in the land and it was the land in South Africa that left an indelible mark on the impressionable youth. Higgins (1981:19) writes on this point, 'The scenery so impressed him that he always believed Natal was the most beautiful country [sic] in the world', though in his autobiography Haggard (1926.I:59) described the allure for him of Africa's landscapes more accurately: 'There is little of what we admire in views in England, but Nature in her wild and rugged grandeur'. It was the wildness of African terrain as opposed to the domesticity of English farmland that captured him. He elaborated on this contrast through his alter ego, Allan Quatermain:

... I longed once more to throw myself into the arms of Nature. Not the Nature which you know, the Nature that waves in well-kept woods and smiles out in corn-fields, but

Nature as she was in the age when creation was complete, undefiled as yet by any human sinks of sweltering humanity. I would go again where the wild game was, back to the land, whereof none know the history, back to the savages, whom I love ... (Haggard 1995:12f).

Haggard had first hand experience of South Africa on three occasions, most notably the first lengthiest stay as a youthful member of Sir Henry Bulwer's staff in Natal, and then as an ostrich farmer near Newcastle, from 1875—1881. His encounter with the African landscape was of the sort to encourage such exhilaration as expressed above: he went riding and hunting, and accompanied Sir Henry Bulwer on his official tours of Natal. He kept copious notes of all he saw including details of Zulu customs and language for he was deeply impressed by the Zulu people whom he found to be dignified and hospitable, 'the Romans of Africa', led by Cetshwayo whose 'manners, as is common among Zulus of high rank, are those of a gentleman' (Pocock 1993:21). Haggard's belief that all people are some part savage, with 'civilisation' acting as a more or less successful veneer, helped him escape the worst excesses of racism. Haggard's admiration for the Zulus and love of African land are all of a piece for he saw the former in terms of the latter. Thus, when the Transvaal was handed back to the Boers, after the shock British defeat by the Zulus at Isandlwana in 1879, Haggard wrote bitterly:

The natives are the real heirs to the soil and surely should have protection and consideration ... we have handed them over without a word to the tender mercies of one, where natives are concerned, of the cruellest white races in the world (Pocock 1993:51f).

In 1879 Haggard left Shepstone's administration, having risen to the position of Master and Registrar of the High Court, to go ostrich farming with his wife of a few months and a friend, Arthur Cochrane. His farmhouse, Hilldrop, was Haggard's first domestic, familial place in the wider, untamed African space. It reappears as Mooifontein in *Jess*:

It was a delightful spot. At the back of the stead was the steep boulder-strewn face of the flat-topped hill that curved around on each side, embosoming a great slope of green, in the lap of which the house was placed ... All along its front ran a wide verandah, up the trellis-work of which green vines and blooming creepers trailed pleasantly, and beyond was the broad carriage-drive of red soil, bordered with bushy orange-trees laden with odorous flowers and green and golden fruit (Haggard 1900:22).

It is the colonialist's dream: an oasis of 'civilisation' planted with flowers and fruit,

both familiar and unknown, set on a vantage point overlooking illimitable lands open to the gazer's eye. The 'lap' of the slope in which the farmhouse is based, and the 'embosoming' hill are also characteristic of Haggard's sexualising of African landscape which will be discussed more fully later in this paper.

Though the ostrich farming was not financially successful, Haggard and his partner Cochrane worked very hard at earning a modest living through brick making and selling hay. Haggard's beloved only son was born on the farm, but the family decided to leave South Africa after the British defeat by the Boers at Majuba in 1881 only a few miles away from their farm. Though this departure marked the end of Haggard's longest and most formative experience of Africa, the impressions gained were to last him a lifetime of romance writing:

It is impossible to overestimate the effect of South Africa on Haggard and his writing. Witnessing the confrontation between British colonialism and the Zulu people caused him to reappraise and define his thinking about the fundamental issues of sex, politics, and religion with which he would struggle in his future novels. The physical environment supplied the raw material for a thousand varied landscapes of the imagination (Etherington 1984:2).

Lilias Haggard (1951:172) said of her father 'For Africa he was always homesick' which is a telling phrase for it implies that, in a psychological or spiritual sense, Haggard felt a desired rootedness in African soil where he lived for only 6 or so years out of a lifetime based in England, his physical, hereditary home.

A major consequence of his stay in South Africa were the romances set in Africa which he subsequently started to write. Published in 1885, his third novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, struck gold and was reprinted four times by December. In its first year it sold 31, 000 copies which made it one of the biggest sellers of that year, and it has never been out of print since (Ellis 1987:100f; Cohen 1960:95). Similar spectacular sales figures were run up by his next few novels: *Allan Quatermain* written in the summer of 1885, *Jess* written in the autumn of the same year, and *She* written between January and March 1886. Haggard's continuing fame as a writer rests on these African romances, together with those written up to *Nada the Lily* in 1892 (*Maiwa's Revenge* 1888; *Allan's Wife* 1889). Thereafter, it seems as if Haggard's spell of almost compulsive writing is broken. Although he wrote at least ten more African romances, besides his novels and romances set in other parts of the world, none has the power of the pre-1892 ones. The sales figures of the early African romances indicate that Haggard had struck a deep chord in the late-Victorian reading public. Late-Victorian fears and desires, both sexual and imperial, found expression in their pages, particularly projected onto the landscapes:

Therein lay the secret of Haggard's enormous popular success and the reason for his African settings. In Africa ... the beasts which Victorians feared to encounter in themselves could be contemplated at a safe remove (Etherington 1977:196).

It is of importance that Haggard chose the romance as a vehicle to convey his vision as certainly, the romance with its grand dreams of wish fulfilment, its deeds of heroism and its binary opposite, the fear of failure, of dark menace from without suited the late nineteenth century British mood well. Africa, in particular, the last unknown space on the map to be colonised provided a suitable site for romantic dreaming for a home nation undergoing quite considerable domestic changes. Fredric Jameson (1975:158) links the romance to society in transition:

Romance as a form thus expresses a transitional moment ... its contemporaries must feel their society torn between past and future in such a way that the alternatives are grasped as hostile and somehow unrelated worlds ... the archaic nature of the categories of romance (magic, good and evil, otherness) suggests that this genre expresses a nostalgia for a social order in the process of being undermined and destroyed by nascent capitalism, yet still for the moment coexisting side by side with the latter.

Frequently in his African romances, Haggard sounds this nostalgic yet contradictory note. There is nostalgia for an Africa untamed and unknown yet ripe with promise, and yet this nostalgia contradicts Haggard the imperialist who encouraged the settlement of the colonies by Englishmen, who stressed the mother country's 'civilising' role in the land. The following passage taken from *Allan's Wife's* introductory dedication to Arthur Cochrane, Haggard's friend and farming partner in South Africa, strikes this note:

Perhaps they [these pages] will bring back to you some of the long past romance of days that are lost to us. The country of which Allan Quatermain tells his tale is now, for the most part, as well known and explored as are the fields of Norfolk. Where we shot and trekked and galloped, scarcely seeing the face of civilised man there the gold-seeker builds his cities. The shadow of the flag of Britain has, for a while, ceased to fall upon the Transvaal plains; the game has gone; the misty charm of the morning has become the glare of day. All is changed (Haggard 1951:v).

Published in 1889, following the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand and also after the relinquishing of the Transvaal, including the precious goldfields, back to the Boers, Haggard's tone is understandably sombre. What Haggard regrets is the loss of freedom to roam the land, a pre-industrial dream now curtailed by the onset of mining capitalism.

This contradiction lies at the heart of the imperialist's desire to imagine Empire's margins: on the one hand, Empire was about information gathering, laying secrets bare by mapping, naming, classifying and yet on the other the attraction of the colonies lay in their ultimate unknowability, their secrecy. The imperial romance set in Empire's far flung dominions depended on this duality of the knowable and therefore predictable and yet unknowable and uncertain. Haggard realised this in a rhetorical question he once posed: '... where will the romance writers of future generations find a safe and secret place ... in which to lay their plots?' (Etherington 1984:66). Haggard's coupling of 'safe' and 'secret' highlights the romance's survival only whilst spaces of secrecy persist. It is a short step from references to secrecy and secret selves to Frye's (1957:193) statement:

[t]ranslated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality, but still will contain that reality.

This, in a nutshell, defines the desire of imperial romance: to show the hero triumphant over land and people but without eliminating the thrill of risk and danger, the great unknown. This is perhaps the reason for Frye's (1976:57,168) labelling Haggard's adventure tales 'kidnapped romances' for 'they represent the absorption and integration of the conventions of romance into the culture of imperialists abroad' (Low 1993:197). To destroy the source of anxiety is to remove the impetus for the romance in which the hero has to have an Other (land, people, animals) to prove himself against:

A paradoxical tension between risk and control remains at the heart of adventure. Without risk, there can be no adventure, but since both gain and loss remain possible outcomes, excessive risk may cause the experience of excitement to give way to anxiety. Adventure in the modern sense is balanced between anxiety and desire (Dawson 1994:53).

Because desire and anxiety are so finely balanced in the quest romance, the happy ending often embraces a denial of fulfilment, a 'happy pessimism' whereby though 'Man seeks a distant, passionately desired ideal: often, he is happiest when he fails to find it' (Fisher 1986:63). Haggard frequently uses this ending as in, inter alia, *She* (1887) where a truly happy ending is impossible, in *Allan's Wife* (1889) which ends with a bitter-sweet vision of the dead Stella, and *The People of the Mist* which ends with what could be Haggard's (1973:363) motto: 'To few is it allowed to be completely miserable, to none to be completely happy'.

A 'happy pessimist' accurately describes Haggard's romantic hero, Allan

Quatermain. Structurally, the imperial romance required a masculine, virile hero to pit his strength against many odds. The masculinity of the romance is a result of the 'gendering of genres' (Low 1993:190) whereby the imperial romance became an almost exclusively male preserve: not only is Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) dedicated to 'all the big and small boys who read it' but Quatermain assures his male readers that there is 'not a *petticoat*' to be found between its covers (Haggard 1992:9). Despite his masculinity however, Quatermain is not a typical romantic hero in Frye's terms. Frye (1957:188) associated the romantic hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigour and youth whereas Quatermain is an odd mixture of these. His first appearance in *King Solomon's Mines* shows him as a hunter-trader of fifty-three but, if not youthful, he is vigorous as his actions prove, though modestly self deprecating. Quatermain represented for Haggard an unencumbered, free, adventurer spirit linking him to an African landscape in which he found his most compelling inspiration.

In Frye's seminal work on the romance, *The Secular Scripture: a study of the structure of Romance* (1976), he describes the romantic hero moving within a 'mental landscape' (1976:53)—the rest of this chapter will begin an exploration of what one can call Haggard's 'African topography' using this structure. Frye's mental landscape is arranged in a vertical perspective on four levels: at top is heaven, below that Eden or earthly paradise, then the world of earthly experience and at the lowest level hell or the demonic world, usually below ground. The two levels above that of earthly experience represent an 'idyllic world' which is associated with happiness, peace, sunshine; whereas the level below that of earthly experience is termed 'the demonic or night world' characterised by 'exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation and the threat of more pain' (Frye 1976:53). There are many features of this hierarchical landscape that seem to be illustrated in Haggard's African romances. The most useful for my purposes is the linking of mental states with physical spaces and features—the 'night world', for example, is

often a dark and labyrinthine world of caves and shadows where the forest has turned subterranean, and where we are surrounded by the shapes of animals (Frye 1976:111).

At the opposite extreme to this night world is the elevation of the 'point of epiphany' of which the most common setting is the mountain top, 'the symbolic presentation of the point at which the undisplayed apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature came into alignment' (Frye 1957:203). This elevated position has close links with the preferred imperial explorer's position as 'monarch of all I survey', described by Pratt in her work *Imperial Eyes* (1992), which implies power and position over landscape and, by inference, its peoples. It is also a vantage position frequently used by Haggard to extol the beauties of the open panorama that lies before the viewer. The

following example from *King Solomon's Mines* is typical of this position :

Behind and over us towered Sheba's snowy breasts, and below, some five thousand feet beneath where we stood, lay league on league of the most lovely champaign country. Here were dense patches of lofty forest, there a great river wound its silvery way. To the left stretched a vast expanse of rich undulating veldt or grass land, on which we could just make out countless herds of game or cattle, at that distance we could not tell which. This expanse appeared to be ringed in by a wall of distant mountains. To the right the country was more or less mountainous, that is, solitary hills stood up from its level, with stretches of cultivated lands between, amongst which we could distinctly see groups of dome-shaped huts. The landscape lay before us like a map, in which rivers flashed like silver snakes, and Alp-like peaks crowned with wildly twisting snow-wreaths rose in solemn grandeur, whilst over all was the glad sunlight and the wide breath of Nature's happy life (Haggard 1992:104f).

Such a vantage point implies that the viewer attempt 'the elevation of Icarus' (Noyes 1992:163) with all its danger—a telling comparison for the conflict within Icarus between desire and fear is the stuff of legend. Noyes (1992:167) elaborates on the tension implicit on this 'point of epiphany' contextualised within the imperial gaze:

The conflict arising out of the initial apprehension of boundless space initiates a tension within the entire corpus of colonial discourse. In the colonial setting, desire is invariably articulated as torn between dissolution in this boundless space and confinement within boundaries—boundaries which allow it to be represented as desire.

Here is the conflict between what Said calls 'manifest' and 'latent' levels of discourse (outlined in *Orientalism* 1995:206) within the imperial framework: the desire to possess through information (the manifest level), as well as through the gaze (the latent level), and the anxiety that this may not be possible. It is a conflict evident in Haggard's romances.

Desire, too, in an erotic sense is also part of the 'mental landscape' of Frye's romance world, as evidenced in Haggard's reference to 'Sheba's snowy breasts' in the passage from *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) just quoted. Frye (1957:205) suggests that the point of epiphany

may be presented in erotic terms as a place of sexual fulfilment, where there is no apocalyptic vision but simply a sense of arriving at the summit of experience in nature.

Haggard's frequent references to the 'laps' of mountains which offer the masculine ego a position of vantage coupled with intense satisfaction (and yet also feelings of



precariousness), seem to illustrate this idea. This is most evident in the descriptions of Ghost Mountain in *Nada the Lily* (1892) which offer extended examples of such satisfaction combined with fear. In the following passage, Umslopogaas and Galazi in turn describe the mountain:

So Umslopogaas rose and crept through the narrow mouth of the cave. There, above him, a great grey peak towered high into the air, shaped like a seated woman, her chin resting upon her breast, the place where the cave was being, as it were, on the lap of the woman. Below this place the rock sloped sharply, and was clothed with little bushes. Lower down yet was a forest great and dense, that stretched to the top of a cliff, and at the foot of the cliff, beyond the waters of the river, lay the wide plains of Zululand ... from time to time between the tops of trees I saw the figure of the grey stone woman who sits on the top of Ghost Mountain, and shaped my course towards her knees. My heart beat as I travelled through the forest in dark and loneliness like that of the night, and ever I looked round searching for the eyes of the *Ama-tonga* ... great spotted snakes crept from before my feet ... and always high above my head the wind sighed in the great boughs with a sound like the sighing of women (1949:112-114).

Linked to this sexualising of the African landscape, in terms of Frye's (1976:153) 'idyllic world' is the 'identification of the mistress' body with the paradisaal garden'. For Haggard writing within the masculine imperial romance form, the sexual quest is partially transferred onto the landscape, there being 'not a *petticoat*' (that is, no white woman) advisable in the genre of his time, as previously mentioned. He allows a far more powerful love affair between his protagonist and the land than with any woman, with whom love affairs are shown to be inevitably transitory, unlike that with the land which is constant. Desire is projected onto the landscape which frequently assumes a female form, alluring yet dangerous as in the paradisaal myth. The intensely sexualised landscape of *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) offers us a view at one point of the mountains named Sheba's Breasts 'modestly veiled in diaphanous wreaths of mist'. After seeing this, Quatermain declares 'this new land was little less than an earthly paradise' (Haggard 1992:125f). Both *Jess* (1900) and *The Ghost Kings* (1908) also offer specific references to the Garden of Eden:

It is like the Garden of Eden, isn't it, with the sea thrown in. There are all the animals, and that green tree with the fruit on it might be the Tree of Life, and oh, my goodness, there is Adam! (Haggard 1908:46)

Haggard's use of a treasure map in *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) is worth mentioning briefly here as it encapsulates many of the ideas just mentioned. It is a map drawn by a dying Portuguese trader en route to the diamond mines of King Solomon in

Kukuanaland and has been read by some critics as a graphically sexualised map of a woman's body leading the male gazer/imperialist to a kind of Promised Land. The treasure seeker is led in the map between Sheba's Breasts towards the diamond mines located beneath a suggestive triangle of hills:

Haggard's map assembles in miniature the three narrative themes which govern his novel: map-making as a form of military appropriation, the transmission of white male power through control of the black female, and the plundering of the land's riches. What sets Haggard's map apart from the scores of treasure maps that emblazon colonial adventure narratives is that his is explicitly sexualised (McClintock 1990:113f).

More than he knew, Haggard had invested his treasure map's literal informational function with subconscious desire. Furthermore in Haggard's treasure map, as in many maps of eighteenth and nineteenth century explorers, the myth of the 'empty' landscape is perpetuated. Though it could be argued that Haggard's map is a 'bodyscape' of Africa as woman, the map is in effect empty of people, the way to the treasure unimpeded by any other claimants to the Promised Land.

Perhaps as much as Haggard's African romances are known for their paradisaical landscapes, so are they for the night world of caves (as previously mentioned), labyrinths and underground rivers that act as a counter balance to the sunlit world above. *She* is probably the best known example of this 'night world', but there are also night world caves in *King Solomon's Mines* (1892), *Maiwa's Revenge* (1888), *Allan's Wife* (1889), *Nada the Lily* (1892), *Heu-Heu or The Monster* (1923) and others. The characteristic state of the protagonist in this other world is the dream/nightmare as seen here in *She*: 'No nightmare dreamed by man, no wild invention of the romance, can ever equal the living horror of that place ...' (Haggard 1991:200). That powerful interpreter of dreams, Freud, recognised the importance of the dreamy underworld of *She* recommending it to a patient as 'A *strange* book, but full of hidden meaning' and finding its landscape even intruding into *his* dream wherein he had to cross a chasm on narrow planks, after which he woke in a 'mental fright' (Etherington 1978:71). Haggard (1887:176), prior to Freud, had recognised that:

Sexual passion is the most powerful lever with which to stir the mind of man, for it lies at the root of all things human; and it is impossible to over-estimate the damage that could be worked by a single English or American writer of genius, if he grasped it with a will.

What Haggard did not realise was the extent to which his own works were driven by desire, and how this desire of an imperial age, with its tensions and ambiguities is

present in his African landscapes.

One obvious tension in Haggard's work is the recurrence of evidence of ancient white civilisations in Africa. For example, in *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) by attributing the ruins and statues found to the work of an ancient white civilisation, probably of Phoenician origin, Haggard contributed to a powerful part of the myth about Africa in the nineteenth century. This myth was linked to race theories of the nineteenth century which held that African cultures were inevitably less sophisticated than European ones. The discovery of ancient stone-walled sites and gold mines in Africa posed a problem for these were unknown in comparable European Iron Age sites. Hence the theory that other [European] races must have built them in some far distant age. Popular theory also held that the southern African region was the site of the Biblical Ophir, a belief traceable back to sixteenth century Portuguese explorers. Thus when Mauch found Great Zimbabwe in 1870, its antiquity and singularity led him to claim it as the site of King Solomon's Ophir, built for the Queen of Sheba, with a Phoenician substratum. Though there was some scientific resistance to this idea by, for example, Hartmann who had seen Africans building in stone, such views did not prevail at the time.

Haggard specifically links Southern Africa with Ophir in *King Solomon's Mines* (1992), (the mines being reached by a route leading between Queen Sheba's Breasts) and its cultural artefacts with an ancient Phoenician civilisation—Allan Quatermain speculates looking at three stone colossi which guard the diamond mine entrance: 'Perhaps these colossi were designed by the same Phoenician official who managed the mines' (Haggard 1992:258). *She* (1991) also has frequent references to ancient white civilisations and their influence in Africa—Ayesha herself is a unique remnant of that ancient period. Horace Holly remarks on coming across an ancient wharf complete with mooring ring in the swamps:

A country like Africa ... is sure to be full of the relics of long dead and forgotten civilisations. Nobody knows the age of the Egyptian civilisation, and very likely it had offshoots. Then there were the Babylonians and the Phoenicians, and the Persians, and all manner of people, all more or less civilised .... It is possible that they, or any one of them, may have had colonies or trading stations about here. Remember those buried Persian cities that the consul showed us at Kilwa (Haggard 1991:45).

Haggard, like some other writers on Africa of his day, through such means tried to construct an Africa which he could understand and interpret, and yet which defied his attempts. The popularity of Haggard's works, however, made his contribution to the myth of ancient white civilisations in Africa potentially far reaching. Tangri (1990:295) speculates:

It might not be too cynical to perceive in the work of Haggard a profound influence on later white lay opinion in southern Africa, already receptive to ideas about Ophir and foreign colonists after centuries of speculation. Certainly ... the basic ideas he perpetuated can be found in all early reports on Great Zimbabwe which advocate an exotic origin for the site.

Nearly ninety years after the publication of *She* (1887), a 1973 South African film version of *She* was shot in the Great Zimbabwe ruins with Ayesha, the white queen, ruling over black subjects and guarding her virginity on which her immortality depends:

With this story De Villiers [the film maker] was able to cash in on the sexual anxieties of white South Africans while reinforcing the hoary and politically convenient belief that a lost white civilization rather than black men raised the walls of the spectacular buildings at Zimbabwe (Etherington in Haggard 1991:xxxix).

All the foregoing points on the imperial romance, its form and Haggard's opinions on the matter, lead to the centrality of landscape to the romance form, and to Haggard with his powerful landscapes as one of the imperial romance's most influential and popular practitioners. African landscape in Haggard's romances, I have tried to show, can therefore act as a text to be read, not transparently however, as it is inevitably ideologically encoded, but with caution. Thus I return to the point with which I began—the centrality of fiction to the understanding of a culture and, more specifically, the centrality of landscape within fiction of Empire, especially the imperial romance set on Empire's margins, to an understanding of an historical period, as translated within Haggard's African romances. Haggard creates an idiosyncratic yet also symptomatic African space which through repeated patterns he turns into what De Certeau calls (1984:117) 'a practised place' a space-turned-place permeated with desire, nostalgia, yet deeply fissured by doubts and anxieties characteristic of his age.

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