‘The Thirst for the Wilderness Was on Me’: Africa-as-Wilderness in Rider Haggard’s African Romances

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Introduction
One of Rider Haggard’s first biographers, Morton Cohen, wrote that ‘[f]or many Englishmen, Africa became the Africa of King Solomon’s Mines’ (1960:94). What Haggard continued to do after this, his first successful African romance, was to work the same canvas, repeating certain features until he had created an instantly recognisable ‘Africa’ for his readers. Writing of Africa intermittently for the whole of his writing career of just over 40 years, Haggard sustained a remarkably constant construction of Africa, perhaps because of, rather than despite, a changing political climate at home. At odds with Britain’s handling of territories in South Africa and the changing policy, post-Shepstone, particularly towards the Zulu people, Haggard drew a largely nostalgic landscape even from his earliest African romance. In his African romances, particularly those written pre-1892 before his only son died, he took a real geophysical space with current and past historical events to which he frequently referred, and moved the whole into a series of ‘imaginative geographies of desire’ (Jacobs 1994:34).

The aim of this paper is to investigate one aspect of Haggard’s constructed topography of Africa: the ‘Africa-as-wilderness’ trope in which Nature is seen as a powerful yet potentially overwhelming force which needs restraining. Once restrained, however, its attraction is diminished. When ‘Africa-as-wilderness’ is added to the other typical tropes Haggard constructed—Africa as vast Eden, as sexualized bodyscape, as dream underworld and as home to ancient white
civilizations (see Stiebel 2001)—a composite topography emerges of a fictional landscape onto which the desires and fears of an age, through one of its most representative writers, are projected. Though this paper is not able to explore the desires and fears referred to at any length, suffice it to say that the imperialist novel provides an illuminating insight into the concerns of the late Victorian era. As Parry notes:

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

Rider Haggard can be seen as the first ‘boys’ adventure story’ writer of Empire to cast ‘Africa-as-wilderness’ centre stage. In doing so, he spawned a legacy of writers to follow this trend—thus Stephen Gray sees Haggard, quite correctly, as part of a lineage stretching from Captain Marryat and RM Ballantyne, through John Buchan and Stuart Cloete, to Wilbur Smith, but states that it would be a ‘tedious business’ to discuss them separately as they all ‘conform so rigidly to established patterns’ (1979:111).

Africa as Wilderness
If one classic element of Haggard’s African topography is Africa as vast sunlit Eden, then another is the theme of Africa as wilderness. The wilderness he draws, however, has both positive and negative elements: in the positive sense, wilderness represents nature as opposed to civilisation; in the negative version wilderness becomes the alienated heart of darkness. To take the positive view of wilderness first, Africa as unspoilt nature offers the jaded, civilised Englishman a chance to recharge his spirits, rediscover himself. Haggard, critical of the new commercial middle classes in pursuit of wealth in England, makes his alter ego Quatermain both constitutionally and ideologically a restless wanderer. At the start of Allan Quatermain, the hero who is saddened by his boy’s recent death (which similar bereavement was soon to happen to his creator in reality) gives expression to his wanderlust:
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The thirst for the wilderness was on me; I could tolerate this place no more; I would go and die as I had lived, among the wild game and the savages. Yes, as I walked, I began to long to see the moonlight gleaming silvery white over the wide veldt and mysterious sea of bush, and watch the lines of game travelling down the ridges to the water ... no man who has for forty years lived the life I have, can with impunity go coop himself in this prim English country, with its trim hedgerows and cultivated fields, its stiff formal manners, and its well-dressed crowds. He begins to long—ah, how he longs!—for the keen breath of the desert air; he dreams of the sight of Zulu impis breaking on their foes like surf upon the rocks, and his heart rises up in rebellion against the strict limits of the civilised life (1995:9f).

This is a desire-laden passage written by one who had recently left the less restricted life of a settler in a ‘new’ land and was now uneasily adapting himself to a far more circumscribed environment in all ways—politically, physically and mentally. The physical and spiritual limitations of his English life are strikingly captured by his daughter. She writes of his circumstances around the time of the publication of *Allan’s Wife* (1889) two years later:

Rider made up his mind that the adventurous part of his life was behind him. That in future his path lay at home, on the small Norfolk estate bordered by the River Waveney and the wide green valley which ran down between the two counties from the town of Bungay to Beccles. In the square Georgian house where his wife had been born, set amidst its shady lawns and beech trees and walled garden. On the little farm consisting of some two hundred and forty acres of heavy land, with its antiquated buildings, neglected pastures and dilapidated fences. Not a very wide or romantic prospect, or very promising material to fill the life of a man of his temperament and ambitions unless he had a political career as well, and that had failed him (Haggard 1951:173).

Small wonder—given the number of circumscribing adjectives, ‘walled’, ‘bordered’, ‘small’ and ‘square’ in this passage—that Haggard repeatedly sent his heroes out to Africa to the wilderness to escape such limitations.
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The great positive virtue then of the wilderness is the potential it offers for adventure. In its most recreational form, adventure for the hero involves hunting wild animals in which the wilderness abounds:

Haggard’s novels set in Africa tend to treat the continent as a vast nobleman’s park teeming with game, big and little, waiting to be shot. While the slaughter of wildlife in *She* is mild compared with that in *King Solomon’s Mines* and *Allan Quatermain*, the eye of Haggard’s imagination is ever alert for wild game (Etherington in Haggard 1991:224).

It must be noted, however, that in later life Haggard turned his back on hunting, saying that ‘the destruction of the lower animals for the sake of sport, has become abominable to me’ (1926:2.105), and indeed published an anti-blood sports novella *The Mahatma and the Hare* in 1911; but

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1 Etherington’s reference here to Haggard’s African wilderness resembling in its positive aspect ‘a vast nobleman’s park’ is interesting for the way in which it foregrounds Haggard’s frequent reference to ‘parkland’ in Africa. Etherington suggests that ‘such vistas were an impetus to colonization and imperialism, inasmuch as they suggested the possibility of country estates open to acquisition by adventurous spirits’ (in Haggard 1991:225). Appleton in *The Symbolism of Landscape* suggests another intriguing reason for the appeal of parkland to the viewer/reader:

If there is a type of environment which we as a species can recognise as our natural habitat, it has to be the savannah... This is now generally agreed by the anthropologists to be the kind of environment in which the first recognizable hominids made their home; ... the power of attractions ... which drew them towards this favorable kind of landscape, has not been eliminated from our genetic make-up but has survived—in Jungian terminology—as an archetype, whose influence is still to be seen in many ways, not least in the wide-spread attraction which people feel towards ‘parkland’, an idealised contrived arrangement of well-spaced trees within a tidily groomed grassland. (1990:15)
this is certainly not apparent in the early romances in which hunting is clearly relished.

The wilderness, however, has a negative aspect, and that is the varying difficulty and hazards of the terrain that the hero must overcome before achieving the purpose of his quest. Haggard’s inventiveness knew no bounds in the construction of obstacles to be conquered, as they always are, in his African romances. The movement of the hero is always from the known and the British—whether ‘Home’ or a British settlement on the coast—to the unknown African interior. On one level, the journey is an arduous physical one in which several African helpers may lose their lives, and on another level it is a psychological test of nerves for the Englishman. It is ‘a trek from the known into the unconscious unknown self’ where the characters move ‘progressively through a symbolic landscape from physical tests to moral tests’ (Etherington 1978:76f). The journey usually leads backwards in time as in this primordial scene from She:

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 and peaty water that, mirror-like, flashed up the red rays of the setting sun.... And then ourselves—three modern Englishmen in a modern English boat—seeming to jar upon and look out of tone with that measureless desolation (Haggard 1991:47).

The travellers struggle through deserts, swamps, mountains, plains teeming with dangerous animals and inhospitable tribes, and the movement is ‘northward, ever northward’ (1908:277).

In Allan’s Wife, this challenging terrain is allegorically called the ‘Bad Lands’,

a great expanse of desolate land, stretching further than the eye could reach, and bordered far away by a line of purple hills.... To look back on it is like a nightmare (Haggard 1951:77f).

This extract hints at not only the physical, but also the psychological strain that Quatermain undergoes in the early romances, and certainly that Leo and Holly undergo in She. ‘Africa-as-wilderness’ in this sense signifies the challenge darkest Africa afforded to the Victorians:
As the Victorian mind tried to ground itself in its role as the colonizer of the “new” lands, it was threatened with the abysses, cliffs, swamps and sands, not only of the southern lands it was colonizing, but of its own psyche (Carter in Darian-Smith et al. 1996:3).

Remarkably, the hero always overcomes these hardships, generally to return to Britain—though Allan Quatermain breaks the pattern that Haggard was later to stick to, as Sir Henry Curtis remains in Zu-Vendis to rule with Queen Nyleptha, and Quatermain dies in Zu-Vendis at the book’s end. The returning adventurer is often filled with nostalgia for the wilderness he has left, despite its dangers. Brother John (The Holy Flower) back in England ‘spends a lot of his time wandering about the New Forest ... trying to imagine that he is back in Africa’ (1915:319), while John Niel, back in Britain with the placid Bessie, yearns instead for Jess, who is the tragic outsider, the loner, symbolised in the following extract by the freedom of the remembered (African) night skies:

He is not a man much addicted to sentiment or speculation, but sometimes when his day’s work is done, and he strays to his garden gate and looks out at the dim and peaceful English landscape beyond, and thence to the wide star-strewn heavens above, he wonders if the hour will ever come when once more he will see those dark and passionate eyes, and hear that sweet remembered voice (1900:308).

To keep the wilderness, especially in its negative aspect, at bay, Haggard’s African topography frequently features the enclosure. The small cultivated patch of ground in the midst of the wilderness is a feature of Haggard’s African romances, as it is indeed of other colonial writers’ works, in which the garden, bearing powerful connotations of paradise and order, is shown in sharp contrast to the turbulence beyond. Boehmer describes this feature in colonial writing as the creation in the fruitful but wild colonial lands of ‘a whole collection of green spots ... replicas of the Kentish garden county’ (1995:53). The symbolic value of the garden, the cultivated land, as a victory of civilisation/order over wilderness/chaos is thus evident: ‘Nature is neutralised in the garden to become an object of detached contemplation. The garden is not, has
never been, a product of nature but a **symbolic structure of meaning**. In the post-lapsarian world, the garden is the return of nature through art’ (Pugh 1988:103, my emphasis).

Garden making is an attempt to impose a structure upon an existing topography, to change a small corner of it to suit oneself. Haggard, by all accounts, was an enthusiastic gardener both at home and in Africa—his daughter comments on this in her description of her father at ‘The Palatial’, also known as ‘Jess’ Cottage’, the small house that he and Cochrane shared during the British occupation of Pretoria: ‘Rider, being Rider, at once made a garden, planted roses, and a vineyard in front, and a screen of blue gums around it. He also wrote to his mother asking her to send him nuts and acorns from his favourite beech and oak trees in the park at Bradenham, so that he might grow ‘English trees’’ (Haggard 1951:75). On the question of creating gardens in the colonies as domestic spaces, it is interesting that Haggard was known for his intense interest in gardening, often seen as a woman’s domain. For example, Ranger, in an article entitled ‘Landscape Gendering in Zimbabwe’ remarks in relation to colonial Rhodesia: ‘As in Australia, the women created oases of civilised domesticity, green lawns and flower-gardens; they moderated essential male violence’ (1994:7). Certainly Haggard’s gardening efforts in South Africa were then an exception to the norm as described here by Ranger. Further research into Haggard’s love of gardening might well yield interesting insights into this often gendered activity—could the garden, for example, represent a kind of sublimated desire for the [absent] colonial female? Or a link home to the [absent] mother?

The largely autobiographical *The Witch's Head* has the main character, Ernest Kershaw, described in similar vein: ‘Even if he only stopped a month in a place he would start a little garden: it was a habit of his’ (1890:336). Ironically, despite Haggard’s frequently voiced dissatisfaction with England and its ‘trim hedgerows and cultivated fields’ (1995:9), it is mostly an English kind of garden that he creates in the Africa which he valued for its freedom from constraints. Ideologically, perhaps one could say that this is another manifestation of the contradiction between Haggard the public imperialist and the private doubter—while he yearned for Africa to remain untouched and unspoiled, he contrived to create an artfully natural English spot for himself within it. Of course while England was in control of the Transvaal, things were
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for Haggard as they should have been, politically speaking. Thus the garden of ‘The Palatial’ is a cornucopia of plenty:

The ground themselves were planted with vines, just now loaded with bunches of ripening grapes, and surrounded with a beautiful hedge of monthly roses that formed a blaze of bloom. Near the house, too, were a bed of double roses, some of them exceedingly beautiful, and all flowering with profusion unknown in this country. Altogether it was a delightful little spot (1900:169f).

Returning to this same garden in 1914 as part of the Royal Commission investigating the state of the Dominions, with the Transvaal long returned to the Boers, the Anglo-Boer wars and Zulu Wars now past, all of which Haggard felt dated back to poor political decisions in Britain, Haggard’s words on his garden seem symbolic of promise wasted:

The garden is a terrible sight, a mere tangle, the whole two acres of it. Of the vines we planted only one or two survive climbing up trees. The roses are all gone.... Standing among those noxious growths I seemed to forget all the intervening years and grow young again. I saw the walls rising. I saw the sapling gums, the infant vines and the new planted roses and gardenias.... I went away with a sad heart. Oh! Where are they who used to pass in and out through that humble gate? (2000:130).

A more sudden dilapidation overtakes another type of enclosure in Jess: Croft’s farmhouse at Mooifontein, the fictional version of Haggard’s first marital home, Hilldrop. Mooifontein is a picture of plenty and order, again ‘a delightful spot’, a haven of productivity:

All along its front ran a wide veranda, 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. On the farther side of the orange-trees were the gardens, fenced in with low walls of rough stone, and the orchard full of standard fruit trees, and beyond these again the oxen and ostrich
kraals, the latter full of long-necked birds. To the right of the
house grew thriving plantations of blue-gum and black wattle, and
to the left was a broad stretch of cultivated lands, lying so that
they could be irrigated for winter crops by means of water led
from the great spring that gushed from the mountain-side high
above the house, and gave its name of Mooifontein to the house
(1900:22f).

Everything has its place, with Silas Croft, the owner-farmer, as
benevolent dictator over the whole. The picture is pre-lapsarian and
recalls Haggard’s own pride in his achievements at Hilldrop in
brickmaking and haymaking, and his early domestic happiness with his
new bride and first-born child, the precious Jock:

The presence of the white man [Silas Croft] domesticates the
wild country into a safe pastoral one; here a man may live and
work like an original Adam, creating and refashioning an
Eden—trapped in a time warp—to his own image (Low
1996:38).

Yet neither the idyll at Mooifontein nor at Hilldrop could last. Croft’s
farm is burnt down by the Boers as part of the Boer uprising against the
British in the Transvaal following retrocession, and the Haggards felt
forced to leave Hilldrop for fear of an imminent Anglo-Boer outbreak.
Both Silas Croft and Haggard leave South Africa in the belief that, at that
point politically, ‘this is no country for Englishmen’ (1900:367) and
return reluctantly to England.

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2 Boer-owned farms in Haggard’s African romances are similarly
hierarchical, if more severely disciplined—see, for example,
Maraisfontein in Marie and Botmar’s Transkei farm in Swallow. The
farmers own the land by virtue of the fact that they work it and have
‘created’ cultivated land out of raw nature: ‘The farm pyramidal
structure, presided over by the Boer owner, translates nature into an
order based on wealth and power; in Eden, and in the hundreds of farms
of South African fiction, the garden of myth finds its practical, historical
actualization’ (Oboe 1994:143).
In *Allan Quatermain* and *Allan’s Wife*, however, the enclosures brought to the foreground are less obviously rooted in Haggard’s own history and more closely allied to the ideals of romance, commonly symbolized by some kind of paradise or park like the biblical Eden, a world in which a humanity greatly reduced in numbers has become reconciled to nature (Frye 1976:172).

Yet, despite their origins in Haggard’s fancy, their ideological implications remain rooted in the late nineteenth-century British pre-occupation with Africa. Both enclosures mentioned—the Mackenzie mission station in *Allan Quatermain* at which Quatermain rests on his way to Zu-Vendis, and the Carson compound in *Allan’s Wife* where Quatermain meets his wife, Stella—have their origins in the desire for colonial settlement in Africa, the idea of colonial land ‘as property, and with it inevitably the appropriation and enclosure of land’ (Young 1995:172)3.

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3 Haggard, it must be noted, was in favour of returning to the system of smallholding farming in England in an effort to provide the small farmer with a stake in the land. The long succession of Enclosure Acts of Parliament had transformed the sociological and topographical map of England by legislating for the enclosure of common land into larger and larger estates, squeezing out the smallholder. What Haggard campaigned for in his agricultural writings was ‘to revive a regime of smallholdings ... returning the larger farms created by a century of Enclosure Acts to an earlier condition. It meant the active encouragement of local difference, even in a sense of return to the picturesquely primitive’ (Carter in Darian-Smith 1996:29). This radical move from one who, after all, was a member of the landed gentry, can be traced back to Haggard’s firm belief in the restorative value for people of working the land:

To large classes of this country the land means a place that is green and full of cows in the summer, and brown and full of mud in winter; to another class it means a place where there are weekend parties and pheasant shoots; and to a third and more select class, a place where they can go hunting for votes. But the land is a great deal more than all these things. It is the nursery of
The Mackenzie mission station in *Allan Quatermain* is reached after a ten-day trek inland from Lamu, an island off Kenya, and a perilous canoe trip up the Tana River in which Quatermain, Sir Henry Curtis, Good and Umslopogaas are attacked by murderous Masai tribesmen. The first view of the Mackenzie family marks them as separate from the wilderness that Quatermain and company have just struggled through:

A gentleman, a lady, and a little girl ... walking in a civilised fashion through a civilised garden, to meet us in this place (1995:40).

They then proceed to the mission enclosure, which is in microcosm a British paradise in Africa, a British protectorate hierarchically organised and feudally arranged. On the lower slopes of the hill (for the topography mirrors the power relations) are the ‘Kaffir gardens’ full of mealies, pumpkins, potatoes and also containing ‘neat mushroom shaped huts’ whose occupants come ‘pouring out’ to greet the visitors. The road up the hill is lined with orange trees ‘positively laden with golden fruit’. Higher up the hill the party is shown a ‘splendid quince fence’, which marks the border with Mackenzie’s private enclosure within which is his ‘private garden’, church and house (1995:41). This garden is symbolically far more English than the African gardens lower down.

Quatermain, no doubt speaking for Haggard, exclaims:

I have always loved a good garden, and I could have thrown up my hands for joy when I saw Mr Mackenzie’s. First there were rows upon rows of standard European fruit-trees, all grafted; for on the top of this hill the climate was so temperate that very nearly all the English vegetables, trees and flowers flourished peoples.... Therefore the land is the most vital of all the problems with which we have to deal. (Haggard 1916:47)

Haggard had support for his position on smallholdings from Joseph Chamberlain whose ‘three acres and a cow’ policy was in similar vein—after reading a copy of *Rural England* that Haggard had sent to him, Chamberlain replied: ‘I judge from what you say that we are very much at one [on agricultural matters]. I am, and always have been, in favour of Small Holdings’ (quoted in Cohen 1960:175).
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luxuriantly ... strawberries and tomatoes (such tomatoes!) and melons and cucumbers, and, indeed, every sort of vegetable and fruit (1995:41).

Protecting this enclosure is Mr Mackenzie’s ‘magnum opus’, a huge ditch and wall that took him and ‘twenty natives’ two years to dig and to construct. The effort was worth it, for Mackenzie says ‘I never felt safe till it was done; and now I can defy all the savages in Africa’ (1995:42).

The image of the manor complete with moat and drawbridge is sustained by the method of entry into the inner sanctum—the party crosses ‘over a plank and through a very narrow opening in the wall’, which seems a very much tamed and domestic version of the crossing over the chasm into the place of the Fire of Life in *She*. This small opening leads immediately to Mrs. Mackenzie’s ‘domain—namely, the flower garden’ filled significantly with ‘roses, gardenias, or camellias (all reared from seeds or cuttings sent from England)’. Flossie, the Mackenzie daughter, has a little ‘patch’ devoted to indigenous plants, ‘some of which were surpassingly beautiful’. Quatermain’s interest in one in particular, the Goya lily whose beauty is fabled, sends Flossie off on an expedition to procure him one that ends in her being kidnapped by the Masai. The Mackenzie house is ‘massively built’ but unremarkable. The whole enclosure is dominated by a vast phallic fir tree, ‘a beautiful tapering brown pillar without a single branch’ for seventy feet whereafter the top boughs offer shade to the house. Mackenzie uses this tree as his ‘watch tower’ as it affords a bird’s-eye view of terrain within ‘fifteen miles or so’ (1995:42f). This enclosure is evidence of the wilderness tamed and mastered within its borders, yet ever vigilant for the possibility of attack from without. It marks a triumph of English planning implemented by black African labour and aided by the natural fertility of the soil together with temperate climate. It is at one level Haggard’s and Empire’s dream of making the wilderness into a Garden of Eden now lost at ‘home’; yet at another level it is a dream that cuts across the latent desire for a free, uncivilised wilderness to escape the confinements of that same ‘home’. There is an ambivalence and contradictory movement in Haggard’s version of the African pastoral. On the one hand, Africa is represented within the Judaeo-Christian myth of the garden as the place where the original perfection of man can be recovered; on the other, Africa is also presented as an anti-garden where man’s presence in the landscape merely heralds impending corruption (Low 1996:39f).
The enclosure at Baboon Head in *Allan’s Wife* is hierarchical in a manner similar to the Mackenzie compound, with Mr Carson at the head, accompanied by Stella, Quatermain’s future wife. Though it has no moat surrounding it, Quatermain has to struggle through the appropriately named ‘Bad Lands’ to reach the Carson settlement, which is ‘embraced ... in the arms of the mountain’ that backs it. Again, the settlement is arranged in tiers with the ‘Kaffir kraals, built in orderly groups’ on the lowest level and the Carson dwellings higher up surrounded by the ubiquitous groves of orange trees. The dwellings, shaped like beehive huts, are built of ‘blocks of hewn marble’ by an ancient people. At this point the Editor figure breaks in with a learned footnote about ruins of such kraals being found in the ‘Marico district of the Transvaal’, built necessarily by ‘a white race who understood building in stone and at right angles’ for ‘it required more than Kaffir skill to erect the stone huts’. Haggard’s African landscapes are littered with ruins of ancient white civilisations; suffice it to say here that these white marble structures, because built by an ancient white race, validate Carson’s own dominance in this enclosure. Again there is a ‘beautifully planted’ garden with ‘many European vegetables and flowers’ growing in it. All in all, it is ‘the best farm I have ever seen in Africa’ created again by British initiative and planning, African labour and ‘marvellous soil and climate’. Carson says, ‘I found this spot a wilderness’ after ‘renouncing civilization’; in Africa he has created something rather more idealistic than Mackenzie, whose enclosure is described in more prosaic terms than Carson’s quasi-spiritual realm. Carson is known as the chief of the ‘Children of Thomas’, a labouring force of about a thousand Africans, and the farm is run on a cooperative basis, with Carson reserving ‘only a tithe of the produce’ (1951:91-101).

This is Haggard’s vision of the muscular Christianity that he was to encourage in his positive report on the Salvation Army settlements in the United States in *The Poor and the Land* (1905), and which he would repeat in *The After War Settlement and Employment of Ex-Servicemen* (1916). The African wilderness could be made to yield up its bounty by dint of planning and labour, could be held back from these hard-working small fiefdoms even at the risk of relinquishing some of its exhilarating yet threatening promise of freedom.

Other characteristic features of Haggard’s African topography, as mentioned at the beginning of the paper, include Africa as vast Eden, Africa as dream underworld, Africa as sexualized bodyscape, and Africa as
home to ancient white civilizations. In the face of those who see Haggard as a typical imperialist adventure writer, Haggard produces a paradoxically complex African topography onto which he projects some of his own reservations about Britain’s imperial future in Africa, introducing thereby an adversarial element, a contentious note, filled with ambiguities. These ambivalences are perhaps most particularly seen in his sexualized bodyscapes (see, among others, Stiebel 2000). However, overall, it is a fictional topography that would resonate deeply in his own age, as this passage from The Natal Witness (28 March, 1914) illustrates:

Who shall say how many strong and sturdy pioneers have been attracted from the pleasant Homeland to help in winning the African wilds to civilisation as a result of romantic interest aroused in them when as boys they read and revelled in these romances? Haggard did more to advertise South Africa to the world when it was less known than any man of his time (Coan 1997:48).

What attracted Haggard—and what he managed to convey to his readers at the time—was the powerful attraction of nature, its potential danger, and yet the Englishman’s ability to engage with it and emerge refreshed, if occasionally chastened.

References
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