

# The Return of the Lost City: The Hybrid Legacy of Rider Haggard's African Romances

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In a strange, oblique way the last eighty-five years of South African fiction has [sic] been an extensive footnote to Rider Haggard. We had to wait until 1972 before we got a serious 'literary' novel about explorers [Fugard, S. *The Castaways*]. His allegorical battle of love and hate, light and dark, energy and entropy, the cry of the smothered soul for release from rational anguish—all these are still with us. His work is visionary, touching on the primordial experience (MacLennan & Christie 1973:35f).

Although the above extract from MacLennan and Christie's unpublished work *Dream Life and Real Life* will make some hackles rise, there is an element of truth in the observation it makes. Though Rider Haggard's influence on successive British romance writers and colonial civil servants is well known, his profound influence on South African writers is less well documented. C.S. Lewis (1984:128) in an essay written in the 1960s entitled 'The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard' asked why '[o]bstinately, scandalously Haggard continues to be read and re-read'. He came to the conclusion that Haggard's continued popularity rested 'on an appeal well above high-water mark' derived from a 'great myth' (Lewis 1984:131) that Haggard had developed in his African romances. While noting Haggard's influence on South African literature, most South African academics have been less positive. They see him primarily as a conservative, imperialist writer and have not always noted his contradictory, complex position on central ideological positions of his age.

Stephen Gray (1979:111) sees Haggard as part of a boys' adventure story lineage stretching from Captain Marryatt and R.M. Ballantyne, through Buchan and Stuart Cloete, to Wilbur Smith. Since they all 'conform so rigidly to established patterns', he judges that it would be a 'tedious business' to discuss them separately. Though Haggard certainly used the formulaic adventure model, his interest lies in the manner in which he projected doubts about his age and person onto the imaginative geography he constructed in these romances; and in this sense he is not as straightforward a 'potboiler' writer as Gray seems to imply. Paul Rich (1984:135), in an essay entitled 'Romance and the Development of the South African Novel' which discusses *Jess* at

some length, together with novels by Buchan, Paton, Gordimer and Coetzee, reiterates the durability of Haggard as a romance writer and writes:

romance formulas remain deeply embedded within the South African literary experience and it may, indeed, take generations of urban living before the nostalgia for the pastoral and idyllic is finally driven from the heart.

It seems that, as Rich points out, nostalgia is a particularly powerful force in what might be called the 'Haggard legacy' in South African letters. More pointedly, while South Africa has undergone profound changes in the twentieth century—historically, politically, economically, socially—to which, in Said's terms (1978), the manifest level of discourse bears witness, there remains a barely changing latent level of nostalgic discourse about Africa. In terms of landscape, that is evident in an ongoing tradition of romance adventure tales, the lineage of which Gray outlines. It seems that Haggard captured not only the *Zeitgeist* of his age in his African romances, but also for succeeding generations of South African writers and readers he left a legacy of nostalgia for a kind of Africa, cast forever in amber—a mythical Africa that is echoed particularly in the geographies of his successors. The more the manifest level of discourse has changed, the more the latent nostalgic desire for Haggard's 'safe and secret' (Haggard 1894:762) African spaces has survived. At the end of the twentieth century with South Africa profoundly politically altered, with violence on the increase and the urban jungle becoming more than a metaphor, perhaps it is no wonder that Wilbur Smith, billed by many as Haggard's current successor, is the world's biggest popular seller with over a hundred million sales to his credit (Smith 1997:72).

This article will trace a strand of this 'Haggard legacy' in twentieth century South African romance literature—especially as regards use of landscape. I focus on the role of nostalgia in the depiction of South African topography in the texts of Sol Plaatje, Stuart Cloete and Wilbur Smith—South African writers who claim to have been influenced by Haggard. It is in the work of these writers that the latent level of nostalgic discourse is loudest<sup>1</sup>. I shall also consider aspects of twentieth century popular culture in South Africa that show evidence of Haggard's influence.

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of Haggard's influence on and cross-fertilisation between contemporary writers and those of the twentieth century, see Etherington (1984:107-119). One writer I do not consider in the chapter as he falls somewhat outside the sequence established, but whom I shall briefly mention here, is Laurens van der Post, whose closest link with Haggard was a similar belief in Africa as representing a primitive and vital phase of the European psyche with which the European had to come to terms to progress. Hammond and Jablow (1970:146) single him out as one 'who has given the most vivid portrayals of Africa and the Africans since Haggard. He has recaptured the wonder of the Africa of the early explorers'. Etherington (1984:114) sees Van der Post as illustrating 'another way in which Haggard's influence has echoed down the corridors of twentieth-century fiction'.

### 1 Sol Plaatje: *Mhudi* (1930)

The leap from Haggard, specifically in *Nada the Lily* (1892) to Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* (1930) which was hailed as the first novel written in English by a black African, is not as big as it may superficially seem to be. For a start, Plaatje, in a letter to Silas Molema dated August 1920, described *Mhudi* as

a novel—a love story after the manner of romances; but based on historical facts ... with plenty of love, superstition, and imaginations worked in between ... wars. Just like the style of Rider Haggard when he writes about Zulus (quoted in Chennells 1997:37)<sup>2</sup>.

Chrisman further draws the two writers together by noting that they 'mark either end of the imperial trajectory in black South Africa', since Haggard's Zulu romance was written during a time of full British control over Zululand and Plaatje's *Mhudi* came at the end of an era of British imperialism in South Africa. Both were sympathetic to a pro-imperial British position but anti-Boer; both used the historical romance form for a novel set during the period of the Mfecane (Chrisman 1992:144).

*Mhudi*, though published in 1930, was written closer to 1917 when Plaatje published his *Native Life in South Africa*, a scathing attack on the Natives' Land Act of 1913, a law which restricted blacks to being wage labourers, unable to own or rent their own land outside the Reserves. For Haggard, who wrote in a letter to Sir Bartle Frere, 'The natives are the real heirs to the soil and surely should have protection and consideration ...' (quoted in Pocock 1993:51) this would surely have also seemed a cruel, exploitative step to take. *Mhudi* tells the story of the displacement in the 1830s of the pastoralist Barolong people by the forces of Mzilikazi, their later ill-advised joining of forces with the Boers who had trekked up from the Cape and their subsequent victory over Mzilikazi who was forced to retreat to present day Zimbabwe where he founded the Matabele nation. The narrative is seen through the lovers Mhudi and Ra-Thaga, Barolong refugees who shelter in the wilderness where they have a child, after which they join up with others of their clan at Thaba Ncho, befriend the Boers, and fight Mzilikazi's army, finally trekking off into the sunset in a Boer wagon given to them to start afresh at Thaba Ncho. Plaatje said in his preface that he wanted 'to interpret to the reading public one phase of "the back of the Native mind"' (Plaatje 1975: 17)—as Haggard (1949:x) also wished in *Nada the Lily* to 'think with the mind and speak with the voice of a Zulu of the old régime'. Couzens (in Plaatje 1975:13) interprets Plaatje as intending in *Mhudi* to launch

<sup>2</sup> Also quoted in Chrisman (1992:144). Both Chennells and Chrisman give their source as Willan, B 1984. *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist, 1876-1932*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. p. 254.

a defence of traditional custom as well as a corrective view on history, ... [and] also an implicit attack on the injustice of land distribution in South Africa in 1917 .... The novel, in other words, is a moral attack on the descendants of those who were welcomed to the land and helped by their hosts to drive off those who threatened it.

It is in the nostalgic depiction of traditional custom and interdependence of people and land that Plaatje most echoes Haggard, in my view, and it is on this small, specific area of overlap between the two that I shall focus.

Plaatje evokes in *Mhudi* 'a veritable green world of romantic pastoral' (Chrisman 1992:159). In describing the centuries' old ways of the Bechuana tribes in the central Transvaal and Kalahari regions, Plaatje writes:

In this domain they led their patriarchal life under their several chiefs who owed no allegiance to any king or emperor. They raised their native corn which satisfied their simple wants, and, when not engaged in hunting or in pastoral duties, the peasants whiled away their days in tanning skins or sewing magnificent fur rugs. They also smelted iron and manufactured useful implements which today would be pronounced very crude by their semi-westernized descendants.

Cattle breeding was the rich man's calling, and hunting a national enterprise. Their cattle, which carried enormous horns, ran almost wild and multiplied as prolifically as the wild animals of the day. Work was of a perfunctory nature, for mother earth yielded her bounties and the maiden soil provided ample sustenance for man and beast (Plaatje 1975:21).

Similarly, Haggard (1949:23) evokes in the opening pages of *Nada the Lily* a pastoral idyll based on an agrarian society at peace, prior to its destruction by Chaka some years hence:

Before the Zulus were a people—for I will begin at the beginning—I was born of the Langeni tribe .... Our tribe lived in a beautiful open country; the Boers whom we call the Amaboona, are there now, they tell me. My father, Makedama, was chief of the tribe, and his kraal was built on the crest of a hill .... One evening, when I was still little, standing as high as a man's elbow only, I went out with my mother below the cattle kraal to see the cows driven in. My mother was very fond of these cows, and there was one with a white face that would follow her about. She carried my little sister Baleka riding on her hip; Baleka was a baby then. We walked till we met the lady driving in the cows. My mother called the white-faced cow and gave it mealie leaves which she had brought with her. Then the boys went on with the cattle, but the white-faced cow stopped by my mother .... My mother sat down on the grass and nursed her baby, while I played round her, and the cow grazed.

Both the passages from *Mhudi* and *Nada the Lily* sound the same elegiac note—both societies described would shortly be crushed: the Langeni by Chaka, the Barolong by Mzilikazi who broke away from Chaka; in both books the spaces thus vacated by the defeated peoples would be overrun by the Boers. In both books too, the ‘wilderness’ in its nurturing guise, offers the chief protagonists succour and shelter. Mhudi and Ra-Thaga find a hiding place in ‘an untenanted wilderness’ (Plaatje 1975:63) in which Ra-Thaga is able ‘to regard himself as a king reigning in his own kingdom, [with] the animals of the valley as his wealth’ (Plaatje 1975:52). In the ‘monarch-of-all-I-survey’ convention, he is able to climb a tree next to the hut they have built and ‘survey the land in every direction and see what was going on, at least between his home and the horizon’ (Plaatje 1975:53). Unusually for the convention, Mhudi who is shown as extremely wise and brave is also given a bird’s-eye view scene:

One day, I decided to walk along the stony slope to the summit of a koppie at the far end of the ridge. My limbs being much better in spite of the abiding stiffness, I could pick my way much more easily over the rocks. I couldn’t tell what part of the world that was, but when I reached the summit, a wide stretch of country was exposed to view and the sight of the outer world fascinated me immensely. Emerging from my limited outlook of many days in the ravine, where only the music of the birds could reach my ears, the sight of the extensive landscape was like being born afresh. The succession of woods and clearings, depressions and rising ground, with now and then the gambols of a frisky troop of gnu among the distant trees, where the woods were less dense, refreshed me, for I had never seen the world to such perfection .... I enjoyed the refreshing view for a time, although haunted by fear and loneliness; then I retraced my steps and wandered back towards the ravine where there was food and water (Plaatje 1975:37).

The vistas afforded to both Ra-Thaga and Mhudi are more circumscribed than those typical of Haggard’s texts: Ra-Thaga cannot see the world lying before him like a map as can Quatermain in *King Solomon’s Mines*, but ‘at least between his home and the horizon’ the view is clear; Mhudi acknowledges her ‘limited outlook’ as she is in hiding, and though she enjoys the ‘perfection’ of her ‘refreshing view’ from the hill-top, she remains ‘haunted by fear and loneliness’—sentiments usually absent from the more confident, masculinist position of earlier imperialist texts. This is not surprising, given the imminent break-up of the pastoral edenic world they had once inhabited. What Plaatje conveys is a sense of historical forces closing in, leaving a latent desire for the untrammelled, ‘Africa-as-paradise’ whose occupants live in harmony with the land. It is a

vision of a paradise destroyed by a combination of warring white tribes and Zulus, [which] bears some remarkable similarities to parts of the imperialist vision of paradise lost (Hutchings 1981:10).

However, despite the gathering storm clouds, Plaatje manages to end *Mhudi* on a more regenerative note than does Haggard in *Nada the Lily* which ends in a 'genocidal closure' (Chrisman 1992:166). In this way, Chrisman suggests that Plaatje follows the romance pattern more faithfully than Haggard, for the ending in *Mhudi*, in which Mhudi and Ra-Thaga leave the Boers to begin a new life and Mzilikazi and Umnandi are reunited in the birth of an heir, marks a new cycle of life. It is a new cycle tempered, however, by caution, aware as Plaatje was of the difficulties the black man in South Africa was to face from 'such cruel people' (1975:102) as the Boers—similarly described by Haggard.

## 2 The 'potboiler' legacy: Stuart Cloete and Wilbur Smith

A rather critical analysis of *Mhudi* states that

the novel shows only that Plaatje was capable of writing a potboiler in order to raise money for a more important set of projects [to collect and print Sechuana folktales], and that his really serious effort had gone into *Native Life in South Africa* (Christie, Hutchings, MacLennan 1980:81).

Despite any imperfections *Mhudi* might have<sup>3</sup>, it is certainly not a potboiler. For Haggard's legacy in that vein in South African literature, we must turn to the novels of Stuart Cloete and Wilbur Smith. Cloete (1973:166) who quite candidly described himself as 'by my own definition a first-class second-class writer—neither highbrow nor lowbrow', was born in England in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Born into an upper middle-class family of South African origin, Cloete's formative years were spent in England and France, where his childhood reading included Kipling, Captain Marryat, Sir Gilbert Parker and Haggard, whose works 'were the literary milk of my boyhood from which I have never been weaned' (quoted in Cohen 1960:231). Given these literary influences, it was perhaps inevitable that, as Rabkin

<sup>3</sup> Couzens (in Plaatje 1975:10) calls some readers' criticisms of Plaatje's style as being 'imitative or derivative', 'a very superficial judgement'. He discusses the difficulties a black writer of the time would have had in placing a work with a publisher aware of a reading public 'who could see no value in things black and who demanded ... slavish imitation of the whites' (Couzens in Plaatje 1975:11). Furthermore, Couzens (in Plaatje 1975:11) points out that Plaatje as linguist would have been sensitive to nuances of language as witnessed in the humour which 'lies just below the surface of Plaatje's style'.

(1978:39) remarks on discussing South African literature, 'Cloete's own works can be described as seeds of that same, now extinct, imperial flower, still flourishing in this last of all colonial gardens'. Perhaps it was this dissatisfaction with an increasingly changing industrialised Europe that led Cloete to seek for new opportunities in South Africa; his interpretation of the move harks to a nostalgia for the wide open spaces of his forebears:

South Africa was in my blood. I had been brought up on stories of hunting lion and elephant, of Kaffir wars .... The vast horizon made me want to get on a horse and ride towards it. I wanted to hunt, to camp under the stars, to sink myself into it. Much of this was, of course, due to the way I had been brought up with stories of Africa, to what I had read—Rider Haggard, Livingstone's *Travels*, Du Chaillu, Selous and the works of other explorers. But I think it went deeper than that. It was in my blood as well as my brain. My family, father and son, had been here almost 300 years ... We were not newcomers nor had we taken land from other people as the American settlers had taken it from the Indians (Cloete 1973:41,72).

He managed a ranch in a very isolated part of the Transvaal bushveld eventually buying his own farm, Constantia, near Irene. Of Constantia, which in its name nostalgically and fruitlessly recalls its gracious, grander Cape namesake quite removed from the aridity of the Transvaal scrub, Cloete wrote: 'It was, though I did not know it then, the place where I saw the Africa about which, later, I was to spend my life writing' (Cloete 1973:107). It was here that his writing career got its start after he showed a few of his short stories to a visiting friend, Arnot Robertson (*Four Frightened People*), who in turn showed them to Sarah Gertrude Millin among others—all of whom said he had some talent. Cloete sold up and returned to England to devote himself to writing. His breakthrough came with *Turning Wheels* (1937), a book the task of ending which he acknowledges defeated him 'so I killed the lot' (Cloete 1973:179), but which nevertheless was chosen in the United States as 'Book of the Month' ensuring its success and his future career as a writer.

The Africa that Cloete describes is still nostalgically the 'Africa-as-paradise' familiar to readers, but it is an Eden won at great cost, drenched in blood, and burdened with growing fears of the black man, resulting in a pervasive racism. *Turning Wheels* carries the weighty bitterness of an author who has just missed the imperial boat and feels cheated of his birthright. It is the story of Hendrik van den Berg and his followers who leave the Cape Colony in 1836 on the Great Trek northwards to search, literally, for Hendrik's vision of paradise, which they find at Nylstrom (nowadays spelt Nylstroom) in the Transvaal. Unlike Haggard who generally disliked the Boers, Cloete depicts them as

the white Noble Savage, the suitable inhabitants of Africa's spacious paradises .... Love of liberty, as Cloete points out, mingles in their search for the earthly paradise and lifts it above the mere greed for crops and herds (Howe 1971:125).

Though Cloete invests the Zulus with some degree of noble savagery—

They were elephants that trampled those who opposed them. They were lions who ripped up and destroyed. They were Zulus: their glory was undenied (Cloete 1967:372)

—they are generally seen *en masse* as a barbaric and animal-like menace to the individualised, heroic Boers. After a Zulu attack on Nylstrom, Cloete writes:

The lands, too, were devastated. Here was wanton anger let loose. Here was the result of taking land from the natives and thinking that those who came down from their mountain fastness to stare and trade, or even to work, were tame (Cloete 1967:343).

The phrase 'taking land from the natives' seems, incidentally, to contradict Cloete's proud assertion that his forebears had not 'taken land from other people' previously quoted. Cloete's frequently disparaging and generally downright racist attitude to blacks in this novel and others leads Tucker (1967:203) to assert that Cloete 'is the descendant of Rider Haggard, with this important distinction: he denigrates the black warrior, whereas Haggard idealized him'.

Despite the slip recorded above where he acknowledges the 'natives' prior ownership of land, South Africa is generally seen by Cloete as empty and Africa in general as 'a dark continent' (Cloete n.d.:9)—'by and large this was a new and empty country washed clean of life by the spears of the Zulu impis' (Cloete n.d.:20). *Rags of Glory* (1963), a 'big novel ... painted on the immense canvas of the South African veld' as the blurb tells the reader, and set at the time of the Anglo-Boer wars, confirms the 'empty land' possibility:

Pretoria was where civilization ended in Africa. In one direction, to the south, were roads, railroads, towns—Cape Town, the ocean, and Europe. In the other, scattered farms like their own Groenplaas, and then nothing. It was true that the President had built a railroad to Delagoa Bay so that the republic would have an access to the sea that was not English. But it was an empty land the track ran through, a wilderness of low veld, and many had died of fever in its construction. (Cloete 1974:21)

The imperialist's enthusiasm for new, wide open spaces is tempered by the knowledge of how hard-won are the small settlements established in the vastness and, with the

hindsight of Empire's decline, there is a recognition of how ephemeral these enclaves were. Cloete carries the strain of imperialist and Boer aspirations in South Africa, and while he could reluctantly accept the decline of British imperialism in Africa, in this novel he pins his hopes on white Boer survival in South Africa. This dream is defeated by a combination of Zulu might and 'the slow wearing down of disease and from the outside pressure of the wilds ... forcing them always into a smaller circle ...' (Cloete 1967:314). Overtaken as Cloete's dreams of Africa were by the harsh realities of history, his African novels keep alight the nostalgic latent lamp of desire for a vast, empty, fertile Africa but he has lost Haggard's idealism and his contradictory, complex position on Africa; instead, using crude tools, Cloete overlays Haggard's more subtle maps with garish, prurient nightmare.

Wilbur Smith is the current, reigning 'modern Rider Haggard' (Johnson in Smith 1995). He was born in 1933 in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia, of British parents from Brighton who bought a maize farm on the Kafue River, near Mazabuka. His British roots however hold firm; despite an African childhood Smith (1995a) maintains: 'All my tradition is British, and if there ever had to be a choice for me, I would have to go with my British antecedents'. Some of these British roots include an education at Michaelhouse, and a reading diet of Rider Haggard together with other boys' adventure classics (Smith n.d.:4).

Starting off his working career as a tax inspector for the Inland Revenue department in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, Smith wrote *When the Lion Feeds* (1964) which, though rejected by seventeen publishers, finally saw the light of day and changed its author's career path entirely. This novel begins the saga, set in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, of the Courtney family in South Africa. Like his novels which were to follow with disciplined regularity, it uses 'the 'Haggard' recipe larded with adult sex [which] provides Wilbur Smith with his international best-seller fare: 'endless safaris and seductions, big game, game women, an Africa where the approved politics are thoroughly conservative' (Chapman 1996:131). Always adamant that he writes to entertain rather than instruct—on *Rage* (1987) Smith (1988:10f) commented 'It's not a political thriller and I'm no message writer .... The thought of being labelled one gives me goosepimples'—Smith has however consistently raised the ire of leftist academics by his wilful manipulation of history to suit his novels' political ends. Harries (1989:4) reviewing *Rage* remarks that:

Smith still sees Africa through the eyes of Rider Haggard, and his African characters speak in pseudo-biblical tones borrowed from *King Solomon's Mines*. More dangerously, their pronouncements sometimes intertwine innocently with those of other non-fictional black leaders. Fact and fiction enter into complicity.

*Rage* is particularly apposite as an example of fact and fiction intermingling—set in the politically volatile context of the 1950s and 1960s in South Africa, it includes known historical figures such as Nelson Mandela, Verwoerd, Malan and Sobukwe; together with a thinly disguised Joe Slovo (Joe Cicero) and Winnie Mandela (Vicky Gama). It covers the documented events of the Defiance Campaign, Sharpeville and the formation of Umkonto we Sizwe and Poqo. There is nothing intrinsically sinister in this—many adventure tales are set against a verifiable historical backdrop—but what needles critics about Smith is his manipulation of historical events, his occasional alteration of historical sequence and characters to suit his own conservative political agenda. In the 'Author's Note' placed unobtrusively after the last page of this long novel, Smith (1987) disingenuously writes:

Once again I have taken some small liberties with the timetable of history, in particular the dates on which *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and *Poqo* movements began .... I hope that you, the reader, will forgive me for the sake of the narrative.

He is seen as an apologist for apartheid South Africa in his novels written during that time and, given the immense popularity of his books (as previously mentioned and in countless editions and translations):

... it seems very probable that in the English-speaking world outside Africa Wilbur Smith is having, via his fiction, a greater formative influence on the popular conception of Africa in general, and of South African society, history and politics in particular, than any other single individual (Maughan-Brown 1990:134-135).

The work which most recalls Haggard and which draws on the lost white civilisation theme most strongly is Smith's early novel *The Sunbird* (1972) 'derived from the work of H. Rider Haggard' (Stotesbury 1996:229). The story concerns the discovery of the Lost City of the Kalahari somewhere in Botswana by archaeologist Ben Kazin and his sponsor Louren Sturvesant. This Carthaginian empire was based on gold mining over 2,000 years ago; now all that is left are traces of the ruins, hidden treasure and the legend of

a race of fair-skinned golden-haired warriors from across the sea, who mined the gold, enslaved the indigenous tribes, built walled cities and flourished for hundreds of years before vanishing almost without trace (Smith 1974:21).

Couzens (1982:47) remarks on the similarities between *She* and *The Sunbird*:

The whole plot of *The Sunbird*, like *She*, is based on the idea of reincarnation, of the great civilisation of the past, in Haggard's case Greek [actually not, rather Egyptian; Kallikrates is called 'the Greek' to show his outsider status, Ayesha is more closely Egyptian in descent, as is Kôr], in Smith's Carthaginian, gradually destroyed with only the ruins left, tended by a degenerate mass of blacks .... Thus *The Sunbird* is a reincarnation itself—it is a reincarnation of Rider Haggard's writing nearly 100 years before.

There is no Ayesha in *The Sunbird* but there is a similar attempt in both books to imagine an ancient white civilisation in the heart of Africa. There is evidence that both before and after writing *The Sunbird*, Smith was preoccupied with this question. In a review of the novel, Smith is quoted as saying:

It is fashionable now to believe that Zimbabwe was built by Africans without outside influence—it is becoming a political/archaeological matter but I don't set out to prove or disprove their theory—I leave the question open (Smith 1972a:17).

This is a little disingenuous as he goes on both in this article and in another to discuss archaeological ruins at Delphi in Greece which he felt confirmed his 'white built' theory in *The Sunbird*:

It was a tremendous thing—finding definite links and a building system in Greece echoed in Zimbabwe, thus reinforcing my ideas and making them more credible (Smith 1972b:28).

Tangri (1990:298) points out that far from remaining outside the political debate in archaeological circles current in Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s, Smith in *The Sunbird* launches

a general accusation running through the book that archaeologists are biased scoundrels siding with Black Nationalism, too blinkered to accept the truth of ancient Mediterranean colonists.

The Rhodesia Front of course sided with this opinion of Great Zimbabwe's origins, as it was in their interest to portray Rhodesia's most famous ruins as white in origin, thus justifying their own political existence.

In Haggard's *She*, the lost civilisation of Kor collapses with Ayesha's demise, but in Smith's twentieth century incarnation of *She* it is a black slave who escapes across the Zambezi returning with a guerilla band who brings about the Lost City's downfall. However, Couzens (1982:49) is correct when he observes that, unlike Hag-

gard who 'represents expanding British Imperialism' and its contradictions, 'Smith contains the tensions of South African imperialism'. Though the Lost City of *The Sunbird* with its ancient origins can coax a small frisson in modern day readers, it has little of Kôr and its mistress Ayesha's mythical power. As Africa on a manifest level is made more and more known and knowable, so does the quest for a lost white civilisation in Africa become harder to sustain (though not less desirable on a latent level). In the 1990s, the Haggard legacy on this score is reduced to the glitzy theme park of the Lost City and its Palace located in what was the apartheid homeland state of Boputhatswana.

### 3 The 'popular culture' legacy: The Lost City and Indiana Jones

If ever one had to look for an example of a postmodern geographical and architectural site in South Africa, then The Lost City, located within the physical space known as Sun City, would be a good one to call upon—in true postmodern fashion, it is self-reflexive, self-ironising and intertextual. The Lost City, opened in 1992, is a 'made geography', created in the form of 'a postmodern architectural dream' (Hall 1995:179)—it is a \$300 million hotel complex set amidst fake sculptured rocks, hills, human-planted rain forests, a created dam, an artificial seaside complete with surfable waves and beach sand, a bridge which has a simulated earthquake every evening at dusk so that it trembles and smokes, and a synthetic chlorinated river through which an electrically generated tidal current flows. The brainchild of Sol Kerzner, known as the 'Sun King' given his status as chairman of Sun International Resorts, The Lost City in an ersatz manner draws on the well-worn discourse of Africa, together with that discourse's historical antecedents and successors—the narratives of early explorers to Africa, the adventure stories of the late nineteenth century (especially those of Haggard), the spectacular World Fairs and Exhibitions of Haggard's day, the blood-soaked dangerous Africa of Cloete's potboilers, the novels of Wilbur Smith, the evergreen if worn myth of 'Africa-as-paradise', and simultaneously as a heart of darkness.

Each hotel room in each of Sun City's four hotels, of which The Palace of The Lost City is one, has an information file on the resort which includes the narrativising myth of The Lost City. It is a generic synopsis of any number of Haggard's novels which, as Pocock (1993:244) suggests, 'could be seen as the inspiration of The Lost City pleasure resort'. The 'legend', as the narrativising myth is called, begins 'A long time ago', which recalls the 'Once upon a time' entry into the world of fairytale, and then proceeds to outline a formulaic, conservative European bed-time story of Africa, with a happy ending. In essence, it describes the story of 'the Ancient Ones' who were 'a nomadic tribe from Northern Africa' (thus smarter and whiter than their southern, darker brethren, it implies, as such narratives always do) who settled in the Valley of

the Sun 'attracted by the fertility of the land and the perfection of the climate'. This was for centuries a Haggardian 'safe and secret' place, as the exotic city with its Palace was sited in a 'secluded valley which was shaped by an ancient volcanic crater'. However, one day a strong volcanic eruption destroyed this settlement, and the benevolent dictator-king and his family escaped 'borne to safety on the backs of the alert kudus'. Though the royal family returned, the Palace decayed and was finally deserted, but its fame lived on however in 'the imaginations of explorers', one of whom apparently is Sol Kerzner:

Almost three hundred years after the great earthquake, in the last decade of the twentieth century, an expedition came upon this sacred locale and its ruins. The leader of the expedition saw the crumbled towers, the heaps of stone and pieces of carvings, in the still majestic palace and the remains of the surrounding village, a legacy of untold value, silvered with age. He dedicated himself to restoring The Lost City to it's [sic] original splendour (hotel information sheet, The Lost City at Sun City).

The authors of this late twentieth century version of the fairytale, 'Africa as lost white civilisation in deepest, darkest Africa', are Kimberley, Allison, Goo and Wong, international resort designers based in California, whose 'brief was to create a fantasy Africa' (Murray 1996:156), in much the same way as they had created a fantasy America in EuroDisney. The legend they created in The Lost City is deliberately derivative, referring to similar older romantic narratives, thus the legend can be exotic yet familiar to its visitors. It should give its consumers a sense of *déjà vu*, and yet an equal sense of wonder at how well *afresh* the old Africa myth has been, literally, constructed. From the harsh realities of poverty-stricken former Boputhatswana, once ruled by the apartheid puppet Lucas Mangope, Kerzner lets rise like a phoenix the promise of treasure, a new Africa, an ancient (constructed) cultural heritage, all in keeping with the new South Africa freshly emerging from its dark political past with Mandela at its head. As Haggard created for his jaded, urban audience the promise of a new start elsewhere in Africa, so does Kerzner provide a new African theme-park in the political and natural wilderness. One could even say that some of the tensions of the imperialist age which found their expression in Haggard's fictional African topography can also be seen in The Lost City yet they have lost their subtlety and have become banal and self-conscious: the golf course clubhouse constructed à la Great Zimbabwe has no mystery about its origins—the builders are black labourers hired temporarily by white owned multinational conglomerates, the building plans drawn up in America, the empire-builder a late capitalist entrepreneur who has 'dedicated himself' to making money in a spectacular fashion. The range of possible interpretations and manifestations of latent discourse about Africa has been even further diminished:

The world has one role for Africa—as a destiny for other people's expeditions, and as the home of 'dark forces'. Rider Haggard, Wilbur Smith and Sol Kerzner have all seen this point—and have become wealthy (Hall 1995:198).

While I would argue that Haggard had a far more complex vision of Africa than either Cloete, Smith or Kerzner, I would agree that it is this monofocal view of Africa that pertains in the popular imagination.

Sol Kerzner has literally cashed in on this fixed romantic mythology surrounding Africa and has been appropriately enough pictured by the media 'through character-formulae already popularized by the genre of adventure-romance, such as capitalist and cultural visionary, working-class boy makes good, and sexually and financially driven male hero' (Murray 1996:159). Both Hall and Murray find links between the media images of Kerzner as metaphorical 'Sun King' who 'discovers' The Lost City at Sun City, and Louren Sturvesant in Wilbur Smith's *The Sunbird* who discovers the Lost City of the Kalahari, a man who is 'building a chain of luxury vacation hotels across the islands of the Indian Ocean. Comores, Seychelles, Madagascar, ten of them' (Smith 1974:205), and who with his 'golden curly head, his sun-bronzed features' (Smith 1974:24) appears as a literal sun king. Kerzner has also been compared to the maverick adventurer Indiana Jones of the popular adventure films, and it is film as a medium for translating Haggard into a modern idiom that I shall briefly consider before concluding this discussion on Haggard's legacy.

The Indiana Jones film character who combines intelligence with commonsense and humour in his daring exploits in exotic locations, including Africa, has been seen as a latter day derivation of Haggard's Quatermain—Couzens (1994:7), in a review of Pocock's biography of Haggard, remarks 'Allan Quatermain lives on in Indiana Jones and perhaps even in bits of Crocodile Dundee'. The 1985 Hollywood version of *King Solomon's Mines*, starring Richard Chamberlain and Sharon Stone and filmed in Zimbabwe, was described as 'an Indiana Jones type adventure yarn with loads of fun and action' (quoted in Murray 1996:161). Murray makes the useful point that for many contemporary film goers, the original Haggard romance of the film's title would be unknown except as hearsay or a long-ago childhood tale, hence the need for intertextual, comparative referencing to 'explain' the film in more up to date fashion

in terms of a broader contemporary cinematic adventure genre which could be said to include Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones* epics, and *Romancing the Stone* and *The Jewel of the Nile*' (Murray 1996:161).

In the case of *King Solomon's Mines* though, which has never been out of print, and which has had five film versions made of it thus far, the story (or idea behind it) has

lingered on, albeit with some alterations. The 1950 version of *King Solomon's Mines*, shot in Kenya and starring Stewart Granger as Quatermain replaces the character of Curtis with that of a woman (Deborah Kerr) looking for her husband. This, incidentally, has been one of the most telling alterations to Haggard's original tale—Haggard could imagine a love/sexual relationship between black and white though he suppresses it eventually, but almost one hundred years later Hollywood apparently couldn't. The Good/Foulata relationship in *King Solomon's Mines* was replaced in the 1936 Gaumont British production and the 1950 and 1985 Hollywood productions by a white-white love interest, which makes for interesting speculation on the progress of race relations in the West, and on what boosts box office sales in the twentieth century. Davis comments on these changes in relation to the 1936 version which stars Paul Robeson as Umbopa, who is thus made to sing as well, that 'it is unsettling to see what has become of it [the book, *King Solomon's Mines*]' for not only has the racial composition of the love interest been altered, but there is also a 'shift in emphasis from a quest for a missing brother in the novel to the itch for diamonds in the film' (Davis 1996:147).

What such films have done is to re-make and re-create through technological wizardry an image of Africa, its landscape and peoples which is disturbingly for some—and nostalgically for others—familiar. Despite some of the changes to the manifest discourse (the technology to capture images of Africa more advanced, the budget bigger), the latent discourse of desire juxtaposed with fear is relatively unchanged: Africa in all the film versions of *King Solomon's Mines* is still a place where one can be tested to the limit, experience adventure, capture treasure (now in the form of money-generating celluloid images) and be threatened by half-naked savages, intriguing and dangerous like the landscape used as backdrop.

## Conclusion

What I have tried to show is that Haggard's legacy has been far reaching in this century and continues to be displayed even in quite divergent forms derived from the original texts. What this speaks of primarily is the enduring power of a discourse which Haggard tapped into, with its fixed dreams and fears of Africa articulated frequently through the use of landscape, which in the more popular cultural manifestations blurs people and landscape into one equation. The appeal of adventure, particularly Haggard's romance recipe, in a geographical world where there are few secrets left is seen in cultural forms as diverse as Wilbur Smith's novels and the non-fictional books and films of the National Geographic Society. In its late twentieth century manifestations as theme park site or the set for a slapstick movie star adventurer, the Haggard legacy has been diminished and degraded to the level of watered down commercial pap. It has lost touch with the complexities and occasional subtleties of the original Haggard to-

pography, which, though it in turn built on the images of Africa that earlier explorers had taken back to Europe, achieved a fresh power that captured the imagination of his age.

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