



# Introduction to “Another Vision of Empire. Henry Rider Haggard’s Modernity and Legacy”

Gilles Teulié

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Listen! What is life? It is a feather, it is the seed of the grass, blown hither and thither, sometimes multiplying itself and dying in the act, sometimes carried away into the heavens. But if that seed be good and heavy it may perchance travel a little way on the roads it wills. It is well to try and journey one's road and to fight with the air. Man must die. At the worst he can but die a little sooner. (Haggard *King Solomon's Mines* 53)

- 1 At the crossroads of Victorian and postcolonial studies, this volume is focused on a writer who lived in the late Victorian and Edwardian period and whose work is studied in Anglophone universities in the fields of Cultural Studies, Victorian Popular Literature and Post-colonial Studies but it is rarely studied in French universities. In France, the most recent academic works on Henry Rider Haggard are the ones of Jean Sévry (University of Montpellier) whose field of expertise was South African Literatures (Sévry 2007), a special issue of *Otrante* published in the collection Arts et Littératures Fantastiques (Art and Fantasy Literatures) to celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Haggard's date of birth in 2006 and Lauric Guillaud's *Des Mines du Roi Salomon à la Quête du Graal, H. R. Haggard (1856-1925)* which was published in 2014.
- 2 In the Anglophone sphere, since Edward Saïd initiated the field of Post-colonial Studies in the 1980s and 1990s, a significant body of scholars has studied Haggard's work and has written chapters or articles on his production. Among these are Robert Dixon, Patrick Brantlinger, Martin Green, John M. MacKenzie, Laura Chrisman and Gail Ching-Liang Low. Wendy Katz devoted a study to Haggard and "examined the place of Empire in his writing to draw out its related political and literary implications" (Katz 6). She

compared him to other "imperial-minded writers": R.L. Stevenson (1850-1894), Andrew Lang (1844-1912), W.E. Henley (1849-1903) and Rudyard Kipling (1865-1935)<sup>1</sup> because, according to her he "shared a similar world-view and certain literary traits (6)".

- 3 Other works conducted in the field of Gender studies have concentrated on the question of masculinity and misogyny considering that many Haggardian adventure stories were written for a young male readership (*Juvenile Fiction*). It is true that in the introduction to his first book *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), which is now considered a "best seller" as it has never been out of print, Haggard wrote that his book was "dedicated to the big and little boys who read" (Haggard KSM 6). The following critics insisted on the link between Haggard and imperialism: (S.M. Gilbert 1983; Suzanne Gubar 1983; Elaine Showalter 1990; Anne Mc Clintock 1995, Philip Leibfried 2000).
- 4 Since 2000, Gerald Monsman has published a monograph based on Haggard's African romances where he clearly adopts a different viewpoint on the writer's fictions, mainly focusing on social issues. Indeed, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the impact of Cultural Studies -which consider sociology, anthropology, literature and arts- has shed a new light on authors whose works have too often been presented as mere imperialist propaganda. In Haggard's case, one must admit that critics have often neglected the complexity and the modernity of his works and have denied the pioneering dimension of a work which consisted of 59 novels, several short stories, 10 non-fiction books, many essays, articles and reports. Lately, the concern for Africa and the new studies on Haggard's African romances have produced an interesting re-evaluation of his fictions (see Stephen Coan 2000; Lindy Stiebel 2001; Jeanne Van Eeden 2004; Yvonne Smith 2013; Katherine Brundan 2017).
- 5 In this context, a symposium was organised by the GRER (Groupe de Recherche sur l'Eugénisme et le Racisme/ Research Group on Racism and Eugenics) at the University of Paris (on Paris-Diderot campus) in collaboration with LERMA (Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Monde Anglophone/ Research Center for Anglophone studies, Aix-Marseille University) and IMAGER (Institut des Mondes Anglophone, Germanique et Roman / Institute of the Anglophone, German and Roman Domains, University of Paris Est Créteil) on 28 February, 2020. It was entitled "Another vision of Empire? Henry Rider Haggard, from South Africa to the Imperial Dream" and some contributors to the present volume participated in this fruitful one-day conference. However, as a result of our discussions, we thought that it was necessary to enlarge our subject and we decided to contact other specialists in various fields in France and abroad and ask them if they would like to contribute to this new academic work focused on Haggard's modernity and legacy. We must say that we are very happy to publish their views on this subject.
- 6 Before introducing their work, we would like to add a word on what we consider to be one of the most striking elements when reading Haggard's fiction: his modernity. Such an affirmation obviously implies an examination of his fiction as a whole, the main reason being, first, that two of his most famous books, *King Solomon's Mines* which featured Allan Quatermain for the first time and *She* which featured its eponymous character, are part of a bigger story – a cycle. Secondly, Haggard took care to unite these two cycles in one novel: *She and Allan* (1921).<sup>2</sup> This final sequel was indeed written thirty-six years after Allan Quatermain entered the pantheon of the greatest fictional adventurers (see *King Solomon's Mines*, 1885). This perspective obviously tells us a lot about the author's intentions even if the reading of one sequel as an independent story is possible. It shows that if we stand from the angle of the evolution of time and space

in the two cycles, we can measure the gradual influence of one cycle upon the other one and the growing importance of fantasy in the two cycles. The thesis is that these two aspects testify to the changes that developed in Haggard's vision of the world and to his will to convey a deeper message to his readership<sup>3</sup>.

- 7 Haggard is modern in the sense that he adopted the ideas and attitudes associated with his time. He was involved in the affairs of his country at a very young age when his father decided to send him to South Africa to be Sir Henry Bulwer-Lytton's aide-de-camp, and he had always been interested in serving his country. As John MacKenzie puts it, "British nationalism was imperial in the late nineteenth century" (MacKenzie 2). Thus, when Haggard was knighted in 1912, he was honoured and considered that "a title is useful in the public service, and specially so abroad"<sup>4</sup> (Haggard *The Days* 591). He was knighted a second time in 1919 for war services. As Haggard was open-minded and intuitive and because he did not hesitate to experience new challenges, one can easily understand that his views about the Imperial project and the future of the Empire evolved throughout his life.
  
- 8 When the French *Bouquins* Collection published the cycle of *She* (*She, Ayesha: the Return of She, Wisdom's Daughter, She and Allan* as well as *King Solomon's Mines*) in French in 1985, Francis Lacassin, in his preface, wondered why Haggard's readership was not bigger in France. He gave one possible explanation quoting Henry Miller in *The Books in My life* (1952). According to Miller<sup>5</sup>, Haggard had often been categorised as a writer of children's books and as such his name fades into oblivion (Miller 84). The American writer also wrote that "Haggard was one of those imaginative writers who undoubtedly fed from many streams" (84). Indeed, it is worth mentioning that during his life Haggard had been involved in many different issues: social issues (he namely developed projects at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with William Booth and eventually wrote *Regeneration: Being an Account of the Social Work of the Salvation Army in Great Britain*<sup>6</sup>) and ecological issues. He published an authoritative report on the agricultural situation in Great Britain: *Rural England* (1901-1902) as well as *Rural Denmark and its Lessons* (1917). The land issue had always been very important for him. For example, as early as 1898, he published *A Farmer's Year* which is his diary for 1898, narrating the work of the farm month by month and he took part in the Royal Commission on coast erosion and afforestation for more than five years.<sup>7</sup> The eco-consciousness and anthropological approach he developed over the years obviously contradict the promotion of the domestication of landscapes and of native peoples which was undeniably part of the colonial project. Haggard's work was certainly not "easy" as he was torn between the need to stick to the frame of "Imperial Romance" (oppositions between civilised and uncivilised peoples, stereotypes, emphasis on moral values etc.) to maintain his popularity as a writer of adventure stories and between his questioning of the Imperial project.
  
- 9 Such issues strangely resonate with the hard times we are living today with the climate crisis and the COVID 19 pandemic. Miller concludes on these words: "Perhaps only when our scientific explorers and investigators stumble upon the truths revealed through imagination will we recognize the true stature of such a writer" (Miller 84). It is our hope today that the different contributions to this volume reveal the "true stature of Haggard" for even if his style can be criticized – Haggard wrote his most famous adventure stories in only six weeks and he did not like to devote too much time to rewriting his stories despite Lang or Kipling's advice— he is still to be remembered

for the visual quality of his romances as testified by the many cinema adaptations of his stories as well as the many pictures which illustrated his fictions.

- 10 To some extent, Haggard embodies the contradictory feelings of most Victorians, as we should not forget that the late Victorian period was an era of technical and intellectual progress, great commercial and territorial expansion but that it was also characterised by poverty, injustice and a premium on morals, duty, and religious crisis. Then, it is no surprise that Haggard's journeys inspired him to write many lost world stories and that some critics even describe him as a pioneer in the Lost World Genre. As we have seen, he was a pioneer in many other domains, and it is time we recognize his legacy.
- 11 One of the main characteristics of the "Imperial Romance" was its dual connection with the imperial discourse and issues connected to the importance of masculinity, but dealing with Haggard's works, we cannot deny his ingenuity. Indeed, he went on writing adventure stories in the same vein (probably because it was his main source of income) while becoming sceptical about the imperial project and having more and more doubts regarding some of its consequences (mainly regarding the land and social issues in Great Britain and South Africa). To do so, he placed his heroes and heroines in new situations and mainly resorted to fantasy to justify some unbelievable aspects of their adventures and convey his own message. However, we must admit that Haggard's fiction has often been misread or misunderstood. First, even if Haggard's fiction is often reduced to his three most famous stories (*King Solomon's Mines*, *She* and *Allan Quatermain*) these elements existed in embryo from the very beginning. For example, Allan Quatermain expressed his doubts regarding civilisation when he stated, "Civilisation is only savagery silver-gilt" (Haggard *Allan* introduction np) or in *She*, where an immortal woman who transcended time and space and opens up new roads to the reader's imagination<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, we should always bear in mind the context in which these works of fiction developed to understand that even if they mirrored the hopes and anxieties of the *fin de siècle* some of those works were obviously more modern than others.
- 12 The first part of this issue is dedicated to "Haggard's projections of colonial space". In her book *Imagining Africa: landscape in H. Rider Haggard's African romances* (2001), Lindy Stiebel concentrated on Haggard's treatment of landscapes in his African romances. She showed that it was both a key to understand Haggard's personal universe and a means to immerse oneself in the spirit of his age as it conveyed late-Victorian representations of Africa: a binary and simplistic opposition between civilisation and savagery, description of the African land as a "virgin territory", echoes of Darwinian theories etc.<sup>9</sup> She concluded that Haggard created a sort of imaginary African topography which was to become his signature, and which inevitably influenced his contemporary fellows as well as generations of writers of adventure stories. In her article, she proposes to examine Haggard's literary, cultural and academic legacy. Haggard not only inspired some of his contemporaries who felt like writing heroic adventures in distant countries; he also inspired 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century South African, American and even Australian writers. Haggardian echoes are also to be found in other media: painting, comics, TV series and cinema even if one may regret that many artists have resorted to clichés and oversimplifications. Finally, she comments on the many studies devoted to his work over the last seven decades showing that the critics and scholars have explored many aspects of his work and have thus showed how rich and diverse, even controversial, his production is.

- 13 It is again through Haggard's representation of Africa that Sinan Akili deals with Haggard's eco-consciousness showing that the writer was not only aware of the inequalities of the Anthropocene, as defined by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, but was critical of some imperialist policies which led to the systematic and absurd exploitation of local populations, fauna and flora for the welfare of some privileged "white races". Akili gives many examples from Haggard's early romances (*King Solomon's Mines*, *Allan Quatermain*) as well as less famous stories (*Marie*) to show that Haggard's attitude towards Africa and his concern for agricultural issues testify that his approach was different from the one adopted by most of his contemporaries. In this respect, he thinks that Haggard should be considered as a "forerunner" rather than a "typical imperialist writer" whose concern would only be to focus on the promotion of the Empire throughout the world. Akili also draws a comparison between Haggard's theory about the necessity to preserve nature and the present environmental and sanitary situation linked to Covid 19. Haggard's vision should obviously be regarded as a wise intuition if we consider the present situation of the world. Therefore, according to Akili, Haggard's romances teach us more than we could expect, and Haggard can be described as an "early ecocritic who anticipated posthumanist ideas".
- 14 Finally, to evaluate Haggard's modernity in his particular use of colonial space, Patricia Crouan-Véron suggests considering his work from a different perspective. For her, South Africa not only provided Haggard with some raw material to write his breathtaking adventure stories, but it played a pivotal role in his life. His deep interest in this country and in the Zulu people literally influenced his vision of imperialism and made him "an imperialist of a different kind". Indeed, although he was involved in agricultural and social issues, he was more of a patriot than an imperialist at heart. Unfortunately, as he was ahead of his time in many ways, he never totally convinced the British officials and his fellow citizens that they could find new alternatives to overcome the dangers of industrialisation and adopt a more humanitarian attitude towards the peoples they had colonised. In this regard, he, himself, was torn between contradictions. However, thanks to his powerful imagination and his innate sense of storytelling he still enthralls his readers and tells them that they should always try to follow their dreams.
- 15 In a second part, this volume seeks to examine the links between "Haggard and the Imperial dream", underlining that the period is also "the end of an era". Haggard's gaze on the world that surrounded him encompasses the end of the imperial thrust on the world, during what is commonly known today as the "Scramble for Africa" which, it could be argued, were the heydays of the British colonial endeavour, culminating in the ill-fated Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. Haggard saw the slow transformation of the Empire into what would become the Commonwealth, aware like Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the colonies (1895-1903) under Salisbury, who stated on 6 November 1895 that the Empire was a colossus with feet of clay:
- I think it will not be disputed that we are approaching a critical stage in the history of the relations between ourselves and the self-governing colonies. That Empire, gentlemen, that world-wide dominion to which no Englishman can allude without a thrill of enthusiasm and patriotism, which has been the admiration, and perhaps the envy, of foreign nations, hangs together by a thread so slender that it may well seem that even a breath would sever it. (Chamberlain 3)
- 16 It is therefore not surprising that from his early works Haggard, even if he was one of those Englishmen who alluded to the Empire with a "thrill of enthusiasm", was



nonetheless also critical of the way it was being constructed. Marie-Claude Barbier delves into one of his early non-fiction works which deals with famous Zulu King Cetshwayo to wonder to what extent Haggard could be seen as "a reluctant imperialist". Indeed, in his book *Cetewayo and his White Neighbours* (1882), Haggard endeavours to write a new narrative on the Zulu kingdom which was defeated only three years before by British colonial troops. Indeed, he criticizes the Colonial Office for having mismanaged the conflict and acted without proper knowledge about who the opponent was. Marie-Claude Barbier also underpins the idea that the somewhat uncommon gaze that Haggard had on the British Empire originated from his youth in South Africa when caught in the whirlwind of the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 and the First Anglo-Boer encounter in 1880-1881. If his account of Zulu life under Cetshwayo was not a commercial success, it set the basis for his celebrated future Zulu novels which would have a great impact on the British public, to the point that many British visitors to Natal often compared the Zulus they met to one of Haggard's stock characters, Umslopogaas.

- 17 This section continues with an analysis of another of Haggard's favourite African regions, but a northern one: Egypt. Nolwenn Courriou also questions the ambivalence of Haggard's relations to the Empire. Through the popular art of "mummy fiction" writing at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Haggard reaches the Victorians' frame of mind, as Walter Houghton once put it, to "excavate" their "modern self" as a sort of archaeological digging into his contemporaries' psyche. By associating ancient Egypt with modern Britain, he connects two great Empires which had different destinies, noting that the remains of the first one were incorporated into the second one. Nolwenn Courriou argues that the fascination Haggard felt for Egypt, gave the impression that for him all roads led to Egypt. But his use of the female mummy that comes back to life (or that the archaeologist fantasises to see coming back to life) is a strong metaphor for the way indigenous populations feel about British imperialism. Could it be that Haggard had whiffs of anti-imperialism? Nolwenn Courriou wonders if, by giving voice to the voiceless, Haggard may be an early postcolonial author, and his fin-de-siècle pessimism and fear of degeneracy seem to lead to a debunking of British colonial practices.
- 18 If "mummy fiction" was very popular in Haggard's time, it was also a great source of inspiration for the cinema. As a writer-director for the cinema and for television and as a distinguished scholar of Haggard, Stephen Coan gives us an insight into four different film versions of one of the most famous of Haggard's romances: *King Solomon's Mines*. Through a very detailed examination of the making of these films he questions Haggard's modernity and mainly evaluates it in terms of progressivism. Haggard's enthusiasts are familiar with the engravings of Maurice Greiffenhagen, Walter Paget or Charles Kerr which illustrated his stories, but here, thanks to the rare illustrations Coan provides, we have access to another representation of Haggard's fictions. From the first silent version shot by H. Lisle Lucoque in 1918 to the first sound version of 1937 starring the African American actor and singer Paul Robeson as Umbopa and the blockbusters of the 1950s and 1980s, he comments on the reception of these films and comes to the conclusion that as in "Imperial Romance," the cinema industry resorted to the same stereotypes to represent Africa and African people. However, he concludes on a positive note as he remarks that the most modern adaptation of *King Solomon's Mines* is surely the first adaptation: the one which was most faithful to the original story and



the only version including the inter-racial romance between Foulata and Captain Good. It is modernity in reverse!

- 19 To go further in our exploration of Haggard's modernity, we should remember that writing in the last decades of the Victorian Era exposed Haggard to the aftermath of the Darwinian revolution initiated by the famous scientist in 1859. The mystery around the origin of humanity and its role within creation led many to wonder about the commonly accepted Adam-and-Eve biblical foundation of our species. But in the wake of new intellectual challenges, thinkers, sustained by scientific or pseudo-scientific theories, developed and normalised a Manichean vision of human beings which enabled them to justify racism, misogyny, and human class hierarchy. The question raised in this third part on "imagining the ideal woman and man" in Haggard's work, is to examine the impact of Francis Galton's eugenics ideas, or Herbert Spencer's so called "Social Darwinism" (but which in fact, to give better credit to Darwin, should be called "Social Spencerism") on Rider Haggard's vision of the world. In that sense Michel Prum goes back to the influential Darwinian sources which, he argues, marked Haggard. He traces them back to the seminal works by Charles Darwin such as the *Descent of Man* (1871) which enables us to understand Haggard's ideal woman, strong and even domineering, which echoes the natural selection concept while the notion of evolution is omnipresent in Haggard's novels. Another topos under scrutiny by Michel Prum is the animal-human dichotomy that blurs the boundaries between the two in the same vein as questioned by the Victorians through the exhibition of Joseph Merrick (the so-called Elephant Man) or Sara Baartjman (the so-called Hottentot Venus), or the philosophical questions raised about man's humanity as expressed by Robert Louis Stevenson in his *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mister Hyde* 1886), Oscar Wilde and his *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Michel Prum delineates the concept of the missing link as he traces it to other sources than Darwin, which shows that Haggard, like his contemporaries, was exposed to an interactive self-identified scientific network as his own questioning on humanity was encompassed in the broader intellectual vortex of his time.
- 20 If Haggard conceptualised the ideal woman, he did the same with his ideal man. Following in the footsteps of ideologists such as Arthur Comte Gobineau, yet with differences, he developed a strong inclination and admiration for powerful warriors such as the Zulus he had met in South Africa, and for those that came out of his imagination as they belonged to the European past: the Vikings. Gilles Teulié shows that Haggard had a keen interest in reviving the Nordic past of Great Britain, when Vikings roamed the shores of the British Isles, or in the Icelandic sagas with his own writing of one of them. Yet, Gilles Teulié argues that Haggard's work is not a commercial response to the Viking Age craze of the Victorian era. This revival of the old Nordic world had a purpose as it was meant to confront different types of manly values that Haggard seemed to praise, such as Zulu and Viking warriors and Middle-Ages knights possessed. The question raised in the last article of the volume is whether Haggard leaned in the direction of "nordicism" or if he had something else on his agenda, which made him less imbedded in the imperial ideological framework at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> than it seemed. Did Haggard have another vision of Empire? Was he a modern forerunner of things to come? This is what this volume seeks to discover.

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## NOTES

1. There is a close inter-connexion between these writers as Haggard bet a shilling with his brother that he could write a book which could be just as good as R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. He produced *King Solomon's Mines* shortly after. Haggard was also a close friend to Kipling and Lang. Kipling recognised that his *Jungle Book* was inspired by a scene of Haggard's *Nada The Lily* (Leibfried 4). The folklorist and writer Andrew Lang worked in close collaboration with Haggard who dedicated *She* and *Ayesha: The Return of She* to him and they collaborated to the writing of *The World's Desire* (1895).
2. The two cycles represent 21 novels.
3. Patricia Crouan-Véron, *Space and Time in the Cycle of Allan Quatermain and the Cycle of She, A Rereading of the two Mythical Cycles of H.R. Haggard*, PhD (See bibliography).
4. The exact quote is "(...) I took the knighthood when it was definitely offered, on the ground that it is a mistake to refuse anything in this world, also that a title is useful in the public service, and specially so abroad. Moreover, it was Recognition, for which I felt grateful: for who is there that does not appreciate recognition particularly after long years of, I hope, disinterested toil?" (Haggard *The Days* 591).
5. H. Miller dedicated a whole chapter to Rider Haggard in *The Books in My Life*.
6. Even if he rarely openly used a fictional form to advocate a cause, it is particularly relevant to notice in the context of the pandemic situation we are experiencing in 2020 that in 1898 Haggard wrote *Doctor Thorne*, an anticipation novel about a plague that sweeps England. It tells the story of James Thorne, a young doctor who is unjustly accused in a malpractice case and although he is a strong believer in vaccination, runs for Parliament and becomes an anti-vaccination advocate, selling out his beliefs and morals for power and lucre.
7. In the author's note he writes: "Outside of descriptions of rustic scenes and events, which to some quiet minds are often pleasing, any interest that this book may possess, indeed, for the present or future time, must be due in the main to the fact that it is a picture, or perhaps a photograph, of one facet of our many-sided modern life, and that it mirrors faithfully, if incidentally, the decrepit and dangerous state of farming and attendant industries in eastern England during the great agricultural crisis of the last decade of the nineteenth century. That is to say, its pages describe those industries with their surroundings as they presented themselves in the year 1898 to the eye and mind of a landowner and farmer of a smaller and therefore more representative sort; a man who chanced to have had the advantage of visiting other countries, and to the best of his ability to have observed the conditions, social, agricultural and political, which prevail in them (Haggard *A Farmer's Year* 15-16).
8. Freud considered Haggard's work as a literary representation of the unconscious (See *The Interpretations of Dreams*) and Jung referred to the character of Ayesha to define his notion of the anima (see *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*).
9. Stiebel writes: "Haggard was doubtful of the durability of the British Empire, and thus, while he usually includes a 'monarch-of-all-I-survey scene' in the early stages of his African romances, that dominant position is never sustained. The monarch descends from his lofty position to face hardship on the plains of empire and emerges generally victorious but wiser, never jingoist" (Lindy *Imagining* 63).

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## AUTHORS

### **PATRICIA CROUAN-VÉRON**

Université Paris Est Créteil, IMAGER

[pcrouanveron@gmail.com](mailto:pcrouanveron@gmail.com)

### **GILLES TEULIÉ**

Aix Marseille Univ, LERMA, Aix-en-Provence, France

[gilles.teulie@univ-amu.fr](mailto:gilles.teulie@univ-amu.fr)