

**IMPERIAL FANTASIES AND THE POLITICS OF
REPRODUCING ENGLISHNESS IN H. RIDER HAGGARD'S
*ALLAN QUATERMAIN***

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In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man," Homi Bhabha traces a dominant strand of colonial discourse to illuminate its investment in the creation of particular subjectivities stamped with the crisscrossing signs of similarity to and difference from the colonising culture. Decidedly ambiguous in its effects, if not its motivation, colonial mimicry according to Bhabha is "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (author's emphasis) (86). Most aptly expressed perhaps by Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" (1835), where the avowed objective was the creation of a compliant, intermediate class of anglicised Indians "English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect," colonial mimicry and the resultant hybrid subject speak to the essential instability and ambivalence of colonial authority – its riven, contradictory nature. The hybrid subject or mimic man is a testament to the ever-present potential for resistance and subversion within colonial discourse itself. The impulse behind colonial mimicry is, as Bhabha sees it, clearly narcissistic. But the "narcissistic demand of colonial authority" (88) that prompts such mimetic schemes of subject conversion, or rather, creation, also assumes other fantastical shapes that fail to fall so neatly within the critical ken of Bhabha's hybrid subject.

In this article, I pursue one of the other ways in which narcissistic colonial power manifests itself in the nineteenth century by focusing on the fantasy of one-(English)man-rule and control over a colony explicitly defined and identified as an alternate England, an ostensible mirror image of the original that is also paradoxically "truer" to form than the latter. Unapologetically anomalous, the ideal colony thus imagined is usually represented in feudal terms, its political manifestation a "natural" and organic consequence of conquest by the standardbearers of a desirable English masculinity. The mimetic impulse underlying colonisation here is inextricably tied to a performance of English masculinity where absolute power over a colony is seen as an end reward at the same time as it is also the means of ensuring the continued preservation of such a masculinist ideology. Essentially an *individualist* fantasy of totalising colonial power, the prospect of monarchical rule in a colony yet answers a larger *national* sense of imperial voyeurism and vicarious rule. As a fantasy of specific proportions, it entwines

isolationist desires for unrivalled authority and self-containment in colonisation together with the need for historical, national and racial continuity.

The different dimensions of this fantasy appear in H. Rider Haggard's imperial romance novel, *Allan Quatermain*.¹ Published in 1887 as a sequel to the extremely popular *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and just before the adventure classic *She* (1887), Haggard's relatively unstudied text harnesses an ideology of martial masculine identity and English national essence to underwrite its vision of the ideal colony established at novel's end. The perfect colony led by the aristocratic Englishman Sir Henry Curtis, together with his sidekick Captain Good, is cast in terms of a new nation and civilisation created as a result of the former's marriage to the Queen of the Zu-Vendi people, a mythical white race in the heart of Africa. In the novel, colonial narcissism and the mimetic impetus are inflected by expressly corporeal concerns regarding reproduction, the regulation of sexual desire, the guarantee of racial purity and the imperative of male bonding. The attempts at closure and narrative resolution in this fiction foreground not only the psychic investment in such an imperial fantasy of rule but the fissures in ideological logic threatening its coherence as well. As a text operating within (as well as modifying) the tradition of the imperial romance genre and colonial discourse in general, its pedagogical function in terms of modelling and reinforcing a performance of English masculinity is predicated on key processes of transmission. The complications of physical reproduction to ensure racial purity and the perpetuation of Englishness within the text, for example, are mirrored by the extra-textual objective of the imperial romance novel to transmit masculine values to the body of young male readers envisaged as its target audience. Ultimately, the modality of mimetic colonial power highlighted by an examination of *Allan Quatermain* recalls less Bhabha's thesis about the chronic instability of colonial authority than the pathological interest the colonising culture has in consolidating and replicating itself via the political unconscious level of fantasy and wish-fulfillment. If anything, such an analysis seeks to lend weight to the critical emphasis on multiple rather than monolithic forms of colonial power and the different ontological effects that these aimed to have on coloniser as well as colonised.

In approaching *Allan Quatermain*, these questions will be key: in what ways does Haggard's representation of a self-sufficient colony deliberately isolated from the rest of the world complicate the fantasy of colonisation as the reproduction of the English nation? How are the demands of a narcissistic English masculinity accommodated within the boundaries of the imperial romance aesthetic? How are contradictory desires about colonialism articulated or silenced, resolved in narrative terms or left open? Instrumental to Haggard's fictional enterprise of colonial

¹ All subsequent page numbers for the novel refer to the Dover edition of Haggard's work in *Three Adventure Novels*.

construction is a particular calibration of the dynamics of race, gender and sexuality to secure the subordination of the black male body in addition to the erasure of other troubling bodies like those of white English women and black women from the colony. Focusing on the nexus between his notion of the ideal colony and his representation of an ideal English masculine subjectivity, I argue that Haggard symbolically encodes the form of the colony in *Allan Quatermain* by using a materialist language concerning land, race and the body to express a highly visceral and hence more “authentic” meaning of colonialism.

As a way of throwing into sharper relief the resolutions Haggard’s text seeks comfort in, I want first to turn to the unique historical example of one-man rule in the nineteenth century and to Rudyard Kipling’s treatment of this theme in his short story, “The Man Who Would be King.” The historical reality of the colony as personal domain saw an Englishman, James Brooke, assuming the reins of power in Sarawak and proving an impediment to the official imperial machinery while yet answering to a dominant cultural demand for heroic English behaviour. In “The Man Who Would be King,” Kipling probes the individual and collective desire for such megalomania, presenting a more ambivalent picture of colonialism as mimesis and the male bonds that allegedly secure it.

It is a familiar refrain of the legitimising rhetoric of Victorian colonial discourse that colonising processes were commonly represented as being nothing more or less than the replication of the imperial nation. Migrants from England to the settler colonies, for example, often justified their uprooting in terms of national reproduction and rejuvenation. The goal of creating other “Englands” dispersed across the world through settlement and British rule was useful in helping to project an image of pan-unity across the strange beast that was the British Empire. The idea of the colony as another England constituted an imperial fantasy of growth and reproduction rendered potent by its openness to multiple articulation according to different metaphorical registers. Thus, the ideal colony, whether settled by British immigrants or administered by the Crown, may be understood within the framework of industrial Britain’s power and ability for mass production; in the more organic and naturalised horticultural language of grafts and offshoots; and as part of a Biblical Christian tradition of divinely-sanctioned and essentially derivative creation. The variety of political forms and administrative structures across the empire, however, was constantly in tension with such a seamless notion of reproduction, a tension nowhere more striking perhaps than in the case of the white Rajahs of Sarawak.

In the 1840s, the story of James Brooke and his apotheosis into the white Rajah of Sarawak captured the public’s imagination. A relatively unremarkable Englishman who had once served in the British army, Brooke was granted full control over Sarawak in 1842 by the Sultan of Brunei for his successful suppression of a rebellion by different tribes on the island of Borneo. A year later, Sarawak was ceded to him in perpetuity. The dynasty he founded spanned three generations and

included his nephew Charles, and the latter's son, Vyner. James Brooke's acquisition of his own sovereign kingdom in Sarawak and his rule over a population known primarily to the Victorian public as consisting of savage headhunters contained all the dramatic elements of a mythical adventure story. In her book *Place Matters*, Susan Morgan emphasises the hold on the national imagination that the Brooke story had, explaining:

Sarawak "proved" the truth of the claim made by so many apologists in British fiction, that the boy's dream of adventure could be realized in the man's actual life in the big world, that a British imperialist really could be a white knight as opposed to a greedy tradesman. (191)

The appeal of Brooke's story lay in the fact that it had, as Morgan points out, a purchase on the twin realms of fantasy and reality: it represented an alternative mode of colonial rule that gratified on the individual level while also fulfilling national imperial dreams.

Brooke's legendary rise from obscurity was unique for the thoroughly *unmodern* shadow that it appeared to cast before the eyes of an English metropolitan audience. In 1868, for example, *The Illustrated London News* published an obituary remembering him as an "enterprising English gentleman" who "entered into a contract with that potentate [i.e. the Malay Rajah of Sarawak], not very unlike the terms upon which a roving Norman baron or knight of the Middle Ages might agree to fight the battles of a feeble Prince in Sicily or Gaul" (qtd Tate 76). The language of medieval gallantry and heroic quests defines the colonial space anachronistically and presents it as a site for the re-enactment of history. But the passage touches on a specific problem that Brooke's personal kingdom posed to official colonial power. For in a colonial landscape populated by a motley assortment of political forms that included settler communities with autonomous governments, crown colonies, protectorates and dependencies, Sarawak was an anomaly that eluded definition. Certainly the British Colonial Office looked askance at the idea of British subjects ruling overseas territory independently, anxious about potential repercussions on its legitimacy. Possessing his own set of ideas about the goals of colonialism, James Brooke (and later Charles) arrogated all political and juridical power to himself and repeatedly rebuffed attempts by his own country to commercially exploit Sarawak.

That the white Rajahs caused the British government much vexation is undisputed. Yet there was no question of eliminating them as this government-issued statement makes clear: "It was one thing to leave Rajah Brooke in a legal never-never land without official British support, but it was quite another matter to turn the full weight of British authority against an English gentleman" (qtd Morgan 185). The uncertainty and unease over Sarawak's nebulous political status gives way to the one constant and undisputed factor in the entire equation – Brooke's standing

as an English gentleman. Brooke's maverick imperialist actions outside the realm of official policy and central government control demonstrate the division between English nation and state that becomes in turn part of the animating force for similar imaginings in fiction.

In his allegorical short story "The Man Who Would be King" (1888), Rudyard Kipling presents an ambiguous and multivalent literary encoding of the desire for imperial monarchical power. The story of two vagabonds establishing a kingdom-colony of their own may be read as a dystopian even grotesque version of the fantasy of one-man-rule and the successful performance of Englishness that Brooke's career and life exemplified.² It also presents, as we shall see, an ironic counterpoint to Haggard's novel, *Allan Quatermain*. In this tale, two rogues, Peachey Carnehan and Daniel Dravot, are disillusioned with the strictures of colonial government and the not unrelated lack of adventure in India. Snubbing the current colonial situation, they embark on a journey to Afghanistan with the express intention of becoming kings of their own territory. The move is at once a repudiation of official colonialism and a reiteration of key aspects of imperialist ideology and processes. Alluding directly to the example set by the white Rajahs, they head specifically for Kafiristan, the only place "that two strong men can Sar-a-whack" (122). Once there, they use the guns at their disposal and their knowledge of Masonic traditions to control the local population, who, for their part, regard Dravot as a God. The account of the two men's colonising exploits in Kafiristan, their initial success and their eventual downfall, is related by a worn and battered Carnehan to the narrator of the story, an Anglo-Indian journalist.

Kipling's story presents a deliberately disorientating view of colonial rule and the entangled skein of desires and fantasies that fuels it. The lack of a definite, sharply defined perspective is signalled from the start of the narrative when the narrator relates his encounter with Carnehan on board a train. Both men were travelling by the "Intermediate class" where "the population are either Intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native, which for a long night journey is nasty, or Loafer, which is amusing though intoxicated" (115). Carnehan is introduced by the narrator as "a wanderer and a vagabond" who subscribed to the "politics of Loafersdom, that sees things from the underside where the lath and plaster is not smoothed off" (115). As loafers, Carnehan, and later, his friend Daniel Dravot, are misfits in the colonial system. In language and manner, they are a radical departure from the ideal specimens of manhood and Englishness typical of Haggard's heroes in the imperial romance genre.

The differences and distortions are obvious. When the two men approach the narrator in the dead of night to seek his help for their project, the effect of their gigantic physique, a metaphor for their grand imperial ambitions, is almost comical. The narrator observes wryly, "They certainly were too big for the office. Dravot's

² For a variety of readings, see Green, Showalter, and Sullivan.

beard seemed to fill half the room and Carnehan's shoulders the other half, as they sat on the big table" (121). Larger than life, they are literally cut down to size at the end of the story when a half-dead Carnehan appears before the narrator in his office for one last time bearing Dravot's decapitated head. At the first meeting in the narrator's newspaper office, however, the two men press the narrator for information. In a parody of the knowledge-gathering integral to British imperialism, they pore over maps, books and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to learn more about the country of their intended conquest. They proceed the next day to begin their infiltration into Afghanistan by disguising themselves as a mad priest and his servant. Once in Kafiristan, they stumble upon warring natives and arbitrarily decide to help one group over the other. The loafers-turned-kings build up a coterie of trusted lieutenants from the local men and widen their circle of rule by providing disparate tribes with military training while also organising the agricultural uses of their newly-acquired land. Their actions mimic historical colonisation processes, following a familiar pattern of opportunistic behaviour, exploitation, extortion and mystification.

At first blush, Kipling's story may be read as an adventure story essentially endorsing the brave if madcap exploits of two likable rogues or as a cautionary tale against imperial overreach with the fate of Carnehan and Dravot at the end serving to warn against any excessive desire for power.³ But the text stubbornly resists yielding such pat moralistic lessons about colonialism. In part, this is achieved by Kipling's evocation of a surreal colonial landscape that constantly threatens to shade into the farcical and the absurd, denying the reader easy points of reference or any kind of moral and emotional ballast. Perhaps the most striking example of this occurs with Dravot's declaration of his grandiose imperial designs and his hysterical identification of his Kafiristan subjects as English.

"I won't make a Nation," says he. "I'll make an Empire! These men aren't niggers; they're English! Look at their eyes – look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes, or something like it, and they've grown to be English. I'll take a census in the spring if the priests don't get frightened. There must be a fair two million of 'em in these hills. The villages are full o' little children. Two million people – two hundred and fifty thousand fighting men – and all English!" (135)

³ Many critics read Kipling's story as colluding with imperialist ideology. Benita Parry, for example, writes that "Kipling's complicity in treating meretricious aspirations and their consummation as the stuff of nobility illuminates, as no other tale does, his involvement with the presumptions of imperialism" (222).

The willed erasure of difference here bespeaks Dravot's madness even as he declares his intention of applying that common colonial government administrative instrument – the census. The taxonomic rationality of the census serves only to highlight by contrast the degree to which Dravot has suffered a breakdown or gone “worst mucker.”⁴

The extent to which Dravot thinks/wishes his subjects are white and English exposes the mimetic impulse of colonialism, usually obscured by the rhetoric of reform and improvement in colonial discourse, but given literal manifestation in the imperial fantasy of a lost white civilization in *Allan Quatermain*. Once his God-like status is debunked following his ill-advised decision to take a wife, Dravot is killed by his erstwhile subjects and beheaded while Carnehan is crucified and left to die. The mutilation and physical trauma that the white male bodies are made to go through is a grotesque counterpoint to the images of male physical beauty that recur as part of the narcissistic performance of English masculinity in *Allan Quatermain* and the imperial romance genre as a whole. Carnehan manages to leave Kafiristan with his friend's head and crown, and survives long enough to impart his tale to the narrator. Instead of propagation and continuity, the text leaves us with a severed head – a grisly embodiment of truncated dreams, which also eventually disappears following Carnehan's death.

Indeed, the only thing that survives the quest for a personal kingdom is the tale itself. Divided into two parts, “The Man Who Would be King” comprises the narrator's direct account of his meetings with the pair of rogues and Carnehan's story of their misadventures. As an embedded narrative, the story that Carnehan tells is framed and mediated by the narrator's somewhat detached and ironic perspective.⁵ The effect of this two-tier narrative structure strengthens the impression of the enclosed tale as belonging to a world removed from everyday colonial reality. The frame estranges and casts doubt on the “truth” of Carnehan's story. Is the story perhaps the product of Carnehan or even the narrator's febrile imagination and unconscious desire for adventure? The text refuses to provide any definite answer. At the same time, it is also clear that the reader is placed in a similar position to the frame-narrator since both are interpellated to be at the receiving end of the tale. On this score, the use of the narrative frame prompts a direct, self-reflexive look at the vicarious enjoyment of power that stories of imperial adventure allegedly provide. The narrator – previously a loafer himself who chose to become “respectable” (118) – is in a sense confined to a passive position on the side as bystander and reporter. For all his ties to a Masonic brotherhood and his allegiance to an active code of conduct, he has chosen the path of convention, inevitably also a more *diminished* path.

⁴ The phrase is used by Kipling in his story “The Brushwood Boy”; see Sullivan.

⁵ See Low, 238-54. She focuses on the “transferential mechanics of story-telling” (239), ultimately arguing that “It is the text's transferential structures that encourage a reading of the tale as one of Pax Britannica” (247).

Yet any sense that “The Man Who Would be King” is a call to imperial adventure predicated on a related sense of vicarious pleasure is, at best, uncertain. For the mood of the text suggests instead that the story is less an invitation to adventure than an implicit acknowledgement of crippling immobility and stasis in colonial masculinity, where even a vicarious experience of imperial power cannot be unequivocally indulged. The last line of the story, “And there the matter rests” (143), appears to sum up the suspended state of things and the uneasy equilibrium between the worlds of fantasy and reality. In this regard, the subversive potential of the story is evident. The structure of the embedded story alludes to the desire for a self-contained and personal colony but also in effect mocks it by showing up the impossibility of such desire. The story may be bracketed off but not the colony.

Parable or parody of imperialism, Kipling’s story serves as a dark counter-narrative to Haggard’s novel of individual rule and empire. In contrast to the kind of uncertain despair and even hysteria examined by Kipling within the colonial context, Haggard embraces more determinedly the fantasy of the white rajah, undertaking the rhetorical labour of resolving intractable contradictions within the textual fantasy space of *Allan Quatermain*.

English Masculinity and the Perfect Colony in *Allan Quatermain*

As a dominant narrative form in the late nineteenth century, in the period of so-called “High Imperialism” that was marked most notably by the scramble for Africa, the imperial romance proved a particularly productive site for the pleasurable articulation of imperial and national desires. The form has often been understood to exist in a compensatory relationship to nineteenth-century geopolitics and fears about Britain’s diminished power in the face of other imperial rivals. Imperial romances provided a controlled textual space for the vicarious enjoyment of the performance of powerful masculine identities. In the male-only romance world of English adventurers on a quest, the trials and adventures of the main protagonists constituted the means of showcasing an ideal version of masculinity that was irrevocably tied to physical prowess and heroic action. The “English gentleman” – a concept inflected as much by imperialist behaviour as class status – was the masculine ideal that the imperial romance novel undertook to propagate. Indeed, one of its key motivations was an extension of the male bonds so crucial to its narrative and moral logic, to a world of other male readers beyond the physical boundaries of the book. Thus Haggard writes at the start of *Allan Quatermain*:

I inscribe this book of adventure to my son Arthur John Rider Haggard in the hope that in days to come he, and many other boys whom I shall never know, may, in the acts and thoughts of Allan Quatermain and his companions, as herein recorded, find something to help him and them to reach to what, with Sir Henry

Curtis, I hold to be the highest rank whereto we can attain—the state and dignity of English gentlemen.

Haggard's words find an echo in the critical significance accorded to narrative transmission in the novel itself when we are told how the eponymous hero's manuscript account of his adventures is brought out of the closed world of Zu-Vendis and to the attention of a wider public.

Haggard's African novels typically involve a movement away from England and into unexplored territory that is frequently accompanied by a sense of nostalgia and temporal dislocation. Underlying the journey to "primitive" lands and the interaction with "savage" natives is the desire to recuperate an older England with its allegedly more simple and honourable value-system secured fundamentally by the idea of a primal and implicitly stronger masculinity. *Allan Quatermain* opens with the death of the protagonist's doctor-son to smallpox. It is a passing replete with obvious symbolic overtones about the supposed moribund state of English society and fears about the degeneration of racial stock.⁶ For Quatermain, the loss of his son provides the impetus for his return to Africa together with his friends Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good. Their stay in England, "with its trim hedgerows and cultivated fields, its stiff formal manners, and its well-dressed crowds" (419), has, as it turns out, sapped their energies, and implicitly, their masculinity. Going back to Africa in search of adventure is thus first and foremost an exercise in masculine rejuvenation. At the same time, with the extinguishing of the male line of succession represented by the death of Quatermain's son, the trio's quest is also fundamentally a search for an alternative means of reproducing English masculinity. Hence the ideological significance and desirability of the group's specific adventure goal: the proposed discovery of a putative "great white race" (425) hitherto left unmolested and forgotten in a remote part of Africa.

The myth of an ancient white civilisation in Africa is mobilised with considerable regularity in Haggard's work. In *She*, for example, Ayesha possesses the physiognomy of a white woman and is the last surviving member of an earlier society now ruling over an inferior, darker race at Kôr. The idea of encountering whiteness among blackness and likeness in the midst of difference surfaces too in Patrick Brantlinger's analysis of the overdetermined conceptualisation of Africa as the Dark Continent. Focusing on that highly dramatic and symbolically resonant moment of (self) discovery when an explorer first meets a fellow white man in foreign territory, Brantlinger attempts to explain the English cultural fascination with the image of the white face staring back thus:

Nothing points more uncannily to the projection and displacement of guilt for the slave trade, guilt for empire, guilt for one's own

⁶ See, for example, Davin.

savage and shadowy impulses, than those moments when white man confronts white man in the depths of the jungle. The archetypal event is Stanley's discovery of Livingstone; the famous "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" scene suggests a narcissistic doubling, a repetition or mirroring, and consequently a solipsistic repression of whatever is nonself or alien that characterizes all forms of cultural and political domination. (195)

The pleasurable shock of a white meeting in darkest Africa, an Africa that Brantlinger argues grew darker in proportion to the amount of illuminating inquiry and Western knowledge shone on it, serves as a prop to imperialist ideology by essentially dampening or displacing the potentially alienating and estranging shock of difference. The nineteenth-century theory about white civilizations in Africa following Karl Mauch's "discovery" of the stone ruins of Great Zimbabwe in 1870 complements the ideological efficacy of such imagined meetings and the related notion of Africa as the dark continent since these formulations enable black Africans to be conveniently constructed as members of a degenerate race who only appeared *after* the fall of the earlier white community.⁷

In *Allan Quatermain*, Haggard deploys the fantasy of an existing white civilisation in Africa that has lived unknown to the rest of the world for the narcissistic reproduction of English masculinity. He depicts two enclosed communities in the novel, each reflecting a specific form of political organisation and colonial rule. Dividing the narrative action of the novel between the heroes' experience of both communities, the second kingdom of the Zu-Vendi people is made to serve as an ideal corrective to the first colonial community. That one society should prove sustainable and the other not hinges on the place of a white but not necessarily English womanhood as well as the selective "presence" of black Africans.

The first society that Haggard introduces to his readers is the mission station of the Mackenzies. A Scottish missionary, Mr. Mackenzie has staked out a piece of land and claimed or rather "tamed" it as his own for both his immediate family consisting of his wife and daughter, Flossie, as well as for his spiritual family of African Christians. Arriving at the Mackenzie station only after a hairy escape from the incorrigibly violent Masai, Quatermain and his fellow English travellers celebrate the place as a veritable oasis – a little piece of England – in the midst of savagery and hostile territory. They are met by the Mackenzies as they approach the station:

"A gentleman, a lady, and a little girl," ejaculated Good, after surveying the trio through his eyeglass, "walking in a civilised

⁷ See Stiebel 91-8.

fashion, through a civilised garden, to meet us in this place. Hang me, if this isn't the most curious thing we have seen yet!" (442)

In this short exclamation, we see the familiar signs of Western-inflected civilisation like the basic monogamous family unit and the cultivated garden that represent at the same time the standard tropes of British imperial conquest and control. The Mackenzies give their visitors a tour of the circumscribed territory, which is spatially and topographically organised so as to reflect and reinforce imperialist racial politics. Thus the Mackenzie house and church sit atop a hill while the lower portion of the hill is given over to the "neat mushroom-shaped huts" (442) of the native converts and the cultivation of vegetables natural to the area. As the group makes their way up to the house, they come upon plots of land devoted to the planting of European produce. The Mackenzies' lush, flourishing garden lends itself to obvious allegorical reading. It is a Biblical prelapsarian Garden of Eden, the miraculous result of the natural environment (the "lovely clime") and English know-how.

The Mackenzie house that Quatermain and his companions eventually reach constitutes Haggard's representation of the quintessential English country house. As a cultural form which enjoyed great currency as a symbol of Englishness during the period, the English country house encoded nostalgia for home as well as achievement in the colony. The image of the traveller confronted by the sight of an English house "miraculously" transplanted into foreign territory mystifies and masks the violent colonial reorganisation of African spaces that is its corollary. In the novel, the Mackenzie house is described as both "massively built" (443) and a "charming place" (444). Mackenzie's own kingdom of a missionary station and house is presented in the main as a horticultural empire: the presence of gardens and the idea of living off the land present a picture of innocent bounty and benignity. But there are hints nevertheless of a more martial and totalising form of domination in operation. Perhaps the image that best collapses the botanical and the political in the mission station is what Mackenzie calls his massive "watch tower," a "splendid tree of the conifer tribe" and "a landmark for fifty miles round" (444). Emblematically potent, it is a none-too-subtle allusion to white phallic and patriarchal rule even while it remains at the same time a natural panopticon.

This closed and apparently idyllic society is seen, however, to be ultimately fragile when the little girl, Flossie, is kidnapped by the Masai. For all its apparent beauty, efficiency and productivity, the Mackenzie mission station is precariously unstable because of the constant presence of *external* hostile elements.⁸ Yet while

⁸ While Haggard's novel and fictitious creations are admittedly far-fetched to a modern reader, it is worth noting that to late Victorian readers, there appears to be some indication that his adventures were within the realm of plausibility. On 28 April 1888, the *Spectator* described an attack on an English mission in Africa as "simply chapters iii. to viii. in 'Allan Quatermain' rewritten," adding as

the novel suggests ostensibly that the station's vulnerability to attack is the sole cause of its instability and eventual non-viability, it is the presence of Flossie and the incipient disruptive femininity she stands for that proves a more insidious threat. In the novel, Flossie, nicknamed the "Waterlily," is a veritable white princess, imperiously commanding her black servants who see to her every whim. The native population believes her to be a divinity because, she tells Quatermain, "I am so white and have fair hair" (450-1). Described as "a true child of the wilderness" (455), she rejects any thought of institutional discipline when she denounces the idea of being sent to school in England. She says, "Why, I should hate to be buried in a crowd of white girls all just like myself so that nobody could tell the difference!" (450).

Flossie's assertiveness culminates in a symbolic identification with masculine power when in a telling moment of the text she introduces Quatermain to Mount Kenia, the towering mountain she calls her "companion." Overawed, Quatermain writes: "The solemn majesty and beauty of this white peak are together beyond the power of my little pen to describe. There it rose straight and sheer – a glittering white glory, its crest piercing the very blue of heaven" (451). Whereas Haggard regularly participates in a discourse of Africanism by sexualising and feminising the African landscape, here the snowy peak of Mount Kenia is distinctly phallic and threatens to eclipse Quatermain's "little pen." Flossie's transgressive and potentially uncontrollable femininity as seen in her subversive appropriation of white masculine power renders her return to England expedient. Affirming Mackenzie's decision to leave following the rescue of his daughter, Quatermain adds that Flossie "should receive some education and mix with girls of her own race, otherwise she will grow up wild, shunning her kind" (489). Effectively underscoring the point that there is no place for the English woman in the reproduction of Englishness in Africa, he also makes Flossie a parting gift of money specifically intended for her future nuptials in the home country.

Together with the break-up of the Mackenzie mission station, the expulsion of Flossie sets the stage in the rest of the novel for the establishment of Haggard's ideal colony-nation and the perpetuation of a pure English masculinity. Here, the plasticity of the adventure romance form that allows for the resolution of some of imperialism's intractable socio-political problems becomes readily apparent. With the second community of the Zu-Vendi people, Haggard constructs an entire civilisation, fitting into place economic, social, cultural and religious structures to make up a society reminiscent of old England. Described as "feudal," Zu-Vendis is also conveniently enough white, ethnically homogeneous and ruled by twin sister queens. Appropriating the form and conventions of the pseudo-scientific ethnographical account, Quatermain presents an elaborate, detailed description of

well that the white society Haggard depicts in his novel was "apt to have a base of reality" (qtd Katz 31).

Zu-Vendis. He locates the people at a semi-civilised stage of development, a fact erotically reiterated by the women's sartorial habit of exposing one breast and leaving the other covered. Additionally, Zu-Vendis is a "veritable Eldorado," full of gold that is collected from "purely alluvial diggings" (531) without any need for mines or black African labour. Non-industrial, the place is an agrarian paradise where the land is "exceedingly fertile," and produce and other natural resources abundant. Self-sufficiency and the absence of class conflict are the norm, in implied contradistinction to a capitalist English society "out there" of increasing class mobility.

In the novel, Quatermain and his fellow adventurers arrive in Zu-Vendis after a harrowing journey only to find themselves caught up in an ongoing political crisis just waiting to explode into civil war. The trigger for war is the Zu-Vendi sister queens' desire for Sir Henry and his preference for only one of them – Nyleptha, a woman of "dazzling fairness" (525). Sorais, the darker and more dangerous sister, is rejected because she threatens to compromise Sir Henry's sexual purity and sever the brotherly bonds between the men. Sir Henry's choice of sisters confirms his marriage as a racially pure union since Nyleptha is the epitome of white womanhood in its lowest, most primitive form. Nyleptha functions in the novel primarily as a conduit for the reproduction of English masculinity. That she is no better than a white cipher with nothing to pass on is evident from Sir Henry's proud description of their child at the end of the novel:

He is a regular curly-haired, blue-eyed young Englishman in looks, and, though he is destined, if he lives, to inherit the throne of Zu-Vendis, I hope I may be able to bring him up to become what an English gentleman should be, and generally is—which is to my mind even a prouder and a finer thing than being born heir apparent to the great House of the Stairway, and, indeed, the highest rank that a man can reach upon this earth. (635)

Sir Henry delineates a patrilineal inheritance of national identity and masculinity which puts to rest any idea that the new colony-nation might be a hybrid entity, the product of any kind of real cultural and civilisational amalgamation. At the same time, he also expresses some uncertainty about his son's survival. Despite the physical measures taken to ensure a hermetically-sealed Zu-Vendis, considerable anxiety about its "purity" remains.⁹ This is seen most strikingly in the way the position of the black African, namely the Zulu Umslopogaas, must be carefully negotiated as a kind of absent presence.

⁹ See Sandison for a reading of Haggard's essentially pessimistic world view in his novels, a view Sandison associates with Darwinian notions of natural selection and accidental variation.

In the novel, Umslopogaas accompanies Quatermain, Sir Henry and Captain Good on their journey, and is afforded heightened narrative significance as the ostensible African and primitive complement to English manhood.¹⁰ High-born and “of the blood of Chaka” (429), he is an exile from his own people. Regarded as the supreme embodiment of savage nobility, Umslopogaas is appropriated as a guardian of the new white nation of Zu-Vendis when he dies fighting for Queen Nyleptha and his corpse is preserved as a memorial and new national monument. In her study of the representation of Zulus, Laura Chrisman observes that of all African peoples, the Zulus occupied a privileged position within the hierarchical taxonomy of races in Victorian culture. Popular illustrations of the Zulus in newspapers of the day emphasise their apparently innate ferocity and splendid physical form, especially after the Zulu war.

In *Allan Quatermain*, Umslopogaas is repeatedly compared to Sir Henry as a warrior. Both men are depicted as atavistic reminders of an earlier time. Both speak in an archaic register and share a chivalric code of conduct reminiscent of medieval England and seen, for example, when Sir Henry compliments Umslopogaas, “I give it thee; thou art a gallant man” (484). Despite the seeming equivalence between the two, especially in terms of noble bearing and masculine physique, Umslopogaas functions in the novel to *mirror* the Englishman. Thus he serves to gratify the narcissistic impulse of white colonial culture, reflecting only what the white man wishes to see in himself. At the same time, however, the figure of the Zulu also always threatens to overwhelm his intended mirroring function and jeopardise the replication of Englishness. This is because the portrayal of Umslopogaas is subject to a fetishistic logic of representation where the indulgence in voyeuristic pleasure as it pertains to self-reflection dovetails with simultaneous attempts to manage anxieties about the black man.

To the extent that Umslopogaas exists to reinforce Sir Henry’s role as a model of desirable English masculinity, the novel’s narrative thrust is strategically arrested at various moments by tableau-like scenes in which the bodies of both men are deliberately aestheticised. In these non-diegetic moments of comparison of male beauty, both characters are the objects of intense scopophilic interest. Thus, just before a key battle with the Masai, Quatermain pauses to note admiringly:

The two men were almost of a height; and, though Curtis looked the bigger man, I am inclined to think that the difference was more imaginary than real, the fact being, although he was plumper and rounder, that he was not really bigger, except in the arm. Umslopogaas had, comparatively speaking, thin arms, but they

¹⁰ Haggard reveals in his autobiography, *Days of My Life*, that the character of Umslopogaas was based on M’hlopekazi, the head native attendant to Sir Theophilus Shepstone on the Special Commission to the Transvaal (I: 74-6).

were as strong as wire ropes. At any rate, when, axe in hand, they both stood clad in the brown mail, which clung to their mighty forms like a web garment, showing the swell of every muscle and the curve of every line, they seemed a pair that any ten men might shrink from meeting. (471)

The physical glorification of black and white, African and English men represents an attempt to celebrate colonial relations, if nothing else, as physical compatibility. Mediated by Quatermain, the erotic *frisson* of the scene, in particular the caressing description of the men's figure-hugging "web garment," is partially justified by resorting to the exigencies of war as an alibi. Visual pleasure from the men's bodies is permissible when appraising their physical readiness for battle.¹¹

At this point, the text appears to celebrate the parity and equivalence between black and white models of an ideal universal masculinity. In her examination of Umslopogaas's novelistic function in *White Skin/Black Masks*, Gail Low suggests that the transient nature of the relationship between black and white men "authorises the expression of a powerful homosexual fantasy. The strong black man enables the white man to dream the 'boyish enterprise of adventure, lightly undertaken, which now would strike us as hazardous indeed'. [. . .] By displacing women as the white man's object of affection, he narrates a culturally sanctioned romance of strong young men predicated on the enforced exclusion of women" (62). Low's apprehension of male bonding across the racial divide accords too much unequivocal stability, I argue, to the relationship between white and black men. The nature of this inter-racial masculine identification, while acknowledged to be impermanent, is nevertheless left unquestioned. What gets overlooked is the subject-forming tension between equivalence and hierarchy, mirror image and absolute difference, which underwrites what might otherwise seem a mutually self-gratifying relationship between white and black men.

Thus despite their similarities, it is Umslopogaas, and not Sir Henry, for whom Haggard reserves at once the most superhuman and dehumanising displays of strength. In one scene in the novel, Umslopogaas runs alongside Quatermain on horseback and the sight elicits "praise" from the latter in the form of a crude comparison of the black man to an animal: "It was a wonderful thing to see old Umslopogaas run mile after mile, his lips slightly parted and his nostrils agape like the horse's" (610). In another critical moment, the Zulu warrior is seen single-handedly defending the stairway to the Queen's palace from hundreds of enemy soldiers, his final feat of strength before his heroic death. That the Zulu is consistently represented as a spectacle for white viewing is evident from the way he is made the visual focus of the illustrations by Charles H.M. Kerr in the first edition

¹¹ See Low, 52-62, for an analysis of the way black bodies are used in Haggard's novels to script a heroic narrative for white bodies.

of the novel (See Figures 1 and 2). Dominating the visual frame, he is typically locked in a larger-than-life martial pose.

Throughout the novel, Umslopogaas is repeatedly fetishised as a warrior, a move that sanctions the gaze at the black man's body by framing the latter within a context of war and battle. Fetishism, conceived by Freud as arising from castration anxiety, is essentially a management strategy, a mode of control involving the process of disavowal. Non-repressive fetishistic disavowal licenses the pleasurable indulgence of desire for an object while at the same time denying it.¹² In this case, the performance and reproduction of English masculinity calls for Umslopogaas to be a flattering mirror image of Sir Henry and to some extent, of Quatermain himself. Threatening this, however, is a fascination with the black body as a primary focus of attention in its own right. The fetishistic process called into play to manage these competing demands suggests the vexed and constantly shifting politics behind the representation of ideal white and black, English and African men. Male bonding across racial lines, which celebrates black and white men embodying a universal masculinity, is from the start always already disrupted by the competing impulses of desire and domination.

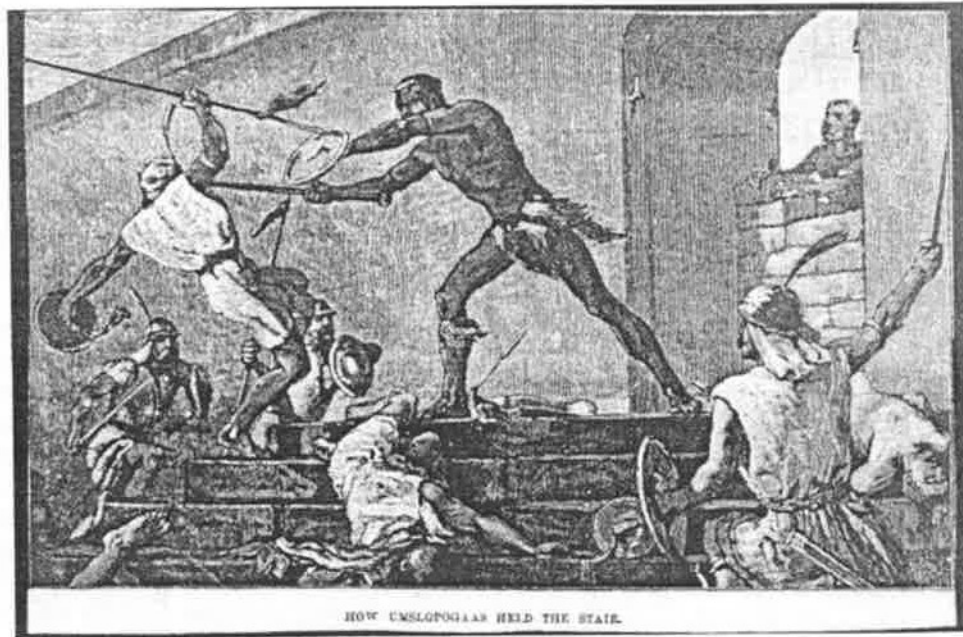


Figure 1. Illustration for *Allan Quatermain* (1887) by Charles H.M. Kerr.

¹² For an account of fetishistic processes, see Hall 266-9.

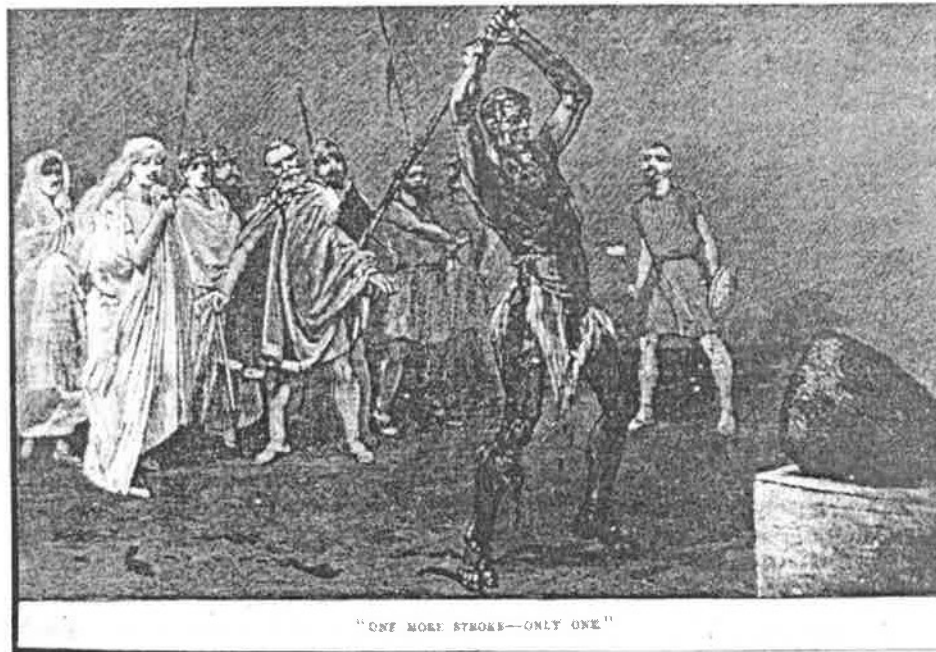


Figure 2. Illustration for *Allan Quatermain* (1887) by Charles H.M. Kerr.

It is perhaps in death that Umslopogaas illustrates most profoundly the crosscutting desires underpinning the fantasy of colonial reproduction. In a move that is part burial and part memorial, we learn that Umslopogaas's corpse is to be "tied up, Zulu fashion, with his knees beneath his chin" and "wrapped in a thin sheet of beaten gold" (623). He is entombed in a sitting position facing Zululand at the top of the stairway he defended, intended as a visible symbol of a rejuvenated Zu-Vendis infused with English blood and as a sign of how the body of the Zulu may be made to serve white Englishmen to the very end. The memorialised body of the black Zulu allows the white coloniser to bridge the gap between a past imperialism and a new improved version of it. Unlike the fragmentation of the white body in Kipling's story, the intact wholeness of the black body guarantees stability: the existence of the new nation is contingent on the mummified presence of Umslopogaas. Only if his body is destroyed will Zu-Vendis fall. Umslopogaas is here turned into a fetish in the anthropological sense of the word as well. The apparent spirit and essence of the war-like Zulu is displaced onto an object, in this case, the fêted and preserved corpse of Umslopogaas, and imbued with totemic and talismanic significance.

But the weird and problematic preservation of the Zulu and what he might signify always threatens to exceed his intended meaning. On one level, mummification suggests that the black man's everlasting subordination has been secured. Yet, Umslopogaas's literal objectification and continued absent presence as an overdetermined trophy also threatens to explode the mimetic fantasy of colonialism by serving as a reminder of the extent to which the black body is needed both physically and symbolically for the performance of English masculinity. As an obsessive point of fixation, it betrays the white Englishman's overriding will to power even as an equalising, trans-racial masculinity is celebrated.

In *Allan Quatermain*, Haggard sets up the perfect English colony by methodically eliminating every potential source of opposition to such an ideal. Rehearsing and riffing on the trope of the man who would be king, he presents a patriarchal autocracy as the political solution to colonial governance. Led by English gentlemen whose values are explicitly set up as out of sync with contemporary England, the colony is an anomaly of time and space. Insulated from foreign incursions, the colony is also free of white Englishwomen and Black Africans. Thus in an Africa without black Africans, the very idea of difference loses its meaning so that there is no real danger of Englishmen "going native" as in Kipling's short story. Moreover, absolute possession of the colony-nation is assured by a physical merger of Englishness with non-English whiteness, a move which obviates the mixing of races that apparently brings down empires. Yet signs of strain are evident. The body of Umslopogaas – fetishised and preserved – haunts and destabilises the text, disrupting the dominant economy of signification and serving as a constant if unconscious reminder of how the masculine English subject can only be reproduced in colonial Africa through the objectification of native bodies.

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