

**“Become a sweet and God-fearing woman”:  
British Women in Haggard’s Early African Romances**

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<1>Today, H. Rider Haggard is probably best known for his creation of Ayesha, She Who Must Be Obeyed, in his novel *She* (1887). From the time of its publication, critics used Ayesha to meet their ideological needs—in 1889, Leo Michael saw *She* as an allegory of the church, later, Jung used Ayesha as an exemplar of the anima, and by 1988, Gilbert and Gubar saw Ayesha as an archetypal goddess-woman who “must be fucked to death by the ‘unalterable law’ of the Father” (21). It seems strange, then, that critics have largely ignored the prominent female characters of other colonial African romance novels from Haggard’s most popular period, such as *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), *Jess* (1887), *Allan Quatermain* (1887), *Maiwa’s Revenge* (1888), and *Allan’s Wife* (1889).<sup>(1)</sup> As Norman Etherington points out, “more than half of [Haggard’s] fictional works bear a woman’s name on the title page,” manifesting his interest in female characters (77). However, Haggard’s fiction offers a very narrow view of what makes a “woman”—in the first chapter of *King Solomon’s Mines*, the narrator claims

that there is no woman in it—except Foulata. Stop, though! there is Gagooola, if she was a woman, and not a fiend. But she was a hundred at least, and *therefore not marriageable, so I don't count her*. At any rate, I can safely say that there is not a *petticoat* in the whole history. (14, emphasis added)

Therefore, it is interesting to note that when the novels do contain characters that would be considered “women” by this definition—a “marriageable petticoat,” presumably white—they often seem to carry the message that once white women leave the safe space of Europe, they are somehow altered. By journeying to the colonies they become deranged, delusional, or disfigured. As LeeAnne Richardson suggests, Haggard may fear that “English women's agitation for legal rights, which centered on their right to own property and thus exercise self-determination, served implicitly to highlight the very things colonizers deny to colonized subjects” (15). This threat is magnified when English women come to the male colonial space of South Africa. Therefore, Haggard uses white women in his texts as plot devices to highlight the successful partnerships of African and English men that are disrupted by the political perils inherent in their presence.

<2>Critics have often noted how Haggard resorts to “types”: “Quatermain is ‘the hunter,’ Umslopogaas ‘the warrior,’ and Ayesha ‘the immortal woman,’” respectively (Katz 42). He also

liberally employs stereotypes—the Portuguese and Germans are untrustworthy, the French are cowardly, etc. (Katz 42). It is true that Haggard relies heavily on such “typing” and also tends to conflate groups whose distinctions do not matter in his (or his characters’) worldview. As Richardson notes, in *King Solomon’s Mines*, Quatermain describes Umbopa as “like a Zulu” since, although he knows Umbopa is not a Zulu, he categorizes all Africans as such (49). In their analysis of *She*, Gilbert and Gubar similarly find “genius” in “Haggard’s less grotesque and more detailed dramatization of the notion that women and colonized peoples were analogically a single group, and that that group, from a masculinist point of view, was affiliated with a power of darkness” (41). However, in Haggard’s popular novels of the 1880s, white women are *not* conflated with native peoples—Englishwomen are instead depicted as far more problematic.

<3>Haggard’s depiction of black Africans primarily veers between the stereotypes of “noble savage” and “savage savage,” the former category comprising those who support and aid the British colonials. Although I do not wish to be an apologist for Haggard, it is worth noting that rather than universally demonizing his African characters, as many of his contemporaries might have done, he essentializes them, depicting them as objects, animals, children, magicians, or heroes as suits the plot of the novel. African men are not, however, the primary antagonists of any of Haggard’s novels of this time.<sup>(2)</sup> The “noble savage”-type African characters that Haggard creates are often crucial to the success of the quest, assisting and saving the great white hunters with their native knowledge and skills. Interestingly, in Haggard’s most famous books, *She* and *King Solomon’s Mines*, these characters must fight bizarre villainesses—in the former, an immortal, sadistic, white “Arab-but-not-Arab” queen who shrinks into a baboon, in the latter, a shriveled, simian witch doctor who is more “fiend” than woman (*KSM* 14). These problematic “not-quite native,” “not-quite human” women are ancient, magical, and diabolical.

<4>The white Englishwomen who come to the colonies show more variety—they are all young, but some, like Stella of *Allan’s Wife* or Flossie of *Allan Quatermain*, are beautiful but “savage” at heart and resist being forced back to “civilization” until they learn the error of their ways; others, like Hendrika of *Allan’s Wife* and Augusta of *Mr. Meeson’s Will*<sup>(3)</sup> are disfigured, made into terrifying monsters that can never properly reintegrate into English society. Contemporary critics noted this trend; a review of *Allan Quatermain* chided Haggard for rendering “the females who appear in his pages...animal and unidealized” (Egan 835). The following year, another adventure writer, Joseph Thompson, published *Ulu: An African Romance* (1888), which presents the “ideal” white woman in a colonial African context. Kate, a blonde, blue-eyed missionary’s daughter, is worshipped by the Masai for her beauty, “taming” their “savage” nature (Brantlinger 190).

<5>Some similarly “idealized” women do exist in Haggard; Nyleptha of *Allan Quatermain* and Foulata of *King Solomon’s Mines* fall into this category, but they are both “native,” not European, women. Critics Paul Cantor and Peter Hufnagel label the romance between white explorers and native women “the Pocahontas motif,” and cite Foulata’s doomed romance with John Good as “a textbook example” of a “native woman [who] must sacrifice her life to save the explorer in a gesture that validates the superiority of the European to the non-European” (40). However, Nyleptha, while white-skinned, is descended from generations of Africans, and it is postulated her ancestors may ultimately have originated from Egypt, Assyria, or Persia, not Europe (*AQ*

310). Despite this racial difference, she and the Englishman Henry Curtis are “allowed” to marry and have children together, and he quite happily settles down as “King-Consort” in the Lost City of Zu-Vendis (AQ 416). As Patteson notes, often the paler the skin of Haggard’s “native” women indicates their greater chances of survival (113).(4) Why then, do the universally pale European women not share such a rosy fate, as many do not survive and none are similarly allowed to wed and remain in Africa? White women are instead depicted as unwelcome intruders into the colonial space and they are punished for their imposition in Haggard’s work.

<6>In his first nonfiction book, *Cetywayo and his White Neighbors* (1882), Haggard expresses his disgust for Victorian ladies who attempted to voice opinions or interfere with African politics when they were ignorant of the facts (and when white men knew best). Female writers such as Frances Colenso and Lady Florence Dixie had been supporters of freeing the imprisoned Zulu king Cetywayo, and Haggard hotly rebukes

[h]is lady advocates, whose writings upon these subjects bear about the same resemblance to the truth that the speech to the jury by the counsel for the defence in a hopeless murder case does to the summing up of the judge. Having demonstrated that the engagements entered into by Cetywayo meant nothing, they will proceed to show that, even if they did, cold-blooded murder, when perpetrated by a black paragon like Cetywayo, does not amount to a great offence. (11)

Haggard seems especially peeved that this “black paragon” has attracted not only the attention, but probably the affection of “the gentler but more enthusiastic sex” (*Cetywayo* 13). Haggard describes how the king’s “appearance is dignified, and his manners, as is common among Zulus of high rank, are those of a gentleman” (2). Haggard is appalled by Lady Dixie’s ardent descriptions of “how good, how big, and how beautiful he is, and [how] “F. W. G. X.” describes in enthusiastic terms his pearl-like teeth” (2). The overt implication throughout Haggard’s diatribe against these “gentle apologists for slaughter” is that they are blinded to the political realities of the situation by their sexual desire for the exotic African king. Haggard urges that there are issues “which are, I think, more important than Cetywayo’s personal proportions of mind or body” (2). Haggard’s damning description of the white women’s erotic attraction to an African man is significant, since this is a conflict that is notable for its absence in his romances of the 1880s.

<7>Rather than choosing to play upon contemporary stereotypes of black men’s sexual prowess or lust, Haggard depicts his male African characters as surprisingly reticent about their sexuality. In *Jess*, the African servant Jantje saves the eponymous English girl and takes her to his cave, where she mentally criticizes his décor and blithely eats all of his food, but there is no hint of sexual possibility between them (215). In *Allan Quatermain*, the young Scottish girl Flossie is kidnapped by Masai warriors, a situation that in another work might be rife with the threat of rape, but their leader explains, ““We would not harm the little girl; she is too fair to harm, and has besides a brave spirit,”” and it is only when the white men fail to meet his ransom demands that he says, regretfully, ““Were she older I would take her for a servant; but as she is so young I will slay her”” (70). Although she claims “they came continually to stare at her... and handled her arms and hair with their filthy paws,” it is from their “awe” at seeing a white person for the

first time, actions intended to be worshipful rather than sexual (104). Again, the lack of mutual sexual attraction between black men and white women is made explicit. Among Haggard's early writing, the only instance when there is an explicit threat of forced sexual attention on a white woman is in *Jess*, when the villain Frank Muller, a white man who is half-English, half-Boer, attempts to force Bessie into marriage, vowing, "you shall marry me, whether you like or no... I want you—I must have you" (28).

<8>Were the fears expressed in *Cetywayo* duplicated in Haggard's fiction writing, Stott's contention that Haggard's adventure novels demonstrate "anxieties about the sexuality of white women" would ring true, but it is instead "African" women (even if white in appearance) who embrace sexuality. The Amahagger of *She* enjoy "perfect equality with the men" and choose their "husbands" for themselves, dropping them for new mates as it suits them (57) and the Zu-Vendi women of *Allan Quatermain* are the "great upholders of polygamy" by choice within their society (176). The queens of both of these societies are overtly sexual, sometimes terrifyingly so for the Englishmen who are the object of their affections.

<9>A typical example of the "sexuality" of the English female can be found in *Allan's Wife*; it is unclear how long Allan and Stella have been married, and it is never mentioned that she might be pregnant, but she gives birth to their child on the same page in which she dies. Similarly, Haggard's own wife failed to mention she was pregnant in her personal diary until she gave birth to their son "Jock," writing only "Baby was born at ¼ to 6 a.m. Rider telegraphed home to announce the event" (qtd. in Pocock 49). The threat of the white woman for Haggard seems to be more political than sexual; Haggard's white women are not Desdemonas, but are aligned more closely with Iago.

<10>Although Haggard may be disturbed by English women's perverse adulation of an African man, it is their attempt to meddle in colonial politics that infuriates him. He decries how such women are able to reduce well-respected Englishmen's reputations to "rags and tatters" and to melodramatically suggest that "not only did one and all of these gentlemen make gross errors of judgment, but, trusted and distinguished servants of their country as they are, they were one and all actuated by dark personal motives that will not bear examination" (*Cetywayo* 13). Haggard's major fear is that somehow such women are able to sway public opinion and to do significant damage to the reputation of the ruling colonial males.(5) The feminist Lady Dixie's reports from Cape Town are thus a cause for concern; Haggard claims to be shocked at how

[i]n a recent publication called a "Defence of Zululand and its Kings," Lady Florence Dixie gibbets Mr. Henrique Shepstone, and points him out to be execrated by a Cetywayo-worshipping public, because... he will certainly be scoundrel enough to misinterpret all that Cetywayo says for his own ends, and will thereby inflict a "cruel wrong" upon him.... Perhaps it has never occurred to Lady Dixie that this is a very serious charge to bring against an honourable man, whose reputation is probably as dear to him as the advancement of Cetywayo's cause is to her. It is all very well to be enthusiastic, but ladies should remember that there are other people in the world to be considered beside Cetywayo. (13)

These “other people,” the British men in South Africa, are generally considered above reproach in both Haggard’s nonfiction and his romances. They have “escaped” the threats of feminism and the New Woman in England by coming to the colonies and they had reason to fear that if these same women followed them to South Africa, their presence would upset the balance and structure currently in place.

<11>By the 1860s and 1870s, periodicals such as the *Queen* and the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* offered advice for English female travelers on what to pack for travel to the colonies and how to obtain English necessities while there (Quirk 171-72). Other articles suggested how to maintain a lady’s English temperament and complexion while in a climate inhospitable to the “English race” (Quirk 173). English women living in India had also been encouraged by the same ladies’ periodicals, available abroad, to further the feminist cause by “taking an interest in politics,” or “educating Indian women” (*Homeward Mail* qtd. in Quirk 179). Both of these advised actions would, of course, have undermined the goals and authority of the white male colonial government; perhaps it is fear of women pursuing similar feminist goals in South Africa that gives rise to the terrifying matriarchies of *She* and *Allan Quatermain*.

<12>Haggard has often been characterized as a jingoistic flag-waver for British rule, and although that is a simplistic view, he is fiercely protective of the image of the colonial British male. His English heroes are men who defend their country’s honor with their life, are crack shots, laugh heartily, and embark on perilous quests for glory. The potential that British women could interfere and spoil the white colonials’ fun was anathema to Haggard. As Patrick Brantlinger puts it, “Africa was a setting where British boys could become men and British men, like Haggard’s heroes, could behave like boys with impunity. Africa was a great testing (or teething) ground for moral growth and moral regression (the two processes were often indistinguishable)” (190). In this vein, *King Solomon’s Mines* was dedicated “to all the big and little boys who read it” (7). Although this dedication speaks to Haggard’s self-awareness regarding Africa as a grown-up Englishman’s playground, he also often derides native African men for the same proclivities. In *Jess*, the African man Jantje is described thus: “Like a civilised child he longed for wild beasts and enemies, and if there were none at hand he found a reflected satisfaction in making a pretence of their presence” (80). What then would this make Haggard, who creates lions, witches, and immortals in his pages for his fictional characters to battle? Haggard’s Africa offers a fantasy world where English “boys” of all ages can fight enemies that are clearly delineated and escape the numerous modern anxieties of *fin de siècle* England. Rebecca Stott finds that

[i]mperialist discourse...as found in imperialist novels, becomes a man-made discourse, expressing male fantasies, fears, anxieties. It is a discourse that emphasizes the importance of male camaraderie and which implicitly warns of the debilitating effects of woman. (70)

Although the Englishmen are the original intruders into Africa, many of Haggard’s books gloss over this fact in favor of scapegoating the white woman—she becomes the cause of suffering and death for the colonizer and colonized alike, and the threat that she presents serves as a kind of bridge uniting the two.

<13>A white woman in Haggard presents a threat because she makes the colonials vulnerable; if she is kidnapped or in peril, they are obligated to risk their lives to save her, and if she wishes to harm the adventurers, they are unprepared for her attack. Interestingly, however, it is her presence that makes “heroes” out of Haggard’s “noble savage” characters; when a white woman is threatened, it is often an African man with English sympathies who saves the day. Many of these African characters possess magical powers or foresight, and, like Cassandra, they have already foretold the danger the white woman presents, although their advice always goes unheeded.

<14>Haggard began his career in adventure fiction with a reversal of what would become a standard plotline; in *King Solomon’s Mines*, “Umbopa,” the disguised prince Ignosi, must recruit white men to help him destroy the evil witch doctor/demon-woman Gagool. For a majority of his succeeding African romances, Haggard instead chooses to focus on the efforts of white men to recruit African men to save their wayward white women. The latter plotline may have held more interest for the target audience of British men, but it also allows Haggard to demonstrate how the advent of white women disrupt the “homeostasis” that he believes British men have achieved in their relations with African men. This device not only showcases how well English and African men can coexist before women disrupt the system, but also demonstrates how white women’s presence upends the system itself, allowing black men a measure of glory normally claimed by white men—an unwelcome reversal. The African men seek to prevent this dangerous state of affairs, but when white women will not heed sound advice, it becomes inevitable. Although Haggard espouses a kind of cultural relativism, he does believe in British rule and the superiority of the English race. As Katz observes, “Haggard’s romances are so replete with casually dispensed and dismissive slurs and indignities that racism is more a given of the African scene than a preached doctrine” (140).

<15>As Brantlinger notes, writers’ use of the “noble savage” stereotype had declined toward the end of the century, and Haggard was one of the notable exceptions to the trend. In each case of the “noble savage’s” partnership with the white hero, the latter “shares some of the qualities of the savage sidekick, but the doubling or mirroring process is lopsided: white always overshadows black” (Brantlinger 58). Although the relationship was inevitably “lopsided,” Haggard saw the British-sympathetic Africans and white explorers as enjoying a symbiotic, mutually-beneficial relationship. Together, they are able to fight against mutual enemies: “savage savages” like the Masai, evil magicians, and wild animals. The white-woman-in-peril trope allows white and black men to heave a mutual sigh, exchange knowing looks, and sacrifice themselves equally to ensure her rescue.

<16>One example of the threatened white woman trope is found in Haggard’s novel *Jess*, wherein he attempts a retelling of Olive Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm*, with the eponymous heroine modeled on Schreiner’s Lyndall. Haggard’s version is set against the backdrop of the Boer War, however, and its main focus is the unjustified brutality and cruelty of the Boer characters against the English and native Africans alike. *Jess* has none of the subtlety of *African Farm*, but wallows in melodrama—the villain Frank Muller is predisposed to long soliloquies about his evil plans to thwart the English. However, it is worth investigating how Haggard, an avowed antifeminist, responds to Schreiner’s work, which he described as one of his

favorite books (Monsman 45). Jess and Bessie Croft are English girls who come to South Africa to be raised by their uncle Silas, who has a “Hottentot” servant named Jantje. The sisters are wooed by the noble Englishman John Niel and pursued by the dastardly half-Boer Frank Muller. Muller’s mother was English, but she “had the devil in her” according to Jantje, and cursed her family that they would all “die in blood” (*Jess* 224).

<17>Jantje is routinely described using racially-charged animal terminology, such as his having a “yellow monkey face” (22), being a “human jackdaw” (215), and creeping “like a snake” (215). Despite this, his character is meant to invoke pathos; Jantje hates the half-Boer (and the Boers in general) as much as the English do and he is justified in his desire for vengeance against Muller, who has killed both of his parents, his uncle, and has beaten and attempted to kill him as well. John Niel intervenes to prevent Muller from attacking Jantje at one point, although he accuses the African of being a “drunken little blackguard” (56). In repayment, when Jantje witnesses Muller taking a potshot at John with his rifle, he tells the intended victim what he saw. John declares that he “will have the man tried for attempted murder,” to which Jantje knowingly replies, “It is no use, Baas. He would get off, for I am the only witness. A jury won’t believe a black man in this country, and they would never punish a Boer for shooting at an Englishman” (69). Thus, although John Niel is not depicted as the ideal Englishman nor Jantje the ideal African, they do have a sense of loyalty toward each other.

<18>Bessie, John’s initial beloved, is explicitly described as “a type and symbol of all that is beautiful and gracious in this rough world... a symbol of the world’s joy, and an incarnation of the world’s beauty!” (85-86). Even her surname, Croft, suggests her place in a garden around the home. Later, the novel suggests that

Bessie was like a flower: the more she basked in the light and warmth of her love the more her character opened and unfolded, shedding perfumed sweetness around her and revealing unguessed charms. It is so with all women, and more especially with a woman of her stamp, whom Nature has made to love and be loved as maid and wife and mother. (90)

Although she is invoked repeatedly as little other than a symbol of English womanhood and has no discernable personality, when John proposes to her, Bessie emphatically insists, “I do not want you to marry me just because I am a pretty woman, as the Kafirs marry their wives? If you marry me at all I want you to marry me because you care for *me*, the real *me*, not my eyes and my hair” (79). Perhaps it is the irony of Bessie’s espoused individualism despite her generic nature that causes John to threaten an African girl by claiming he will “cram [her] into the oven” and “cook” her until she comes out “quite white!” (75). What worse punishment could there be? Even Bessie admits that she, as the symbol of English womanhood, is “nothing but an ignorant, half-educated farmer girl, with nothing to recommend me, and no fortune except my looks” (78). She tells John, “You are different to me; you are a man of the world, and if ever you went back to England I should be a drag on you, and you would be ashamed of me and my colonial ways” (79). In Africa, she observes, Englishwomen have an “exaggerated value” only because they are not Boer or African women, and the conflict over such “valuable” commodities will inevitably lead to trouble. During one such conflict, Jantje is forced to save Bessie using “a ventriloquistic power that is not uncommon among natives,” throwing his voice

into the air and shouting Frank's name in the tones of Frank's dead mother (88). Bessie, however, is "not troubled by Jantje's mysterious howling; indeed, she was too preoccupied to give it a second thought" (89).

<19> Jess, Bessie's sister, is Haggard's attempt at reproducing Lyndall, but rather than being an intellectual woman with aspirations of knowledge and independence, Jess is more like Lady Macbeth. She emasculates and belittles men, and by the end of the novel, she kills one. If Bessie is the symbol of English womanhood, Jess is "a very incarnation of the intensest love of woman," but she loves as a woman possessed; with this "love," "[s]he knew, and had always known, that she could master [John], and force him to regard her as she regarded him, did she but choose" (117). When she yields to this "unconquerable impulse," she is able to force John to love her as she desires. She is not able to control her own fate as easily, and Jantje must warn John to save Jess, since she is caught in the middle of a Boer rebellion. Although Jess shows Jantje no gratitude, when he again saves her and brings her to his home to be safe, he gives his only food to Jess "without hesitation," even though "he had tasted no food all day" (215). Earlier, he had also killed Hendrik, Muller's servant, an evil witch-doctor who had helped kidnap Bessie.

<20> Jess immediately begins to goad Jantje to kill Frank Muller as well, although Jantje resists more murder; as they approach the sleeping Muller, Jess hisses for him to "be a man" and "strike home!" (229). Jantje cannot kill Muller and claims that "the spook of the old Englishwoman," Muller's mother, was there preventing him from striking her son (230). Jantje has seen that it is English women who began the cycle of unrest and who are continuing to perpetuate it. Jess chooses to strike the blow herself, murmuring, "For Bessie's sake, for Bessie's sake!" (231). She then flees "like a wild thing" (237) into the night and dies of exhaustion. After her death, the text notes,

She might have been a great and a good woman. She might even have been a happy woman. But fate had ordained it otherwise. Women such as Jess are rarely happy in the world. It is not worldly wise to stake all one's fortune on a throw, and lack the craft to load the dice. Well, her troubles are done with. Think gently of her and let her pass in peace! (239)

Although Jantje has acted heroically by attempting to save both white women and even the half-Boer man, he knows he will be blamed for Muller's murder, so he too must flee and is never heard from again (240). Silas, claiming "this is no country for Englishmen," is probably disguising his belief that there is no place for Bessie, the remaining Englishwoman, "among a rough people and in rough times" (241). As Bessie's guardian and her fiancé, the two men are obligated to take her back to England, where the marriage takes place and John must adjust to employment as a land agent in Rutlandshire (241).

<21> The next novel Haggard published that same year, *Allan Quatermain*, begins with a meditation on the nature of the "savage" and the "civilized":

I say that as the savage is, so is the white man, only the latter is more inventive, and possesses the faculty of combination; save and except also that the savage, as I have known

him, is to a large extent free from the greed of money, which eats like a cancer into the heart of the white man. (12)

Haggard's texts often gives lip service to such purported cultural relativism, but what is especially interesting here is that his narrator specifically uses white women to bridge the gap between English and African:

I dare say that the highly civilized lady reading this will smile at an old fool of a hunter's simplicity when she thinks of her black bead-bedecked sister... And yet, my dear young lady, what are those pretty things round your own neck? —they have a strong family resemblance, especially when you wear that *very* low dress, to the savage woman's beads. Your habit of turning round and round to the sound of horns and tom-toms, your fondness for pigments and powders, the way in which you love to subjugate yourself to the rich warrior who has captured you in marriage, and the quickness with which your taste in feathered head-dresses varies — all these things suggest touches of kinship; and you remember that in the fundamental principles of your nature you are quite identical. (12-13)

Allan Quatermain levels a similar accusation to a gentlemen “idler” as well, but it is the English lady who takes the brunt of his ire—it is the borders of England alone that prevent her from “going native,” it seems.

<22>Katz believes Haggard's “so-called cultural relativism” is also often tied into his disapproval toward white missionaries (136). Haggard's novels tend to portray missionaries as bumbling, feminized, and ineffective—his character the Reverend John Dove from *The Ghost Kings* (1908) is called “The Shouter about Things he does Not Understand” by the Africans around him (35). Thus, it is interesting to consider his less-scathing portrayal of the Scottish missionary family, the Mackenzies, in *Allan Quatermain*. The adventurers first meet the Mackenzies “walking in a civilized fashion, through a civilized garden” that Mrs. Mackenzie has planted with flowers from England (*AQ* 42). Although they have attempted to recreate Britain as much as possible for their daughter, Flossie, like Stella, is a “true child of the wilderness” and now prefers her adopted homeland instead (60).(6) She says,

“I should hate to be buried in a crowd of white girls all just like myself so that nobody could tell the difference! Here,' she said, giving her head a little toss, 'I am I; and every native for miles around knows the “Water-lily”, —for that is what they call me—and is ready to do what I want, but in the books that I have read about little girls in England it is not like that. Oh! it would break my heart to be put in a cage like that and not to be free —free as the air.” (53-54)

Quatermain, doubtful that “every native for miles around” would be willing to stoop to this tiny white tyrant, asks whether she is really “never afraid among all these wild men?” (54). She replies,

“Afraid? Oh no! they never interfere with me. I think they believe that I am ‘Ngai’ (of the Divinity) because I am so white and have fair hair. And look here,' and diving her little hand

into the bodice of her dress she produced a double-barrelled nickel-plated Derringer, 'I always carry that loaded, and if anybody tried to touch me I should shoot him. Once I shot a leopard that jumped upon my donkey as I was riding along. It frightened me very much, but I shot it in the ear and it fell dead, and I have its skin upon my bed.'" (54)

Of course, Flossie gets her comeuppance when she is kidnapped by Masai warriors and held for ransom in exchange for cattle.

<23>The kidnapping has been foreseen by the Zulu Umslopogaas, Haggard's ultimate "savage hero," who has predicted that he "smells blood" (64). The Masai demonstrate their power by sending their demands along with the severed head of one of Flossie's African companions, to which her father only exclaims, "'Thank God it is not hers!'" (67). A Masai messenger claims that they do not wish to harm Flossie, but interestingly, to save face with their own women they must kill one of the white men, since "'[w]ere we to return to our kraal without having done so, all the girls would make a mock of us'" (69). Quatermain is inclined to exchange his life for Flossie's—"a man was better fitted to meet death in such a peculiarly awful form than a sweet young girl"—but the others will not allow him to do so (70). His claims that Flossie's life is more "valuable" than his rings somewhat hollow, given Quatermain's achievements.

<24>Umslopogaas warns the Masai messenger that he will kill him with his new battle-axe, which he dubs "Inkosi-kaas," or "the chieftainess." Umslopogaas explains

that the axe was very evidently feminine, because of her womanly habit of prying very deep into things, and that she was clearly a chieftainess because all men fell down before her, struck dumb at the sight of her beauty and power. In the same way he would consult 'Inkosi-kaas' if in any dilemma; and when I asked him why he did so, he informed me it was because she must needs be wise, having 'looked into so many people's brains'. (51)

Umslopogaas claims, "'Man is born to kill. He who kills not when his blood is hot is a woman, and no man,'" but he gives his axe a feminine name so it is *she* who murders (56). After Mr. Mackenzie convinces more African men to lay down their lives for Flossie, the band attempts their rescue, and, in typical Haggard fashion, it is the African hero who must sacrifice the most and leads to the success of the mission. Umslopogaas has a "sportsmanlike" means of killing his foes: face-to-face, "tapping" them in the head with his large axe (52). Quatermain, on the other hand, admits, "I myself did not go into the melee, but hovered outside like the swift 'back' in a football scrimmage, putting a bullet through a Masai whenever I got a chance" (96-97). Although Allan claims he was "more use" this way, it is Umslopogaas who ceases the carnage and wins the day—"either by accident or design" he breaks from the ring of fighting and, visible to all the others, deflects an opponent's spear with his hidden protective armor (97). Umslopogaas slays the messenger as he swore he would, and, as Allan says, they "had saved the life of the little maid, and taught the Masai of those parts a lesson that they will not forget for ten years—but at what a cost!" (103-02).

<25>The upside, however, is that Flossie has now learned the error of her ways. During the melee, she had shot a Masai warrior who attempted to kill her, and now, Allan muses, "It struck

me as an odd thing that a girl who could find the nerve to shoot a huge black ruffian rushing to kill her with a spear should have been so affected at the thought of it afterwards; but it is, after all, characteristic of the sex” (104). When the adventurers must leave, Umslopogaas shows the greatest “distress at parting with Flossie, for whom the grim old warrior had conceived a strong affection. He...was never tired of loudly congratulating himself on having killed the Lygonani who had threatened to murder her” (114). The benefit of the imperiled and perilous white woman like Flossie is that, by virtue of saving her, he is ennobled and made heroic in the eyes of the white men. The white men like Quatermain, however, have a more immediate goal in mind: to send her back home where she belongs. At their parting, Allan advises her,

“By-and-by you will grow into a beautiful woman, Flossie, and all this wild life will be like a far-off dream to you.... Always try to be good, my dear, and to do what is right, rather than what happens to be pleasant, for in the end, whatever sneering people may say, what is good and what is happy are the same. Be unselfish, and whenever you can, give a helping hand to others.... If you do that you will become a sweet and God-fearing woman, and make many people's lives a little brighter, and then you will not have lived, as so many of your sex do, in vain.” (113)

Quatermain next hands her a check for a thousand pounds in order to pay for a diamond necklace for Flossie's future wedding—and, he even postulates, perhaps one day her daughter can wear the gems too (113). Thus assuring that she will return to Britain and marry like a good Scottish girl, Quatermain feels he has done his duty. He expresses his hope that she is “safe and well in England” and he wonders “how she fares there where there are no black folk to do her imperious bidding” (114).

<26>Like Bessie of *Jess*, Flossie is neutralized as a threat through her deportation. However, just as Flossie's father and *Jess*'s John discovers, the obligation to accompany a woman on her return forces British men out of the African paradise where they can live like kings and back to Britain. Haggard's Africa is often figured as a new Eden, a place where Englishmen can escape from the industrialism of England (Stiebel 58). In *Jess*, the heroine of the title is seen sobbing “as Eve might have sobbed when Adam reproached her” (205). Stella, of *Allan's Wife*, the last of Haggard's titles of this decade, also sees herself as Eve, defending her choice to stay in Africa as “natural” since “God put Adam and Eve in a garden, and that is how he meant their children to live” (106). However, what remains unspoken is that, without Eve, God's children might have remained in Eden, but her woman's weakness forced their expulsion. Haggard portrays Africa as mankind's second chance at Paradise; without Eve, this time they might be able to remain.

<27>The eponymous character of *Allan's Wife* appears about halfway through the novella and Allan describes her as his “dream woman” (79); she has “rosy lips” and “beautiful dark eyes” (83). She, however, does not identify as an Englishwoman—she claims to have no surname and does not remember her English childhood. Allan does, however; as a young girl, she cross-dressed as Father Christmas and caught fire. Young Allan burned his wrists in saving her (84). Although Allan rhapsodizes about Stella's “perfection,” her proclivity to bend genders and act a masculine role is a constantly threatening presence in the text. She acknowledges that she is “very wild and savage” (99), takes Allan's elephant gun to carry for herself and barks

harshly at her servant Hendrika (85). Although she knows Allan is an explorer, she claims she could never return to England, and has no desire to stray more than thirty miles from her current home, claiming that civilization “would frighten and bewilder” her (99). Stella is never given the chance to leave; she dies where she grew up and becomes a ghost that haunts the African wilderness (159).

<28>Stella is in Africa because her father, Mr. Carson, brought her there in what he admits could be called “the act of a madman,” since they live there “in a way unnatural to [their] race and status” (109). Again Carson likens Stella to Eve, claiming that she would have grown up “Nature’s child” were it not for his instruction, but he ultimately decided “I had no right to degrade her to the level of the savages around me, for if the fruit of the tree of knowledge is a bitter fruit, still it teaches good from evil” (110). He realized that by leaving her in Africa, he “was doing her a bitter wrong, ... separating her from her kind and keeping her in a wilderness where she could find neither mate nor companion” (109). Mr. Carson has only one, very firm, stipulation to their marriage:

“That so soon as my death occurs you should leave this place and take the first opportunity of returning to England. I do not ask you to live there always; it might prove too much for people reared in the wilds, as both of you have been; but I do ask you to make it your permanent home.” (111)

When Carson asks, “Do you consent and promise this?” it is to this query that Stella and Allan answer “I do”—twice—at their wedding (111). Equaling Allan’s delight at wedding “one of the sweetest and loveliest women on the whole earth” is that he “was to acquire with her very considerable possessions, quite sufficiently large to enable us to follow any plan of life we found agreeable” (115). Even before the danger another white woman presents in the novel is made manifest, Carson’s warning that Englishwomen belong and must stay in England is made clear.

<29>The most bizarre characterization of a white woman in Haggard’s early writing is that of Hendrika, the baboon woman. Etherington sees Hendrika as “an extremely rare example of Haggard appearing to place women below men on the evolutionary ladder,” but this assertion seems to deliberately ignore Ayesha of *She* and Gagool of *King Solomon’s Mines*, both of whom are also conflated with simians (84). However, this is the first of the simian women who is probably European in origin. Hendrika was raised by baboons, but, demonstrating some peculiar logic, Stella says could tell she was a “girl, for her skin was quite white” (87). Stella wanted to capture the “white baboon” and attempted to make a “Hottentot” man, Hendrik, help her, but while he “was very fond of [her],... for a long while he would not listen to [her] plan, because he said that the babyans [baboons] would kill us” (87). Ultimately, he is right; Hendrik is “torn... to pieces” by the baboons for his reluctant assistance in Stella’s scheme (89). Hendrika is given his name, perhaps suggesting her desire to usurp a man’s role.

<30>Upon meeting Allan, Hendrika urges Stella to “let him die” (79). She reminds Allan “of nothing so much as a very handsome monkey. She might have been the missing link” (79). Allan’s friendly African witch-doctor companion, Indaba-Zimbi, immediately knows how dangerous Hendrika is and foresees the conflicts to come. When he calls her “baboon-woman,”

Hendrika's "face twisted and grew livid with fury. She...literally sprang at Indaba-zimbi as a monkey springs" (85). Stella insists in reminding Allan that Hendrika "'is a woman, not a monkey, and yet she has many of the ways of monkeys, and looks like one too.... Also she is very savage, and when she is angry or jealous she seems to go mad, though she is as clever as anybody'" (89-90). Stella may represent the best possible outcome for Englishwomen raised in Africa—although she remains unnervingly headstrong and willful—and Hendrika represents the worst. She has not merely "gone native," she has "gone ape." She is able to use both the "cleverness" of the baboons and "the wisdom of the white people" that she has learned to orchestrate Allan's downfall.

<31>Moreover, Hendrika is in love with Stella; she resents that although Stella "used to kiss [her]," now she belongs to Allan (107). Allan, blind to the extent of Hendrika's hatred for him, ruminates:

It is generally supposed that this passion only exists in strength when the object loved is of another sex from the lover, but I confess that, both in this instance and in some others which I have met with, this has not been my experience. I have known men, and especially uncivilized men, who were as jealous of the affection of their friend or master as any lover could be of that of his mistress.... But the lower one gets in the scale of humanity, the more readily this passion thrives; indeed, it may be said to come to its intensest perfection in brutes. Women are more jealous than men, small-hearted men are more jealous than those of larger mind and wider sympathy, and animals are the most jealous of all. Now Hendrika was in some ways not far removed from animal, which may perhaps account for the ferocity of her jealousy of her mistress's affection. (108-09)

Haggard has here offered yet another reason to keep English ladies out of Africa; by returning to their "baser" instincts, they may engage in lesbianism. Part of this danger exists because of the potential for isolation in parts of the continent, and this particular fear might also reflect Haggard's refusal to consider Englishwomen's desire for African men in his fiction of this time.

<32>It has also been noted by several critics how Haggard's Africa is often figured as a woman itself. In *Imagining Africa*, Lindy Stiebel demonstrates how the African landscape is sexualized in his fiction—the mountains called "Sheba's Breasts" in *King Solomon's Mines* are the most overt example—and feminized, thus rendering it an apt playground and site to conquer for men. For women to attempt to similarly "conquer" this female landscape would be tantamount to lesbianism, and as seen in *Allan's Wife*, lesbian love in Haggard is linked with "brutes" and "animals" (109). As Stott succinctly puts it: "Africa invites the white male explorer, it challenges him and it tempts him. The white man must explore and penetrate this foreign territory, but he must also resist it or be threatened with absorption into otherness" (77). Haggard's white women are too easily absorbed and distorted by their surroundings, so it is necessary that *men*—both African and English—tame the exotic female landscape.

<33>In *Allan's Wife*, the African witch-doctor Indaba-Zimbi foretells that Stella and Hendrika's lesbian connection will bring destruction for all, warning, "'Baboon-woman—devil-woman. Be careful, Macumazahn. She loves that Star (the natives aptly enough called Stella the Star), and is

jealous. Be careful, Macumazahn, or the Star will set!” (103). The adventurers also have with them a young Boer girl named Tota, and Indaba-Zimbi predicts that the baboon-woman, having lost her natural maternal instinct in this unnatural setting, will attempt to kidnap or harm the child. The night before Allan’s wedding day, Hendrika attempts to stab him, but Indaba-Zimbi is there to save him, and together they “tie the devil up” and lock her away. After the wedding, although the African witnesses insist Hendrika must be killed, Stella leaps to Hendrika’s defense, speaking “in moving terms” of her affection (123). Indaba-Zimbi, “who had already gained a great reputation for wisdom and magic in the place,” counters Stella, insisting that the baboon-woman will destroy them all (123). Even Hendrika agrees with the sage African—“Better let them kill me, mistress, better for all. Without you to love I shall go mad and become a babyan again” (123).

<34>Although the men all realize the wisdom in Indaba-Zimbi’s advice, they feel bound to spare Hendrika’s life for Stella’s sake. Indaba-Zimbi is left to shrug and wonder, “Ah, why will you not listen to my words. Have they not always been true words, Macumazahn?” but he realizes that the presence of the white woman prevents the men from doing what is necessary (124). In retaliation, Hendrika recruits a baboon army that kills many African men from the village, kidnaps Stella and attempts to murder Tota. She no longer speaks or understands either English or “Kaffir” (147), and as Stella later recalls, “All she would do was to caress me, and even kiss my hands and dress with extravagant signs of affection” (148). Stella is forced to admit “that Hendrika was quite mad, and but little removed from the brutes to which she is akin” (150). Indaba-Zimbi uses his powers of divination to find the cave where Stella is being held—as Allan says, “I do not believe we should ever have found that cunningly hidden cave, unless, indeed, Indaba-zimbi’s magic (on which be blessings) had come to our assistance”—and the witch-doctor saves Allan’s life by defending him from baboons (145). When Hendrika discovers their escape, she tramples Indaba-Zimbi while Allan “could not bear to shoot” her (142).

<35>By the novella’s end, Stella dies from trauma and Hendrika digs up her grave and stabs herself in the breast. The baboon-woman dies declaring her undying love for Stella and begging her forgiveness. Although Allan asks Indaba-Zimbi to “send some one to watch the body,” by the “next morning it was gone, and I found that the natives, hearing of the event, had taken the corpse and thrown it to the vultures with every mark of hate” (155). Allan seems grateful for this act, since the African men have recognized the white baboon-woman’s danger from the beginning. Indaba-Zimbi and Allan bid each other a fond farewell, and Allan takes the Boer girl Tota to an English couple to ensure she will not suffer similar fates to Stella or Hendrika. He reassures the reader that, being brought up properly in England, “she grew up a very charming and pretty girl, and ultimately married a clergyman in Norfolk” and has three children (157).

<36>*Allan’s Wife* is atypical Haggard because of the Hendrika character; while he often employs villainesses, it is rare that this one, unlike Ayesha, is neither beautiful nor royal, nor, like Gagool, a native “fiend.” As Etherington suggests, the usual “fatal flaw” inherent to Haggard’s women is “the massive brain power that lurks beyond their radiant visages” and destroys their perfection as women (79). This is perhaps the case with Stella, who believes so strongly in herself that she is blind to danger and ignores the advice of more knowledgeable men, but the description of Hendrika and her love affair with Stella instead suggests a fear of white women’s “devolution” in

the African wilderness. Wendy Katz describes how, “[f]or Haggard, a white person always reaches the level of an African by ‘sinking’; there is no horizontal movement” (Katz 137). However, this generalization seems to apply only to white men; as is demonstrated in *Allan’s Wife*, white women, rather than “sinking to the level of an African,” instead seem to become *more* savage and more animalistic, and they degenerate, in a sometimes literal sense, to primates rather than “savage” people. As is often the case in Haggard’s work, the native Africans are much more aware and knowledgeable about their environment and their future than their European counterparts; like Indaba-Zimbi, they possess magic and foresight that Christianity does not afford.

<37>The threat of a primate-lesbian like Hendrika or an “imperious” white woman like Flossie demonstrates both Haggard’s perceived need for European men to form productive alliances with African men and a manifestation of contemporary societal fears within the Empire. In *She*, Haggard depicts a matriarchal society in which, at first glance, men and women appear to enjoy equality and all seem content with the established arrangement. It is not until the explorer Holly has Billali, one of the male Amahagger chiefs, alone that he reveals the truth. Billali initially claims, “In this country the women do what they please. We worship them, and give them their way, because without them the world could not go on; they are the source of life” (*She* 78). Many critics have pointed to this plot element in *She* as a manifestation of English fears of the threat of the New Woman. Billali continues,

“We worship them...up to a point, till at last they get unbearable, which...they do about every second generation....Then...we rise, and kill the old ones as an example to the young ones, and to show them that we are the strongest. My poor wife was killed in that way three years ago. It was very sad, but to tell thee the truth, my son, life has been happier since, for my age protects me from the young ones.” (*She* 78)

Although this does not suggest that Haggard advocated killing women, he seems keenly aware of the problems both white and black men face due to the unwelcome intrusion of women into their shared space. Haggard was by no means a woman-hater; as Etherington points out, Haggard’s love for his mother, his pining for the loved-and-lost Lily, and his intense admiration for Olive Schreiner all had a profound effect on the author (79). However, Haggard demonstrates an “instinctive feeling that it was immoral for women to use their brains as men used their brains and to pursue power as men pursued power” (Etherington 86). He also had “anxiety about the social consequences of women achieving self-sufficiency either alone or in groups”—as demonstrated in Haggard’s bloodthirsty white queens (Etherington 86). As Richardson notes, by the late nineteenth century, many English men feared that women’s lobbying for rights would lead to a reversal, rather than a reconsideration, of power dynamics, in which men would ultimately lose (14). These fears had driven men to leave the domestic sphere and take refuge where they could enjoy masculine pursuits away from the threat of agitating women (13). When considered in context, however, Haggard’s depiction of women in South Africa is no less egregious than some of his contemporaries’ portrayal. Lord Randolph Churchill, like most English reporters of the time, represented South Africa as “predominantly a male world” and saw the “place of women” in an African context solely as consumers abroad of the mining industry (Helly 134). Churchill describes a diamond as “a tiny crystal to be used for the gratification of

female vanity in imitation of a lust for personal adornment essentially barbaric if not altogether savage,” and concludes that “whatever may be the origin of man, woman is descended from an ape” (qtd. in Helly 134-35). Hendrika aside, Haggard is kinder in his characterization of Englishwomen, although he warns that if they choose to intrude upon the masculine colonial space of Africa, their primal, if not primate, natures will emerge.

### Endnotes

(1)As the majority of its story takes place in England, *The Witch’s Head* (1885] is not under consideration here. The other African romance stories reprinted in *Allan’s Wife and Other Stories*—“Hunter Quatermain’s Story” (1885], “Long Odds” (1886], and “A Tale of Three Lions” (1887]—contain only one type of “female”: lionesses to be hunted.(^)

(2)The possible exception is *Maiwa’s Revenge*, the cast of which is primarily African—although it could be argued that the novel’s final line points to the woman Maiwa as even more terrifying than the ostensible male villain.(^)

(3) It should be noted that in *Mr. Meeson’s Will*, Augusta’s colonial destination is New Zealand, not Africa.(^)

(4)One notable exception is the title character of *Nada the Lily* (1892] who dies tragically, although the novel consists of a primarily African cast and does not employ the “Pocahontas motif.”(^)

(5)Luckily for Haggard, some of the most famous female travelers of the day had not yet penetrated “his” South Africa; Mary Kingsley had focused on West Africa, and Amelia Edwards primarily traveled in Egypt. The reporter Flora Shaw would not be sent to South Africa until 1892 (Helly 130).(^)

(6)It is notable that the Mackenzies insist on the *Englishness* of their garden even though they are native Scots, and they ultimately settle in England.(^)

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