GERALD
MONSMAN

COLONIAL VOICES

THE ANGLO-AFRICAN

HIGH ROMANCE

OF EMPIRE

UNIVERSITY **P**RESS
OF THE **S**OUTH

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This one is

for

Nancy

A ma vie de coeur entier

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PREFACE

Ever since the nineteenth-century the imperial romance has been understood, on some level, not merely as a self-evident genre of adventure capable of producing an aesthetic experience but as a political construction of ideological identifications and exclusions. There is a serious dearth of critical work on late-imperial writers of popular romances written about the Anglo-African colonies and the regions beyond their imperial frontiers. A growing interest in Africa now means that even the Anglo-imperialist using the voices of the original inhabitants to write about Africa is no longer a forgettable novelist from an insignificant corner of the globe. The strategic move in *Colonial Voices* is to re-evaluate "voice" in terms of "landscape," in which natural space and cultural space are interdefining, though radically different for indigenous and capitalistic societies. Thus when economic globalization invaded diverse indigenous habitats, it redefined the land as a capitalistic resource. Tribes were progressively displaced from their traditional physical homelands which served as the framework for their cultural voices–for myths, songs, ceremonies, visions. By the end of the nineteenth century this land was a vanishing presence in their lives.

Critics have suggested that discourse about indigenous populations in the language of the colonizer cannot establish an authentic relatedness between the tribal lives these authors describe and Western experience. This view considers colonial English an instrumentality bound by doctrinaire political and religious principles, a collection of whitened words like bones in a sepulcher. But *Colonial Voices* argues that contemporary disapproval over the appropriation of indigenous subject matter by white writers fails to take into consideration such co-relations and connections within historical experience as those that allow simultaneous, multiple social perspectives. The empire author's ideological stance is tempered both by scrutinizing divergent African and Western cultural concepts and by utilizing abundant historical and multi-textual tethers with which to ground his fiction. To revalue these writers, it is necessary to read

their fiction both with and against the grain of imperial ideology; that is, to read their literal content also in the light of counter-imperial contexts as reflected in the land and its different voices. It is this relation of landscape to voice and of voice to written text that will give the work of these empire writers their audacity of vision and a heuristic value of achievement.

This monograph particularly brings an important and neglected figure back into the canon–Bertram Mitford (1855-1914). Mitford explores the cultural differences between Western and African perspectives with respect to spirituality, social organization, justice, women's roles, and civic duty. His work is measured against somewhat better known Anglo-African writers, including H. Rider Haggard, Olive Schreiner, John Buchan and W. C. Scully, as well Sol Plaatje, an indigenous novelist writing in English. After the second chapter, each subsequent section compares Mitford's fiction to other narratives by one or more near contemporaries. These Anglo-African narratives are treated in terms of their divergent "voices"–the inflections and social identities of authorial, narrational, characterological, and historical speakers–as they comment on the events, cultural rituals, and beliefs of the original inhabitants or settlers in conflict or (sadly less frequently) in harmony. The varied styles of discourse by which the narrators tell their stories include elements of camp-fire tales, ancient myths, heroic narratives of warfare, colonial turns of phrase, and "dark talking" between tribal chiefs or banter by black servants. Both their multiplicity and their conflicting goals challenged the empire's socially constructed assumptions about power. And they suggest alternative modes and values to define settler and subaltern identities.

In analyzing these voices of the Zulu, Ndebele, and British *imperia*, this study utilizes new primary materials from Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States to work through their deeds and legacies. Although I resist turning what is essentially a literary history into a theory-driven discussion, an informed awareness of contemporary global scholarship and debate will be apparent in this discussion. Anyone in the twenty-first century reading the primary texts of the nineteenth will find the spellings and accepted terms for

ethnic groups in South Africa deeply enmeshed in the politics of usage. Within the context of British imperialism, nouns such as *native* or *Hottentot* (a Dutch derivative, "to stammer," from the clicking sound of the Khoisan speech) evoke a disparaging or patronizing stereotype of backwardness. But although I will endeavor to establish clearly the valencies and currency of my terminology and to be accurate in referring to the historical polities and geography of Southern Africa, consistent maintenance of contemporary usage (often taken from Nguni or other African language groups) must on occasion yield to imperial usages (their English forms). In certain places the contrast of recent socio-political terminology would jar with the nineteenth-century historical atmosphere, and the reader is invited to suspend contemporary perspectives in order to experience Africa as the authors lived it.

Originally undertaken as the "2007 Lectures" for the History of Ideas Institute, this series is now brought to publication with the assistance of a timely Award from the Office of the Dean of the College of Humanities, University of Arizona. I am happy also to thank Professor Robert Langenfeld, editor and publisher of *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* and ELT Press, for permission to utilize for this current study biographical material in the Appendix of my *H. Rider Haggard on the Imperial Frontier* (ELT Press, 2006). Also, I wish to thank Professor Paul Niemeyer and "Mitfordians" Brian Stringer, Jay Jenkins, Kent Rasmussen, and Jim Armstrong. To them I owe much in the way of encouragement, sage advice and a few pub drinks. Diana deKrijger-Monsman, who through songs when I was a child taught me enough Dutch so that fortuitously I could muddle through Afrikaans in later years, was the beginning of it all. Much more recently I set about acquiring a basic knowledge of isiZulu, of phonology and grammar, but unlike old Africa hands, I can't sing any hymns in isiZulu–yet.

PART I

AUTHORS OF EMPIRE

CHAPTER 1
THE ANGLO-AFRICAN WRITERS' CLUB

Among current questions of canonicity and the rehabilitation of less "mainstream" kinds of texts, Part I, Authors of Empire, proposes that the fiction of Bertram Mitford, H. Rider Haggard, and other Anglo-African writers such as W.C. Scully, H. A. Bryden, and John Buchan, may be prime candidates for consideration, inasmuch as their work has depth as well as an accessible, popular appeal. This "adventure" category includes heroic struggles in settler life, sagas such as those of the Ndebele-Zulu peoples, the tension of suspense or the passion of adventure and romance, and the paranormal. Until recently, and in some quarters currently, "popular" nineteenth-century empire writers and their readers have been marginalized as practitioners and enthusiasts of a formulaic and trivial genre. Yet because so many people read and were influenced by these works, they provide us with insights into the cultural trends and ideologies of that era. Still, traditional markers between serious and popular literature are becoming more blurred or complicated by a growing awareness in critical discourse that popular works also may be artistic. A process of critical re-evaluation, focusing on the range of adventure romance's contributions–on its narrative voices, its sophisticated, complex characterizations, and its use of irony, particularly in presenting British and Boer imperial societies–would bring a new appreciation of these authors "more often named than read, and more often read than profitably studied" (Eliot, "Metaphysical" 669).

John Buchan's definition of "the romance" as an adventure tale "where the incidents defy the probabilities, and march just inside the borders of the possible" (*Steps* 5) is apposite. Later in this same narrative, Buchan's protagonist recounts a horrible murder:

> "You're looking for adventure," I cried; "well, you've found it here. The devils are after me, and the police are after them. It's a race that I mean to win."

> "By God!" he whispered, drawing his breath in sharply, "it is all pure Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle."
>
> "You believe me," I said gratefully.
>
> "Of course I do," and he held out his hand. "I believe everything out of the common. The only thing to distrust is the normal."(*Steps* 70)

One tends to think of Shakespeare's plays, even the romances, as embodying the beliefs of his Tudor era, but one is less likely to assume the adventures and occult happenings in Haggard or Doyle express any sort of practical political philosophy or effective cultural commentary. Popular and serious works of literature alike can be vehicles of political comment and social vision, and any separation of higher and lower is often exaggerated.

This present critical examination begins at the metropolitan center of empire with the speakers and topics at the "Anglo-African Writers' Club," a filter through which the mysterious "other"on the frontiers of empire was represented. Mary Louise Pratt has suggested an unequal dialectic in which the urban center "habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis–beginning, perhaps, with the latter's obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself" (Pratt 6). Statements on the white man's burden in Victorian schools, editorials in newspapers, and sermons by vicars, created even in the club a popular belief in "the Divine right of a great civilizing race such as ours " (*Times* 17 May 1898:11). Nevertheless, fiction by several of the club writers on the British presence in Africa challenges at least some of the assumptions of jingoistic imperialism. The best empire romances are neither wholly conservative, like G. A. Henty's fiction, nor confrontationally polemical, like Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Halket of Mashonaland* (1897).[1] Rather, the best of this fiction questions the ideology of empire, even while maintaining an

1. This value judgment debatably assumes that when character, action, and image are intended to persuade readers to adopt a particular position or action on a topical issue, the æsthetic element is diminished–in Schreiner's story, an attack on Rhodes's policies.

ostensible consensus on its generic structure and readership as defined by class, gender, age and geography. That such works have formulaic moments–hair's-breadth escapes, sickness, hunger, death, and the reconciliation of lovers–is undeniable. Such motifs, however, are equally present in mainstream fiction and, even, in non-fictional works of travel, hunting and exploration, and missionary accounts. The complaint that popular works fail to explore the social norms from which they originate is simply untrue. The fact is that the use of history and ideology in popular fiction has been inadequately recognized and articulated. Canonical literature of quality certainly has an agenda beyond entertainment, but so does popular fiction. Moreover, highbrow novels cannot match empire romance for responsiveness to the cultural anxieties and urgencies within a broad, popular base of readers. These romances of empire reflect how readers expected to see that world: "In spite of all its apparent peace and restfulness, its smiling beauty and magic charm of scenery, there is never absent in Africa the note of passion, the undertone of the fierce warfare between nature and life, between man and animal, between man and man. And it is perhaps this note of tragedy, this element of passion which gives to Africa its thrilling interest" (Smuts vii-viii). Far-off in time as Britain's crown colonies may be, it is easy to visualize the impact of nineteenth-century imperialism on Ndebele and Zulu political power. It is a drama that opens our eyes to our own human ambitions and flaws. Not only does this fiction portray with authentic local color the sudden changes wrought by British imperialism upon traditional, indigenous ways of life, these narratives also convey the weight and interest of pivotal human moments–of life lived in the presence of death or of passion or of duty, of guilt and innocence, and of the ironies of unfeeling circumstance.

Although such fiction graphically depicted the clash of cultures, current uneasiness with its dramatization may well obscure the original force and tenor of the scenes. Because neither Mitford nor his fellow Anglo-African writers explicitly condemned the British presence in Africa, they were (and still are) considered "patriotic" writers who praised the manly virtues of the Empire against tribal Africans and Boers. Mitford kept an ironic distance from the jingos of

the proletariat, and his authorial voice currently is relevant for its shrewd attitudes and interpretations of those historical events. Significantly, his plots are more often presented from the perspective of colonist or indigenous African struggling for survival in the colonized land than from G.A. Henty's transoceanic perspective of *With Buller in Natal* (1900) or *With Roberts to Pretoria* (1902). When Henty writes in the preface to this latter novel that "the Boers had not the heart to venture even once to face the British in the open" (vi), Mitford unhesitatingly burlesques this "consuming love of fair play" in *The Curse of Clement Waynflete* (1894): "Sergeant Clark's idea, you see, was thoroughly characteristic of his nationality, viz., that naked savages armed only with spears . . . ought by every law of fairness to stand out and do themselves the honour of being shot down by the latest improvement in breech-loading weapons of precision in the hands of Englishmen. Failing this they were 'crawling, cowardly, greasy rascals'" (7). Actually, Mitford realized that Clark's type of crafty warrior was the Zulus' ancient standard (*Zulu Country* 145) and so far from disparaging them, he is allowing Clark actually to credit the Zulus with adapting tactics to pragmatic necessities. The imperial scorn of the Zulu language (Nguni form: isiZulu) as "native jabber" or "monkey chatter" by those who hadn't learned it strikes the same ironic note as the popular glorification of military action as "nigger-shooting," mere "fun," or what Royston, an imperial dim-wit in *Waynflete*, rationalizes to King Cetywayo (no less!) as merely his desire for "adventure."

Colonial Voices: The Anglo-AfricanHigh Romance of Empire is a companion study to my *H. Rider Haggard on the Imperial Frontier* (2006) and will introduce pivotal novels by Bertram Mitford, reading his texts both "with the grain," to explore how the patriotic nineteenth-century public understood his political meanings, and simultaneously reading "against the grain" to identify those covert ambiguities, unspoken preferences, and subtle inconsistencies that subvert the dominant imperial ideology. Both Mitford's language, stylistics, and the interrelated images as well as his social, political, and literary contexts will be explored. Ever since Odysseus met Polyphemus, the confrontation between "god-fearing" European

culture and "wild savages" (Homer 9: 177-78)–between reason and passion–has presented itself in literature and life according to an imperial agenda or "script" foreshadowed here by Homer. This scenario of deceit and technological force unfolds according to a sequence of actions, neither willingly admitted nor openly orchestrated, but which yet appear as scripted as if it were a play. The wonderful Gikuyu parable in Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (1938) illustrates exactly this sort of aggressive imperial appropriation of Africa's ostensibly unoccupied land. Recounting this oral tale of his people–a beast fable, later titled by Chiuna Achebe "The Gentlemen of the Jungle"–Kenyatta illustrates the British attitude towards tribal Africans as calculatedly dishonest (47-52). The British "gentlemen" are the "animals" of the jungle, the "man" is the African; and although the jungle "gentlemen" know that untenanted land is used at least part of the year by shifting cultivators, they enable one of their own, the elephant, to force the "man" out–a script that now will end with a political backlash.

The first great imperialist in Western literature may be Odysseus. Although as Homer describes him, he pridefully taunts the aboriginal Polyphemus, yet as Tennyson in "Ulysses" pictures him, he has much else in common with the British imperialist, "roaming with a hungry heart." Neither Ithaca nor England as insular habitations could contain that lusting spirit of exploration, travel, and progress: "'Tis not too late to seek a newer world." This voice of Tennyson's Ulysses became also the voice of Britain's nineteenth-century empire–but not the only one. Mitford and his contemporaries introduce a wide spectrum of characters, with immensely different racial or gender histories, who talk about the world and themselves diversely. Many Anglo-African writers knew the novelist cannot have just the one story of colonial society, even if it be the seemingly benign story of the missionary. He or she must listen to the many voices of children, women, and of the land and its indigenous inhabitants. Indirectly, these voices also bespeak a distinguishable authorial presence, who stages how these figures are depicted, who speaks with intentionality for them, and who creates for his readers a sympathetic closeness to them or an ironic distance from them. The

elephant sticking his trunk into the colonial room or lying on the verandah–to summarize Kenyatta's hilariously satiric Gikuyu parable–seems always to be for the imperial author, given that the ideal of cultural superiority may be flawed and that colonial rule may not be benign or just, whether and to what extent black resistance or violence towards white society is justified.

The present study examines the agreement or conflicts between African and imperial speakers and, through them, the refracted intentions of the authors of the narratives here considered. The characters' differing values and social viewpoints–religious, political, economic, racial or historical–either reinforce or controvert each other. Each voice must be construed against the backdrop of all the other voices, not to mention the roaring of beasts and the thunder that is the voice of God. And each must be read with or against the grain not only of such multifarious voices within each particular text, but, equally, read with or against the larger contexts of Anglo-African political analysis and social discourse. If "high romance" implies a tale of larger-than-life love and adventure–one rather less realistic than the usual vein in which things occur–in this fiction of empire situational contrasts, ambiguities, and ironies often subvert the conventional romance elements. Descriptions of social values that expose fundamental tensions are integral to the authors' intent and create for the reader a complex response. For this reason, in both generically dissimilar adventure tales and in works of realism, common concerns with local cross-cultural interactions, framed by the broader imperium, show how gendered and subaltern voices, no less than more-canonical ones, attested to the alteration, renegotiation or maintenance of complex identities. Narratives by Sol Plaatje, Olive Schreiner, and Joseph Conrad (who all have attained canonical or quasi-canonical status) are compared to the romance adventure to provide, in terms of a thematic and formal convergence between genres, a more dynamically expressive definition of empire fiction. That these writers have been part of the canon for various lengths of time, demonstrates the continuity of Mitford's thematic and imagistic values within the canonical range of Anglo-African literature in the High Victorian and Edwardian eras. This will be the *procedure* of the

present study. The contemplated *outcome* of this study, which breaks new ground critically and biographically, aims to "mainstream" Mitford and his fellow African and Anglo-African writers, so that in future they can be read alongside Dickens or any other Victorian or Edwardian novelist, not merely considered special-topic local colorists. I suggest that Mitford and his fellow writers hold a unique place in relation to Homer's epic, inasmuch as their fiction reflects a time when the *last* habitable places on earth were being discovered, explored, and colonized. Yet these stories of seeking "newer worlds," from the time of Homer to that of these Anglo-African writers, have an astonishing contemporary resonance in our twenty-first century world of nation- and empire-building.

§

From the agoras of ancient Greece to the parks and pubs of Victorian England, centralized spaces of concentration and mixture promoted locally diverse contacts, mobility and opportunity. The same is true of imperial capitols; indeed, the emperors in Rome placed symbolic importance on their city as a center to counterpoise the inescapable loss of power in their far-flung empire. In the late nineteenth century, the buildings of major European cities that assumed the function of imperial capitols competed with and copied each other. British architects lamented London's falling behind rival national models for the imperial metropolis. Paris had Baron Haussmann's publicly supported reconstruction proclaiming the power of Napoleon III's state; Brussels boasted the grandiose and ambitious plans of King Leopold II for the city's rebuilding. Of London it was observed that the various locales within the city served differing functions of empire. In such cities, money for far-flung trading networks was centralized and no full understanding of an empire without its functioning social-economic-political center and its ostensibly dependent periphery can be reached. The significance of even a regional governmental center is testified to in a novella that will be discussed later, W.C. Scully's *A Vendetta of the Desert* (1898). Writing of the Cape Colony, Scully observes: "For centuries

the government tried to prevent the expansion of the Colony to a distance from the central authority at Cape Town, but the efforts were as useless as though one were to try to control quicksilver on a slanting board with the hand. The enactment of the most stringent laws was of no avail to prevent the more adventurous spirits from seeking their fortune in the vast, mysterious hinterland. Such men looked upon the heathen as their inheritance and on the wilderness as their portion" (49). This dynamic of central control and peripheral independence, finally even tribal rebellion, is the essence of the three-way British, Boer, and African struggle.

In connection with the high romance of Empire, it may therefore not seem too strange to describe a gathering of writers at monthly dinners in the Grand Hotel, Northumberland Avenue, London. If there was a home for England's novels of Africa–an ideological center of journalistic opinion and literary production–it may well have been here at the Anglo-African Writers' Club in Westminster. For most of the club's existence, H. Rider Haggard seems to have been its Chairman, active at its monthly dinners from its inception in1895 to the early years of the following century.[2] In his autobiography, *The Days of My Life* (1926), Haggard refers, perhaps a bit dispassionately, to this group of which he was elected chairman as "a pleasant and useful dining society" (2: 110). Literary members included Bertram Mitford, author of many African novels, including *Sign of the Spider* (1896),W.C. Scully, author of *Kafir Stories* (1895) and *Between Sun and Sand* (1898), H. A. Bryden, author of *Tales of South Africa* (1896), and numerous other writers. A slighting reference in *The New York Times* opens the possibility that F. C. Selous, narrator of hunting adventures, and Olive Schreiner, writer of *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), attended the club meetings.[3]

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2. *The San Francisco Call* noted that the Anglo-African Writers' Club was "recently formed in London" with Rider Haggard as its President (1 July 1895: 6). Apparently, William Eglinton, who gave up mediumship and spiritualism for journalism, was the club's vice-chairman in 1895 and chairman in 1896, having in 1890 hunted extensively in South Africa ("Eglinton").

3. "Mr. Kipling was the guest at a recent dinner of the Anglo-African Writers'

Haggard, along with the Secretary of the Anglo-African club, on one occasion called on Schreiner at her apartment, much to the landlady's displeasure at a single woman entertaining gentlemen callers. Haggard initially had made Schreiner's acquaintance when he sent her a copy of his first novel in testimonial to the impression that her novel of farm life on the karoo, the arid, semi-desert tableland of southern Africa, had made upon him, which subsequently in "About Fiction" he priased as a notable narrative of "spiritual intensity." In a letter to his brother, Haggard somewhat contradictorily observed "that he was attracted by Schreiner's intellect, but admitted that he was repelled by her 'complete and overpowering atheism'" (Stiebel 380; Haggard, "About Fiction" 180).

Pleasant and useful the club undoubtedly was, but the largest share of excitement was generated by politics. When three African chiefs came to London to entreat Queen Victoria to halt appropriation of their territory by Cecil Rhodes's British South African Company,

> pro-native and prosettler traditions clashed, literally, in a bar-room brawl inside Rider Haggard's Anglo-African Club in London, just before the Bechuana chiefs left England. Prosettlers, led by the French traveler Lionel Décle, clashed with pro-natives led by H. A. Bryden, who in the pages of the *Saturday Review* had accused "Mr. Rhodes and the monopolists" of trying to seize and suck the three chiefs dry. (Parsons 258)

This event reflected a vigorous exchange of these gentlemen's opinions as reported in "The Smoking Room" column of *The African Review* for 16 November 1895:

> It was hoped that Khama with his companions would be the guests of the Anglo-African Writers' Club at the monthly dinner this week, but although they were very anxious to accept the

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Club. The Anglo-African writers are, so far as is known, Mr. Rider Haggard, Mr. Selous, and Miss Olive Schreiner. These appear to have taken to themselves a sufficient number of Anglo-Africans, who hope some of these days to write, and they have formed a club that from time to time gives capital dinners" (Alden BR388).

> invitation–which, by their special request, was kept open for a week–they were unable to do so, as they are now practically in the hands of the Government. Mr. A. Wilmot was also asked, but he has gone over to Rome–actually, not religiously. Khama would have enjoyed himself, I think, but though it is a well-known fact that all members of the Anglo-African Writers' Club are teetotalers, it does not follow that their friends are, and I fear the chief would have been shocked at the "dead men" on the table on Wednesday evening.
>
> The evening was a pleasant one. Mr. Bertram Mitford presided, and near him sat Mr. Cust, the Editor of the *Pall Mall*, M. Lionel Dècle, and Mr. Stevens, also from that paper. . . . M. Dècle followed [Mr. Cust's speech] with some very trenchant remarks upon "l'affaire Stokes,"[4] branching off into a somewhat strong denunciation of Khama, whom the celebrated explorer evidently does not like. M. Dècle explained that he once bought some oxen from Khama, and had to pay £8 for each beast. Some months later, wishing to dispose of them, he asked Khama to buy them back, and could only get £3 for each beast. I am bound to say that nearly everybody who heard this story seemed to think that the Chief was an extremely good business man, and I fancy that he went up considerably in their estimation. Mr. H. A. Bryden defended Khama warmly, but there was no fight, and then we had some music and some more speeches. . . .
>
> One of the events of the evening was the arrival of Lobengula, the *Pall Mall Gazette* bulldog, who was sent for by Mr. Cust, and who came in charge of a gorgeously-dressed black boy. Lobengula was an appropriate and a welcome guest, and his beauty was much admired. (867)

One must not take everything at face value; Lobengúla was probably the only teetotaler there–and, of course, "boy" in colonial usage could be an adult servant.

The article by Bryden in the *Saturday Review*, entitled "Schreiner *v.* Rhodes," dealt with Olive Schreiner's "impeachment of Mr. Rhodes and his policy" in "The Political Situation," *Cape Times*, 28 August 1895, for allowing "a small band of monopolists" to

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4. In 1895 Charles Henry Stokes, a British-born ivory trader, was summarily tried and hanged in King Leopold's Congo Free State not for an alleged sale of firearms but as retaliation for lost ivory commissions.

appropriate the mineral resources of Southern Africa for personal profit: "She shows but too plainly that under the Rhodes *régime* South Africa has been in effect already captured by the capitalist and monopolist, and that it will be available for the use of the colonists only when it has been squeezed and sucked dry of most of its wealth." Bryden again used nearly the same end phrase in his last paragraph:

> I believe as much as any one in the expansion of British South Africa. But I have, and have always had, the gravest doubts whether such an expansion under the rule of Mr. Rhodes and his monopolist crew would not in the long run do infinite harm to South Africa as a whole.
>
> The Chiefs Khama, Sebele, and Bathoen, as was stated last week, are just now in England for the purpose of preventing their countries from being seized and sucked dry by Mr. Rhodes and his "ring." (5 October 1895: 435-436)

A very similar unsigned article, "Khama and the Chartered Company," appeared in the *Saturday Review* on 26 October 1895 (536-537).

The Anglo-African novel of empire grew out of a specific call for direct appropriation or control through settlement for agricultural or mineral resources in "the great and fertile continent of Africa to be no longer kept wantonly sealed, but made available as the scene of European enterprise" (Livingstone, *Zambesi* 2)–and of course, perhaps not as an intentional afterthought, that the "happiness," "prosperity," "freedom," and "the blessings of the Gospel" will result for the African tribes. This was the missionary's largely humane agenda. But when that evening at the Anglo-African Writers' Club Bryden accused "Rhodes and the monopolists" of trying to seize and suck dry the land of native tribes, he voiced a dissent to a colonial ideal that Cecil Rhodes, if not Lionel Décle, had imbibed from John Ruskin, one of the most influential professors at Oxford. There is no more direct expression of imperialism than that offered by the enormously admired and influential Slade Professor of Art at Oxford University. Ruskin articulated *the* quintessential statement of British imperialism, "ripe with sinister idealism" (Monsman, *Schreiner* 2-3). His editors, Cook and Wedderburn, said Ruskin described this

passage from *Lectures on Art* (1873) "as 'the most pregnant and essential' of all his teaching":

> There is a destiny now possible to us–the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused. We are still undegenerate in race; a race mingled of the best northern blood. We are not yet dissolute in temper, but still have the firmness to govern, and the grace to obey. . . . Within the last few years we have had the laws of natural science opened to us with a rapidity which has been blinding by its brightness; and means of transit and communication given to us, which have made but one kingdom of the habitable globe. One kingdom;–but who is to be its king? Is there to be no king in it, . . . or will you, youths of England, make your country again a royal throne of kings; a sceptred isle, for all the world a source of light, a centre of peace?

English global hegemony would be built on a "pure" aristocratic Anglo-Saxon bloodline. Ruskin's "race" of "best northern blood," for the moment "still undegenerate," connects with a broad fear of contamination, especially by darker races. Perhaps Alfred Tennyson's jilted and bitter young man of *Maud* (1855) had been influenced by such ideology–he who was tempted to "take some savage woman" but recoiled at the bestiality of being "mated with a squalid savage," siring offspring "with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains" (90).

Somewhat later Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* (1898) took up this theme fictionally when England's vision of hereditary entitlement was challenged by a foreign invasion of blood-draining predators. In the opening pages of Wells's novel, the Martian observers of mankind are malevolent spies; but man, the arrogant observer of the protozoans (ironically, his ultimate savior), is the noble scientist. For Wells, privileging the terrestrial perspective resembles ethnocentric British imperialism, implying that the Martians, the technologically superior invaders, are only the British themselves in another guise. When Wells described the Martian attack upon London, center of the British empire, he allegorized the vulnerability of imperial ambitions, as a reminder to his countrymen that imperial rule upheld by force of arms may be

challenged by the very progress it embodies. The salvation of London's citizens was owing to the Martians' progress in eliminating disease, thus also extinguishing their immunity to those insignificant bacilli. What the British in Bryden's image do to Africa's inhabitants through Rhodes–captured, "squeezed and sucked dry"–Stoker's or Wells's vampires do fictionally. Just before these novels, Mitford's *Sign of the Spider* (1896) featured a vampiric arachnid that drains its prey, another image of ethnocentric values that victimize by means of enforced customs, institutions, and laws.

Ruskin, the Anglo-African Writers' Club's *éminence grise,* elaborates:

> There are the two *oriflammes* [golden flames]; which shall we plant on the farthest islands,–the one that floats in heavenly fire, or that hangs heavy with foul tissue of terrestrial gold? There is indeed a course of beneficent glory open to us, such as never was yet offered to any poor group of mortal souls. But it must be–it *is* with us, now, "Reign or Die." And if it shall be said of this country, "*Fece per viltate, il gran rifiuto*,"[5] that refusal of the crown will be, of all yet recorded in history, the shamefullest and most untimely. And this is what she [England] must either do, or perish: she must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men;–seizing every piece of fruitful waste ground she can set her foot on, and there teaching these her colonists that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and that their first aim is to be to advance the power of England by land and sea.

Here we have the dominant metropole and its unresisting periphery. Although possession of "fruitful waste ground" sounds almost like an ecological obligation, the reality of underutilization was quite different. Those rain-fed grazing areas are not "waste" but used by nomadic herders. To dispossess these pastoralists of their land would be to ruin them. Yet, says Ruskin:

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5. Dante, *Inferno*, 3:59-60: "I saw and recognized the shade of him / Who made, through cowardice, the great refusal."

> The England who is to be mistress of half the earth, cannot remain herself a heap of cinders, trampled by contending and miserable crowds; she must yet again become the England she was once, and in all beautiful ways, . . . polluted by no unholy clouds, . . . she must guide the human arts, and gather the divine knowledge, of distant nations, transformed from savageness to manhood, and redeemed from despairing into peace. (20: 41-43)

Ruskin would consign industrial pollution to foreign soil, replacing it with an ideal of "arts" and "knowledge" regenerated for the British at home and abroad by empire. One may wish to compare the above quotations with another passage from Ruskin's *The Crown of Wild Olive* ([1866] 1906: 185).

Cecil Rhodes wrote his agenda as a young man of twenty-three, just before he left for Africa to become the greatest nineteenth-century political figure on that continent, after whom the territory of Rhodesia was named. If Rhodes had not elsewhere acknowledged indebtedness to Ruskin, his use of "seize" and "duty" would certainly have established an influence. In what has been entitled "Rhodes's 'Confession of Faith'" (1877), he wrote:

> I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings, what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence; look again at the extra employment a new country added to our dominions gives. I contend that every acre added to our territory means, in the future, birth to some more of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence. Added to this, the absorption of the greater portion of the world under our rule simply means the end of all wars. . . .
>
> Why should we not form a secret Society with but one object, the furtherance of the British Empire and the bringing of the whole uncivilised world under British rule, for the recovery of the United States, for the making the Anglo-Saxon race but one Empire? What a dream; but yet it is probable, it is possible . . . . Africa is still lying ready for us; it is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory. (Flint 200)

Ruskin was the theorist, Rhodes the practitioner. Perhaps neither set out to warp and deprave his given portion of history, to create a ruthless and cruel empire controlled solely by notions of blood purity and racial heredity.

In contrast with Ruskinian urbanity or Rhodesian crudity of direct appropriation, there was another ideal, one of cooperation, voiced by Bryden and Schreiner but best encapsulated by John Buchan in hindsight. Novelist and political figure, Buchan had accepted an invitation from Lord Alfred Milner, the colonial administrator, to go with him to South Africa. Milner's quest for British influence in Africa was reflected in Buchan's highly idealistic hopes for empire:

> Those were the days when a vision of what the Empire might be made dawned upon certain minds with almost the force of a revelation. . . . It was an inspiration for youth to realise the magnitude of its material heritage, and to think how it might be turned to spiritual issues. Milner, like most imperialists of that day, believed in imperial federation. . . . I dreamed of a world-wide brotherhood with the background of a common race and creed, consecrated to the service of peace; Britain enriching the rest out of her culture and traditions, and the spirit of the Dominions like a strong wind freshening the stuffiness of the old lands. I saw in the Empire a means of giving to the congested masses at home open country instead of a blind alley. I saw hope for a new afflatus in art and literature and thought. Our creed was not based on antagonism to any other people. It was humanitarian and international; we believed that we were laying the basis of a federation of the world. As for the native races under our rule, we had a high conscientiousness; Milner and Rhodes had a far-sighted native policy. The "white man's burden" is now an almost meaningless phrase; then it involved a new philosophy of politics, and an ethical standard, serious and surely not ignoble. (Buchan, *Memory* 124-25).

Buchan contrasts Africa's "scents, sights and sounds" to London's "dull mercantile" tone and its "vulgar display of wealth, and a *rastaquouère* craze for luxury. I began to have an ugly fear that the Empire might decay at the heart" (127-28). But the irony is that if the idea of empire had been less idealistic and more realistic, then

cynically self-enriching liars would not have been able to manipulate the naive and single-minded belief in a cooperative international world. Nor would the blundering created by colonial ransacking of resources and a failure to recognize and honor cultural differences have led to Buchan's dawning realization "that the Empire might decay at the heart." A power in the land's historic and material possession by its inhabitants created anxiety about the Empire's future. In the colonies exploitation was paradoxically mixed with appreciation of African spirituality; in the metropole humanitarian views were often neutralized by profit-driven financial schemes. This debate on colonial affairs pivoted between the fantasy of a harmonious empire and a violent capitalistic and Western venture that incited black resistance. Precisely here lies the central dilemma of the imperial debate–either idealistic assimilation or hypocritical victimization. Britain's "most energetic and worthiest men" were offered incorruptible devotion to duty and the chance to make the kind of world they aspired to inhabit–or they must resist the siren song of hope, of idealism, of over-much faith in those around them and of a mission to spread the British gospel of light to all the dark places of the earth.

Invited speakers at later gatherings of the Anglo-African club comprised such luminaries as Conan Doyle, whose first story, "The Mystery of the Sassassa Valley," was set in Southern Africa–appearing the same month that his first professional article came out in the *British Medical Journal*, both in September 1879; afterwards, as a young physician Doyle had worked as medical officer on a ship going to west Africa, becoming gravely ill with typhoid. Invited in 1897 to speak, Doyle replied on 15 June: "I have, as you know, been idling for a long time and so I contemplate a hard winter's work, which can only be done by cutting off all festive occasions however tempting. I am none the less very much flattered that the Anglo-African club should have wished to have me as their guest" (Reznikoff 883). A few years later, on the brink of the Anglo-Boer war in which Doyle would serve as medical officer in South Africa, Haggard wrote (in the hand of a secretary, signed by Haggard) to Greville Matheson, Secretary of the Anglo-African Writers' Club

on 18 April 1899: "I enclose Conan Doyle's answer. Perhaps you could see, or write to him & try to make some arrangement. I enclose cheque for my share of the Grand Hotel account" (Hart 6602). *The North Otago Times* reported on 27 November 1899 that "Dr. Conan Doyle, the well known author, was on Monday night the principal guest of the evening at a dinner of the Anglo-African Writers' Club at the Grand Hotel, London, where he observed that "violence would be a sign of weakness," and cautioned against "the bullying of a small Power by a large one," referring to President Kruger of the dissident Transvaal (4).

Another notable was Rudyard Kipling in May of 1898. Kipling, so the newspaper reported, was introduced by Haggard as a visionary of empire: "There was more in the idea of empire than that of trade, and the poet and idealist had a nobler conception of empire than the trader, and none was better qualified to give expression to that conception than their friend Mr. Kipling, who realized as few had realized the Divine right of a great civilizing race such as ours." Kipling praised the "strong men who were working for our Empire," who "had to deal with an agricultural simplicity which objected to the very elements of civilization–to simple precautions against the spread of disease among their sheep, against rinderpest, objected to railways and to roads of all kinds. (Laughter.)" ("Anglo," 17 May 1898: 11; also *The New York Times* 11 June 1898: BR385; *African Review* 21 May 1898: 311-313). Haggard's old boss, Henry Bulwer, the lieutenant Governor of Natal, later its governor and special commissioner for Zulu affairs, brought as his guest the future film-maker, Charles Ken, to this talk (Archives, Hertfordshire).

At the next meeting, on 20 June 1898, Haggard chaired a dinner of the club at which he and Ex-Chief Justice J. G. Kotzé both gave speeches. Haggard recalled with nostalgia riding the judicial circuit with Kotzé, a native Boer appointed judge soon after the Transvaal had been annexed:

> I looked at him, and I said, "Well, if a person can become a Judge at that age I will take to the trade myself." . . . Well, in the course of our various voyagings–and in those days it was really a case of voyagings, because we travelled together through many

> and many a mile of veld, dragged by oxen–as you may imagine, I became well acquainted with your guest of to-night. I saw him in every relation. I saw him on the Bench, executing the duties of his office; I saw him in private life; I saw him, I remember, sitting on the legs of a drunken usher while I was in the post of honour on his head. (Laughter.) I saw him stuck up to his chin in a Transvaal swamp; and, by the way, gentlemen, I think that perhaps it might be said that he is stuck in another Transvaal swamp now. (Cheers.) I had the honour then of pulling him out, and I only wish I could have the honour of pulling him out now. (Cheers.)

Haggard then turned to the uproar caused by President Paul Kruger's recent unconstitutional dismissal of him as chief justice. Kipling, Haggard remarked, would have attended this dinner but for a family funeral, so he sent instead "some lines which he wrote out for me." After jokes about whose muse inspired this effort, signed "Vrede" ("Peace" in Afrikaans), Haggard quotes two of them: "May there be no moaning at the Bar, / When I put out Kotzé." Haggard added: "All of you have read it in the Press. They have talked of him as a devil. Well, if Mr. Kotzé is a devil, all I have got to say is that a certain place loses much of its terror. (Laughter.) They have talked of him as mad. If he is mad, all I have to say is that I hope my own sanity will go the same way, because he is the most brilliant lunatic whom I have ever met. (Hear, hear.)" (*African Review* 476).

After a very lucid account of how affairs in the Transvaal were spinning out of control towards near-dictatorial subordination of the judicial branch by the executive, Kotzé challenged the members of the Anglo-African club, who, he said, "hold a great and, let me add, a very responsible position," to put forth their influence "by aiding the independent Press of South Africa in supporting us in fighting for a liberal and broad Constitution–a Constitution based upon the people's will; and when I say the people I include the new-comer [i.e. British] as well as the old population." Kotzé even unwittingly all but introduced the speaker some months hence: "A very able and right hon. gentleman, Mr. Bryce, has said in his very admirable and able book on South Africa that the Transvaal is in a condition of unrest. I regret to say that there is a great deal of truth in

that remark." The former Chief Justice concluded by recalling that the young Haggard "was as good a cook as he was a shot, and how delightful it was to sit over their evening meal discussing their good old whisky and roast snipe on toast prepared by their Chairman" (*African Review* 25 June 1898: 477-18).

At its December meeting in 1898, chaired as usual by Haggard, the group was addressed by James Bryce (now honorary President of the club), one of Britain's most intelligent statesmen, whose *Impressions of South Africa* (1897) had recently appeared. *The London Times* summarized his remarks that evening:

> It might be asked what literary men could do for the colonies, and what the colonies could do for literary men. . . . There still existed in England an ignorance of colonial society and of the conditions of colonial life, and he thought literature could remove that ignorance. Literature might make people in England understand the deep and peculiar charm that South Africa had for all who lived in it, and also make them understand its difficulties. (Hear, hear.) The chief difficulty which beset South Africa was the difficulty of race, but that was a difficulty which would ultimately give way under tact and judgment. (Hear, hear.). . . . As to the question of what the colonies might do for literary men, he thought they might give them new fields, new topics, new subjects which were very welcome now that the old fields had been tilled and crops reaped from them over and over again . . . When the soil of the old country had been exhausted, there were abundant fields in the outlying portions of the Empire. The works of Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Pringle, Olive Schreiner, Mr. Scully, and Mr. Bryden, and the brilliant romances of the chairman [Haggard], were instances of what the study of new conditions might do in the way of stimulating and developing the force of the writer's thought, and he did not think it was idle to suppose that the time might come when the literary activity of the colonies themselves might be far more abundant than it was at present. (*Times* 22 December 1898: 8).

Bryce said these twin ideals of dispelling British ignorance of colonial life and of igniting "the literary activity of the colonies themselves" were tasks that writers such as Haggard already had initiated. Bryce's promise of "new fields, new topics, new subjects" is