

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green gradient. It is decorated with several stylized, light green leaf motifs that appear to be floating or falling from the top left towards the bottom right. These motifs are scattered across the entire page, with some appearing near the top and others near the bottom.

IMAGINING AFRICA

Landscape in H. Rider Haggard's African Romances

Lindy Stiebel

 *Greenwood*
PUBLISHING GROUP

IMAGINING AFRICA

**Recent Titles in
Contributions to the Study of World Literature**

Ulysses, Capitalism, and Colonialism

M. Keith Booker

Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism

Ewa M. Thompson

Demythologizing the Romance of Conquest

Jeanne Armstrong

*Camelot in the Nineteenth Century: Arthurian Characters in the Poems of Tennyson,
Arnold, Morris, and Swinburne*

Laura Cooner Lambdin and Robert Thomas Lambdin

*Writing the Body in D.H. Lawrence: Essays on Language, Representation, and
Sexuality*

Paul Poplawski, editor

Postcolonial and Queer Theories: Intersections and Essays

John C. Hawley, editor

The Novels of Samuel Selvon: A Critical Study

Roydon Salick

Essays on the Fiction of A.S. Byatt: Imagining the Real

Alexa Alfer and Michael J. Noble, editors

Victorian Writers and the Image of Empire: The Rose-Colored Vision

Laurence Kitzan

Immigrant Narratives in Contemporary France

Susan Ireland and Patrice J. Proulx, editors

*Aristocracies of Fiction: The Idea of Aristocracy in Late-Nineteenth-Century and Early
Twentieth-Century Literary Culture*

Len Platt

*Salman Rushdie's Postcolonial Metaphors: Migration, Translation, Hybridity,
Blasphemy, and Globalization*

Jaina C. Sanga

IMAGINING AFRICA

*Landscape in H. Rider Haggard's African
Romances*



Lindy Stiebel

Contributions to the Study of World Literature, No. 105



GREENWOOD PRESS
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stiebel, Lindy.

Imagining Africa : landscape in H. Rider Haggard's African romances / Lindy Stiebel.
p. cm.—(Contributions to the study of world literature, ISSN 0738-9345 ; no. 105)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-313-31803-4 (alk. paper)

1. Haggard, H. Rider (Henry Rider), 1856-1925—Knowledge—Africa. 2. English fiction—African influences. 3. Landscape in literature. 4. Africa—In literature.

I. Title. II. Series.

PR4732.S75 2001

823'.8—dc21 00-049070

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Copyright © 2001 by Lindy Stiebel

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 00-049070

ISBN: 0-313-31803-4

ISSN: 0738-9345

First published in 2001

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881

An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

www.greenwood.com

Printed in the United States of America



The paper used in this book complies with the
Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National
Information Standards Organization (Z39.48-1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Copyright Acknowledgments

The author and publisher gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint the following materials:

Parts of Chapter 3 were previously published in *Alternation* 5, no. 2 (1998): 91–102, and *Being/s in Transit*, ASNEL Papers 5, Ed. Liselotte Glage. Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 2000: 125–140. Permission to reprint is gratefully acknowledged.

Parts of Chapter 4 appeared under the title “As Europe Is to Africa, So Is Man to Woman: Gendering Landscape in Rider Haggard’s *Nada the Lily*,” in *Current Writing* 12, no. 1 (2000). Permission to reprint is gratefully acknowledged.

Parts of Chapter 5 appeared under the title “The Return of the Lost City: The Hybrid Legacy of Rider Haggard’s African Romances,” in *Alternation* 4, no. 2 (1997): 221–237, and in *Multiculturalism and Hybridity in African Literatures*, Annual Selected Papers of the African Literature Association No. 7, Eds. Hal Wylie and Bernth Lindfors. Trenton, N.J. and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2000: 279–296. Permission to reprint is gratefully acknowledged.

Extracts from Liliias Haggard, *The Cloak That I Left* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951). Copyright held by Commander Mark Cheyne. Permission to reprint is gratefully acknowledged.

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	xi
Chapter 1: Towards a Discourse of “Africanism”	1
Chapter 2: Imagining Africa	11
Chapter 3: Rider Haggard—“King Romance”	37
Chapter 4: Haggard’s African Topography	53
Chapter 5: The Haggard Legacy	103
Chapter 6: Conclusion	131
<i>Bibliography</i>	137
<i>Index</i>	151

This page intentionally left blank

PREFACE

This project is the result of several years' research in South Africa, England and the United States, and thus thanks for financial assistance is due to the South African National Research Foundation and to the University of Durban-Westville Research Committee, whose research grants enabled me to travel to far-off archives and libraries.

My sincere thanks are extended to the following people: Professor Margaret Lenta of the Department of English, University of Natal (Durban) and Professor Norman Etherington of the Department of History, University of Western Australia, for their incisive comments on earlier drafts of this book, Glenda Robson for administrative assistance, Judith Shier for compiling the index, and, of course, my family for their constant support. Thanks are also due to Commander and Mrs. Mark Cheyne (Sir Rider Haggard's descendants); Roger Allen, founder and editor of the Rider Haggard Society, England; and especially Stephen Coan, assistant editor at *The Natal Witness*, for their willingness to answer my queries.

I would like to thank the following librarians and archivists who have helped expedite my research: Diana Madden at the Brenthurst Library; Paulette Coetzee at the National English Literature Museum; Bobby Eldridge at the Killie Campbell Africana Library; Seema Maharaj at Inter-Library Loan, University of Natal; Jean Kennedy, county archivist at the Norfolk Record Office; and Cliff Farrington at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. Drafts of various chapters were presented at a number of conferences over the past few years, including the African Literature Association's annual meetings at Guadeloupe and Austin, Texas; at the Association for New English Literatures meeting at the University of Hannover; at a South African literature colloquium at Palacky University, Czech Republic; and at the Association of English Teachers of Southern Africa annual meeting

at the University of the North and at the University of South Africa. For all the constructive criticism and helpful comments from these conference participants, I am deeply grateful.

INTRODUCTION

What is the function of landscape or cityscape descriptions in novels and poems? What is the function of topographical terms in philosophical or critical thinking? The answers seem obvious. Landscape or cityscape gives verisimilitude to novels and poems. Topographical setting connects literary works to a specific historical and geographical time. . . . Sooner or later, [however] in a different way in each case, the effort of mapping is interrupted by an encounter with the unmappable. The topography and the toponymy . . . hide an unplaceable place.

—J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* 6-7

This book is concerned with the function of landscape in Rider Haggard's African romances of providing, in the ways that Hillis Miller describes above, both an historical and geographical context and also a mapping space for the wishes, desires and anxieties of the writer. More than any other writer of his age, Haggard used the African landscape of his early manhood years in South Africa to create both for himself and his many readers "a country of the mind" (Hillis Miller 1995: 19). He created a generic "African topography" in his romances set in Africa which, because it became formulaic, became instantly recognisable to his reading public both in the late nineteenth century and twentieth centuries. Onto this topography, this "produced" space (Lefebvre 1991), Haggard projected his contradictory imperialist impulses, his intense and fearful sexual desires, his misgivings on some of the central issues of his age, such as civilisation and barbarism, and cultural relativity. Evidently, these ambivalent positions were not idiosyncratic to Haggard, for his enormous popular success, especially with his earlier romances, speaks of a sympathetic response from a wide range of Victorian readers. That certain of Haggard's African romances have never been out of print argues the case for a continuing nostalgic appreciation of the stylised landscape and the far-fetched adventures

that unfold within its frame. From the critical reader's point of view, the study of Haggard's African romances through the lens of landscape construction and spatial ordering yields insights not only into Haggard's complex personality, but also the *Zeitgeist* of the late Victorian imperialist age, through the medium of the fiction that that public chose to read in such quantities. Chrisman holds that "Haggard's example leads us to conclude that fiction is a particularly potent medium for the contradictory articulation of imperialist identity" (1992: 303); my contention is that, in Haggard's case, the prism of landscape is a particularly useful one through which to focus in order to see such "contradictory articulation" literally mapped out.

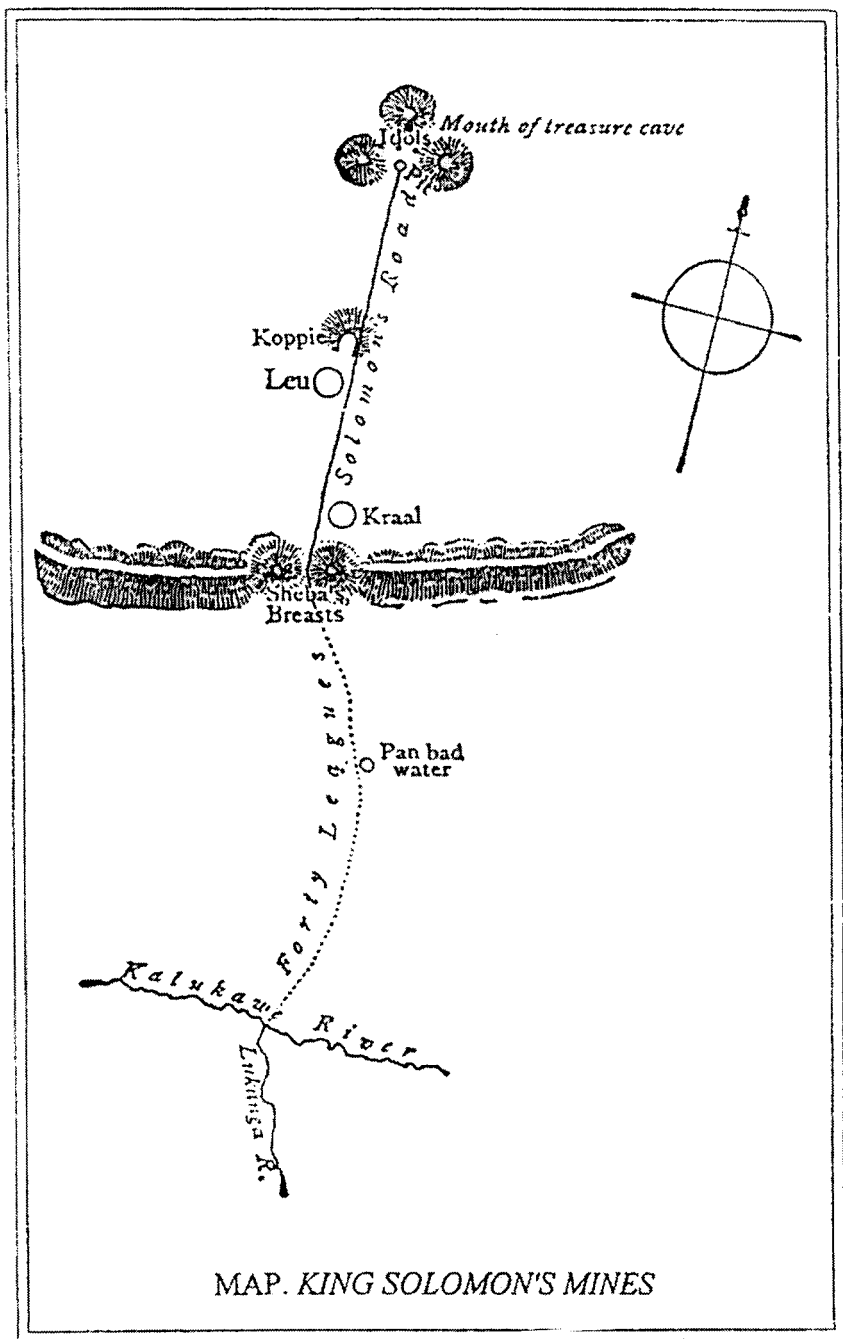
Early Haggard scholarship, for example Cohen (1960, 1965), comprised largely biographical information which later scholars such as Ellis (1978), Higgins (1980, 1981) and T. Pocock (1993) built on. Commentary on Haggard's use of African landscape, especially in its sexualised aspect, really began with Bunn (1988) who wrote an article on *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*. Stott (1989) and Gilbert and Gubar (1989) also wrote on Africa as female body, again using the well-known *King Solomon's Mines* and *She* as examples. A number of scholars, starting with Pierce (1975) and among whom are listed Rice (1981), Rich (1984), Chrisman (1990, 1992) and Etherington (in the annotated edition of *She*, 1991), discussed aspects such as Haggard's use of "bird's-eye view" positioning, African "ruins," and Africa as lost Eden. The present study, however, is the first sustained piece of work on Haggard's treatment of landscape in his African romances, and, while it draws on the work of the scholars mentioned above, it widens the focus considerably to include previously little known or little researched Haggard novels and nonfictional writing. As such, this book ventures into uncharted territory as well as noting the few well-travelled routes. No other lengthy work on Haggard has argued for landscape to be given such a central place in Haggard's writing.

My book begins with a chapter drawing on post-colonial theory, which looks at the importance of literature as a way of understanding the age of imperialism and at the centrality of landscape as an imaginative arena in which the contradictory imperialist impulses and desires are played out. The possibility of a discourse of "Africanism" along some of the same lines as Said's "Orientalism" paradigm (1978) is suggested, as is the centrality of land to Haggard's novels and public service career. Chapter 2 traces the ways in which an image of Africa, especially as regards its land, came to take shape in Europe, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and what use Haggard made of this image. His various visits to South Africa as a public servant in the service of Empire are discussed, especially in terms of their contribution to his efforts to construct in writing a space which he could understand and interpret, and yet which defied his attempts by remaining at a deep level "unmappable" and "unplaceable," as Hillis Miller's quotation observes. Chapter 3 considers Haggard's choice of the romance form for his African adventures as particularly

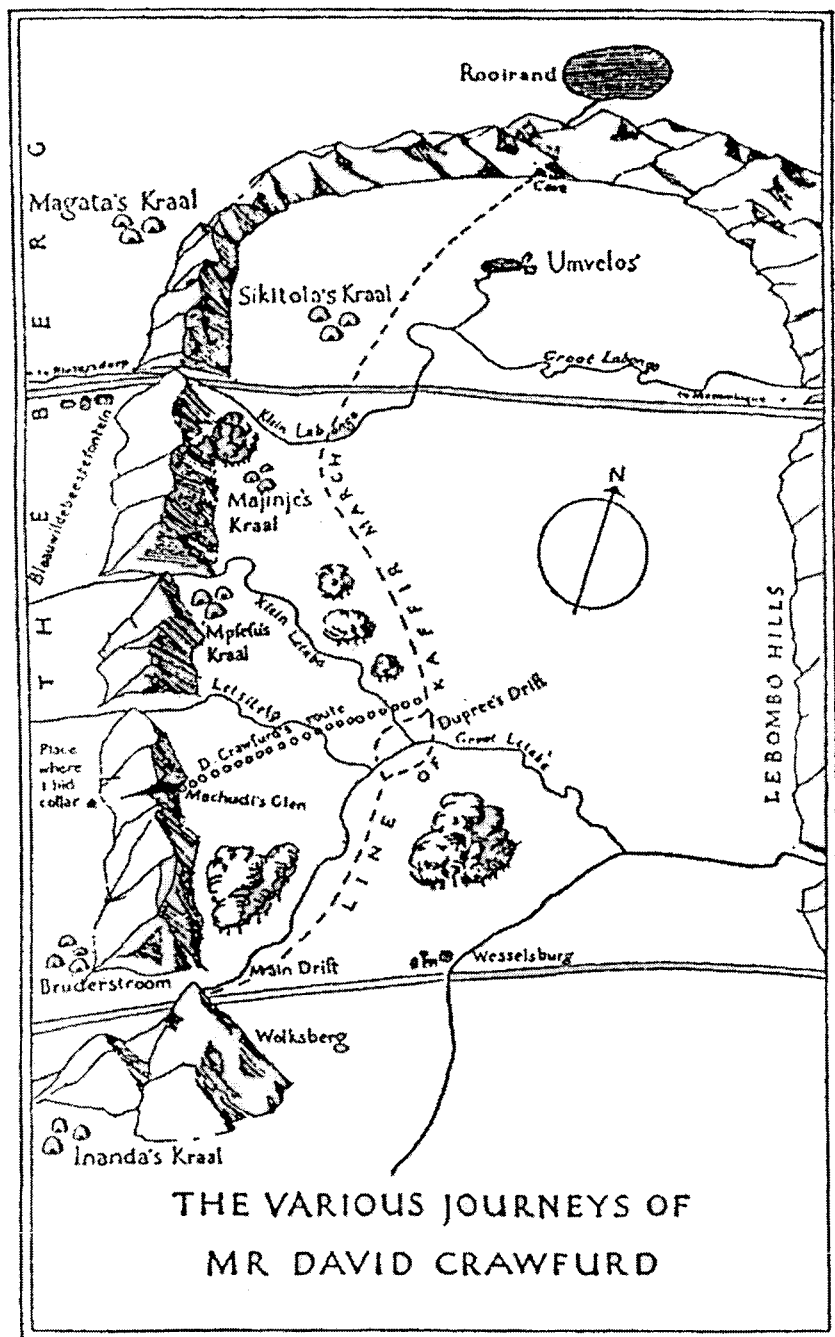
appropriate given his idealistic, romantic nature, together with the fact that the romance form was also particularly well suited, with its dreams of wish fulfilment and yet also of dark menace, to the late nineteenth-century British mood. The African interior I argue in particular, as the last unknown space on the map to be colonised, provided both Haggard and his readers with a suitable site for romantic dreaming, far away from a home nation undergoing considerable domestic changes. Chapter 4 charts what I call Haggard's generic "African topography" as he repeated it through his African romances, particularly those prior to 1892 when his mapmaking vision seems most sustained and intense, but not excluding reference to some written after that date.

What I do not aim for is any systematic reading of successive Haggard romances. I try instead to draw out characteristic features of his "topography" from his work in order to advance particular arguments. Thus I describe aspects of the Haggard "map" such as Africa as vast Eden, as wilderness, as dream underworld, as sexualised bodyscape and finally as home to ancient white civilisations. These are aspects of many of his African romances which, because frequently formulaic, repeat these abovenamed features compulsively and, at times, anxiously. Finally, Chapter 5 traces what might be called the "Haggard legacy" in twentieth-century South African literature, especially as regards use of landscape, with those romance writers most directly connected to him being placed in the foreground. The lineage of this nostalgic tradition contains such different writers as John Buchan, Sol Plaatje, Stuart Cloete and Wilbur Smith, together with its reincarnation in various forms of popular culture such as film and theme parks.

In conclusion, I look at the most enduring element of Haggard's—at times contradictory—love affair with the African land and its peoples; his fresh romanticising of the landscape which in the works of others has often been debased. In the contemporary "green" nostalgia of the late twentieth century, this impulse has been adopted and to some extent transformed as witnessed in contemporary efforts to preserve parts of "Nature" in (ironically) enclosed wilderness areas, in an effort to protect "nature [from] becoming lost to thought" (Lefebvre 1991: 31). The irony, of course, lies in the fact that, as Carter points out, "Without the unenclosed horizons of South Africa, Rider Haggard would have had no basis for his romances" (Carter 1996: 28). Ironies aside, however, the fact that Haggard's African romances—and particularly their symptomatic landscapes—can still resonate a century after the publication of his first major success speaks for the need to take Haggard seriously as mapper of his age's anxieties and desires.



Map 1: Treasure Map, *King Solomon's Mines* (1885)



Map 2: Map, *Prester John* (1910)

This page intentionally left blank

CHAPTER 1: TOWARDS A DISCOURSE OF “AFRICANISM”

To a criticism concerned with mapping the exclusions and affirmations of an imperialist culture whose legacy has still not been spent, these same texts can be made to reveal both imperialism's grandiloquent self-presentation and those inadmissible desires, misgivings, and perceptions concealed in its discourses.

—Benita Parry, *Space and Place*, 238

The heart of Africa is in Haggard's romances just what Conrad said it was in *Heart of Darkness*—a special psychological terrain in which European man confronts and nearly succumbs to his deepest fears.

—Norman Etherington, *Victorian Studies*, 77

To understand how a culture imagines its world, both “home” and “away,” one looks to its literature. In late nineteenth-century Britain, at the height of Empire, with a third of the world's lands under its domination, literature was for many Britons one of the few possible ways to visualise the heat and dust of India, the snows and icebergs of Canada, and the game-filled plains of Africa. Together with other post-colonial critics, Said has commented on the interconnectedness of nineteenth-century British culture and the policies of imperialism, and since the novel was the dominant literary form of the time, it became central to an understanding of both. He writes “The novel, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other . . . imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other” (Said 1994: 84). What is interesting for the post-colonial critic in making a study of a writer of Empire and how s/he imagines his or her world, both familiar and foreign, is to study the subtext, the slippages and cracks that underlie the superficially seamless surface of imperialist discourse: “What criticism can recover, through dismantling the plural discourses and