Treasure and Travesty: Refractions of Victorian Imperial Racism In Selected Contemporary Literature

Lauren Ashleigh Cruz, Independent Scholar, United States

Abstract

Racism is pervasive. Modernity shows that race broaches constant invocation, nearly becoming the standard for relations, internal and international. Moored in dominance and arrogance, the impact of race swelled uncontrollably during the imperial surge of the nineteenth century. Invasion, partition, and exploitation of Africa sowed its latent seeds and nurtured it into the irascible weed of today. During Queen Victoria's reign, Britain expanded its colonial holdings to almost one-quarter of the earth. Nationalistic zealotry and desire to "civilize those less fortunate" fueled this expansion, and societal culture thrived on rigid principles of heroism, chivalry, and mettle. Contemporary writers such as H Rider Haggard, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Joseph Conrad relied on these and other Victorian values in their various Adventure Novels, wherein courageous characters presented as great men worthy of emulation. These authors and their peers incorporated and adapted white superiority over "natives," rationalizing and propagating racial arrogance and the emergent racial paradigm. The sheer magnitude of their readership elucidates not only mass ingestion of their messages, but also a broad and unshakeable fastening of racism to human consciousness. Coupling history of Africa's imperial fate with analysis of contemporary literature highlights the exacerbation of the racial paradigm. Though watersheds like imperial enterprise and common values leave the door far ajar when it comes to sufficient address of racism's violent cornerstones, increased understanding of its conflagration through heroes and literature can foster more comprehensive discussion of its implications, misapplications, and volatile potential.

Keywords: Racism, Imperialism, Victorian Values, Literature, H. Rider Haggard, Africa

Introduction – Of Men and Might

Memorable characters and emotive attributes are not reserved exclusively for fiction. Historical eras also embody these aspects. The Ancient World is magical, mystical, and poignant; the Crusades are gallant and fiercely religious; the twentieth century is simultaneously pockmarked by war and adventure and is constantly shifting; and the list continues. While these epochs are each singular, there is perhaps no era more romanticized or celebrated than the period between Queen Victoria's ascension to the British throne in 1837 and the early years of her successor King Edward (1910s) — considered emblematic of chivalry reborn.

Victoria is not only known for the morals of her times, but also for her colossal expansion of the British Empire, reaching almost one-quarter of the globe at her death. British imperialism was fueled by a sense of duty to spread British "civilization," but this and other countries' similar sentiments reignited and refashioned racism. Though famously difficult to define, here racism is understood as a social construct wherein one group exercises superiority and dominion over another due to various physical or cultural markers. This superiority manifests in action (violent or otherwise), opinion, and policy. Originating in human contact, these measures have governed that contact ever since, leading to violence and societal damage.

Most importantly, racism slowly joined the values championed by Victorian authors. Coupled with immense popularity of their and others' works, racist literary themes helped perpetuate and fuel the concept, as well as imperialist ideas and policy. With racism on the rise, the masses continued to support the spread of civilization to those who were unfortunate and "knew no better."[1] This vicious cycle allowed imperialism and racism to gain significant ground, and the latter continued to enjoy soci0-cultural application. Before these authors, however, existed perhaps the best agents of cultural spread — the explorers, missionaries, soldiers, and map-makers who sought to enlighten the darkened corners of the map.

Universal racial resurgence in the Imperial Century hinges on comprehensive analyses of Victorian society, literature, and imperialism, emphasizing African enterprise. This assessment presents over two parts. The first investigates the racial paradigm before shifting to the Victorian era. Also mentioned are the adventures and misadventures of the famous explorers who first charted the Dark Continent, as well as the Zulu Wars and their consequences for African nations and lands.

Part II analyzes the African imperial enterprise's socio-cultural impact through the lens of the Sherlock Holmes stories and *King Solomon's Mines*. Heroic themes and aspects of racial arrogance pulse throughout these narratives, providing insight into the strength of racist thought and imperialist ambitions in Victorian times while also acting as commentary. Exegesis illustrates the nexus between Victorian imperialism and the development of the modern racial paradigm. Understanding this origin point

---

[1] As a brief note, the term "native" is used throughout this project. Typical negative connotation is not intended, except where noted. It simply represents those peoples who originally populated colonial lands, embodying neutrality and the simple comparison of colonists against those that inhabited the areas they entered.

and its nuances offers more insight into how to approach and improve racially-themed relations.

Part I: Savagery Silver-Gilt — Race, the Victorians, and Illuminating the Dark Continent

Rulers have always sought ways to organize and control the populace, presenting state-controlled paradigms to subjects who adopted and absorbed them with little question. One such paradigm, perhaps the most insidious and dismally-forged, is race. Used by the state, race is a human construct, created by authority to precipitate human action toward collective sentiment (unity), which in turn fuels national pride and consequently economic prosperity. Propagation helps disseminate the concept as well, using media, literature, and popular culture.

Like ethnicity and nationalism, race is Janus-faced, entertaining countless definitions and explanations. Benedict Anderson, Anthony Marx, and many other scholars maintain that its origins lie in colonialism, an argument which this paper seeks to clarify and support. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson explains racism as "the typical solidarity among whites, which linked colonial rulers from different national metropoles."[2] Emphasis on solidarity or linkage across countries show racism as a commonality between competing nations, along with economic endeavors in colonial holdings. Anderson elaborates, stating that "[colonial racism generalized] a principle of innate, inherited superiority…conveying the idea that…Englishmen were…superior to the subjected natives."[3]

During their "imperial century," Jeremy Paxman's term in the BBC documentary *Empire,* Britain embodied this sentiment in a massive colonial surge, including the race with Scandinavia for the Arctic and Antarctic in the early twentieth century.[4] By conveying the possession of distant lands and peoples in a superior or darkly paternal way, Britain imposed an identity and stratification structure onto its subjects, highlighting the state's role in applying and perpetuating racism. Anthony Marx, in *Making Race and Nation*, claims blatantly that "states made race…[by] selling out blacks and reinforcing prior racial distinctions and ideology in order to unify whites [and maintain social order]."[5]

Humans arrive at racial paradigms through an involuntary stratification of others upon first meeting, a process described by Max Weber as "ethnic honor."[6] Resultant constructed boundaries form the basis of nearly all human conflict, closing this vicious race cycle. Born out of the colonial mindset, which is inherently aggressive, race thrives on division and violence, only to culminate in more abusive forms of human action and surviving as a means to exploit and curtail others' human rights. In

---

[2] Anderson,Benedict. (2006). *Imagined Communities.* London: Verso, 152-3.
[3] Anderson,Benedict. (2006). *Imagined Communities.* London: Verso 150.
[4] Britain controlled 13,700,000 sq mi by 1920. *Empire* (DVD), episode 1, "A Taste for Power."
   Also, Antarctic exploration was a was only beginning at this point, and the Arctic was nearly charted. Norway's Roald Amundsen and England's Roberf F. Scot and Ernest H. Shackleton fought over rights to the title of "first man to find the South Pole." See Larson, Edward J. (2011) *An Empire of Ice.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
[5] Marx, Anthony. (1998). *Making Race and Nation.* London: Cambridge University Press, 2-3.
[6] See Weber, Max. "The Origins of Ethnic Groups." (1996, reprint 2009). In Hutchinson, John, & Smith, Anthony D (Eds.), *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 35-40.

their work *Ethnicity and Race*, sociologists Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann state that 19th-century imperialists "concluded [that] superficial differences surely indicated more fundamental differences as well…[which] helped them justify their efforts to colonize, enslave, and sometimes exterminate."[7] Simply, it was a means of identifying peoples encountered by colonial agents as inferior, biologically and civilly, and was heavily drawn upon to devise social and economic strata. Sir Henry Rider Haggard conveniently sums up imperial enterprise in *Allan Quatermain*, when he (through the titular, iconic character) says that "civilisation [*sic*] is only savagery silver-gilt."[8]

With Britain's imperial expansion came the rapid influx of not only Britons themselves, but also their customs and set of morals. Britons harbored fervent national pride and clung to the belief that they knew how to care for foreign lands better than the natives. Thus, racial arrogance came rather naturally, spurred by Charles Darwin's Social Theory in his 1874 work *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. A.N. Wilson summarizes and quotes Darwin's findings that "the 'savages' who wasted away at the prospect of British colonization…have 'low morality,' insufficient powers of reasoning to recognize many virtues, and 'weak power of self command.'"[9] Statements like this, embarrassing today, were freely accepted and viewed as truth by Victorians and Europeans at large. It was precisely this idea of superiority that encouraged "civilization" of foreign natives.

Moreover, the Victorian public's desire for adventure and tales of heroic and chivalrous deeds swelled with surges in literacy and technology. The 1870 Education Act "permitted compulsory schooling for every child among Britain's thirty-one million people."[10] The resultant Boarding Schools that popped up across cities were, as none other than Sherlock Holmes put it, "'Beacons of the future! Capsules…out of which will spring [a] wiser, better England.'"[11] Literacy increased rapidly, newspapers entered the public scene, and telegraph and railway lines connected people as nothing had before. For one of the first times in history, the government was directly accountable for its doings, especially in the imperial enterprise. W.J. Reader states that "[census] reports, returns and statistical tables, the Blue Books and White Papers…became a necessary part of the law-making process."[12] Britons became more governmentally involved, and when their rights to see into the apparatus were challenged, uproar ensued.

Akin to the literacy boom was a cartographical renaissance, noted by Sally Bushell in her article "Mapping Victorian Adventure Fiction."[13] With the vast emptiness of Africa looming, Britons sought to illuminate the Dark Continent. Maps soon became a fixture not only in Victorian culture, but also in contemporary literature, and, as Bushell states, "[also functioned] not only to project the power of Englishmen to

---

[7] Cornell, Stephen, & Hartmann, Douglas. (2003). *Ethnicity and Race*. London, Pine Forge Press, 23.
[8] Haggard, H Rider. (1951). *Allan Quatermain*. In Haggard, H Rider, *Three Adventure Novels*. Mineola: Dover Publications, 420.
[9] Charles Darwin quoted in Wilson, A. N. (2002). *The Victorians*. London: Hutchinson, 375.
[10] Keating, H.R.F. (2006). *Sherlock Holmes: The Man and his World*. Edison: Castle Books, 14.
[11] Holmes (Conan Doyle) quoted in Keating, H.R.F. (2006). *Sherlock Holmes: The Man and His Times*. Edison: Castle Books, 14-5.
[12] Reader, W.J. (1973). *Victorian England*. London: Book Club Associates, 18.
[13] Bushell, Sally. (2015). Mapping Victorian Adventure Fiction: Silences, Doublings, and the Ur-Map in *Treasure Island* and *King Solomon's Mines*. *Victorian Studies* 57, 611-37.

penetrate and possess alien worlds and strip them of their wealth, but also to pose unsettling questions about the moral and ethical nature of such enterprises."[14] Concerned with morality as Victorians were, however, their belief in the civilizing power of their "superior" culture drove impassioned forays into the swaying dunes and breathing jungles of India, Africa, and beyond. As long as there was soil, capital, and souls to gain, imperial enterprise thrived, circulating and crystallizing ideologies like Kipling's "White Man's Burden" to reach out and civilize the less fortunate.

Britain's most famous explorers played a pivotal role in fostering and supporting the newly-emergent racial paradigm. With Britain's Egyptian ventures already fruitful, the riddle of the Nile's origin, embedded in the uncharted bowels of Africa, gained ground once again. Africa did not give up the secret easily, however, as demonstrated by the intrepid efforts of what Tim Jeal calls "an idiosyncratic group of exceptionally brave British explorers."[15] Sir Richard Burton, John Hanning Speke, Dr. David Livingstone, and Henry Morton Stanley would solve the mystery in piecemeal fashion through a series of haggard expeditions characterized by bouts of dangerous disease, incredibly rough conditions, and numerous setbacks due to the collision of British and African cultures.

Richard Burton's Somaliland expedition, undertaken with John Hanning Speke, was stupendously catastrophic, culminating in a vicious confrontation with an African tribe and no proof of the Nile source.[16] Burton himself harbored fierce racial arrogance, viewing slaves at market in Zanzibar as "lines of negroes [that] stood like beasts…[and] appeared hardly human."[17] Speke countered this view of Africans as chattel, empathizing for an African woman suffering under potential buyers' scrutiny at the same market. This contrasting opinion, coupled with other partnership strains during expeditions, fueled these men's emergent bitter rivalry pockmarked with insult, sabotage, and slander.

Dr. David Livingstone was famous for two aspects of his exploration: crossing the continent (1852-56) and disappearing between 1866-70 — the latter prompting the iconic catchphrase. A fervent missionary, abolitionist, and embodiment of the White Man's Burden, he viewed his sanctioned 1866 search for the Nile source as "valuable only as a means of enabling me to open my mouth with power among men…to remedy [the] enormous evil [of the slave trade]."[18] Though adamant about expanding British trading opportunities in Africa, he passionately decried the racism and slave trading that came with that territory. His sentiments conveyed an understanding of racism's imperial origins.

Henry Morton Stanley's reports home about his adventures in search of Livingstone included violent encounters with Africans that excited the public to no end. His

---

[14] Bushell, Sally. (2015). Mapping Victorian Adventure Fiction: Silences, Doublings, and the Ur-Map in *Treasure Island* and *King Solomon's Mines*. *Victorian Studies, 57*, 634.

[15] Jeal, Tim. (2011). *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 3.

[16] Jeal, Tim. (2011). *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 51-3.

[17] Burton quoted in Jeal, Tim. (2011). *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 67-8.

[18] Livingstone quoted in Jeal, Tim. (2011). *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 15.

quintessentially British "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" has become a colloquialism affecting literature, film, and even exploration history, despite lacking formal proof that it was actually uttered.[19] Britain's famous explorers transcended mere popularity and entered the realm of myth once their adventures reached the public. However, their actual experiences served not only ideological transformations; they also exposed the once Dark Continent to exploitation.

As more agents arrived on native soil, the more organically the racial paradigm expanded in collective consciousness. In April 1877, Britain formally annexed the Transvaal region, inciting both support and protest.[20] Staunch British shied away from broad imperial conquest, while enraged Dutch Afrikaners denigrated the loss of what they considered their land.

Africans also experienced a shock when they realized Europeans' true intentions. Gone were the days of faithful porters, guides, and loyal expedition compatriots. Once tolerant and even somewhat welcoming to a point, some Africans now rose up to defend their claim to their homeland. The Zulu Wars from 1877 to 1879 are most indicative of imperial violence as a key underpinning to the racial paradigm raging through imperial powers' veins.

Once conflict ignited between Africans and Europeans, it was not simply blacks against whites. In *Zulu Warriors: The Battle for the South African Frontier*, John Laband explains that rather than band together to keep their homeland, tribes maintained ancient rivalries — some even *allied* with the British hoping to gain favor in the long run.[21] Britons obstructed solidarity by capitalizing on these feuds.

Though murky upon first glance, the impact of the racial paradigm in the Zulu Wars and beyond is massive. Yes, heavy artillery and the Maxim gun hurled the British standard through African hearts, but racism kept the fuses lit. British used their advanced technology and strategy against Africans, knowing that the conflict would be short because of Africans' inferior tactics and weaponry. Nations like the Zulu clung fiercely to their culture constructs of fair fights on *equal terms*, an intense warrior ethic, and honor, while Britons quickly and brutally overpowered them.[22] Once the conflicts ended, African combatants suffered the "overturning of [their] old order…[and] forced integration on the conqueror's terms into a British-dominated sub-continent."[23] All the blood and deaths of brave warriors could not stay the white hand that snatched up Africans' homeland.

Racism also manifested in Britain's treatment of African allies. Laband addresses Britain's betrayal of African loyalists and their condemnation to "increasingly

---

[19] Jeal, Tim. (2011). *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 270.

[20] Pakenham, Thomas. (1991). *The Scramble for Africa: The White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912*. New York: Random House, Inc., 45.

[21] Laband, John. (1991). *Zulu Warriors: The Battle for the South African Frontier*. New York: Random House, Inc., 8.

[22] Pakenham and other scholars discuss the Maxim gun and superior technology and warfare tactics.

[23] Laband, John. (1991). *Zulu Warriors: The Battle for the South African Frontier*. New York: Random House, Inc., 281.

subservient station in the domineering colonial order."[24] African *Inkosi* (lord) Mqawe expressed his fury and indignation, crying, "Never more will I fight for the white man…. I have stood out in the fight with my men…and now I find we have been fighting for nothing…. My heart is angry."[25] His rage was but a matchstick in a torrent — Britain's imperial tide would not be stemmed, and it joined in the other European powers' colonial deluge.

The Zulu Wars wiped out African solidarity, and allowed coveting countries to further spread the contagions of "civilization" and imperialism. The 1884-5 Berlin Conference produced a "treaty that recognized [Belgian King] Leopold's rights to operate in the Congo and also agreed to the future claims by [colonizing countries]."[26] Africa was carved up without any consideration to its native people — racial arrogance personified. By 1890 Africa was a patchwork of imperial rulers, and the racial paradigm festered within each country's sphere of influence.

Soon after these very real events, convictions of racial superiority spread like ignited gunpowder, and the emergent racial paradigm began to take on its modern characteristics. As long as this white superiority complex drove the wedge deeper between colonizer and colonized, its invocation in contemporary literature only reinforced differences created by the colonizers, and extensive readership expanded the concept's reach. Further, since the Education Act was in full force and viable, its first beneficiary generation came of age to consume immensely popular adventure novels, which granted authors' messages enough weight to influence — however subtly — collective consciousness.

Part II: Scarlet Threads in the Skein of Life — Moral "Canon" Fire of the Victorians

Affinity for their own literature tempered Victorians' understanding of right and wrong, and they clung to their heroes with a vice-like grip. This section focuses on Victorian works and their commentary on colonialism and racism. Canonical tales like Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, and Sir H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* directly commented on imperial enterprise and on the importance of Victorian values to society.[27] Shining light into the dismal alleys radiating from bloodied Whitechapel and into the far, dark corners of Britain's imperial machine, these and other works provided commentary and escape to readers across the "civilized" world.

---

[24] Laband, John. (1991). *Zulu Warriors: The Battle for the South African Frontier*. New York: Random House, Inc., 281-2.

[25] *Inkosi* Mqawe quoted in Laband, John. (1991). *Zulu Warriors: The Battle for the South African Frontier*. New York: Random House, Inc., 282.

[26] Jacobs, Nancy. (2014). *African History Through Sources: Colonial Contexts and Everyday Experiences, c. 1950-1946*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 65.

[27] Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, and Charlotte Brontë are also important and pertinent novelists. Due to limitations of space, author relevance (Conrad has been analyzed extensively) and locale (Kipling writes about India), their works are omitted. Their imperial commentary is superb, however, and can be found in works like *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Jungle Book*(s), and *Jane Eyre.*

Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* strove to highlight the evil within all men, and succeeded wildly.[28] Upon its publication in 1886, duplicity, *doppelgängers*, and natural selection were easily applied to character and physicality. Because of this, Victorian notice of this short story was meteoric. Stevenson's story is first and foremost one of values and character, with Dr. Jekyll representing the pure Victorian man of honor, politeness, and respect. On the other hand, Hyde, "a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness," is a pure antithesis to Victorian-ness, and his existence within Jekyll shows that evil lives within all men.[29]

Stevenson's work can also have an imperial-racist spin. Heretofore unexplored, subtle racism appears a handful of times in the story. Recall that Darwin published *Descent of Man* in 1874, twelve years before Stevenson's work. Darwin claimed that natives subjected to British colonialism (at this time a great portion of which were African) were inferior and incapable of higher thought or proper action. When Hyde's murder of an MP is described by a witness, she says he used a club to bludgeon the man "with ape-like fury."[30] African natives were often considered simian, with physical attributes at the forefront of these depictions. Further, Hyde is known to the reader as uncivilized and wrathful. Not only is he the evil side of civilized humanity incapable of clear thinking, he also represents the "Other" — the savage who assaults and kills a white benefactor in cold blood. The subsequent energized hunt for the murderous Hyde echoes the vanquishing of native customs.

Arguably one of the most portrayed literary characters on television or film, Sherlock Holmes is adored the world over and has permeated vernacular culture as likely very few others. He became a beloved character, complete with earnest memorial service and public outcry when Doyle killed him, both of which eventually induced Doyle to contrive a brilliant resurrection.

Social Darwinism and fierce British patriotism often play a part in the Holmesian canon, and imperial mentality is also a recurring theme. In her essay "Anxieties of Empire in Doyle's Tales of Sherlock Holmes," scholar Lauren Raheja focuses on three imperial themes present in the Holmes chronicles, including that things or people originating from colonies appear in Britain as a threat.[31] Though her article covers many stories, the most presently applicable are "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot," and *The Sign of the Four*.

In "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot," Holmes and Watson investigate two murders and two cases of acute insanity in Cornwall. They discover that "the great lion-hunter

---

[28] *Jekyll and Hyde* is a purely masculine tale, implying that the "evil incarnate" is only in men. This is veiled commentary on femininity in Victorian times, echoing W.J. Reader's statement that women's "first business [is] to be happy — a sunbeam in the house." (Reader, W.J. (1973). *Victorian England.* London: Book Club Associates, 14).

[29] Stevenson, Robert Louis. (2014). *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In Dziemianowicz, Stefan, (Ed.), *Penny Dreadfuls.* New York: Fall River Press, 291.

[30] Stevenson, Robert Louis. (2014). *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In Dziemianowicz, Stefan, (Ed.), *Penny Dreadfuls.* New York: Fall River Press, 295

[31] Raheja, Lauren. (2006). Anxieties of Empire in Doyle's Tales of Sherlock Holmes. *Nature, Society, and Thought* 19:4, 417.

and explorer" Dr. Leon Sterndale had brought back a root powder from Africa.[32] This powder had been stolen and used as the murder weapon, but Sterndale eventually found the thief/murderer and forced him to suffer the powder himself. The key is Sterndale's mastery of *Radix pedis diaboli,* or the Devil's Foot root — the powder "used as an ordeal poison by the medicine-men in…West Africa."[33] As an African item given demonic properties, the powder symbolizes the threat of African colonies lacking British influence. Sterndale's mastery, illustrated by his familiarity with the substance's properties and his righteous use, justifies Europeans being better-suited to implement African savagery.

The Sign of the Four offers one of the most clear examples of superficial and racial representations of blacks or foreigners in the Holmesian canon. In the novel, Bartholomew Sholto is murdered by a poisoned dart, fired by a transplanted Andaman Islander named Tonga. Tonga is described as "a little black man…[with] a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, dishevelled [*sic*] hair. …[T]his savage, distorted creature…[had] features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty."[34] Tonga's appearance and likeness to a beast emphasizes white superiority over natives, and puts into relief British ideals of increased civility and the need to "fix" or "deal with" these "savages." Perpetual "defenders of the empire," as Reheja calls them, Holmes and Watson expose the British public to the dangers of imperialism, laying bare authors' warning of the lure of savagery awaiting any imperialist.[35]

In his works, H. Rider Haggard consistently crafted themes of adventure, but is also known for romanticizing treasure and danger, and creating the image of the native worthy of sympathy. Yet, though the reader is faced with several instances of heroic Africans worthy of respect, undertones of white superiority abound. Readers' ultimate takeaway is the idea of bringing "civilization" to otherwise "barbaric" natives, shoring up the ties between these themes and the burgeoning imperialism-racism paradigm.

In his article "Linguistic Crossings: African Essentialism in *King Solomon's Mines,*" Matthew Nye shows how Quatermain or his compatriots Curtis and Good embody a space of "racial superiority" in moments of comic or emotional prevalence.[36][37] Secreting commentary this way increases the subliminal nature of Haggard's racial address.

During their trek towards King Solomon's mines, Quatermain calls Umbopa (their Zulu companion) "…a cheerful savage…in a dignified sort of a way, when he had not

[32] Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. (2003). The Adventure of the Devil's Foot. In Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *Sherlock Holmes, the Complete Novels and Stories, Vol. II.* New York: Bantam Classics, 476.
(*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* first published in London, 1917).
[33] Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. (2003). The Adventure of the Devil's Foot. In Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *Sherlock Holmes, the Complete Novels and Stories, Vol. II.* New York: Bantam Classics, 489.
[34] Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. (2003). *The Sign of the Four.* In *Sherlock Holmes, the Complete Novels and Stories, Vol. I.* New York: Bantam Classics, 204.
The Sign of the Four first published in London in 1890.
[35] 35 Raheja, Lauren. (2006). Anxieties of Empire in Doyle's Tales of Sherlock Holmes. *Nature, Society, and Thought* 19:4, 424-5.
[36] Nye, Matthew. (2016). Linguistic Crossings: African Essentialism in *King Solomon's Mines.* ANQ: A *Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 29:2, 98-103.
[37] Nye, Matthew. (2016). Linguistic Crossings: African Essentialism in *King Solomon's Mines.* ANQ: A *Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 29:2, 98.

got one of his fits of brooding…. We all got very fond of him."[38] Though there is some respect implied in the comment, language like "fits" and "very fond of him" indicate childlike qualities associated with Umbopa. Thus, even though Africans can be cheerful or brave, they are still considered children, feeding the superiority complex native to the white imperial mindset.

Also illustrative is Quatermain and the party's continual capitalization on the natives' superstition to obtain their goals or to protect themselves. When the party has to trust most of their gear, including firearms, to a local, Quatermain catches the man coveting the weapons and suspects that he will steal them, so he threatens to "kill him and all his people by witchcraft…and make the devils in the guns come out and talk to him."[39] Quatermain tells the reader that Africans and particularly this "villain" are thoroughly superstitious, showing that these threats would inspire obedience. This usage of African innocence against them highlights Haggard's veiled message of white arrogance. The Englishmen later abuse their supposed divinity to play to native superstition and ignorance, feigning power over a lunar eclipse to maintain their safety and to attain their goals. Counting on African innocence as given, Quatermain and his companions utilize their privileged knowledge to both navigate their surroundings and adapt to different encounters and interactions. As pioneers, they apply their white mindset to a black land- and people-scape. Though occasionally granted admirable traits like trustworthiness, bravery, and sacrifice, Africans are still considered ignorant and childlike, which invites whites to take advantage.

Readers may notice that Joseph Conrad is thus far absent from discussion, perhaps seeing it as a glaring omission. However, he is arguably the most analyzed imperial author, and so I have deigned to pass by his work, especially the default opus *Heart of Darkness,* in which Conrad's protagonist Marlow relays a harrowing tale warning of the dangers of colonialism and "the horror" hiding within Africa. Conrad passes swift and harsh judgment on British imperialism, and remains one of the strongest commenters known today. H. Rider Haggard, an author that is often ignored in critic circles, also targets imperialism in his novels and stories, but through a far less direct approach. This is an important contrast: *King Solomon's Mines* and Haggard's other masterpieces appeared in the thick of imperial conquest (1886-1889), just after Britain jumped feet-first into the African fray and long after the Indian Mutiny. As a result, Haggard had to tread lightly when discussing the perils of imperialism. Conrad, on the other hand, was writing in the early twentieth century, thus granting him the heady tonic of hindsight and the ability to appeal to a more imperially-jaded public.

Haggard, Doyle, and other authors drove home the momentous duty charged to imperialists to civilize the foreign world with their particular brand of British sensibility and values network. Moreover, Doyle mastered the art of giving critique in a thoroughly domestic setting. Holmes and Watson operate predominantly on English soil, yet comment (subtly or bluntly) on England and Empire, effectively supporting opinions on imperial enterprise while remaining within England.

---

[38] Haggard, H. Rider. (2002). *King Solomon's Mines*. New York: Modern Library, 47.
[39] Haggard, H. Rider. (2002). *King Solomon's Mines*. New York: Modern Library, 64.

Conclusion

Moored in dominance and arrogance, the impact of race swelled uncontrollably during the imperial surge of the nineteenth century. Invasion, partition, and exploitation of Africa sowed its latent seeds and nurtured it into the irascible weed of today. Nineteenth-century Britain's nationalistic zealotry and desire to "civilize those less fortunate" fueled imperial expansion, with icons like Burton and Livingstone entering and illuminating the Dark Continent. Reflecting their journals and published journeys, societal culture thrived on rigid principles of heroism and mettle.

Contemporary writers such as Doyle, Conrad, and Haggard relied on these and other Victorian values in Adventure Novels, incorporating white superiority over "natives" to rationalize and propagate racial arrogance and the emergent racial paradigm. Snappy prose and exciting action drew in and engaged readers, focusing and refracting hidden commentary onto contemporary society and values. Characters also impacted reader mentality. Any fictional hero with an engaging and heroic personality can become fixed in readers' minds, so that their values slowly inform the readers'. Or, at the very least, they can help confirm views on governmental practices. In this case, beloved Victorian personas' indirect championing of the values of adventure, white superiority, and civilizing natives mirrored British imperialism, perpetuating the ideas that supported racism.

Fictional Africans came across as ignorant and inexperienced, traits expanded upon by virtue of their skin color. Victorian and other European colonists saw this widespread "savagery" as native to *actual* Africans, and therefore applied characteristics like lack of intellect, free will, or innovative ability to the race. Consequently, the notion of racism further developed, and via Victorian writers' popularity germinated in the European psyche. The sheer magnitude of their readership elucidates not only mass ingestion of their messages, but racism's broad and unshakeable crystallization into human consciousness.

Coupling history of Africa's imperial fate with exegesis of contemporary literature highlights the exacerbation of the racial paradigm. Watersheds like imperial enterprise and common values leave the door far ajar when addressing racism's violent cornerstones, but increased understanding of its conflagration through heroes and popular media fosters more comprehensive discussion of its implications, misapplications, and volatile potential.

Acknowledgements

References

Anderson, Benedict. (2006). *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

Bushell, Sally. (2015). Mapping Victorian Adventure Fiction: Silences, Doublings, and the Ur-Map in *Treasure Island* and *King Solomon's Mines*. *Victorian Studies* 57, 611-37.

Cornell, Stephen, & Hartmann, Douglas. (2003). *Ethnicity and Race*. London, Pine Forge Press.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. (2003). The Adventure of the Devil's Foot. In Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *Sherlock Holmes, the Complete Novels and Stories, Vol. II.* New York: Bantam Classics.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. (2003). *The Sign of the Four. In Sherlock Holmes, the Complete Novels and Stories, Vol. I.* New York: Bantam Classics.

Haggard, H Rider. (1951). *Allan Quatermain.* In Haggard, H Rider, *Three Adventure Novels.* Mineola: Dover Publications.

Haggard, H. Rider. (2002). *King Solomon's Mines*. New York: Modern Library.

Jacobs, Nancy. (2014). *African History Through Sources: Colonial Contexts and Everyday Experiences, c. 1950-1946*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jeal, Tim. (2011). *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Keating, H.R.F. (2006). *Sherlock Holmes: The Man and his World.* Edison: Castle Books.

Laband, John. (1991). *Zulu Warriors: The Battle for the South African Frontier.* New York: Random House, Inc.

Larson, Edward J. (2011) *An Empire of Ice.* New Haven:Yale University Press.

Marx, Anthony. (1998). *Making Race and Nation.* London: Cambridge University Press.

Nye, Matthew. (2016). Linguistic Crossings: African Essentialism in *King Solomon's Mines*. *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 29:2.

Pakenham, Thomas. (1991). *The Scramble for Africa: The White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912*. New York: Random House, Inc.

Raheja, Lauren. (2006). Anxieties of Empire in Doyle's Tales of Sherlock Holmes. *Nature, Society, and Thought* 19:4, 417-26.

Reader, W.J. (1973). *Victorian England.* London: Book Club Associates.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. (2014). *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In Dziemianowicz, Stefan, (Ed.), *Penny Dreadfuls*. New York: Fall River Press.

Weber, Max. "The Origins of Ethnic Groups." (1996, reprint 2009). In Hutchinson, John, & Smith, Anthony D (Eds.), *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 35-40.

Wilson, A. N. (2002). *The Victorians*. London: Hutchinson.

Contact email: Laurencruz15@gmail.com