

LITERATURE AND IDEOLOGY:
 THE PATTERSON EMBASSY TO LOBENGULA, 1878, AND KING SOLOMON'S MINES¹

by

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Aims of the Paper

1. It is my contention that literary critics and English Departments, particularly in South Africa (largely perhaps as a function of their class background and present class system), teach or approve of a number of books (perhaps a whole tradition) whose full implications they do not make explicit. In other words, it is my belief that there is a hidden ideological bias in what is regarded as "good" in English literature and I wish to show this with a particular example, King Solomon's Mines. This book I see as an ideological statement revolving around an historical event, and it is my belief that English Departments and people conditioned by them find a book "good" because they largely respond to that ideological statement, agreeing, even if almost being unaware of it, with that statement. Much literary criticism, at least in South Africa, takes place on a formalistic level, the analysis and assessment of style, reading the book as a self-contained unit, and critics manage to ignore the book's genesis and background and to avoid much historical or sociological analysis. (2) To speak plainly, much racist (and, in Rider Haggard's case, imperialist) literature is whole-heartedly approved of. I would like to demonstrate this, largely implicitly.
2. I also hope to show that literature is an interesting subjective expression of ideology at a particular moment in time, explaining the world and justifying it, and can therefore be seen as another area for historical and sociological analysis. Because it is "fiction" and therefore "not real" does not mean to say it does not affect attitudes or has no connection with social reality (accepting the limitations of this last term).
3. If nothing else, I would like to take a particular book, King Solomon's Mines, which I believe may have had an unmeasurable but not insignificant effect on racial attitudes, and examine its genesis and relationship to an historical event about which we now know something. The novel came out not long after the Berlin Conference of 1885, when Africa was very much in people's minds.

The Patterson Embassy to Lobengula

Captain Robert Patterson, an officer in the 1st Royal Lanark Militia, arrived in South Africa in 1877 on a private shooting expedition. The missionary T. M. Thomas wrote that Captain Patterson "was a scotchman of good parts and some means - a man of about fifty - still a bachelor ... We liked him for his good sense and corteousness". (3) This favourable opinion is reinforced by Rider Haggard, who wrote that Patterson, when Haggard became acquainted with him, "was a man in early middle life, florid in appearance, and rather stout in person, of an open manner and a genial disposition", and Haggard continued that he believed Patterson to be "the possessor of considerable means". (4) Consequently, when Patterson and a companion, John Sergeaunt, planned a visit to the Victoria Falls, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, then Administrator of the Transvaal, and Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner of South Africa, could have had little hesitation in deciding to use Patterson as their official envoy to Khama, chief of the Bamangwato, and to Lobengula, king of the Ndebele.

Frere and Shepstone had three main objectives in mind for the embassy: firstly, he was to examine the country of the Bamangwato and to discuss with Khama the chief's complaints about Boer incursions; secondly, Patterson was to raise with Lobengula the question of complaints made by various hunters and traders (particularly Richard Frewen) of interference on the part of the Ndebele; and, thirdly, he was to look into the possibility of establishing a permanent British consul at Lobengula's court. For this service Patterson was to receive £500 for expenses. According to Rider Haggard, it was only owing to Haggard's being unable to obtain leave from the Government of the Transvaal that he did not go with Patterson, so that it was only by the narrowest of margins that the embassy was not even more fateful than it actually turned out to be.

Captain Patterson's business with Lobengula was described by an eyewitness, T. M. Thomas:

Captain Patterson attempted to discuss all the above points with the King uLopengule without much success. But ultimately when it had been suggested to his Majesty that in view of the possibility of the Transvaal Boers leaving their country for these parts and bringing with them the supposed uKurumana it would be well for him to be on friendly terms with his next-door neighbour Sir Theophilus Shepstone he seemed to approve of the idea of a British consul's being placed at Gubulawayo. We had three successive meetings and two others with the chief men, but the Captain declined to enter upon any discussion with them unless the King himself requested him to do so which he did not. My own impression was that the King wished to avoid entering any agreement which would in the least interfere with his barbarous, avaricious and sensual customs and habits; but that are imperiling his life or kingdom he would make some efforts to meet the wishes of the English captain. He was accuated by fear and not any good principle. (5)

After the discussions Patterson, together with John Sergeaunt and T. M. Thomas's son, Evan Morgan, went on an expedition to the Victoria Falls. Three days' journey from the Zambezi River, on 20 September, the three white men, together

with at least two servants, died. The manner of their death, whether an accident (the result of drinking poisoned water) or deliberate murder, is the subject matter of many of the documents contained in the Patterson papers.

The Patterson documents relate largely to the various enquiries instigated by Frere and Shepstone into the deaths of the Patterson party. Though there is circumstantial evidence that murder possibly took place and Lobengula may have been involved, the investigation was never pressed, perhaps owing, as Tabler suggests, to "the difficulty of disproving Loben's account of it". (6) If the documents give no definite answers they certainly raise interesting questions and the whole series often reads rather like a detective mystery set in nineteenth century Africa; but no bodies were ever examined to verify whether death was caused by accident or murder; and even if it was murder, as some contended, most vehemently, the how, the why and the who, the method, the motive and the agent still remain in doubt.

Lobengula and the Succession Problem

If the deaths of Captain Patterson and his party were not accidental and were the result of orders from Lobengula or some of his induna, it is extremely desirable to understand the background which might have led to those orders being given. (7) It is, of course, very dangerous to accept only the written sources of contemporary Europeans. It is therefore important to try to understand Lobengula's position and his feelings, caught as he was in a web of conflicting motives, subject to as many pressures as any human being who finds himself in the role of ruler of a complex state; it is important, in addition, to remember that our knowledge of that position is frequently at two removes from direct apprehension, since much of our information has to be sifted from the vision of a European with a distinct bias, whether he be a hunter, trader or miner with some economic self-interest, or a missionary horrified by pagan practices.

An indication of the likely reason which may have led Lobengula to order so drastic an action as to have the Patterson party killed is the King's behaviour during one of Patterson's interviews with him, in the way the King's attitude changed abruptly when Patterson mentioned the name of Kuruman in what appears to be something of a veiled threat on Patterson's part. For the origins of this problem of succession one has to return to the time of the death of Mzilikazi, Lobengula's father.

Mzilikazi died in September 1868, and the Ndebele were immediately faced with the problem of finding a successor to the King. Before the King's death it had been assumed by several whites that he would be succeeded by his eldest son, Mangwana (or Mangwane). But the Ndebele knew perfectly well who was the legitimate heir to the throne: this was one of Mzilikazi's sons, Kuruman, or Nkulumana, named after the mission station of the Rev. Robert Moffat. Although there was no doubt that Nkulumane was the person so qualified there was considerable doubt as to his whereabouts and fate. Until he could be found or a successor appointed, the shrewd old induna, Nombate, cousin and right-hand man of Mzilikazi, was made regent.

There were two versions of the fate of Nkulumane. When the Ndebele retreated from the Transvaal after their defeat by the Boers in 1837, the tribe was split in two because of the problems of finding food for so large a body of people on the move. One section, comprising the women and children and part of the army, under Gundwane Ndiwene, and accompanied by Nkulumane, headed northwards and eventually founded a settlement (which they called Gibexhegu) across the Limpopo; while the other section of the army, under Mzilikazi, after covering their retreat, moved by a more westerly route, eventually reaching the Zambezi River. When Mzilikazi recontacted the other half of his tribe he found that the induna, despairing of the leaderless remnant, had made attempts to install the young boy, Nkulumane, as king. Mzilikazi had Gundwane and other induna executed and ordered the death of Nkulumane and two other royal princes, Ubukalelo and Lobengula. An alternative version is that Mzilikazi, according to custom, banished the heir to prevent any threat of rivalry. Tribal tradition, at any rate, believed that Nkulumane escaped death and headed southwards.

Nombate, however, spread another story. He claimed that Nkulumane was at Zwangendaba when Mzilikazi sent a Basuto called Gwabaiyo to Zwangendaba, and the latter strangled Nkulumane in the veld. Gwabaiyo and Nkulumane's servant, Gualena, testified to this killing before the council of induna set up in August 1869 to decide the succession. It is possible that this latter version of Nkulumane's fate was devised by Nombate to overcome the whole succession problem and to stabilize what was threatening totally to disrupt Ndebele society - uncertainty about a leader. Lobengula was afterwards to justify his accession and the legitimacy of his reign in terms of Nombate's story. Whatever the fate of Nkulumane, what is certain is that Lobengula was concealed from the wrath of his father and was later reconciled with Mzilikazi. So much so that, according to Henry Hartley, Lobengula, who was the son of Mzilikazi by a lesser wife, a Swazi woman called Fulata, had been given by Mzilikazi to his chief wife for adoption so that he could become heir.

On his assumption of the regency Nombate sent an expedition (some time in November or December, 1868) to Natal to try to find Nkulumane, but this expedition returned in July 1869 with no information as to the heir's whereabouts.

External factors were also to complicate the succession issue. In 1865 the hunter and trader Henry Hartley discovered what seemed to be ancient gold diggings in Mashonaland and his guess as to the presence of gold was confirmed the following year by a German geologist, Karl Mauch, who accompanied Hartley into the area. In 1867 Mauch also found gold at the Tati River. There was something of a gold rush in the Tati area, an area where it was difficult for the Ndebele to control mining activities; but, on the other hand, the Ndebele could control far more effectively the road to Mashonaland and the Northern Goldfields.

After a disastrous expedition in 1869 by the Durban Gold Mining Company, two other companies were soon to be involved. The first of these was the London and Limpopo Company, whose expedition under the abrasive Sir John Swinburne quickly came to an agreement with some of the induna, gaining permission for the company to explore the Northern Goldfields in exchange for the company's help for another expedition to be despatched to Natal to look for Nkulumane. Swinburne's subordinate, Captain Arthur Leveret, accompanied this second delegation under Umkaiitcho southwards, in July 1869. Meanwhile, an expedition of the South African Goldfields Exploration Company under the soon-to-be-famous artist Thomas Baines was given permission by Nombate to explore the Northern Goldfields.

It is also at this point that Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, began to play an increasing part in the affair. In 1868 Shepstone sent northwards as his agent an educated African, Elijah Kambula, who attached himself to Swinburne's party. It seems to have been Kambula, who first claimed to have discovered the missing Ndebele heir. He told Shepstone that Nkulumane had lost his left eye; by chance Shepstone had a gardener who corresponded to the description. Initially Shepstone had believed, or so he subsequently stated, that this gardener, Kanda, was a son of Mzilikazi, but he had not known that he was the missing heir. Kambula accompanied Levert on the expedition south to identify Kanda. Whether Shepstone ever believed that Kanda actually was Nkulumane is not known, but he certainly seems to have been interested in being a king-maker.

Meanwhile the Ndebele, in the face of the increasing activity of the miners, were anxious about their kingless state. Lobengula seems to have been the obvious choice but he was reluctant to become king, not unreasonably fearing for his life if Nkulumane did reappear - an indication of the insecurity which Lobengula initially felt over the whole succession dilemma and which perhaps never really left him. It is possibly this feeling of insecurity which in part explains his actions with respect to the Patterson mission. Indeed, around July 1869, Lobengula himself started on an expedition southwards to search for Nkulumane but he had to turn back because of illness. Some time in August or September 1869, however, a council of induna seems to have decided to make Lobengula king. Still the latter was reluctant. Eventually, however, Lobengula was installed as king on the 24th January 1870. In the meantime, the expedition of Levert, Kambula and Umkaitcho had returned in December 1869, with Kambula having claimed to recognize Kanda as Nkulumane when he saw him. But it was not till February and after his installation that Lobengula saw Levert, and by this time Kambula had changed his mind and was claiming that Kanda was not Nkulumane. Brown offers the most plausible reason for this volte-face. Apart from being Shepstone's agent, Kambula was also an employee of the London and Limpopo Company, and it is possible that by this time the miners felt that a king on the throne was worth two in the bush and stability rather than scrupulous legality would better benefit mining interests.

About April 1870, Lobengula despatched to Natal yet another expedition (the third) under the induna Marima, this time almost certainly to entrench Lobengula's own position by a secret offer of goldfield concessions in return for support for Lobengula's accession. Although no agreement was reached on this, Marima did see Kanda and denied that he was Nkulumane.

Meanwhile, Lobengula had trouble at home. One of the Ndebele regiments, under its leader Mbigo, supported Nkulumane rather than Lobengula, possibly because Nkulumane seems to have been a member of the regiment in former times, or at least associated with it. Mbigo sent emissaries south to Kanda. At first Lobengula tolerated the old and senile Mbigo and his opposition because most of the tribe was beginning to swing round behind Lobengula. Eventually, however, at the insistence of his induna, Lobengula attacked and defeated the Zwangendaba Regiment and its allies in May 1870, though he was merciful to the survivors.

Later, in alliance with Macheng, the Ngwato chief, Kanda, invaded Matabeleland but the expedition was a fiasco. Kanda fled to the Transvaal Republic where he seems to have continued ineffectual plotting for some years. His shadow, however, continued to disturb the mind of Lobengula. In August 1876, T. M. Thomas was summoned to Lobengula's presence to read the King some letters, written in

Dutch, which disclosed a possible bargain between Kanda and some Boers of the Transvaal Republic; the Boers would help Kanda to the throne in return for large land concessions.

He is also much afraid that they should accede to Kuruman's request. Indeed when I made known to [him] some parts of the above letters he wept the tears and said that he had not yet turned his back from fear of Kuruman. (8)

"After 1877", writes Richard Brown, "little more is heard of Kuruman". Tradition relates that he was poisoned by an agent of Lobengula's." And, although this may be true of Kanda himself and his activities, it is also very evident from the Patterson episode that his influence lingered on in Matabeleland at least until 1879.

Sequel to the Patterson Deaths

In 1894 Wills and Collingridge published their book, The Downfall of Lobengula, which was partly an account and glorification of the occupation of Matabeleland in 1893, and partly a justification of it. Generally, the book takes the line that the dawn has just replaced the darkness, and the savage tyrant has been dealt his just deserts. It is in this context that Rider Haggard contributed his chapter on "The Patterson Embassy to Lobengula". What is interesting and significant in the article is its bias and the function it was clearly intended to serve. Haggard's statement that "Sir Theophilus Shepstone, who knew the natives and their temper better perhaps than any white man who has ever lived, told me that the party came to their end by foul means" not only reveals his inability to achieve any real objectivity but also the tenuous logic on which his deductions were based.

Thus, although at the time of Patterson's death Shepstone and Frere did not see fit to pursue the inquest too far, either for reasons of expediency or simple practicability, the death of the Scottish captain was not without its consequences. If it could not be used as a motive for intervention, it was at least used as a justification. Rider Haggard was in this way helping to drive a nail into Lobengula's coffin. He found Lobengula guilty without even any analysis as to extenuating circumstances, such as possible motives for the murder.

Evidence that Haggard's interpretation of the Patterson episode was not still-born and became the generally accepted version can be found in the account given by Mrs Caroline Kirkham (née Thomas), the second daughter of the second wife of T. M. Thomas, and the "step-sister" of young Morgan Thomas:

I was about nine when my step-brother, Morgan was murdered with Patterson's party in October, 1879. There is an account of this tragic event in 'The Downfall of Lobengula', which is considered to be the truth:- Captain Patterson and Sargeant were on their way to the Victoria Falls, and had brought a letter to Lobengula from the High Commissioner, Cape Town, complaining that Lobengula had allowed white traders to be molested in Matabeleland.

During the negotiations, it is believed that Captain Patterson was so unfortunate as to remind the king about his brother, Nkulumane, who was said to be living in Natal and who was believed by many to be the rightful heir to the throne. From that moment, Lobengula and his indunas doomed Patterson's party to a sudden and cruel death. (9)

She carried on at length with details of the "murder", and ends:

It was a terrible story, and one which shows to what depths of wickedness and treachery the savage will sink, when he thinks that his own interests are threatened.

And thus perished, in his twentieth year, Evan Morgan Thomas, Rhodesia's first child pioneer.

An account which begins with partial reservations like "considered to be the truth" and "it is believed" noticeably ends with little doubt and considerable condemnation. It is an interesting illustration of the way a story can move into the realms of popular mythology and help to shape attitudes and historical stereotypes.

In his last paragraph Haggard almost moves out of the world of the historian into the world of the literary critic, into the realm of the imagination:

Such is the brief account of the fate of Sir Bartle Frere's ill-starred embassy to Lobengula in the year 1878. If, as I believe to be the case, it is indeed true that the King did plan and execute this most wicked murder, his subsequent history and end may give food for reflection to those who hold that such crimes meet with a just reward at the hand of Providence. Perhaps as he lay dying, a hunted fugitive in the neighbourhood of the Shangani River, Lobengula may have remembered the innocent white men whom he butchered nearly twenty years before. Perhaps, on the other hand, in the river of blood that he shed, to his hardened sense theirs would have seemed of small account. However these things may be, it has seemed to the writer of this note that the story of the tragic and mysterious end of his friends, as far as it can be pieced together after the lapse of so long a time, may prove an incident of interest, worthy of record in the annals of the early history of Matabeleland; one, moreover, which will be remembered in after generations, when that country is the prosperous home of tens of thousands of white men.

One hundred years afterwards, this "incident" of possible interest can perhaps be remembered by "after generations" in a slightly less emotive, if not more objective, frame of mind and some of the excesses of prejudice corrected.

In an interesting example of the white oral tradition, Basil Fuller relates a rather different version of the episode:

So Lobengula was suspected of the crime. But, beyond asking both Thomas and the King for full reports, the British authorities did nothing in the matter. Effective action would have required the use of an army.

However, evidence since available suggests that Lobengula was sincere in protesting his innocence to Thomas. Judge Thomas told me that it is very likely that the true version of the matter was related to his father, Mr Willie Thomas, a native commissioner, by old native indunas after the death of the King. (10)

Fuller therefore blames "hot-heads" amongst Lobengula's subjects.

The Patterson case is one of those episodes in history which read like a murder trial and which demand of the historian reader that he play the role of judge and jury and place himself in a situation where he must ask himself whether the same rules about a man's innocence and guilt apply as in a court of law. Rider Haggard and others had little shadow of doubt, but it is still possible that they murdered an innocent man's reputation. By then, however, Lobengula was dead, so perhaps it did not matter.

Patterson and King Solomon's Mines

Whether or not the Patterson embassy had a lasting effect on history is open to debate, but it has certainly left its mark on the literature of South Africa: the events of the Patterson mission combined with its background (the succession problem) seem to have been the partial inspiration for a not unknown South African novel. As has already been mentioned, Rider Haggard would have been with Patterson when the latter met his death, had it not been for a fortuitous accident. The novelist was later to discuss the incident and to show to what extent the Patterson episode influenced his first novel, for the two servants Patterson took with him and who died with him were, in fact, the servants of Rider Haggard:

But of the Matabele, who, in the tale, are named Kukuanas, I did know something. Indeed I went near to knowing too much, for when, in 1877, my friends Captain Patterson and Mr J. Sergeant were sent by Sir Bartle Frere on an embassy to their king, Lobengula, I asked leave to go with them. It was refused as I could not be spared from the office. Had I gone my fate would have been theirs, for Lobengula murdered them both, and my two servants whom I had lent them. These two, Khiva, the bastard Zulu, and Ventvogel, the Hottentot, I have tried to preserve in King Solomon's Mines, for they were such men as I have described. (11)

Khiva and Ventvögel (whose names are spelt in several ways in the Patterson documents) are the two servants whom Allan Quatermain and Sir Henry Curtis

and Captain Good take with them to Kukuanaaland. The description of these two in King Solomon's Mines is quite likely to be accurate. Their fates, however, are romanticized in the novel. Khiva dies saving Captain Good from an elephant (the image of the brave and loyal servant), while Ventvögel dies of the cold in a cave. Much of the plot of King Solomon's Mines also probably owes much to the Patterson embassy. For Allan Quatermain and party take with them a third servant, Umbopa, who is, for some time, surrounded with an air of mystery. Allan Quatermain describes Umbopa as being "different from the ordinary run of Zulus", and he also says that "I always called him a Zulu, though he was not really one". The inspiration of the story becomes clear when Umbopa, who for years lived in Natal "working as a servant and soldier", arrives in Kukuanaaland and proves to be the legitimate heir. The incumbent on the throne is one Twala (the name probably owes much to the Zulu word "tshwala". His son's name is Scraggat). The old induna Infadoos (possibly based on Mbigo for the regiment of loyal Greys in the novel may be inspired by the Zwangendaba Regiment) says that "The land groans at the cruelties of Twala the king: it is wearied of him and his red ways". In the above-mentioned quotation we have already seen Rider Haggard say that "of the Matabele, who in the tale are named Kukuanas, I did know something", although the mines of King Solomon are actually situated north of Rhodesia and the party does travel through the land of Lobengula.

At Inyati, the outlying trading station in the Matabele country, of which Lobengula (a great and cruel scoundrel) is king, with many regrets we parted from our comfortable wagons.

So that it is clear that Umbopa is Kanda-Kuruman, and Twala is Lobengula. It is also clear that in the novel Haggard is maintaining his bias against Lobengula, is following the support of Shepstone for Kanda, and is following the prevailing belief (expressed by Patterson as well) that Kanda would receive wide support from the people if he tried to claim the throne. King Solomon's Mines, then, continues Haggard's anti-Lobengula stance and is, in a way, propaganda to encourage and justify the King's removal. From his article in The Downfall of Lobengula we know that Rider Haggard read at least some of the Patterson papers, and this is supported by internal evidence. Some may be simply coincidence: for example, Allan Quatermain asks to be paid £500 for my services on the trip", while Patterson was paid £500 for expenses by Shepstone; Captain Good is retired from the Royal Navy, Patterson was a captain in the Lanark militia; according to E. C. Tabler, Patterson used instruments on his journey, in the novel "Good was leading as the holder of the compass, which, being a sailor, of course he thoroughly understood"; the original dispute over succession in the novel is due to twins, Kuruman was supposedly a twin; there is also the reference to lack of water in both the novel and in the true story. But these are perhaps only incidentals: there are some more interesting facts.

Fascinating is Haggard's description in the novel of Lobengula-Twala:

Then the gigantic figure slipped off the karrross and stood up before us, a truly alarming spectacle. It was that of an enormous man with the most entirely repulsive countenance we had ever beheld. This man's lips were thick as a negro's, the nose was flat, he had but one gleaming black eye, for the other was represented by a hollow in the face, and his whole expression was cruel and sensual to a degree. From the large head rose a magnificent plume of white ostrich feathers, his body was clad in a shirt of shining chain armour, whilst round the waist and right

knee were the usual garnishes of white oxtail. In his right hand was a huge spear, about the neck a thick torque of gold, and bound on the forehead shone dully a single and enormous uncut diamond.

This should be compared with Patterson's description of Lobengula in a letter.

... there stood Lobengula, a perfect impersonation of a savage King - about 17 stones in weight, tall, naked, but for a few strips of monkey skins hanging from his hips - a great sensual, cruel face whose daily work it is to order death, often with torture.

The same phrase of "sensual and cruel" appears in both. There is also an interesting example of transference here. In the novel Lobengula-Twala has "one gleaming black eye": in his journal in the notes on the succession problem Patterson wrote:

The identity of K. was denied and various accounts were given to show who he really was. The one most accepted at the time is that K the Khanda of Pmg. was one of the twin boy and girl born to Masilik by Motoomoi of Inyatini. Twins are an abomination to a King and cannot be brought up together. The boy was sent to the Makobi Kopjes east of Tati. In 1859 he came to his father who insisted on his leaving the country and gave an ox. He went to the Amaswazi where in a fight he lost an eye. From there he went to Natal.

Clearly Haggard has transferred what he finds to be physically repulsive from his hero to the man he finds morally repulsive.

The Patterson papers also give us a clue as to the origins of the somewhat unfortunate name of the capital of Kukuanialand (Loo): at one stage in the papers Gubulawayo is called Gobroloo. There is, finally, yet one more interesting fact which must be more than coincidence. The beautiful black girl whom Lobengula-Twala orders to be sacrificed and with whom Captain Good falls in love is called Foulata. Lobengula's mother was a Swazi woman called Fulata. There are surely only two possible explanations of Haggard's use of this name: it is either conscious or unconscious. If it is a conscious use, Haggard is ironically having Lobengula-Twala kill his own mother, who is younger than he and very beautiful: the overtones of this seem intensely Freudian. If the use is unconscious, as seems more likely, then it shows how deeply the whole episode affected Haggard and how his subconscious mind dwelt on the whole affair.

It would seem to me that all the above points to the fact that the Patterson embassy had a profound effect on Haggard. Since he owed his life to not going on the Patterson mission, it is not surprising that this became an indelible memory and the basis for his most famous novel. Patterson's meeting with Lobengula is perhaps the genesis of the very ominous statement made by Twala at his first meeting with Allan Quatermain, where he says "It is not well to threaten a king".

When Haggard visited Rhodesia in 1914 the event still preoccupied him. This dwelling on the memory of the Patterson episode may have one more

interesting consequence. The main purpose of the expedition in the novel is to search for Sir Henry Curtis's brother. Right at the end of the book this brother is miraculously found. He has been injured and is found at an oasis or water-hole (many of the accounts of Patterson's death tell of the party being two days without water and then dying at the water-hole). It is possible, then, that Haggard in his fictional world could not really bear the thought of Patterson's death, so that in the world of fiction Patterson is kept eternally alive. Or, perhaps, even more intriguing, the survivor at the end is Haggard himself. Possibly he is trying to write out in his fiction the sub-conscious fear of his own death, the reality and proximity of which was brought home to him by his narrow escape from the ill-starred (to use his own phrase) Patterson embassy. From the above, however, it seems clear that the novel is in many ways an ideological distortion or manipulation of what seem to be established facts.

The Popularity of the Novel

According to his biographer (12), 650,000 copies of King Solomon's Mines were printed during Haggard's lifetime and the book has never been out of print. In 1960 there were 12 issues in print, it has been broadcast many times and filmed, and read by people from King Edward VII to D. H. Lawrence. In 1973 the SABC broadcast it as a school setbook, and it is taught even in Zulu schools. It has been widely praised. Haggard's biographer is surely right when he claims: "For many Englishmen, Africa became the Africa of King Solomon's Mines." The effect of the book has therefore been considerable. Future literary critics should perhaps set themselves to deciding whether the Transvaal government of 1878 was not culpable in refusing Haggard leave to accompany Patterson.

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Notes

- (1) This paper has been adapted from the introduction to a hitherto unpublished collection of documents contained in the Little Brethurst Library, Johannesburg. Because of reasons of space, I have tried to keep notes to a minimum. I have tried elsewhere to examine the corollary of this paper: that is, the way in which certain prejudices within English literary criticism have caused at least one African novel to be misinterpreted or passed over. Cf. "Sol Plaatje's Mhudi" in The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Vol. VIII, 1, June 1973, pp. 1-19.
- (2) To give an example of how a literary critic can avoid specific detail and hence come to find a work worthy of approval (the ideological content is obvious though most literary critics would deny any ideological bias), compare the following criticism of Robinson Crusoe: "the sympathy and understanding that spring up between the two [Robinson Crusoe and Friday] represent on a small scale the feelings which would bind all men together if they turned inward to their hearts instead of outward to the world." This should perhaps be set beside Defoe's own words: "in a little time I began to speak with him, and teach him to speak to me; and first, I made him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life; I called him

so for the memory of the time; I likewise taught him to say Master, and then let him know, that was to be my name; I likewise taught him to say yes and no, and to know the meaning of them." Other examples of racialism in the "Great Tradition" which would be seen at worst only as temporary aberrations by many literary critics would be the Jewish question in Lawrence's "Women in Love" or Dickens's handling of "The Noble Savage".

- (3) Unpublished manuscript journal 1874-1883, contained in the library of the University of the Witwatersrand. Thomas's spelling and grammar are his own.
- (4) "The Patterson Embassy to Lobengula" in W. A. Wills and L. T. Collingridge, The Downfall of Lobengula (London, 1894), pp. 227-233.
- (5) Unpublished journal 1874-1883.
- (6) E. C. Tabler, Pioneers of Rhodesia (Cape Town, 1966), p. 129.
- (7) The following account of Lobengula's succession and its problems owes much to R. Brown, "The Ndebele Succession Crisis", The Central Historical Association, Local Series Pamphlet No. 5, 1966, and to E. C. Tabler, The Far Interior (Cape Town, 1955).
- (8) Unpublished journal 1874-1883.
- (9) Jeannie M. Boggie, First Steps in Civilizing Rhodesia (Bulawayo, 1940).
- (10) Basil Fuller, Bid Time Return (Cape Town, 1954), pp. 87-88.
- (11) Lillias Rider Haggard, The Cloak That I Left (London, 1951), pp. 122-3.
- (12) Morton Cohen, Rider Haggard: His Life and Works (London, 1960), pp. 230-233.