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2. Another Vision of Empire. Henry Rider Haggard's Modernity and Legacy

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Henry Rider Haggard's Posthumanist Eco-consciousness¹

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Abstracts

English Français

In this essay I argue that the late Victorian and early Edwardian novelist Henry Rider Haggard had a distinct eco-consciousness that was reminiscent of twenty-first century posthumanist philosophies as early as the 1880's. Writing his "imperial romances" in the wake of the beginnings of what is now called the Anthropocene age, Haggard observed and understood the changing relationships between the human society and the more-than-human world in this historical period. In a manner that would be unexpected of an author widely labeled as 'a man of his times'—and therefore a pro-imperial propagandist—in postcolonial literary criticism, he was critical of the anthropocentric ways of western civilization. Ranging from a Darwinian notion of the oneness of all living animals to a highly skeptical attitude toward the reckless exploitation of the resources of colonial lands and peoples, Haggard's *Weltanschauung* included notions that were not only antithetical to imperialist discourses, but also 'ahead of [their] times' by more than a century. In this essay I elaborate on Haggard's posthumanist eco-consciousness with reference to his fiction and conclude that a renewed understanding of Haggard's literary and intellectual heritage would show how his works are still very much relevant and valuable in our time.

Dans cet article, je souhaite démontrer que le romancier victorien et édouardien Henry Rider Haggard, a développé, dès les années 1880 une véritable conscience écologique distincte de ses contemporains, qui n'était pas sans rappeler les théories post-humanistes actuelles. Le fait d'écrire des romans avec l'Empire pour arrière-plan à l'aube de ce qui est communément appelé l'ère anthropocène, a permis à Haggard d'observer et de comprendre les relations fluctuantes entre la société telle qu'elle était et une société plus humaine à sa propre époque. Il est surprenant de constater que lui, généralement considéré par la critique littéraire post-coloniale comme « un homme de son époque », et par conséquent comme un propagandiste pro-impérialiste, a été critique de l'attitude anthropocentriste de la civilisation occidentale. A partir de la conception darwinienne de l'unicité de tous les animaux vivants jusqu'à une attitude manifestant le plus haut scepticisme envers l'exploitation non raisonnée des ressources des terres et des peuples colonisés, Haggard a développé une *Weltanschauung* (vision personnelle de la vie humaine et de l'univers) s'appuyant sur des notions qui n'étaient pas seulement opposées au discours impérial, mais étaient également en avance sur leur temps de près d'un siècle. Dans cet article j'examine la

conscience écologique post-humaniste de Haggard par rapport à sa fiction et je conclus qu'une nouvelle compréhension de l'héritage littéraire et intellectuel pourrait montrer combien son œuvre est toujours d'actualité et appréciable pour comprendre notre époque.

Index terms

Mots-clés : Roman Victorien, Théorie écocritique, post-humanisme, Anthropocène

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Full text

“We might change our system if we wished. The will is lacking, not the way.”

Henry Rider Haggard (*Rural Denmark* 276)²

1 In a March 2020 article entitled “Literature in an Age of Extraction: An Introduction” that appeared in *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Alok Amatya and Ashley Dawson have powerfully stated that the destructive urgencies the planetary ecosystems and we, as the human race, face today signal the beginning of “the biggest ideological fight of all time” (Amatya and Dawson 8). Invoking Antonio Gramsci’s reflections about the “organic crisis of capitalism—a crisis that is at once economic, political, and ideological” (6) in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Amatya and Dawson then explore “[w]hat role the literary (and representation more broadly) [will] play in this” (8) fight. Likewise, only weeks before coronavirus became headline news, the climate crisis was responded to by David Higgins and Tess Somervell who suggested “Three Things Historical Literature Can Teach Us about the Climate Crisis,” one of which was that “studying historical texts helps us to understand how modern cultural attitudes towards the environment developed, which in turn allows us to perceive that these attitudes are not as ‘natural’ or inevitable as they may seem.” It was as if Humanities scholarship had seen the disaster coming. Now understood by many as the culmination of the effects of diverse anthropogenic activities of the past 300 years, i.e., “the Anthropocene” age as defined by the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and limnologist Eugene Stoermer, the current pandemic marks the climax of the Anthropocene characterized by the reckless extraction of the supposedly endless resources of our planet, climate emergencies, rapid mass extinction of species, plastic pollution in the oceans, rising carbon emissions especially in the wealthier countries. To many, this is the Apocalypse. Accordingly, the eschatological vision has become the governing element of the myriad of examples of the increasingly popular *new* genre called climate fiction, or cli-fi. By storying the Anthropocene, these *new* narratives are considered to be discursive vehicles for the formulation and dissemination of an eco-consciousness of which humanity is *now* in dire need. In this article, I try to illustrate that neither the concerns with the destructive forms of the humans’ relationships with the more-than-human world nor the literary or other representational responses to these realities are exclusively *new* and exclusively *now*. A distinct eco-consciousness that was reminiscent of twenty-first century posthumanist philosophies; that understood the Anthropocene condition and was critical of its anthropocentric ways, was already present in the works of Henry Rider Haggard as early as the 1880’s. Even though conventional and pre-conditioned readings of Haggard’s fiction and non-fiction have positioned him as ‘a man of his times’—and therefore a thoroughgoing imperialist—he was not exclusively *now* in the late Victorian and early Edwardian ages either. His *Weltanschauung* and his posthumanist perception of human ontology—as well as the representations of such perception in other narrative media—as enmeshed with the more-than-human, which is essentially antithetical to imperialist discursive formations,³ presaged the *now* of the second decade of the twenty-first century.

2 As a matter of fact, the real challenge in recasting the image of Haggard as a posthumanist ecocritic is not so much about digging into the history of Victorian English literature to look for the possible ancestors of modern eco-conscious literary discourses. As I have recently discussed elsewhere, the age in which Haggard lived and

wrote was an age when “the human’s place and role in nature were beginning to be replaced with a new understanding based on interconnectedness” (Akili 2019 53). The examples of this renewed perception of the ontological continuum as an effect of the Darwinian Revolution included canonical novelists such as George Eliot and Thomas Hardy as well (Akili “The Agency” 53). Depicting the human-nature interrelations with a renewed sensibility based on evolutionary views such as Darwin’s observation that animals and humans are all on the same continuum, different only in “degree, not in kind” (126), many Victorian authors—obviously including Haggard—were in fact circling around ideas which heavily influence posthumanist thinking of the twenty-first century. In Jesse Oak Taylor’s words, “the Victorians’ conception of nature, society, and their interaction is a[n] . . . apt correlate to our own moment . . .” (882). Among the most powerful posthumanist terms that connect this particular Victorian context to our day, one can count Karen Barad’s concept of “entanglement” (206), which is detailed later in this article, and Pramod Nayar’s term “humanimal” that “calls for a more inclusive definition of life, and a greater moral-ethical response, and responsibility, to non-human life forms in the age of species blurring and species mixing” (Nayar 8). In brief, Barad’s and Nayar’s terms introduce revisions of Victorian concepts by updating them in the light of new findings in quantum physics and biology, respectively.

3 The real challenge in my present discussion is about digging into the works of an author whose novels, when read from a certain pre-conditioned position, appear to be the least likely places to find such views. Considering crimes against nature as an inherent part of the British imperial project, many critics of Haggard’s most well-known novels, namely *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) and *Allan Quatermain* (1887), interpreted these novels as deliberately promoting the sexualization and domestication of wild African landscape for exploitation and the animalization of indigenous people to create an excuse for colonization. What is more, they seemed to have good reasons for their assumptions: after all, Haggard was a devout pro-imperialist who had served in Natal colonial administration in South Africa even as a boy (Higgins 15). By early 1877, he had been promoted to the position of secretary in colonial administration and when the Transvaal was officially annexed by the British, he was on the forefront when the proclamation was read and the Union Jack was hoisted in late May of the same year (Pocock 26–27). Obviously, historical facts such as these seem to have easily justified arguments about Haggard’s imperialist, and thus masculinist and anthropocentric, worldview. So why should one even try to search for instances of eco-consciousness in Haggard’s works when the quest at hand is more difficult than finding King Solomon’s treasures? Were not the root causes of our modern ecological crises European colonization of the globe and the subsequent industrialization, both of which relied on the extraction of human and non-human resources of non-European lands? Was not Henry Rider Haggard himself the evil “Anthropos” of the Anthropocene?⁴

4 Gary Westfahl’s apt suggestion that “to fully understand [...] Haggard’s fantasies, one must first strip away a century of critical misperceptions” answers the above questions. Accordingly, the alternative reading of Haggard’s novels presented in this article suggests that by using the hero of his novels, namely Allan Quatermain, as his own self-appointed mouthpiece,⁵ Haggard was in fact glorifying the savage and uncorrupted nature in Africa and, perhaps more importantly, criticizing the destruction inflicted upon nature by the agents of British imperialism. He was effectively contesting, from a posthumanist perspective, what, a century after the 1885 publication of *King Solomon’s Mines*, has come to be called “ecological imperialism” by Alfred W. Crosby in 1986.

5 Emphasis in most critical accounts of Haggard’s novels has been put on the author’s alleged depiction and representation of Africa and/or African landscape as a place waiting to be exploited, both materially and sexually, and as a mystified and wild realm dared and domesticated by the white race. Laura Chrisman, for example, has argued that Haggard’s novels have served for the legitimacy of British imperial capitalism by normalizing the idea that African natural resources and mines belonged to the English (Chrisman 44). Chrisman’s reference here is to *King Solomon’s Mines*, which, if one chooses to do so, can be read as an allegory of the search for Africa’s hidden mineral riches symbolized by the legendary treasure of King Solomon sought out in Africa by the novel’s characters. Similarly, Linda Dryden has claimed that “Africa, in Haggard’s

novels, remains an essentially romantic, exotic locale, dripping with gold and diamonds, the rightful property of the African which, nevertheless, is regarded as legitimate plunder by his English gentlemen" (Dryden 174). As for the supposed encouragement by Haggard of the exploitation of Africa as if it were a virgin to be raped, another critic has argued that:

indeed, Africa as a whole was by some visualized as [...] feminine [...] Such a representation conformed to a masculine exploration of her dark, dangerous spaces. If Africa was in some sense female, then her penetration and partition by the white man was itself a form of rape [...]. H. Rider Haggard seems to suggest as much in the sexual geography of *King Solomon's Mines*, where the mountains beyond the desert are Sheba's Breasts, with the treasure cave further down the road between them. (Malchow 82)

6 In the same vein, as a feminist-postcolonialist comment on the alleged metaphorical rape of Africa such as was depicted in Haggard's novels, Anne McClintock has interpreted the treasure map in *King Solomon's Mines* as being "explicitly sexualized [...] [because] *if the map is inverted*, it reveals at once the diagram of a female body" (italics mine) (McClintock 3). A similar comment was made by Lindy Stiebel who discussed the "African topography" as depicted in Haggard's romances and described the map in relation to a "sexualised bodyscape": "the relation between the map and the landscape is not here a purely hypothetical one, as the map Quatermain holds is an unconscious but obvious 'bodyscape' of a recumbent woman *lying upside down turned literally on her head...*" (italics mine) (Stiebel 82). This particular claim almost became a staple remark resonating across all postcolonialist readings of *King Solomon's Mines*.

7 Some other critics of Haggard's novels have placed more emphasis on Haggard's handling of the so-called Nature/Culture dichotomy. Gail Ching-Liang Low, for example, has asserted that Haggard, by his depiction of certain British characters in his novels, implants in the reader the idea that "the presence of the white man domesticates the wild country into a safe pastoral one" (Low 38). Likewise, offering an ecocritical view, Serpil Oppermann has defined the acts of the characters in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, as "acts of ecological mastery over nature in the colonized lands" (Oppermann 180) and argued that late Victorian adventure fiction was also promoting "ecological imperialism [...] a specific manifestation of anthropocentric thought, [which] can be defined as the systematic exploitation and re-shaping of the local ecosystems of the peripheries for the economic welfare of the center" (181). Such views were, of course, discussed with textual evidence and developed in line with their own critical stances. Was this the entire story, though?

8 Other textual evidence in Haggard's novels still begs the question: was Haggard really an anti-nature, anthropocentric imperialist? The answer is not easy and cannot be produced by resorting to essentializing approaches. Haggard's perception of Africa cannot and should not be explained simply by referring to pre-conditioned interpretations of his novels as exemplified by the above references. The pre-conditioning in the question is exerted by post-colonialism's concerns, since the post-colonial discourse fundamentally stems from an unsparing problematization and discussion of European imperialism of the past. Maybe, using 'inverted maps,' which will only result in one's getting lost, is not such a good idea after all.

9 Apparently, such a pre-conditioning of critical thought has led, in the case of Haggard's novels, to a kind of methodological fallacy in which critics

find what they want [...] to find in the novelist's work, and use [...] it to support positions already taken. [...] This type of approach conditions the evidence: it leads to the asking of such questions as 'does this fiction support this view of [...] Victorian society?' If it does, it may be quoted or cited; if not, it may be dismissed curtly as 'untypical,' or merely ignored altogether. (Blake 6)

10 Ironically, with reference to the concept of typicality mentioned above, when one reads Haggard's imperial adventure romances as productions of their own time, one can clearly see Haggard fully situated in his own political, cultural, and ecological context. In other words, yes, Haggard's work was typical of late Victorian society, but in a way which has not been explored so far by critics.

- 11 There was not only one prevailing and uniform political culture in late Victorian Britain. The seemingly dominant imperialist ideology of late Victorian Britain was challenged and subverted by an anti-imperialist ideology, which, at varying degrees, was critical of imperialist politics and by which Haggard was influenced very much. As Patricia Knight has explained, at the time of the partition of Africa, which was also the time when Haggard was writing his novels,

a number of anti-Imperialist theories developed. The Socialist analysis was the most far reaching and best worked out. Socialists tended to relate Imperialist expansion directly to the needs of British capitalism. The aims of Imperialism were commercial, – to acquire a larger share of the world market and make profitable investments of capital. The civilizing mission theme was hypocrisy, – slavery would be replaced by wage slavery and forced labour. (Knight 42–43)

- 12 To illustrate this view with further reference, one may also mention Henry du Pré Labouchere, the leader of the Radical Committee (Matthew 26) who was a devout anti-imperialist of the time who declared that “in fact we [the British] are the most thoroughgoing buccaneers and land grabbers that ever existed [...] I assert that Africa belongs to the Africans [...] and we have no more right to the interior of Africa than had any other country on the globe” (qtd. in Knight 47). These are very powerful statements and there is no reason why Haggard, ‘a man of his times’ as he was, would not have been aware of and/or influenced by the anti-imperialist sentiments voiced by his contemporaries.

- 13 From an alternative point of view, Haggard’s attitude towards Africa was one which called for the protection of the land from Europeans, and certainly not one which promoted its exploitation, let alone its rape. Haggard was observant and consciously critical of the inequalities of the Anthropocene as it was experienced in the late Victorian age. In *King Solomon’s Mines*, for instance, when the white heroes are leaving Kukuanaaland, the king of the Kukuanas sends a strong message to the outer world, namely to the world of Europeans: “But listen, and let all the white men know my words. No other white man shall cross the mountains, even if any man lives to come so far. I will see no traders with their guns and rum” (KSM 284). Similarly, Sir Henry Curtis, the English hero of *Allan Quatermain*, expresses the same concern after being appointed as the King-Consort of the Zu-Vendi country:

I cannot see that gunpowder, telegraphs, steam, daily newspapers, universal suffrage, etc., etc., have made mankind one whit the happier than they used to be, and I am certain that they have brought many evils in their train. I have no fancy for handing over this beautiful country to be torn and fought for by speculators, tourists, politicians and teachers, whose voice is as the voice of Babel. (A.Q. 276)

- 14 Such strong statements found in Haggard’s novel point to an anti-imperialistic, anti-extractionist discourse and could easily pass for a quotation from Labouchere, but does not reflect the Anthropos.

- 15 Rather than seeing modern civilization and primitive savagery—and the larger Culture/Nature binary for that matter—as constituting a strict dichotomy, Haggard perceived the latter as the essential origin of the former. We know for a fact that in an 1887 lecture in Edinburgh, Haggard said “out of barbarism we came, and into barbarism we may, perhaps, one day relapse” (qtd. in Lilius Haggard 53). In his lecture Haggard was denouncing the superiority and absolute fixity of modern British civilization and pointing towards the primitive and nature-oriented life in Africa as a fundamental complement to it, which of course was contradictory in its essence to the dominant imperialist discourses of the time. A similar attitude can be observed in Quatermain’s following reflection in the 1913 novel *Child of Storm*:

While man is man [...] he will remain man. I mean that the same passions will sway him; he will aim at the same ambitions; he will know the same joys and be oppressed by the same fears, whether he lives in a Kaffir hut or in a golden palace; whether he walks upon his two feet, or, as for aught I know he may do one day, flies through the air. This is certain: that in the flesh he can never escape from our atmosphere, and while he breathes it, in the main with some variations prescribed by climate, local law and religion, he will do much as his forefathers did for

countless ages. That is why I have always found the savage so interesting, for in him, nakedly and forcibly expressed, we see those eternal principles which direct our human destiny. (2–3)

16 In short, according to Haggard the eternal principles of human life were to be found in the life of the 'savage' not in the life of Englishmen, and hence the life of the 'savage' had to be preserved, at least in written accounts, before it began to be spoiled and corrupted as a result of the intrusion of 'civilized' nations who competed for more land. Obviously, such an attitude echoes the current interest in the larger Environmental Humanities field in animistic cultures and indigenous knowledge which are in tune with the ecosphere. More importantly, Haggard's explicit attribution of the status of "those eternal principles which direct our human destiny" to the ontological fact that "in the flesh [man] can never escape from our atmosphere," directly corresponds to several key concepts in contemporary posthumanist theory. Perhaps the most obvious parallelism can be drawn with Karen Barad's concept of "entanglement" which rejects any static and individual existence or preexistence, causality, or agency, but proposes that we are "intra-actively (re)constituted as part of the world's becoming" (Barad 206). Of course, Barad's theoretical frame of reference that is shaped by the findings of modern quantum physics did not exist in Haggard's day. However, Haggard clearly had the fundamental notions of this modern philosophical perspective in place in his *Weltanschauung* in the late Victorian age.

17 Another interpretive fallacy has suggested the association of Haggard's depiction of Africa in *King Solomon's Mines* with the late Victorian myth of the 'Dark Continent' characterized by darkness, gloom and sickness. Again, various excerpts from the novel prove otherwise. For instance, as Quatermain reports:

just before you come to Durban there is a peculiar richness about the landscape. There are the sheer kloofs [ravines] cut in the hills by the rushing rains of centuries, down which the rivers sparkle; there is the deepest green of the bush, growing as God planted it, and the other greens of the mealie gardens and the sugar patches, while here and there a white house, smiling out at the placid sea, puts a finish and gives an air of homeliness to the scene. (*KSM* 29)

18 A similar description of landscape in the novel is as follows:

As we went the country grew more and more lovely. The vegetation was luxuriant, without being tropical; the sun was bright and warm, but not burning; and a gracious breeze blew softly along the odorous slopes of mountains. Indeed, this new land was little less than an earthly paradise; in beauty, in natural wealth, and in climate I have never seen its like. The Transvaal is a fine country, but it is nothing to Kukuanieland. (114)

19 The comparison made between the Transvaal, which is populated to some extent by white people and their 'civilization,' and Kukuanieland, which is closed forever to white man and his 'civilization,' is noteworthy. In accordance with his views about 'civilization' and 'savagery,' Haggard identifies Africans with natural beauty and Europeans with natural corruption. In his opinion, "civilization [...] drives away the game" (*KSM* 30), in other words, disrupts the balances in the ecosphere. Haggard was cognizant of the effects of anthropogenic interventions to the more-than-human orders and habitats. In this context, one cannot help but observe how, during the lockdowns in the spring and summer of 2020, the accuracy of Haggard's last remark has been proved as wildlife returned to spaces previously occupied by humans, who, in turn, were astonished by the speed of this rewilding and made it a very popular YouTube phenomenon—yet another illustration of Haggard's *nowness*.⁶

20 A more explicit criticism of the corruption of nature perpetrated by the British presence in South Africa is found in the novel *Marie*. Early in this novel, Marie—Allan Quatermain's girlfriend at the time—in spite of her being a Boer,⁷ treks with her father to the interior of the country to escape from British rule, or as Quatermain puts it, "as they wanted more room to live" (*Marie* 269). Quatermain's remark is full of sympathy with the Boer point of view, which is an unconventional attitude for the late Victorian British political context. Some months after the departure of the Boer group a letter

arrives from Marie saying that everyone in her camp is about to starve and she asks for urgent help. Immediately Allan takes action knowing that he is racing against time. Along the way he observes a certain natural landscape and regrets its impending corruption:

On the third morning, to my great relief, for I was terrified lest we should be delayed, the *Seven Stars* sailed with a favouring wind. Three days later we entered the harbour of Delagoa, a sheet of water many miles long and broad. Notwithstanding its shallow entrance, it is the best natural port in south-eastern Africa, but now, alas! lost to the English. (115)

- 21 On the other hand, Haggard's admiration for African nature as opposed to white man's culture is expressed once more at the beginning of the novel *Allan Quatermain* through the hero:

as I walked up and down the oak-panelled vestibule of my house there in Yorkshire, I longed once more to throw myself into the arms of Nature. Not the Nature which you know, the Nature that waves in well-kept woods and smiles out in corn-fields, but Nature as she was in the age when creation was complete, undefined as yet by any human sinks of sweltering humanity. (A.Q. 6)

- 22 To interpret the quotation above in contemporary ecocritical terms, the undisputable privileging of nature "as she was in the age when creation was complete" over culture as represented by "well-kept woods" and "corn-fields" immediately points to some form of ecological consciousness that was ahead of Haggard's time at least by a century. Even though Haggard's imagining of "Nature as she was in the age when creation was complete" does not really match with the rejection of the romanticized and fetishized idea of a "pristine nature" in current ecocritical discourse, on the grounds of its immediate prevention of the "opening up [of] a critical platform for complex ecological issues" (Göçmen 19), his remark also challenges both the anthropocentrism and the interests of a "sweltering humanity."

- 23 Another instance in *Allan Quatermain*, which can be referred to in explaining Haggard's treatment of Africa, concentrates on the fauna of the continent, and hence Haggard's criticism on the white man's disrespect for animal life and its significance for the inhabitants of the land. As the group of heroes make their way accidentally to the lake near the city of Milosis, the capital of the Zu-Vendis, on their boat Captain Good "spied a school of hippopotami on the water about two hundred yards off us, and suggested that it would not be a bad plan to impress the natives with a sense of our power by shooting some of them if possible. This, unluckily enough, struck us as a good idea [...]" (A.Q. 126). As the hippopotami were being killed "some of the parties in the boats began to cry out with fear; others turned and made off as hard as they could; and even the old gentleman with the sword looked greatly puzzled and alarmed, and halted his big row-boat" (126). In fact, the ideas that seem to govern Haggard's depiction of this scene too are reminiscent of contemporary posthumanism, particularly in its junction with critical animal studies. Here, through the reactions of the natives, Haggard clearly offers a commentary on animal mortality in almost a Derridean way. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, which has become a seminal text in critical animal studies today, Jacques Derrida makes a similar point:

Being able to suffer is no longer a power; it is a possibility without power, a possibility of the impossible. Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this nonpower, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish. (Derrida 28)

- 24 This scene in the novel deliberately emphasizes the suffering and death of these nonhuman entities. Initially the white heroes cannot make any sense of the alarmed behaviors of the Zu-Vendi people because they perceive the hippopotami as mere animals. They clearly lack the understanding of death as "the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals" (Derrida 28) or the most essential reality, as Haggard himself articulates in the following: "Out of the dark we came, into

the dark we go. [...] Life is nothing. Life is all. It is the Hand with which we hold off Death" (*KSM* 61). However, the European characters of the novel later learn that "for some reason or other the hippopotamus is a sacred animal among them. [...] Thus, it came about that in attempting to show off [the heroes] had committed sacrilege of a most aggravated nature" (*A.Q.* 141). What Haggard tries to assert by this incident is the incapability of white civilized men when it comes to understanding nature as a whole, and thus a criticism of the British imperial project which has been carried out most of the time by the destruction of nature in Africa, with its flora and fauna. On the whole, it may be suggested that Haggard's argument as regards this subject was not yet mature and well-formulated when he was writing *Allan Quatermain*. However, later in *Marie* he is able to express his concern by stating that "of course it is easy to laugh at natives and their superstitions [about nature], but, after a long life of experience, I am bound to admit that they are not always devoid of truth. The native has some kind of sixth sense which the civilised man has lost, or so it seems to me" (*Marie* 90). Haggard himself was an exception to this observation. As mentioned at the outset, Haggard lived in the aftermath of the Darwinian Revolution and even had firsthand experiences making him to reflect upon the "kinship" or "the oneness, of all animal life" (qtd. in Berresford Ellis 169).⁸ His perception of this matter is very similar to the posthumanist philosopher Rosi Braidotti's recent observation that "the unbridled greed of capitalist societies—which is the root cause of the climate change emergency, is also responsible for the abuse of animal life that produced the infections in bats and generated COVID-19 as a zoonotic disease" (Braidotti 27). One wonders if we would still be experiencing these disasters had we but taken heed of the messages of visionaries like Haggard who had written from within an age very much like ours. One wonders how so powerfully Haggard still is the *now*.

25 By way of conclusion, there is a need to recall the initial question: Can Henry Rider Haggard be regarded as an early posthumanist ecocritic? The answer is affirmative, because Haggard seems to have created a concept of his own as early as the 1880's regarding the nature of 'civilisation' and its relation to 'savagery,' in other words the relation between culture and nature, which significantly resembles the major issues in what we call posthumanist ecocritical thought today. According to Haggard's understanding, savagery, and not civilization, is the essence of human nature. The somewhat lengthy, but necessary quotation given below—from the opening section of *Allan Quatermain*, who yearns for a retreat into nature and away from the depressive mood caused by the loss of his son about two years prior to the beginning of the narration—can be read as a manifesto of Haggard's theory about nature, in fact, about the nature of everything:

supposing for the sake of argument we divide ourselves into twenty parts, nineteen savage and one civilized, we must look to the nineteen savage portions of our nature, if we would really understand ourselves, and not to the twentieth, which though so insignificant in reality, is spread all over the other nineteen, making them appear quite different from what they really are, as the blacking does a boot, or the veneer a table. It is on the nineteen rough serviceable savage portions that we fall back in emergencies, not on the polished but unsubstantial twentieth. Civilization should wipe away our tears, and yet we weep and cannot be comforted. Warfare is abhorrent to her, and yet we strike out for hearth and home, for honour and fair fame, and can glory in the blow. And so on, through everything. So, when the heart is stricken, and the head is humbled in the dust, civilization fails us utterly. Back, back, we creep, and lay us like little children on the great breast of Nature, that she perchance may soothe us and make us forget, or at least rid remembrance of its sting. (*A.Q.* 5–6)

26 Obviously, for Haggard nature is the true and permanent force on which everything else depends. Therefore, in view of Haggard's above-mentioned theory and since the overall worldview which emerges from the present reading of Haggard's works is one that privileges nature over culture or even rejects this dichotomy in a subtle way, Henry Rider Haggard should be redefined not only as an anti-imperialist author, but also as an early ecocritic who anticipated posthumanist ideas and perceived of the changes that characterized the *fin de siècle* in its larger Anthropocene context.

27 The Apocalypse has happened before. It happened with the first Industrial Revolution. We did not listen to the cautionary tales that followed. Tales of the kind that Henry Rider Haggard penned... We thought we survived. We did not. The Apocalypse is happening again *now*. But this *now* is most probably also a time for the final post-Apocalyptic regeneration. *Now* is when the *new* commences. Maybe for the last time... If we are to take on “the biggest ideological fight of all time” (Amatya and Dawson 8) in wiser ways this time, we might revisit the texts of old to understand how and why “modern cultural attitudes towards the environment,” in the words of Higgins and Somervell, “are not as ‘natural’ or inevitable as they may seem.” “‘We’—who-are-not-one-and-the-same-but-are-in-this-convergence-together” (Braidotti 31), we who “can never escape from our atmosphere” (Child 3), would certainly benefit from seeing the *now* in Haggard and going back to the critical appreciation of his heritage with *new* perspectives.

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Notes

1 Parts of this article, especially the textual examples selected for commentary, previously appeared in my book chapter titled "Henry Rider Haggard: An Early Ecocritic?" in *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons*. Edited by Serpil Oppermann et al. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, pp. 300–309. I thank the editors and Cambridge Scholars Publishing for the permission to reprint that material.

2 This reflection of Haggard on the reluctance of British political authority in disregarding opportunities for reforming agricultural practices in Britain appears in *Rural Denmark and its Lessons*, which he wrote after a study visit to Denmark in 1910 as a member of The Royal Commission on Coast Erosion and Afforestation. This *ad hoc* commission was established in 1906 and published its final report in 1911. Even though he only served as a member of the commission—despite the fact that he was one of the founding figures—Haggard dedicated most of his time and efforts to promoting the conservation and amelioration of forests and the nationalization of agricultural land during this period. For further details of Haggard's public service, see Peter Berresford Ellis's *H. Rider Haggard: A Voice from the Infinite* (1978), pp. 179–195.

3 For the highlights of my commentary on the film adaptations of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, see the presentation slides of my talk entitled "Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and its Disturbing Adaptations" given at the 8th Annual International Conference of the Association of Adaptation Studies: "Disturbing Adaptations" at Linnæus University, Växjö, Sweden on September 26–27, 2013. One of my conclusions in that discussion was that Haggard's anti-imperialist sentiments were even present in the earlier film adaptations that tended to remain more loyal to the literary text than the adaptations that appeared from the mid-20th century onward. Presentation permanent link: <https://prezi.com/e5atcdslzixe/anti-imperialism-in-late-victorian-popular-adventure-fiction-the-case-of-henry-rider-haggards-king-solomons-mines-and-its-adaptations/>. Accessed 17 August 2020.

4 For further elaboration on the term “Anthropos,” see Serpil Oppermann’s “Envisioning a New Anthroposcenario.” *NANO: New American Notes Online*. Special Issue: The Anthropocene. Guest edited by Kyle Wiggins and Brandon Krieg. <https://nanocrit.com/issues/issue13/Envisioning-a-New-Anthroposcenario>. Accessed 17 August 2020.

5 In fact, the name Quatermain is derived from a real person, an old Oxfordshire farmer William Quatermain, whom Haggard knew when he was a boy (Pocock 7). Yet, as for the worldview Quatermain represents, Haggard himself wrote in his autobiography that Quatermain was “only [him]self set in a variety of imagined situations, thinking [his] thoughts and looking at life through [his] eyes” (qtd. in Katz 32), in other words a “masked Haggard,” as Morton Cohen has put it (222).

6 See Helen MacDonald’s article “Animals Are Rewilding Our Cities. On YouTube, at Least.” *The New York Times Magazine*. 15 April 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/15/magazine/quarantine-animal-videos-coronavirus.html>. Accessed 17 August 2020.

7 Boers had a very unfavourable image in Britain at the time and as Patricia Knight has explained, in the contemporary British media the Boers were represented as unruly characters who were against society and civilization, and thus racially inferior to the British (50).

8 A particularly striking example of this is an anecdotal note by Haggard upon the death of his eldest daughter Angela’s dog, Bob, that was found dead on 14 July 1904 in a river after Haggard had a nightmare on the night of 9 July in which Bob was “lying on its side among brushwood, or rough growth of some sort, by water” and “trying to speak to [him] in words, and, failing” (qtd. in Berresford Ellis 168). After the incident he completely dropped the sportsmanship practices adopted in his youthful days in the form of pheasant shooting, only “bring[ing] them down in imagination with an umbrella or a walking stick” (qtd. in Berresford Ellis 169).

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