

Introduction

A Single Frame: Southern Africa, Britain, and the Authorial Informant

Shortly after her arrival in London in 1895, Poppy Destin, the heroine of Cynthia Stockley's 1910 novel, *Poppy: The Story of a South African Girl*, catches a glimpse of her former home, on a street corner outside a

paper shop, which had many news-boards exposed, with the "sheets" hanging . . . from them. One yellow sheet stood out boldly with the words "*South Africa*" in black letters across it. A pang of joy shot through her. She could have fallen down before that . . . paper and kissed the magic words. The name of her own land!¹

Poppy and those like her, who were situated in the metropole but interested in southern Africa, would have had access to over half a dozen weeklies that focused specifically on the region.² The paper that catches Poppy's attention is most likely *South Africa: A Weekly Journal for All Interested in South African Affairs*. Begun in 1889 by Edward P. Mathers, Englishman, established journalist, book author, and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, *South Africa* had the "largest circulation of any South African newspaper."³ Written for "all classes interested in and resident in South Africa," the paper had its headquarters in London and was shipped weekly to Cape Town for South African distribution.⁴ Available by subscription, it was also "on sale at all bookstalls throughout the United Kingdom" and at "newsagents in all South African centres."⁵

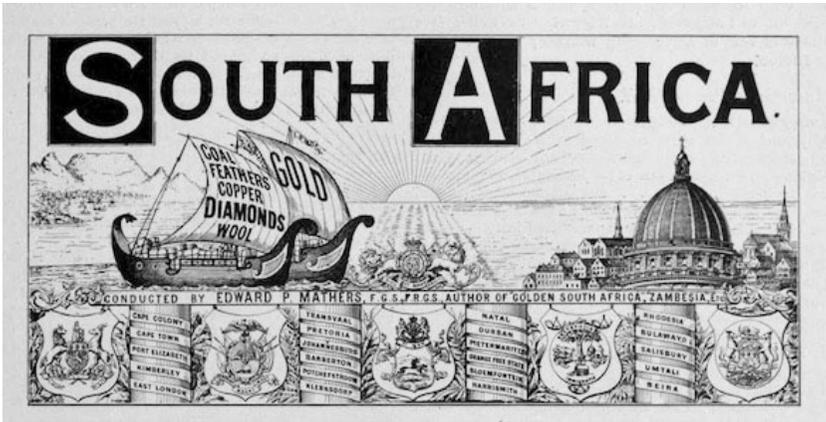


Figure I.1. *South Africa: A Weekly Journal for All Interested in South African Affairs*. Source: *The Story of "South Africa" Newspaper and Its Founder, Told by Others*, South Africa, 1903, page 17, *Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/storyofsouthafri00londuoft/page/16.

On its front page, beneath the title that captured her eye, Poppy would have seen an impossible image: St. Paul's Cathedral and Table Mountain set against the same horizon, above which the rising sun cast its many rays.⁶ In the inlet by the famous Cape landmark, Poppy would have spied two or three ships whose sails bore the names of South African resources: coal, feathers, copper, diamonds, wool, silver, and gold. Lower still, she might have noticed columns listing the names of southern Africa's several regions—Cape Colony, Transvaal, Natal, Orange Free State, and Rhodesia—and their most prominent cities. Finally, her gaze might have been drawn to the bottom of the masthead, where the key features of the journal were often listed in succession: commerce, finance, industries, mining, agriculture, politics, society, and exploration. Over the years this quarter-page header varied slightly: figures were added to or removed from the South African coastline, St. Paul's was flanked by smaller buildings or stood alone, the items emblazoned on the ships' sails changed and were rearranged, the names and numbers of the regions (whether British colonies or Dutch [Boer] republics) and cities altered, and the list of the journal's categories was sometimes omitted.⁷ But in the early years of *South Africa's* publication the overriding message was the same: the ships pictured crossing between southern Africa and Britain, captured in a single frame, carried not only colonial resources and metropolitan emigrants but also Britishness, in both directions.

Southern Africa's emergence from the sidelines to the foreground of imperial consciousness was at once a material and a discursive event. Though the region had been under British control since 1806 and the first major influx of British emigrants took place in 1820, it was not until the discovery of its vast mineral wealth decades later—diamonds in the 1860s and gold in the 1880s—that Britons really turned their attention there.⁸ As investors, prospectors, and emigrants undertook the roughly three-week, six-thousand-mile journey from Southampton to Cape Town, the “most stagnant of colonial regions suddenly exploded into activity.”⁹ The white population swelled from approximately a quarter of a million in 1865, before the start of the mineral revolution, to 1.117 million in 1904.¹⁰ Urban centers, the mining industry, the colonial administration, and the economy grew exponentially. As Britain's commitment to securing dominance throughout the region intensified, so, too, did tensions with both indigenous Africans and the (mostly) agrarian Boer population, whose (mostly) Dutch, German, and French ancestors preceded them there by well over a century.¹¹ The British fought the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), the First Anglo-Boer War (1880–1881), the First Matabele War (1893–1894), the Second Matabele War (1896–1897), and the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902).¹² In the name of Queen Victoria, Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company seized most of Matabeleland and Mashonaland in the 1890s. The white population of Rhodesia—as the territory would be named in 1895—grew from less than two hundred in 1890 to nearly forty-eight thousand by 1930.¹³ The British acquired the Transvaal (South African Republic) and Orange River Colony (Orange Free State) from the Boers in 1902. The Union of South Africa, which officially joined the Transvaal, Orange River, Cape, and Natal, was debated, enacted, and in 1910 finally formed. At the same time, a generation of fiction writers was creating a southern Africa of the imagination, a place in which, for the British, greater challenges yielded greater authority, not least for women.

The discursive production of British southern Africa was in large part the work of those whom I term *authorial informants*, British authors who spent significant time in the region and wrote about it as insiders. Claiming both an expertise predicated on and an identity enhanced by South African Britishness, these writers include H. Rider Haggard, southern Africa's most popular novelist; Gertrude Page, Rhodesia's first famous novelist; and John Buchan, whose best known protagonist spent three decades in southern Africa. For these best-selling writers, living in southern Africa was authorizing: British identity, they suggested, was more authentic, because more comprehensive,

when informed by colonial experience. It was also generative: using generic innovation to contend with such sociopolitical issues as female authority, Boer political power, African nationalism, and European ambition, Haggard, Page, and Buchan introduced, respectively, the female colonial romance, the Rhodesian settler romance, and the modern spy thriller. Southern Africa's first famous novelist was not an authorial informant, but the colonial-born Olive Schreiner. Like Haggard, Page, and Buchan, Schreiner spent time in both southern Africa and Britain, was viewed by metropolitans as an expert on the former, and used generic innovation to explore sociopolitical issues. For this self-described "English South African," southern Africa's promise fell short, but her frustration nonetheless engendered the New Woman novel.¹⁴ Tracing the ways in which genre enabled each of these authors to negotiate cultural and political concerns through a distinctly British South African lens, *Beyond Gold and Diamonds* functions as a literary history in a double sense: it reads British South African literature as a field, one that overlaps with but exists apart from both a national South African literary tradition and a tradition of South African literature in English, and it demonstrates how southern Africa shaped British literature.

As constructed by authorial informants, southern Africa has little in common with either the "undiscovered" Africa of the early and mid-Victorian imagination or the Belgian Congo of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899/1901), the default text of Victorian, modernist, and postcolonial studies for interpreting British perceptions of Africa in this period. Self-styled experts, authorial informants characterize southern Africa not by darkness but by light, not by regression but by progression, not by danger but by opportunity, not by indigeneity but by Britishness. Frequently referred to as a "white man's country" and considered not only geographically and "environmentally" but also essentially "separate from the Dark Continent," southern Africa, as the British saw it, was "suited to the white man's occupation the further . . . south" one went.¹⁵ Resplendent with the dazzle of the Victoria Falls, the sparkle of Kimberley diamonds, the gleam of Transvaal gold, the coruscation of captured sunlight reflecting from mirrors held by Cape colonists along the shore as they welcomed new arrivals, by the 1880s Africa's "southernmost sixth" was no longer a shadow at the edge of the map; by the end of the century "every London shopboy" was familiar with its landscape.¹⁶

Perhaps the most significant distinction between "darkest Africa" and discursive southern Africa is the way in which each interacts with Britishness.¹⁷ In *Heart of Darkness* the best an Englishman can do is not regress. Conrad's story famously depicts the subsumption of Western values by Afri-

can primitivity leading ultimately to the consumption of the metropolitan himself. Marlow succeeds by managing not to descend, unlike Kurtz, into the “black and incomprehensible frenzy” along whose edge he rides.¹⁸ The impotent witness of good conscience, he maintains his “original” identity in the face of the rapacious imperialist and the primitive “native.”¹⁹ The triangulation in southern Africa is different. There, the Boers, an independent largely European-descended population, are cast as regressive, as evinced by their rejection of capitalism, disregard for education, dislike of the British, “heartlessness” toward the indigenous, and nomadic pastoralism; the indigenous Africans as absent, unthreatening, or conquerable; and the British as self-actualizing.²⁰

Nonetheless, the literature of southern Africa’s authorial informants lacks the “paradise complex” that is the hallmark of “booster literature,” a tendentious genre written to encourage colonial emigration.²¹ Exploring shifts in gender dynamics, African politics, and both metro-colonial and Anglo-European relations through generic innovation, southern Africa’s authorial informants imaginatively redirect potentially threatening authority toward imperial ends. Schreiner also engages in generic play, but with different motives and toward different ends; grappling with her ambivalent subject position as a South African-born white woman, she challenges the notion that meaningful authority is available to British colonial women.²² The concerns of these writers yield new generic forms that circulate in colony and metropole alike, anticipating and influencing developments in British literature more broadly.

The Authorial Informant

The authorial informant—and Schreiner’s authority—is enabled by the late nineteenth-century convergence of a number of factors that can be loosely grouped as: a) the rise of “the cult of the specialist or the ‘expert’” and “the cult of personality”; b) the “the new literacy of the lower classes,” the growing power of the popular press, and “the easy transactions between fiction-writing and popular journalism”; and c) the increase in both “the visibility within popular culture of the imperial project” and the value placed on colonial experience.²³ So while Dickens was a famous author known *to write about* social issues, Haggard was a famous author known *to be an expert* on southern Africa. While divisions between fiction and nonfiction had never been hard and fast, a broader readership eager to consume

accessible and often sensational journalism made those lines even finer and looser. While Britain's imperial enterprise had long been intrinsic to British identity, its increasingly self-conscious addition of territory—manifest most ostensibly in the “scramble for Africa”—meant that Britons could no longer claim that their empire had been acquired “in a fit of absence of mind.”²⁴ While colonists had historically been viewed as “offshoots of the national centre,” this was decreasingly the case as the century waned.²⁵ And while so often in the literature of the authorial informant “an English colonist is an Englishman [or -woman] improved,” the authorial informant him- or herself was even more so.²⁶

The concept of the authorial informant plays with that of the “native informant,” introduced by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The latter refers to a colonized subject who provides insight to the colonizer about his “and occasionally” her native culture, and though he or she usually accrues certain privileges in doing so, the native informant is always subordinate to the colonizer.²⁷ At the same time, the native informant communicates the colonizer's values to the colonized. He or she is thus a kind of middleman or -woman. So, too, is the authorial informant. But while both the authorial informant and the native informant claim an expanded identity, the latter occupies only one imperial subject position—that of the colonized—while the former occupies two—that of both colonial and colonizer.²⁸ This position is illustrated by a recruitment speech Haggard delivered in 1914 in his hometown of Ditchingham, Norfolk just after the outbreak of World War I. “The England you know,” he told his listeners, “is not all England. There are many Englands beyond the seas, and it so happens that I am able to bring you a message from some of them.” His “Call to Arms” to defend not one but “many Englands” hinges on his authority to speak not only to but also for and about the British.²⁹ As a metropolitan, Haggard addressed locals as one of their own, in the very county in which he was born. As a former resident of southern Africa, he also represented colonials, particularly South Africans, as a colonial advocate. Asserting less a dual than an enhanced British identity, Haggard averred a greater knowledge of Britain than both those to and those for whom he delivered his “message.”

The expertise of authorial informants was assumed by as well as attributed to them. Unsolicited and by invitation alike, they expressed their views on strategies, circumstances, and events in, about, and affecting southern Africa—in speeches, essays, letters to the editor, interviews, and columns, and even as political candidates.³⁰ As Paula M. Krebs has argued in her study of public discourse during the Second Anglo-Boer War, “literary

figures who were . . . directly addressing empire in their fiction were called upon to address imperial questions in the press as well.³¹ This is as true of Haggard, who was approached by both the *Times* and the *Daily Express* to write about the war, as it is of the South African-born Schreiner.³² Their experience was not only more extensive than that of someone who, after a “flying visit” to a colony, would “go home and write special articles and things as connoisseurs,” which are essentially “superficial,” it was also less general and more sustained than that of someone like Anthony Trollope, who made lengthy visits to, then wrote entire books about colonial regions, including southern Africa.³³ Where Trollope’s writing belies any colonial affiliation, one sees, at times even feels, in the writing of southern Africa’s authorial informants that the region is a part of them.³⁴

The translocal, another term deployed in postcolonial studies, further helps to elucidate the authorial informant. As theorized by Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, the translocal suggests movement, exchange, and transformation across the “webs of empire.”³⁵ If a contact zone is a place or space, transculturation a process, and hybridity a result, the translocal, necessarily kinetic, is all three at once.³⁶ Applied to the authors and texts that are the subject of this study, the translocal provides a framework for reading beyond the bounds of national histories—British, South African, and Rhodesian—in order to examine the interdependence of national and imperial cultural formations.³⁷ Not only did Schreiner, Haggard, Page, and Buchan spend significant time in both southern Africa and Britain, at various points each thought the former might be or become his or her permanent home.

When not in southern Africa, these writers occupied a position we might call *colonial exile*. Whether colonial born, like Schreiner, or colonial adjacent, like Haggard, Page, and Buchan, whose extended time in the region compelled their identification with it, the colonial exile is incomplete when elsewhere, even as he or she has been enhanced by colonial experience. Often, the colonial exile speaks or writes, like Page, of “yearning” to return.³⁸ “Whoever has once drunk Vaal [River] water, says the proverb, will always return,” writes Buchan in his autobiography. “Who wears *veld-schoens* [leather sandals] will return to the veld,” claims the narrator of Stockley’s *Wild Honey* (1914). “Once the Golden Land gets its grip on the heart-strings, there is no settling down happily” in England, notes an anonymous writer in *South Africa*.³⁹ Lilia Rider Haggard wrote of her father: “For Africa he was always homesick.” Allan Quatermain, his most famous character, describes the feeling as “a great craving.” Haggard himself ascribed the very existence

of his African fiction to this “longing,” for it was when “the ‘pull’ of Africa got hold of me, [that] I began to write.” He returned briefly just twice, and though he professed, “I should like to end my days in Africa,” he did not.⁴⁰ Neither did Buchan, who died in Canada while serving as its first governor general, a position he had hoped to hold in South Africa.⁴¹ Both Schreiner and Page died and were buried in southern Africa. But all of these writers carried the region with them, as their writing so clearly bears out.

Why British South African Literature?

Recent historiography has “raise[d] the profile of the specific form of imperialism known as settler colonialism.”⁴² This includes John Darwin’s *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (2009), which conveys the “inter-dependence” of empire’s constituent parts and locations, particularly in terms of economics, and James Belich’s *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (2009), which describes the “the nineteenth-century long-range mass transfer of goods and people[,] . . . money, information, and technical knowledge” as a “revolution.”⁴³ Thoroughly researched and vast in scope, both are, nonetheless, exceedingly thin on culture. The new imperial history has drawn attention to the mutually constitutive nature of colony and metropole, the imbrication of the cultural and the political, and the webs of communication and exchange that crisscrossed the empire.⁴⁴ Until fairly recently, however, it has had little say about settler colonialism, as distinct from incipient nationalism.⁴⁵ Two exemplary collections that are rich in cultural analysis, interdisciplinary in methodology, and attentive to both gender and race are Philippa Levine’s *Gender and Empire* (2004) and Annie E. Coombes’s *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand, and South Africa* (2006).⁴⁶ Surprisingly little space, however, is given in either to colonial southern Africa.

Literary scholarship that offers close readings of colonial discourse while attending to the networks of empire has tended to treat India, a colony of occupation, “as the definitive site of British imperial culture,” and to privilege the metropolitan writer.⁴⁷ Literary critical examination of settler colonialism is at last, however, on the rise. Jude Piessé’s *British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832–1877* (2016), a study of the ways that both “mainstream” and “feminist and radical” metropolitan periodicals depicted settler emigration in the early and mid-Victorian period, is a welcome contribution; it should be noted, however, that it “sets out to tell the story of

[early-mid Victorian] settler emigration history from a metropolitan, British point of view.”⁴⁸ Focusing on almost precisely the same period, Jason R. Rudy mines colonial archives in *Imagined Homelands: British Poetry in the Colonies* (2017). Though an important book, it gives more attention to “the transportation and adaptation of British culture” than to “the emergence of new traditions” or, correlatively, colonial influence on metropolitan literature.⁴⁹ “Highlighting settler colonialism’s neglected cultural significance,” Tamara S. Wagner has done a great deal to develop settler colonial studies. Her edited collection *Victorian Settler Narratives: Emigrants, Cosmopolitans and Returnees in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (2011) does some important feminist recovery work, though its attention to both race and southern Africa is negligible. *Domestic Fiction in Colonial Australia and New Zealand* (2015), which Wagner also edited, and *Victorian Narratives of Failed Emigration: Settlers, Returnees, and Nineteenth-Century Literature in English* (2016), her recent monograph, continue to expand the field in their discussion of colonial as well as metropolitan writers, but they, too, sideline southern Africa.⁵⁰ If Wagner’s primary interest is the Antipodes, she is not alone; scholarship on settler colonial discourse in recent years has favored this region.⁵¹ Two decades ago, Laura Chrisman observed that “South Africa . . . occupies a marginalized place in cultural studies of British imperialism.”⁵² Unfortunately, this remains the case.

Between the formation of the Union and the first democratic elections in 1994, monographs on South African literature generally focused on either “white writing,” writing by Afrikaners (whether in Afrikaans or English) or by South Africans of British descent; “black writing,” writing by indigenous Africans; or the writing of a single indigenous ethnic group.⁵³ Manfred Nathan’s *South African Literature: A General Survey* (1925), which discusses both Afrikaans and English literature, was the first of its kind. He “regard[s] as South African literature that which is *in or of South Africa*.”⁵⁴ This includes not only those “born in South Africa [or] who have spent all or most of their lives there” but also “those writers who have resided in South Africa for a period sufficiently long to enable them to be regarded as speaking with authority on South African affairs, or to have assimilated the local atmosphere sufficiently for the purpose of describing South African life at firsthand, and with more less of fidelity [*sic*].”⁵⁵ Though Nathan includes Schreiner, Haggard, and Page, he mentions Buchan only briefly, for, as he sees it, Buchan “more properly belongs to English literature.”⁵⁶ Stephen Gray’s *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* (1979), which David Attwell describes as “the first systematic introduction to the field,” almost exclusively surveys writing in English, including “black English.”⁵⁷

Schreiner, of course, makes the cut, as do Haggard and Buchan, while Page does not. In *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988), which centers on the pastoral, J. M. Coetzee looks primarily at literature in English, including “the great antipastoral writer” Schreiner—to whom “the Cape Colony, and perhaps all colonies, are . . . anti-Gardens, dystopias”—though he devotes one chapter to Afrikaans writer C. M. van den Heever.⁵⁸ Malvern van Wyk Smith’s *Grounds of Contest: A Survey of South African English Literature* (1990) includes Schreiner, excludes Afrikaans writers, and, like Coetzee, leaves Haggard and Buchan to the British.

Since the end of apartheid, South African literary historiography has been more expansive. Its historical sweep is greater; it is more ethnically and also often more linguistically diverse. Though mostly “written in English for a wide international readership,” it seeks to be multilingual in other ways.⁵⁹ It might discuss texts originally written in any South African language from Afrikaans to Zulu. Among its subjects might be orature, from praise poems to songs, in any of southern Africa’s many indigenous languages. It might quote passages in the language in which they were originally written or spoken. And it might attend to “translingual writing”: “writing done by authors who work in more than one language and whose writing is generally informed by knowledge of several languages.”⁶⁰ In *Southern African Literatures* (1996), Michael Chapman examines literature from South Africa as well as the countries that it borders.⁶¹ At times, postapartheid scholarship puts forth a national “developmental narrative,” which moves through colonialism, apartheid, and resistance to arrive at a universally democratic present. Christopher Heywood’s *A History of South African Literature* (2004), for instance, is divided into two parts: “Part I: Towards Sharpeville” and “Part II: Transformation.”⁶²

Astoundingly, there is no overview of or substantial critical work on British South African literature.⁶³ I would define this as literature written about southern Africa by British emigrants, their descendants, or Britons who spent time in the region between the turn of the nineteenth century and the early 1920s. This period begins with Britain’s acquisition of the Cape and ends around the time of the Balfour Declaration of 1926, which established South African autonomy in foreign affairs. Two years earlier, Barry Hertzog had become South Africa’s first National Party prime minister; in keeping with his party, he supported South African autonomy, Afrikaner interests, and white supremacy. Two years before that, Rhodesia had declined to join the Union of South Africa for the second time (the first preceded its inception), making it quite clear that it was forging its own path. Given

that there was scant fiction—less than twenty novels by one account—and not much more poetry written in or about the region until the 1880s, the bulk of British South African literature appeared in the two decades before and after the First Anglo-Boer War.⁶⁴ If not the “pivot of the Empire” that W. T. Stead claimed it was in his review of Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1893), southern Africa was nonetheless a central concern of a number of important writers.⁶⁵

Schreiner, Haggard, Page, and Buchan were the most popular, outspoken, and influential British South African writers. Prime Minister William Gladstone sent Schreiner his congratulations on the success of *The Story of an African Farm*. A thirteen-year-old Winston Churchill wrote Haggard a letter praising *Allan Quatermain* (1887). A British member of parliament recommended Page’s writing to King George V. At least three prime ministers—Arthur Balfour, Stanley Baldwin, and Clement Atlee—read Buchan.⁶⁶ They shaped the literature that followed them, from the New Woman novel to the empire romance, from the adventure novel to the spy thriller. Other British South African writers include Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling, both of whom spent time in southern Africa during the Second Anglo-Boer War. I would only cautiously describe them as South African authorial informants, however, since their time there shaped neither them nor their fiction to the degree that it did the authors and novels that are the subject of this study.

Doyle, who spent six months in southern Africa in 1900 with the volunteer medical corps, wrote two widely read works of nonfiction about the war: the four-volume *The Great Boer War* (1900) and the much shorter *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct* (1902). Already famous as the author of numerous Sherlock Holmes stories, he used his platform to justify and chronicle the war in the first publication and to defend Britain’s role and policies—including its administration of concentration camps—in the war in the second.⁶⁷ The only fiction Doyle set in southern Africa was “The Mystery of Sasassa Valley: A South African Story” (1879), an adventure about the unearthing of a diamond, whose glint had long been mistaken for the “glowing eyes” of a “frightful fiend” (148). His first published story, it was written years before he visited the region.⁶⁸

Kipling, who spent far more time than Doyle in southern Africa—a short visit there in 1891, a four-month stay in 1898, and annual three-month visits with his family from 1900 to 1908—wrote both fiction and nonfiction about, set in, or clearly inspired by the region. Specifically, he wrote two children’s parables, included in *Just So Stories for Little Children*

(1902); a handful of fables and maxims for the troops, published in *The Friend* (1900), a newspaper distributed by the British after their seizure of Bloemfontein, the Orange Free State capital; two tracts for the Imperial South African Association, a metropolitan organization whose stated aim was “to uphold British supremacy and to promote the interests of British subjects in South Africa”; a number of articles for British newspapers; just over two dozen poems, many of which were collected in 1903’s *The Five Nations*; and eight short stories, several of which appeared in 1904’s *Traffics and Discoveries*.⁶⁹ His first South African piece was the wildly popular poem “The Absent-Minded Beggar” (1899), which, though not quite up to his (own) standard of writing—“I would shoot the man who wrote it if it would not be suicide,” Kipling quipped—helped to raise a quarter of a million pounds for the dependents of Britons fighting in the war.⁷⁰ Set to music by Arthur Sullivan, sung in West End theaters, East End music halls, and beside barrel-organs throughout Britain, “reproduced on scarves, handkerchiefs, matchboxes, caps, vases, and biscuit-barrels,” the song was so widely disseminated that “there could scarcely have been anyone who did not know at least its refrain.”⁷¹ Given the poem’s success and Kipling’s long-standing reputation as India’s foremost authorial informant, much was expected of the “most important spokesperson for empire at the turn of the century.”⁷² “The Absent-Minded Beggar” aside, Kipling’s South African writing was, nonetheless, neither popular nor well received. Though several of his short stories are productively informed by a precarious tension between loyalty to empire and loyalty to race as he wrestled with the implications of arming people of color, his most powerful work—including *Kim* (1901), published and partially written during the war—remains that which he set in India.⁷³

Schreiner, Haggard, Page, and Buchan have not generally been read as British South African writers. Schreiner, claimed by both South African and British literary canons, is often viewed as more cosmopolitan than colonial, despite the fact that she wrote her most important novel long before she left southern Africa. Haggard is usually considered a British writer, though he is reluctantly included in a number of South African surveys.⁷⁴ Buchan is almost exclusively read as British. Page fell by the wayside as Rhodesia increasingly became a distinct cultural entity.⁷⁵ When their work is read as part of a British literary tradition or “post-colonial critical canon”—as colonial discourse—its South African-ness is often neglected. As Chrisman notes, British and American scholars have shown a “preference for a version of Haggard and Schreiner as general Africanists.”⁷⁶ And despite its exploration of emergent black nationalism, Buchan’s *Prester John* (1910) has received

surprisingly little attention, as has the South African background of his most popular character, Richard Hannay.

Beyond Gold and Diamonds argues that these writers can be read productively as British South African. It considers the reasons for the emergence of the New Woman novel in what many, like Stead, viewed as the most unlikely of places.⁷⁷ It puts the first New Woman novelist directly in conversation with the Victorian period's most famous romance writer, offering new ways of interpreting both, particularly in terms of colonial subjectivity and gender. Bringing critically overlooked texts to light, it insists that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the male imperial romance was not Haggard's most interesting literary contribution. It unearths Page, making connections between her work and that of both Schreiner and Doris Lessing. In doing so, it draws a line from southern Africa's first famous novelist through Rhodesia's first famous novelist to Rhodesia's most famous novelist. And it identifies the concerns that compelled Buchan to bring down the curtain on the imperial romance, only to transport a character seemingly plucked straight from the genre to the metropole now in need of his strengths. Though the study is representative rather than comprehensive, it demonstrates that reading British South African literature as a field brings its significance to British literature—meaning also southern Africa's significance to British literature—into view.

The Fiction of Race

For all its variation, British South African fiction, like much colonial discourse, is remarkably consistent in the limited ways it depicts the indigenous. Despite their actual numeric majority in southern Africa, they are often all but absent. Despite the reality of their presence as laborers, in towns, on farms, and in mines, they remain exotic. Despite the fact of consistent, persistent European aggression into the interior, it is they who are malign. Southern Africa's population looked nothing like its representation in British South African fiction—that is, almost entirely white. Figures vary, but indigenous Africans outnumbered those of European descent by roughly ten to one before the start of the mineral revolution and six to one at century's end. There was variation within the colonies; the ratio in Rhodesia, for instance, was around thirty to one in 1898.⁷⁸ In the first Union census, taken in 1911, the population was around twelve million. Four million blacks comprised sixty-seven percent of this total, 1.3 million whites twenty-one percent, 500,000 "Coloureds" nine percent, and 200,000 Indians three percent.⁷⁹

Asians had been coming to southern Africa almost as long as Europeans. The Dutch brought over approximately sixteen thousand Indians as slaves. Between 1860 and 1911, more than 150,000 Indians came as indentured laborers, many to work on Natal's sugar plantations, while some came independently to trade.⁸⁰ When a labor shortage arose following the Second Anglo-Boer War, thousands of Chinese came over as indentured laborers—roughly sixty-four thousand between 1904 and 1910—to work on the Transvaal gold fields.⁸¹ Yet Indians and Chinese are nowhere to be seen in the fiction.

Those of mixed race appear only occasionally, despite the fact that Africans and Europeans had intermixed since the latter first arrived in southern Africa. Though the Boers were primarily descended from Dutch, German, and French Huguenot emigrants, some were also descended from indigenous communities. The Griqua, the majority of whom lived near the Transvaal at the start of the mineral revolution, were a culturally distinct group of people with mostly Dutch and Khoikhoi ancestry. The large “Cape Coloured” population was comprised of Khoikhoi, former slaves, and many of mixed race.⁸² And of course indeterminate numbers of mixed-race people lived and passed as members of the community or ethnicity into which they were born, which was generally the distaff side. This fact and apartheid have meant that until the last thirty years, stark divisions remained when it came to the classification of literature.

The few mixed-race characters one does find in British South African fiction are almost always among those “call[ed] . . . mean white[s].”⁸³ Greedy, cowardly, and duplicitous, mean whites are loyal to none but themselves. They have little if any regard for “European” values, and their sustained engagement with indigenous Africans has had an unwholesome effect on them. Their vice, which often includes miscegenation, is written on their flesh. This includes Haggard's Swart Piet, a Boer villain in *Swallow* (1898), whose “dark face and savage temper had earned him the name of ‘the little Kaffir.’” “Born of white blood and black, [he] is false to both and a disgrace to both.”⁸⁴ It also includes Buchan's Henriques, a double-dealing Portuguese with “mean eyes and [a] cruel mouth,” “whose skin spoke of the tar-brush.”⁸⁵ As the white narrator of *Prester John* views Henriques, he is “a traitor to the white man's cause . . . whose name is a byword among honest men.” In the eyes of Henriques's black ally, he is a “Kaffir . . . in everything but Kaffir virtues.”⁸⁶ White men of low character, “who took to the wilderness as a last resource, [could also] by degrees s[i]nk to the level of the savages among whom they lived.” Ishmael, for example, in Haggard's *The Ghost Kings*

(1908), who “chose to come and live in a place where there [were] no laws or civilisation,” dresses in animal skins and resides in a kraal (homestead) with his African wives and their children.⁸⁷ Such characters quite often go mad, consumed by ungoverned passion. The degraded state of these white men, the paucity of mixed-race characters, and the reprehensibility of those who do make it onto the page are part of what Jennifer De Vere Brody describes as the “convoluted construction[] of pure whiteness and pure blackness in Victorian culture.”⁸⁸ This construction was especially torturous in a South African context, where the reality of hybridity daily stared one in the face. Constructing their “purity” in contradistinction to Boers and other whites, the British claimed, through moral and genetic superiority, the greatest fitness to rule.

As I discuss in chapters 1 and 3, respectively, African erasure is most notable in Schreiner’s earliest novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, and throughout Page’s work. Of “the occlusion of black labour” in the South African pastoral, Coetzee has written: “If the work of hands on a particular patch of earth is what inscribes it as the property of its occupiers by right, then the hands of black serfs doing the work had better not be seen.”⁸⁹ Black Africans hover around the edges of *The Story of an African Farm* as servants, laborers, and the long-dead creators of cave paintings, but they play no role in the lives of the story’s white characters. Schreiner would eventually recognize this discursive violence and come to champion African rights, but she is an exception. On the rare occasions the indigenous are mentioned in Page’s writing, they are dirty, lazy, and intractable servants—little more than one of many obstacles on the path to colonial maturity for the new female emigrant.

Haggard and Buchan exploit black Africans romantically. At times Haggard casts them as brutal and unrestrained; at other times he makes them more nuanced characters. Even when he renders them sympathetic, they are also exotic. As I argue in chapter 2, the colonial woman’s ability in the female colonial romance to negotiate with African leaders is a sign of her fitness for the work of settlement, while alliances with indigenous women enhance her strength. Though these leaders are not always malevolent and these allies are always benevolent, both are props in a largely British drama, or at least one in which British interests and characters prevail. That said, Haggard did write an entire novel populated almost entirely by indigenous Africans, *Nada the Lily* (1892), mentioned here in the epilogue. As we see in chapter 4, Buchan’s *Prester John* is preoccupied with the growing presence of African nationalism. The young narrator’s “admiration” for the novel’s

vigorous and charismatic black leader is matched only by his certainty that he must not triumph, lest he “wipe out the civilization of a thousand years, and turn us all into savages.”⁹⁰ For besides the eponymous African, an exceptional man, and a “well trained” female servant, the Africans in the text are a largely undistinguished mass of followers, filled with “the fury of conquest, and all the aboriginal passions.”⁹¹ For the most part, British South Africans took pains in their writing to deny such fury and passion in themselves, even as they consumed the guts of the earth with the labor of Africans they treated as disposable bodies.

Overview

Following Edward Said, *Beyond Gold and Diamonds* takes as its subject the discursive representation of empire.⁹² Specifically, it examines the South African writing of British writers with translocal identities and interests. Chapter 1, “Preterdomesticity and the South African Farm: Women Old and New,” offers a radical reinterpretation of Schreiner and Haggard, associated respectively with the New Woman novel and the male imperial romance. Though *The Story of an African Farm* in many ways enabled Haggard’s female colonial romances (the subject of chapter 2) and Page’s Rhodesian settler romances (the subject of chapter 3), it differs significantly from them in its denial of the fantasy of female empowerment in southern Africa. Its heroine’s failure to achieve what Haggard’s and Page’s heroines attain is a reflection of Schreiner’s feminist integrity; at the same time, it is a mark of her inability to think beyond the frame of the domestic novel it implicitly critiques, or to consider the value of either cross-cultural or female-female alliances. Reading Schreiner’s Lyndall against the eponymous heroine of Haggard’s *Jess* (1887), chapter 1 demonstrates the limits of intellectual feminism manifest in Schreiner’s novel and the surprisingly feminist implications of Haggard’s. A realist novel that depicts both war and romantic love, *Jess* is a tale of action but is not adventure fiction per se. To the degree that it is a “romance,” then, it is only so in the modern sense of foregrounding romantic love—like Page’s settler romances—not in the contemporaneous sense of depicting the strange or fantastic—like Haggard’s male imperial and female colonial romances. Set during the First Anglo-Boer War, *Jess* attempts to resolve the colonial problem that caused Haggard to “abandon”—as he put it—his South African life: Britain’s 1881 surrender of the Transvaal to the Boers at the war’s end. “Deserted,” like the colony, by the mother

country, farm and family are successfully recovered by Jess, whose courage is contrasted with the weakness of imperial policy in southern Africa.⁹³ Conflating domestic and military stakes, Haggard stages victory on a small scale through the heroics of a woman who achieves what the empire will not.

Chapter 2, “‘It Is I Who Have the Power’: The Female Colonial Romance,” argues that Haggard’s female-centered colonial romances *Benita* (1906) and *The Ghost Kings* attempt both to manage the problem, as he saw it, of growing twentieth-century British feminism and to serve the goal of anglicizing southern Africa. But even as Haggard fictively reroutes feminist focus from domestic politics to imperial consolidation, his settler heroines transcend their ostensible function, manifesting an authority whose implications reach beyond the page. While British women in the colonies were generally portrayed recreating British domesticity and its adjacent values,⁹⁴ Haggard’s colonial heroines display characteristics more often associated with male adventurers. Using courage, confidence, and savvy, they defend themselves and their loved ones against ill-intentioned white men as well as negotiate with indigenous leaders and soldiers in indigenous space. Forming alliances with other women, they also engage in what I term *mystical feminism*. Enabled through cross-cultural—and sometimes cross-racial—female-female bonds, mystical feminism entails the use of extrasensory powers for self-preservation or benevolent ends, enhancing the heroine’s power and authority among whites and the indigenous alike. A conservative gesture with inadvertently feminist implications, Haggard’s reinvention of the British woman as the British South African woman turns fear (of the modern woman) into strength (of the empire), while also extending female influence.

Chapter 3, “Colony of Dreadful Delight: Gertrude Page and the Rhodesian Settler Romance,” explores the ways in which Page, an English emigrant to Rhodesia, posits Rhodesian domesticity as an emancipatory modernity for British women. Encouraging female emigration to Rhodesia as a means of bolstering the empire and liberating the self, Page envisions imperial subject positions for white women beyond those of mother, missionary, and martyr. Influenced by the New Woman novel that flourished in the 1890s and anticipating the empire romance that took off after World War I, her Rhodesian novels depict female emigrants achieving authority through colonial trial, frequently with the help of a more seasoned colonial woman.⁹⁵ Titillating her readers with the prospect of illicit gratification, Page suggests that sexual temptation is one of the many challenges-cum-pleasures that Rhodesian women face. If courage is often required to resist it, it is also sometimes required to give in; for not only do women have a right to their

desire in this land of “freedom from narrow conventionalities,” they also have a right to their satisfaction. A writer of fiction and nonfiction alike, Page both illustrates and models the transformation into colonial maturity that is available to women who learn to navigate this new terrain.⁹⁶

Chapter 4, “‘There Will Be No More Kings in Africa’: Foreclosing Darkness in *Prester John*,” claims that Buchan’s novel, influenced by his administrative experience in southern Africa during and immediately following the Second Anglo-Boer War, bridges the gap between the imperial romance and the spy thriller at the moment of South Africa’s union. Demonstrating the implausibility of southern Africa as a site of mystery, depicting the demise of indigenous autonomy, and asserting the inevitability of British supremacy, *Prester John* eliminates any residue of exoticism, squelches indigenous militarism, and minimizes the presence of the (recently reenfranchised and politically ascendant) Boer populace. Ignoring Afrikaner nationalism and representing African nationalism as a final failed bid to reclaim what had long since ceased to belong to the indigenous, the novel imagines the anglicization of southern Africa as a *fait accompli*. At the same time, it anticipates the political turn from colony to (European) continent and the literary turn from adventure novel to spy thriller that would coincide with World War I.

The epilogue, “Beyond the British South African Novel,” illustrates movement in two different directions, one beyond South Africa and one beyond Britain. In its analysis of what is often referred to as the Hannay quartet (1915–1924), it demonstrates that South African Britishness, as Buchan conceived it, defends a Britain both materially and ideologically besieged.⁹⁷ At the precise moment when Britain, having consolidated its empire, turned its attention to Europe, Buchan turned his attention there as well. Abandoning the imperial romance for the spy thriller, he introduced the character of Hannay, whose South African–honed skill set protects Britain from radical and foreign influences on the eve of, during, and in the aftermath of World War I. A colonial past thus prevents a continental future from consuming a vulnerable metropole, evincing the importance of southern Africa to British integrity. In its analysis of Sol T. Plaatje’s *Mhudi* (1930), the epilogue demonstrates the influence of orality and the British South African novel alike on the first novel in English by a black South African. Combining traditional African storytelling techniques and the generic innovations of the female colonial romance specifically, Plaatje lays claim to black African belonging in South Africa’s past, present, and future.