

Plaatje's African Romance:
the Translation of Tragedy in *Mhudi* and Other Writings

THESIS

Submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
of Rhodes University

by

Brian Ernest Walter

November 2000

Abstract

This study brings together Plaatje's political and literary visions, arguing that the one informs the other. Plaatje's literary work is used as a starting point for the discussion, and the first chapter explores the relationship of his political and artistic visions.

Mhudi is his definitive romance text, and it is argued that Plaatje's romance vision in this text is reflected in his political thinking, and in turn reflected by it. His romance work was part of a literary romance tradition which Plaatje both drew upon and transformed, and thus the basic features of romance are explored in Chapter Two. Plaatje's work is situated between two influential romance models, therefore Chapter Two also discusses the romances of Shakespeare, whom Plaatje read as reflecting a non-racial humanism that was translatable into the African context, in terms of political vision and of literary text.

His other models were the colonial romances of Haggard. It is argued that, while Plaatje could glean many elements from Haggard that suited his purposes as an African, specifically a South African, writer, he nevertheless—despite his own pro-British leanings, qualified though they might have been by the complexities of his colonial context—would not have represented Africa and Africans in terms of the exotic *other* in the way Haggard clearly did. Thus Plaatje, in terms of his romance vision, may have used many of the themes and techniques of Haggardian romance, but consistently qualified these colonial works by using the more classically shaped Shakespearean romance structure at the deep level of his work. The third chapter examines Haggard's romance, but differentiates between two Haggardian types, the completed or resolved romance, which is more classical in its form, and evokes an image of a completed quest, as well as the necessity of the quester entering the world again. Haggard's "completed" African romance, it is argued, is resolved only in terms of a colonial vision.

Chapter Four, by contrast, examines examples of his unresolved African romance, in which African ideals implode, and show themselves to be in need of foreign intervention. It is argued that Haggard's image of Africa was based on the unresolved or incomplete romance. His vision of Africa was such that it could not in itself provide the material for completed romance. This vision saw intervention as the only option for South Africa.

While Plaatje uses elements of Haggard's "incomplete" romance models when writing *Mhudi*, he handles both his narrative and political commentary in this text in terms of his own political thought. This non-racial political vision is guided by his belief that virtue and vice are not the monopoly of any colour, a non-racialism he associates with Shakespeare. However, within the context of the South Africa of his fiction and of his life, this non-racial ideal is constantly under threat. It is partly threatened by political forces, but also challenged by moral changes within individuals and societies.

In Chapter Five the examination of Plaatje's work begins with his *Boer War Diary*, in which a romance structure is sought beneath his diurnal observations and political optimism during a time of warfare and siege. The discussion of this text is followed by a reading of *Native Life in South Africa* in which it is argued that Plaatje looks, in the midst of personal and social suffering, for that which can translate a tragic situation into romance resolution. "Translation" is used in a broad sense, echoing Plaatje's view of the importance of translation for cross-cultural understanding and harmony.

The arguments of Chapter Five are extended into Chapter Six, where a reading of *Mhudi* places emphasis on the possibilities of change implied in romance. Plaatje's non-racial humanism recognizes the great potential for injustice and human suffering within the context of South African racism, but constantly seeks to translate such suffering into the triumph of romance. While the narrative of *Mhudi* concludes on a romance peak, tensions between the tragic and romance possibilities alert the reader to the sense that, despite its romance resolution, something has been lost in the translation of the potential tragedy into romance.

Contents

Preface	i
Chapter One	
Plaatje's Romance Models: Shakespeare and Haggard	1
Chapter Two	
Romance Possibilities	47
Chapter Three	
Stella: the White Woman who Dies and Shines	73
Chapter Four	
Haggard's Romance of Irresolution	108
Chapter Five	
Romance, Equivalents and Translation	146
Chapter Six	
Mhudi: The Black Woman who Lives	207
Bibliography	266

Preface

A South African academic told me, as I was beginning with this study, that “quite enough has been written about Plaatje already”. For a while this comment stopped me in my tracks, just as Masizi Kunene’s comments about *Mhudi* tend to pull one up rather abruptly. The advantage of this sort of discouragement is that it forces one to seek the value of the work, and to find justification for doing it. Fortunately, with Plaatje as a subject, one does not need to be dispirited for long. That there is still much to write about Plaatje is evident, and this was made clear by the timely publication of his *Selected Writings* in 1996, which added grist to the mill.

Plaatje has been fortunate in his critics and biographer. All scholars of Plaatje will be indebted to the work of Brian Willan, Tim Couzens, Stephen Gray and John Comaroff. Another source of inspiration to me was Laura Chrisman, who was kind enough to send me a copy of her thesis *Empire and Opposition*, for which I am very grateful.

I have been encouraged, also, by my colleagues at the University of Fort Hare, particularly Dan Izevbaye, Norman Morrissey, Cathal Lagan and Lokangaka Losambe, while other colleagues in the Department of English Studies and Comparative Literature have always been supportive. But a special word must be said for the students of Fort Hare, where I have taught *Mhudi*. Their interest in literature in general, but specifically in African and South African literature, has been infectious. I feel I owe this work to the Fort Hare context in which it was written, and initial work was sponsored by the Fort Hare Research Committee. Further afield, Tony Voss, then at the University of Natal, was greatly encouraging in the early stages of this study, while my supervisor, Malvern van Wyk Smith of Rhodes University, has been a pleasure to work with. His interest, enthusiasm, wisdom and courtesy have been exemplary.

My greatest debt is to my family. My mother and late father, to whom this work is dedicated, have always been inspirational. The biggest sacrifice, however, has been made by my wife, Cheryl, and my children, Ian, Michael and Dylan, who—while working through school projects of their own—have done their best to accommodate their father’s “project”.

Chapter One

Plaatje's Romance Models: Shakespeare and Haggard

Plaatje's works have usually been evaluated from fairly narrow perspectives, frequently historical or political. However, even literary approaches have often failed to reveal the depth and integrity of his vision. The present study offers a reading of Plaatje's works, with a focus on *Mhudi*¹, from within the context of romance conventions, arguing that reading *Mhudi* on its own, without reference to its literary traditions or models, places a burden on both novel and reader. Without its literary context the novel speaks into a void, in a strange voice, and this has given rise to much misunderstanding.

While Plaatje had many romance models to work from, the most evident influences are Shakespearean romance² and the Zulu works of H. Rider Haggard. The work of each of these writers is discussed as forming two distinct, though overlapping, romance models which influenced both Plaatje's positioning of his own romance mode of thought and his unique use of the mode in *Mhudi*. This reading, however, treats his works not only as literature that responds to definable literary conventions, but also as literature produced from within influential historical and political contexts, which included the changing relations between imperial and colonial structures, and the definitive 1910 Union of South Africa.

¹*Mhudi*, ed. and introduced by A.E. Voss (Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1989). Unless otherwise noted, this is the version of *Mhudi* cited henceforth.

²References to Shakespeare's works, unless otherwise noted, are to *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. John Dover Wilson (London: Octopus, 1980).

Emphasis on Plaatje's historical importance as the first South African black novelist, significant as this is, needs to be balanced by the fact that *Mhudi* is also part of a broader tradition of South African literature: in fact, like all significant works, it is part of a tradition, and also part of the force which simultaneously changes that tradition¹. More work needs to be done on Plaatje's linking role between white colonial romance, and the black South African texts he has influenced: most directly Peter Abraham's *Wild Conquest*, but also the works of Dhlomo, and later, Mphahlele and Head². As is typical of Plaatje, he is a forerunner in the establishment of a non-racial, South African literature which merges traditional African and colonial forms. However, while the mode and structure of *Mhudi* is influenced by English romance models and the ultimate romance vision of the Bible³, Plaatje's centre of gravity remains African.

Writing soon after the 1910 Union, Plaatje is arguably one of the most inclusive and representative South African writers of his time, and also—in a broader context—one of the early voices writing back to the empire⁴. Plaatje wrote within an imperial and colonial context that was dynamic: his *Boer War Diary*⁵ was produced during the South African War of 1899-1902, and demonstrates a fervour towards the British Empire typical of black subjects who fought for equality before the law within the imperial

¹See T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", in *English Critical Texts*, ed. D.J. Enright and Ernst de Chickera (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962) 294-95. Plaatje had played a similar role in entering and redefining the field of the South African newspaper editor.

²Vivan argues for an influence on Abrahams and Head, as well as on Chinua Achebe: "Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*: History as Fiction" in *Crisis and Conflict: Essays on Southern African Literature*: proceedings of the 11th Annual Conference on Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies in German-Speaking Countries, Aachen-Liege, 1988 (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1990) 56.

³The Authorized Version, ed. C.I. Scofield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) is used throughout.

⁴Salman Rushdie's phrase lent itself to the title of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Routledge: London, 1989).

⁵*The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje: An African at Mafeking*, ed. John L. Comaroff, (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1972).

context. Writing about South African Indian involvement in the same war, M. K. Gandhi says:

Our existence in South Africa is only in our capacity as British subjects. In every memorial we have presented, we have asserted our rights as such It is true that we are helots in the Empire, but so far we have tried to better our condition, continuing the while to remain in the Empire. . . . And if we desire to win our freedom and achieve our welfare as members of the British Empire, here is a golden opportunity for us to do so by helping the British by all the means at our disposal. It must largely be conceded that justice is on the side of the Boers¹

While Plaatje would have disagreed with the final sentence², his willingness to work for equality of citizenship within the structures of the Empire at the time was similar. However, after the 1910 South African Union and the South African National Native Congress's unsuccessful appeals to Britain, the political landscape was changing, with Britain tending to withdraw from the South African political arena, which was increasingly being controlled by Republican Boers. Chennells argues that the South African Union marked a change in Plaatje's views³. However, the change in both the political landscape and in Plaatje's attitude was most clearly symbolized by the 1913 Land Act which Plaatje vigorously opposed, notably in *Native Life in South Africa*⁴. Most of Plaatje's work was written in this weakening imperial context, as power was slowly being passed on to colonial and Republican Boer structures even more opposed to black interests than the imperial British—structures which ultimately led to the 1948 election victory of the National Party, which began to implement a much stricter control over black people in the framework of its apartheid policy.

¹*Satyagraha in South Africa*, translated from the Gujarati by V.G. Desai (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928) 114.

²See *Boer War Diary*, 11.

³Anthony Chennells, "Plotting South African History: Narrative in Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*", *English in Africa*, 24.1, (1997), 57, note 8.

⁴Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982.

Plaatje's work thus falls naturally into the field of interest of postcolonial critics. This study, however, does not look back at Plaatje through this modern theoretical lens. This is not because the theory is considered inappropriate to Plaatje's work, but rather because this study seeks to follow his work from its roots in his earlier texts to its full-blown meaning as revealed in *Mhudi*. In order to do this as sympathetically as possible, the literature that influenced Plaatje has been approached without the value judgements that postcolonialism assumes. According to postcolonial theory, humanistic thought, which could categorize Plaatje's own world view, focuses on the innocent and objective "human subject capable of knowing, acting upon and changing reality"¹. Accordingly, humanistic literary studies "have long been resistant to the idea that literature (or at least good literature) has anything to do with politics, on the grounds that the former is too subjective, individual and personal or else too universal and transcendent to be thus tainted"². And works can thus—naively according to postcolonialism—be categorized by humanists as having "ideological and political innocence".

However, "political innocence" in the postcolonial sense does not capture the moral framework within which Plaatje worked. Plaatje's view was essentially humanistic, and his literary creeds and modes are in some ways closer to Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare than they are to more modern, self-consciously postcolonial novels. Rather than categorizing Shakespeare as a colonial icon, in the manner of postcolonial theorists, Plaatje regarded him as a literary and humanistic icon, almost as an ideal standard. For Plaatje, Shakespeare had "a keen grasp of human character" which was not restricted by time, nor by modern technological advances: "we of the present age have not yet equalled his

¹Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 66.

²Loomba, 69.

acumen”¹. For Plaatje, Shakespeare’s works furthermore “show that nobility and valour, like depravity and cowardice, are not the monopoly of any colour”, and thus he and his work could symbolize non-racism.

For the postcolonial theorist Shakespeare is intrinsically problematic, even though this may be in a complex way:

Literary texts are crucial to the formation of colonial discourses precisely because they work imaginatively upon people as individuals. But literary texts do not simply reflect dominant ideologies; they also militate against them. Such complexity is not necessarily a matter of authorial intention. Plays such as *Othello* and *The Tempest* thus evoke contemporary ideas about the bestiality or incivility of non-Europeans. But we can differ about whether they do so in order to endorse dominant attitudes to ‘race’ and culture or to question them. Does *Othello* serve as a warning against inter-racial love, or an indictment of the society which does not allow it? Does *The Tempest* endorse Prospero’s view of Caliban as a bestial savage, or does it depict the dehumanisation of colonial rule? It is difficult to establish Shakespeare’s intentions, but we can certainly see how these plays have been read differently by people over time, and in different places. *The Tempest*, for example, has been staged, interpreted and appropriated as a romance that has nothing to do with colonialism, as an imperial fable depicting the victory of the white man’s knowledge over both nature and the savage, and as an anti-colonial text that depicts the struggle of the enslaved Caliban².

Plaatje’s understanding of Shakespeare is not complex in the same way. Plaatje could argue that Shakespeare presented universal, even non-racial, truths³, and both Shakespeare and Plaatje could be said to be humanists. Loomba is typically fair in noting the complexity in the plays: she similarly notes complexity in the “syncretic nature of literary texts” (75), in the production of colonial knowledge (66-

¹ I. Gollancz (ed.), *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1916): Plaatje’s contribution is reprinted in *Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings*, ed. Brian Willan (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996) 210-212.

²Loomba, 74.

³Universalism has, since Plaatje wrote, been severely critiqued by postcolonial theorists. See *The Empire Writes Back*, 149, 157, for example.

67), and so on. Thus, she argues, “specific texts are not always simply pro- or anti-colonial, but can be both at the same time” (81).

This valid insistence on complexity, however, makes postcoloniality difficult to apply in a study of this sort. As a theoretical tool it is extremely sharp in certain decisive, but general, instances. However, it can be simultaneously blunt in needing much qualification in specific geographical, historical or literary areas. Loomba, quoting Jolly, notes for instance that South Africa is a “bizarre” settler country in that nationalist Afrikaners “continued to see themselves as victims of English colonisation and . . . the imagined continuation of this victimization was used to justify the maintenance of apartheid”¹. Furthermore, postcolonial theory is, in itself, not necessarily “innocent” in its own terms: Kwame Appiah notes the “role of the colonial (and, alas, the postcolonial) school in the reproduction of Western cultural hegemony”².

These problems and complexities suggest that adopting the terms of postcoloniality is, pre-emptively, to enter into the debates of its discourse in order to understand the shifting South African political situation before tackling the literature. Taking the precedent of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., this study aims, rather, to place texts within a tradition, and to work inductively from a textual basis³.

¹Loomba, 10, citing R. Jolly “Contemporary Postcolonial Discourse and the New South Africa”, PMLA 110 (1), January 1995, 22.

²Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Out of Africa: Topologies of Nativism”, in *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, ed. Dominick LaCapra (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991) 138.

³“The Master’s Pieces: On Canon Formation and the Afro-American Tradition” in *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, ed. Dominick LaCapra (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991). Gates’ argument about the importance of the literary traditions in which works are written is pertinent to this study. While he argues for the validity of both the larger American and the more immediate Afro-American traditions, he focuses on the latter. This study similarly argues for the validity of both a larger South African tradition and a more immediate tradition of black South African writing. The focus in this study upon the former of these two does not seek to imply a value judgement: it is understood that a reading of a work from within the context of either tradition may help inform readings from within the context of the

Writing of the need to read an Afro-American work from within a literary tradition, Gates says:

Just as we can and must cite it within the larger American tradition, we can and must cite it within its own tradition, a tradition not defined by a pseudoscience of racial biology, or a mythically shared essence called blackness, but by the repetition and revision of shared themes, topoi, and tropes, a process that binds the signal texts of the black tradition into a canon just as surely as separate links bind together into a chain. It is no more, or less, essentialist to make this claim than it is to claim the existence of French, English, German, Russian, or American literature—as long as we proceed inductively, from the texts to the theory¹.

Furthermore, if the moral world of the postcolonialist turns around political innocence or guilt, Plaatje's was still a moral world based on Christian concepts of good and evil and human choice, and he extended these values into his political vision². Plaatje emphasizes the value of literature (and other discourse) in influencing individual choice. In order to explicate Plaatje's work, then, the starting point in this study is an attempt to understand Shakespearean and Haggardian romance, and therefore Plaatje's own romance vision, from a point of view close to his own. The attempt here is to provide a reading of Plaatje from the perspective of the literary conventions he was using, a reading outwards from his work. While postcolonial theory is not taken as a starting point, and while the scope of this study does not extend to a postcolonial evaluation of its findings, it is nevertheless assumed that such theory could fruitfully dialogue with the readings provided. Theory, in so far as it is used in this study, is restricted to a discussion of the literary conventions of romance, the purpose of which is to enable a reading of the texts.

other tradition.

¹"The Master's Pieces: On Canon Formation and the Afro-American Tradition", 35.

²As Voss notes, "Christianity is Plaatje's acknowledgement of universal humanity". A.E. Voss, "Sol Plaatje, the Eighteenth Century, and South African Cultural Memory", *English in Africa*, 21.1 and 2, (1994), 69.

However, Plaatje's place within the postcolonial debate helps to reinforce the point that, while he may be seen as "South African" in a broad non-racial sense of the definition, his being a black South African, specifically a member of the Barolong, was nevertheless an essential part of his consciousness and mission, and this aspect of his life and work should not be underplayed. His newspaper carried the constant reminder to himself and his readers, "a kind of personal motto" as Willan points out, and one which, for Plaatje, linked the black struggle with the universal Christian belief in human freedom:

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, and the curtains of Solomon.

Look not upon me because I am black for the sun hath looked down upon me; my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept¹.

The constant echo of these words, which are symbolically used in *Mhudi* when Umnandi is introduced, as well as at the head of Chapter 1 in *Native Life in South Africa*², are a persistent reminder that Plaatje's historical, political and social beliefs were all intertwined with his Christian understanding of salvation. The romance structure of this belief, in the sense of humanity needing to work through the tragic fall of Eden to the reunion and socio-political resurrection in the New Jerusalem, informed much of Plaatje's thinking. As Voss notes, quoting Northrop Frye: "Characteristic writers of this period³ 'knew that the proper study of mankind is *fallen* man, and that the man who does not see himself in this perspective does not see himself at all'".

¹Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1984) 110.

²*Mhudi*, 96, and *Native Life in South Africa*, 21.

³Edward Young, Goldsmith and Cowper's era of "the reaction to the Age of Reason", which Voss identifies as "Sol Plaatje's eighteenth century": Voss, "Sol Plaatje, the Eighteenth Century", 62, quoting Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Boston: Beacon, 1962), 168.

In Plaatje's time, many South African politicians and artists, from diverse perspectives, drew on Christian allegory which evoked a new and redemptive future. Stanley Ridge argues that "the Voortrekkers used and were influenced by the myth of the Chosen People, . . . and the English Settlers used and were influenced by the Romantic myth of Paradise"¹. Similarly, in the late nineteenth century, many black South Africans gathered around Africanized Christian ideals. As Govan Mbeki notes:

The growth and spread of the Ethiopian Movement took place at the same time that Africans were forming independent political movements. Although these religious and political movements grew alongside each other, individuals within them did not find it difficult to be members of both. It was in this setting that African nationalism had its origins².

Buchan uses this combination of religious and political visions, personified in the Reverend John Laputa, to symbolize evil pride in his South African romance, *Prester John*, first published in 1910, the year of the South African Union:

At full moon when the black cock was blooded, the Reverend John forgot his Christianity. He was back four centuries among the Mazimba sweeping down on the Zambesi. He told them, and they believed him, that he was the Umkulunkulu, the incarnated spirit of Prester John³.

Thus the basic romance paradigm was much used in religious and political thought in the South Africa of Plaatje's day. Plaatje himself, who was accused of Ethiopianism by the conservative press⁴, drew on the imagery of Exodus and the promised land to make political points⁵. With this use of the romance

¹Stanley G.M. Ridge, "Chosen People or Heirs of Paradise: Trekkers, Settlers, and Some Implications of Myth", in *Race and Literature / Ras en Literatuur*, ed. Charles Malan (Pinetown: Owen Burgess, 1987), 103.

²Govan Mbeki, *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: A Short History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992) 7. See also T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1987) 231-2.

³John Buchan, *Prester John* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1957).

⁴*Selected Writings*, 102.

⁵See *Native Life in South Africa*, 84, for example.

paradigm in mind, the present study will attempt to place *Mhudi* and other writings by Plaatje within the context of both Shakespearean and Haggardian romance models, with the intention that these models should help to provide a suggestive reading of Plaatje's work. Shakespeare's and Haggard's romances are of the same broad genre, but are nevertheless vastly different. However, both were read and absorbed by Plaatje, who places his work within an area of tension created by their similarities and differences.

Plaatje clearly saw *Mhudi* as part of a literary tradition, as he indicates in its Preface: "South African literature has hitherto been almost exclusively European"¹. The use of "hitherto" implies, however, that he saw the *status quo* of South African literature changing with the publication of his novel. He adds that *Mhudi* presents "to the reading public, one phase of 'the back of the Native mind'". Plaatje suggests here that he brings a new perspective to South African letters, and—as this readership was largely English—he presents himself as an interpreter between cultures.

Focusing on his conscious role as interpreter is perhaps the best way to understand Plaatje's work, both in its intention and form. The "native press", in Plaatje's view, functioned both to express "native opinion", and to act as "interpreters of European thought and translators of Government policy"². By the time he wrote *Mhudi* he had been a court interpreter, a newspaper editor and translator of Shakespeare, all in their own ways acts of translating or interpreting. Plaatje knew that the most effective way of translating was into an idiom understood by the receiver³. He comments, for instance, on a lengthy vernacular rendition of "pithy official" English: "A literal translation of it will be beyond the

¹*Mhudi*, 11.

²Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 297, quoting Plaatje in the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 22 January, 1924.

³"The Essential Interpreter" in *Selected Writings*, 58.

reach of the intellect of a person of mediocre intelligence, so I found the following rendition rather round-about but more satisfactory because better understood . . . ”. Plaatje’s use of Shakespeare and the much-read, popular Haggard become ways of translating “one phase of ‘the back of the Native mind’” into the vernacular of the reading public, of interpreting into a convention that was understood, the *topoi* of which were given.

Plaatje comments about the writing of *Mhudi* in a letter to Silas Molema in 1920:

I am still busy writing two books. One is a novel—a love story after the manner of romances; but based on historical facts. The smash-up of the Barolongs at Kunana by Mzilikazi, the coming of the Boers and the war of revenge which smashed up the Matabele at Coenyane by the Allies, Barolong, Boers, and Griquas when Halley’s Comet appeared in 1835—with plenty of love, superstition, and imaginations worked in between the wars. Just like the style of Rider Haggard when he writes about the Zulus¹.

As *Mhudi* is the particular artistic focus of this study, this revealing description of the work deserves careful consideration. Plaatje calls *Mhudi* a novel, but also refers to it as “a love story after the manner of romances”, and further adds that it is “based on historical facts”. *Mhudi* is clearly an eclectic work, drawing on a number of genres and traditions, and it defies simple classification—a point illustrated by the number of labels given to it². In dealing with *Mhudi* critics have often selected one of its many

¹Molema / Plaatje Papers, Da62, Plaatje to Molema, 25 August, 1920. Quoted in *Selected Writings*, 254.

²Lenta, for instance, says “It is fair, though inadequate, to call *Mhudi* an historical romance: it is fiction set a century earlier than the writer’s own day”, Margaret Lenta, “The Need for a Feminism: Black Township Writing”, *Journal of Literary Studies*, 4 (1), March, 1988, 54. Stephen Gray says “Although *Mhudi* is basically a twentieth century historical novel, it is somewhat of an oddity in that it is conceived in terms of Elizabethan theatre”, “Sources of the First Black South African Novel in English: Solomon Plaatje’s Use of Shakespeare and Bunyan in *Mhudi*” (*Munger Africana Library Notes*, No. 37. Pasadena: Munger Africana Library, California Institute of Technology, 1976) 8. He later calls *Mhudi* a “‘problem’ novel”, 10. Chennells, in “Plotting South African History”, notes that “*Mhudi* can be read at several different levels, most obviously as an historical novel”, 37, but argues that the text has a “dialectical narrative”, 56, with clear tensions between comic and satirical structures, 47.

modes and dealt with it in terms of that single mode, which either limits an interpretation, or makes the text seem confused or confusing.

Reading *Mhudi* strictly as a novel—which, Watt argues¹, implies formal realism as its basic mode of presentation—ignores the romance features central to an understanding of the work. Romance is—despite the term’s porous nature—a formal genre which implies a specific mode of seeing and representing the world. Dealing with *Mhudi* as pure romance, however, would be to ignore its insistence upon dealing with “historical fact”. Thus “romance”, in the letter quoted above, is carefully qualified by the word “but”.

And yet, the issue is made more complex by *Mhudi*’s being called, in its sub-title, “an epic”, which raises various issues. In the more classical sense “epic” evokes the “heroic, cultural-religious practices of a people”²; in a more modern sense it may imply a nationalistic sub-text. Homer’s *Odyssey*³ has both romance and epic elements: the hero returning to his homeland emphasizes the epic, the husband fighting mythical monsters to get back to his wife, the romantic. Thus, while romance leans towards the personal, including sexual and spiritual or mythical relationships, the epic leans towards the narrative of a people, the heroic historical.

While the *Odyssey* indicates that these forms can be merged, as indeed they appear to be in *Mhudi*, romance features characteristically lean away from the historical, the factual. As Coleridge says in a discussion of *The Tempest*:

¹Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 34-35.

²Cloete, T.T. (ed.) *Literêre Terme en Teorieë*, (Pretoria: Haum-Literêr, 1992), 98 (own translation).

³Translated by E.V. Rieu, revised by D.C.H. Rieu and P.V. Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).

The Tempest, I repeat, has been selected as a specimen of the romantic drama; i.e., of a drama the interests of which are independent of all historical facts and associations, and arise from their fitness to that faculty of our nature, the imagination I mean, which owns no allegiance to time and place—a species of drama, therefore, in which errors in chronology and geography, no mortal sins in any species, are venial, or count for nothing¹.

At one extreme, then, romance does not depend on historical accuracy and may be seen as “independent of all historical facts and associations”. While *Mhudi* has been described as “a kind of winter’s tale of loss and regeneration” in recognition of the features it shares with Shakespearean romance², other models for *Mhudi*, such as epic³, have a more historical leaning, while the works of Haggard find a more recent historical base in the use of South African incident and landscape⁴.

Thus when Plaatje merges romance with “historical facts”, following Haggard’s romances such as *Nada the Lily*⁵ and the other Zulu works, he blends genres which at their extremes may seem contradictory, but which have conventionally—using the *Odyssey* as a model—been brought together in such epic romances as the *Aeneid*⁶, the *Divine Comedy*⁷ and *The Faerie Queene*⁸. In *Mhudi* the blend, especially where the history is recent or parallels political events of Plaatje’s own time, introduces

¹Coleridge on *Shakespeare*, ed. Terence Hawkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) 224.

²Tim Couzens, Introduction to *Mhudi* (London: Heinemann, 1978) 9.

³Vivan, in “Sol Plaatje’s *Mhudi*: History as Fiction”, parallels the destruction of Kunana in *Mhudi* with that of Troy in the *Aeneid*, 45.

⁴The relationship of *Mhudi* to Haggardian romance, specifically *Nada the Lily* has been discussed by Laura Chrisman in *Imperialism and Opposition: Literature of South Africa* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1992) 7 and 145.

⁵*Nada the Lily* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914).

⁶Virgil, trans. W.F. Jackson Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959).

⁷Dante, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers, in three volumes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955).

⁸Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1980). All citations are from this edition.

vibrant tension into the text which allows for diverse perspectives, adding to the dialogic nature of the text¹.

When Plaatje says his work is “Just like the style of Rider Haggard when he writes about the Zulus”, he does not refer directly to Rider Haggard as author, or specifically to his work: he refers to his “style”, as earlier in the passage he says “after the *manner* of the romances”.² Furthermore, he refers to Haggard’s style “*when* he writes about the Zulus”. That is, he refers to only a portion of Haggard’s works. Not all are set in Africa and, of these, only a selection deal with Zulu people in great depth. Plaatje’s reference to Haggard, then, is carefully qualified by his phrasing: his “style . . . when he writes about the Zulus”.

Plaatje, however, was not content to use merely the style of Rider Haggard: he was ready to use many more typically romantic elements. Plaatje was a literary eclectic, using for his purposes whatever suited him—Haggard, Shakespeare, African oral tradition, Christianity, African religion, the English judicial system, as well as African judicial systems, for instance³. He takes what is useful, the language of romance, the language of the reading public whom he wishes to address, but forges these into a new language that articulates his own thoughts and vision. Thus, while the influence of Haggard on *Mhudi*

¹Chrisman calls Plaatje’s aesthetic “pluralist and hybrid”, *Empire and Opposition* 8.

²The emphasis in this, and the next, quotation is mine.

³Chennells regards the different narrative perspectives that result from such eclecticism as combining creatively into an “unstable text” which “refuses containment in a single polemic”, “Plotting South African History”, 38. Voss argues that Plaatje’s liberal use of “documentary fashion” quotations from diverse oral and written sources “impregnates his text with a humanitarian, sometimes nostalgic, spirit and energy”: “Sol Plaatje, the Eighteenth Century”, 63.

is clear and acknowledged by the author, this influence is carefully qualified by Plaatje's own sense of art and humanity, and by his vision, more Shakespearean¹ than Haggardian.

Haggard spent most of his sojourn in Africa in Natal and Zululand and felt he knew the Zulu better than he did other indigenous South African peoples, writing a political work entitled *Cetywayo and his White Neighbours*² about his impressions of the state of the Zulu nation. Haggard's fiction that deals with Zulu characters had, then, at least some link with historical fact: he often worked historical incident into his romances, and claims in his Preface to *Nada the Lily* that "[m]ost, indeed nearly all, of the historical incidents here recorded are true in substance"³, although his phrasing does allow for an unspecified latitude.

Haggard's Africa, despite occasional localized scenes and landscapes, was typically a romantic or gothic invention, whereas Plaatje sought to establish South Africa as familiar and recognizable. Although his mode was a version of colonial romance, Plaatje characteristically avoided imagery and incident which suggested that blacks were by nature evil, immoral, savage, incapable of humane behaviour, socially or intellectually inferior, or in need of white patronage. Plaatje would, therefore, have rejected the belittling imperialism which permeates Haggard's romances.

He might, however, have been attracted to Haggard because of his popularity (which would have made him a useful "idiom" into which to translate), his South African focus and his use of recognizable

¹"Shakespearean" is used here in the sense of Plaatje's understanding of his "veracity", but it will also be argued that the Shakespearean influence on *Mhudi* goes deeper than this.

²AMS, New York, 1982, originally published by Trübner, London, 1882.

³*Nada the Lily*, 12. Similarly, in the Introduction to *Finished* (London: Ward, Lock, 1917), he says "Although, of course, much is added for the purposes of romance, the main facts of history have been adhered to with some faithfulness", 9.

historical backdrops, characters and landscapes. Other possibilities that Haggard texts hold are the use of narrators from the oral tradition, the broad epic sweep of history, the intertwined movement and development of peoples, and the tension between group and individual interests. Further tension is generated by local South African material placed against old, well-established romance traditions. Haggard's texts combine fact and fiction, the historical with the romance.

The South African political context would also have added to both Plaatje's interest in Haggard, and his use of him as a model. In *Native Life in South Africa* Plaatje's rhetorical and political intentions are clearly aimed at urging the imperial metropole to intervene and temper the growing strength of combined Republican Boer and English colonial interests. Voss contrasts the "idealisation of imperialism" typical of Plaatje, tempered as it is by "Romanticism and evangelicalism", with "the condition of slavery, which is held out as either the actual or the potential condition of the 'natives' of South Africa"¹. Noting Plaatje's allegorical use of Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* to lament "The Passing of Cape Ideals", Voss argues that the question of whether Britain could prevent slavery in South Africa "enables us to see that Plaatje has been moved from the dominion of one Imperialism to that of another"².

Haggard is interestingly placed in this debate, with his imperialist fervour (albeit limited and patronizing), reflected in early works such as *Cetywayo and his White Neighbours* and *Nada the Lily*, being qualified by his later despair at colonial treatment of the Zulu people:

¹Voss, "Sol Plaatje, the Eighteenth Century", 62-4.

²"Sol Plaatje, the Eighteenth Century", 71.

. . . since first I knew the Zulu in 1875 about two-thirds of their territory as it was at that time, including many of the best lands, have on one occasion and another, and one pretext and another, by force, by so-called treaty, and by fraud, passed from them into the hands of white men, Boers and English together. In addition, those of them who wish or are forced to live on farms held by white men, developed or undeveloped, are in future, under the Native Land Act of 1913, liable to be allowed to do so only on condition that they labour for the owner, the payment of rent and the hiring of land, or its purchase being henceforth forbidden to them. Such is the state of the people of Zululand to-day with reference to the country which their fathers occupied.

Since the year 1879 the history of the Zulus has been one long tale of misfortune¹.

For Plaatje, then, Haggard's works occupy the same terrain of debate as *Mhudi*.

Making use, then, of the Haggardian elements that suited his own artistic and political discourse, Plaatje writes in *Mhudi* the counter-novel of the colonial romance tradition that Stephen Gray once suggested was never written². He uses romance to reflect on, not only the "historical facts" of Barolong history, and upon the way Africans have been portrayed in colonial South African literature, but also upon the political future as seen from his time.

Mhudi did not receive, upon publication, the attention it deserved, and certainly was not recognised as a significant counter-novel. Published in 1930, about ten years after it was written, the hiatus thus created in a rapidly changing world³ distanced it from its models. It appeared when the work of modernists like T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce had already been published, rather than

¹*Diary of an African Journey: The Return of Rider Haggard*, ed. Stephen Coan, (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000), 292. Haggard is often ambivalent, however. In his diary he also wonders where the colonial population will come from "to occupy all this enormous land [the then Rhodesia]", 151, and notes that South Africa "so sadly needs" a "British population", 234.

² Stephen Gray, *South African Literature: An Introduction*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), 111: "No South African work of hunting and adventure has received its reverse image, as Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* did in Golding's *Lord of the Flies* in 1954".

³This change is the focus of Chapter 13 of Willan's biography, "The 1920s: A Leader without a People": see especially 295, which talks of Plaatje's "displacement" owing to changes while Plaatje had been out of South Africa.

amongst the romances of Rider Haggard and John Buchan, to which it is generically more closely related.

The example of a counter-novel given by Gray is the idyllic island world of Ballantyne countered by the harsh realism of *Lord of the Flies*¹: realism counters the romantic. But, in this case, Haggard's gothic romance of determined inhumanity and hints at cannibalism are countered by Plaatje who presents, in his more gentle romance, an ordinary world in which people suffer and hope, a world which has treachery, but recognises the possibilities of an accommodating humanism. Haggard's exotic African wildness is countered by a world of natural humanity.

Mhudi's use of a classical romance form, rather than the more popular form of Haggard's colonial-gothic romance, may have made it seem quaint, already old fashioned, to readers at the time of its publication. Furthermore, the work places a humanistic view above a narrow racism. It emphasizes racial equivalence above the "single, overwhelmingly racist imperialism" that colonial romance almost conventionally displays². At the time of its publication these essential qualities of the work, if indeed they had been recognized, would not generally have been taken seriously. Black aspirations to social and political equality were, at the time, not given much credit by white commentators. Plaatje's own wedding party was publicly described in the following terms:

¹William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962).

²The phrase is Malvern van Wyk Smith's, although he has argued in "Romancing the East Cape Frontier: Prelude to the South African High Romance of Empire", *English in Africa*, 24. 2, November 1997, 5, that this "racist imperialism" represents the hard surface of colonial romance, and that, particularly in the Eastern Cape whence he draws his examples, the "inside of the discourse . . . remained remarkably porous and malleable". If, as he argues, the East Cape romances represent "the undergrowth of the high romance" which ultimately mounts a disturbing critique of empire, Plaatje is interestingly placed in the genealogy he constructs, 12.

Last evening a couple of ‘swagger’ looking natives resplendent in bell toppers, morning coats, white waistcoats, light pants, and patent leathers, with a number of females in holiday attire, were the centre of an admiring group in the Kimberley Railway Station. The rumour had gone forth that they were a couple of Lobengula’s sons and certain of his wives Shortly before the train left, the police sergeant on duty at the station ‘spotted’ one of the ‘princes’ as an interpreter at a court down colony, while his companion was discovered to be a telegraph messenger. It transpired that the former had come up to the Diamond Fields for the purpose of getting married, and the buxom dusky lady who had been put down as one of the sharers of the late Matabili monarch’s joys and sorrows was in reality a daughter of the people and the bride of the ‘got up regardless’ interpreter¹.

This satire, which touches on the comic convention of clowns being dressed beyond their estate, neglects the human feelings and respect the people thus described might actually have had about the wedding ceremony. Some notion of the other point of view might be recaptured in an entry in Plaatje’s

Boer War Diary:

To think that this is the second Christmas of my wedded life and I have to spend it, like the first one, so very very far away from the one I love above all: it is becoming too big and I wish I could drive the thought from my mind².

Thus, black people expressing human feelings, whether in civil life or in literature, were often not treated with human understanding in Plaatje’s time. Reviews of *Mhudi*, Willan notes, though generally favourable, and in some cases sympathetic to Plaatje’s lot as a black South African, were often “not very penetrating” and “rather patronizing—as in the comment that ‘the style is wonderfully good for a native’”³. Willan adds that “*Mhudi* was not a great deal noted in more literary circles in South Africa, for it simply fell outside any recognised literary tradition.”

¹*Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 26 January, 1898: quoted by Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography* 50-51.

²*Boer War Diary*, 49: 4th December, 1899.

³Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography* 361-62.

Soon after the National Party's election win in 1948 had introduced a new era in South African politics,

Mhudi was mentioned in Snyman's study of the South African novel in English:

Although *Mhudi* would seem to be authentic, it lacks the spontaneity of Mitford's Untúswa series . . . it seems as if Plaatje is unable to span the gap and live in the period about which he is writing¹.

Mostert, in an unpublished MA thesis, quotes Snyman's study, specifically the point that the publication of *Mhudi* is "the first indication that the African is reaping the fruits of European education"² (despite Plaatje's formal school education having ended with Standard Three). Describing him as a "Coloured author", Mostert suggests that *Mhudi* is a "precursory novel" in which

Plaatje displays all the glaring inequalities of a novice . . . [he] fails both to revitalize history and to conjure up convincing fictitious characters and incidents in the framework of history. Interesting as each issue on itself is, or could have been, they lose in potential force by the author's inability to present them as forming an integrated unit³.

Parts of the novel, he notes, are "only interesting as passages of social history" (51). Mostert, furthermore, regrets that the "advent of the European Trekkers is also stripped of its momentous significance" He adds that "[a]s novelist, Plaatje cannot desist from being prejudiced in his presentation", his sympathies allegedly lying with the Barolong, his own people, although he says that the novel's "major imperfection" is its "affected style" which "betrays the author's second-hand knowledge of English and his desire to impress with words" (52).

¹J.P.L. Snyman, *The South African Novel in English: 1880—1930*, (Potchefstroom: University of Potchefstroom, 1952) 141.

²Cornelius Wickaam Mostert, *The Native in the South African Novel in English*, unpublished MA thesis, (Bloemfontein: University of the Orange Free State, 1955) 48.

³*The Native in the South African Novel in English*, 50.

Mostert concludes that the “artificiality of style, even more than the unbalanced themes, the flaccid story and the superficial portrayal of character, makes this novel a dismal failure” (53).

When *Mhudi* was re-published in 1975 by Quagga, with a sympathetic and informative introduction by Couzens, and in 1978 in the Heinemann African Writers Series¹, it was more enthusiastically received by many. However, the political context had now become such that to some critics a gentle romance seemed tame, a compromise, and even unAfrican. Mshengu in a *Staffrider* review sees Plaatje “as talking about ‘native life’ from a position outside of it”², a remarkable comment about the author of *Native Life in South Africa*.

In a 1976 review Mazisi Kunene seems unconsciously to echo Mostert in his criticism, although from a different socio-political angle (both critics indeed reveal their own different notions of what South African literature should be), and castigates those who praise *Mhudi* in any way:

Mhudi itself is a second-rate, badly organized hodge-podge of semihistory, semifiction, shoddy allegory—a pastiche combining fact and fiction in a most illogical manner. To those championing *Mhudi* as a pioneering work, I say: Stop it! Begin now learning about the great African literary classics. Begin now learning³.

Kunene’s emphasis is on the “true authentic classics of African literature”, and his preferred method is verbal narration “*a la africaine*”: thus *Mhudi*, a written work, in English, drawing from many sources and traditions, including European classics and the traditions of African orality, becomes, for him,

¹The publication history of *Mhudi* is summarized by A.E. Voss in his introduction to *Mhudi*, 20.

²Mshengu, (no initials given) quoted in M. Doyle’s review in *Staffrider*, April/May 1979, 53.

³Review of Stephen Gray, “Sources of the First Black South African Novel in English: Solomon Plaatje’s Use of Shakespeare and Bunyan in *Mhudi*”, in *Research in African Literatures*, 11.2 (1980), 245.

eclectic and unstructured. He does not take into account the importance of *Mhudi*'s involvement in the debate about the new nation that was formed by the 1910 Union¹.

It is the object of this study to argue that, instead of being a "second-rate, badly organized hodge-podge . . . of shoddy allegory", *Mhudi*, like Plaatje's other writings, represents an intelligent and sensitive attempt to find meaning and to seek social justice in an uncertain and constantly changing world. In *Mhudi* Plaatje does not strive to be unAfrican. Nor does *Mhudi*, as Kunene implies, "project the 'exotica' of African life", or, as Mshengu claims, project it from the outside. Rather it deals with African life in a changing world, and within the context of the old literary genre of romance in a way that enables the reader to view the African character as human, although somewhat stylized in terms of the genre, rather than as exotic. And with his constant allusion to other literary works, both African oral and Western written, Plaatje establishes a dialogue within which the African text is in conversation with the traditions from which it draws, making it a complex, dynamic work that articulates the difficulties of Plaatje's time, but never abandons the human quest to make sense of the world. *Mhudi* states its own case against the evidence of previously published works of the "South African literature" that Plaatje refers to in its Preface.

While *Mhudi* has many influences in the socio-political and literary spheres², this study will identify and focus on three areas of influence that are likely to have shaped Plaatje's romance: the historical or political situation in which he lived; humanistic Shakespearean romance; and colonial romance, epitomized by Haggard. Comparative readings that couple *Mhudi* with *Native Life in South Africa*

¹*Mhudi*'s place in the Nationalistic debate has been noted by Michael Green in *Novel Histories: Past, Present, and Future in South African Fiction* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1997), 37-63.

²See, for a discussion of some sources, Stephen Gray "Plaatje's Shakespeare", *English in Africa* 4.1 (1977): 1-6.

(Couzens suggests they were written “close to one another”¹), with Shakespeare’s romances, or with Haggard’s “Zulu” romances, each highlight different aspects of Plaatje’s novel. Brought together, such readings reflect the depth and richness of Plaatje’s thought.

Stephen Gray points out the profound influence of Shakespeare on Plaatje, and the creative use the African author makes of his English model. He notes that in *Mhudi* Plaatje makes “a number of assumptions about the shape of history, all of which are derived from Shakespeare”, and that axioms “Shakespeare subscribed to reappear in Plaatje unmodified” (1-2). This study focuses specifically on Shakespeare’s romances, arguing that these assumptions and axioms are largely derived from, or are most clearly reflected in, the romances. As Couzens says in his introduction: “. . . *Mhudi* is a kind of winter’s tale of loss and regeneration . . .” (9).

At the time of *Mhudi*’s publication, however, the romances were neither the most popular nor the most understood of Shakespeare’s works. Peterson argues that their philosophical depth and political or historical significance only became clear to scholars in the latter part of the twentieth century².

Shakespearean romance, for the purposes of this study, is taken to be a complex narrative, which begins with the potential for tragedy. Worked through time, the tragic potential moves towards a resolution which reunites families, returns people from apparent death, reveals the truth of a situation which has previously been confusing, and brings political and moral stability to a society that has suffered discord.

¹Couzens, introduction to *Mhudi* (Heinemann), 17.

² *Time ,Tide and Tempest: A Study of Shakespeare’s Romances* (San Marin: Huntington Library, 1973) Preface, xi.

Romance, however, is not seen as a simplistic or escapist genre, but rather as one that, while drawing towards the ideal of a conclusion in its narrative structure, nevertheless complicates the relationship between this ideal and the real world from which it emerges. The complexity of this relationship between the real world, which is often allegorically presented in romance, and the ideal can give romance a depth which goes beyond its fairly predictable narrative structure.

Conventional romance closures, in which harmony and reconciliation are unquestioned, might result in politically naive or conservative viewpoints being articulated. This is not always the case, however, and the mode can equally be used to comment upon and criticize such conservatism, or to complicate it, as is the case in *Mhudi*. Criticism of the genre is often blind to these exceptions, as well as to the potential for complexities within romance in general.

Plaatje considered Shakespeare's works, in general, to be of immediate, contemporary importance. This is clear from his contribution to Gollancz's *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* where he compares certain films he had seen to "Shakespeare's dramas":

I once went to see a cinematograph show of the crucifixion. All the characters in the play, including Pilate, the Priests, and Simon of Cyrene, were white men. According to the pictures, the only black man in the mob was Judas Iscariot. I have since become suspicious of the veracity of the cinema and acquired a scepticism which is not diminished by the gorgeous one¹ now exhibited in London which shows, side by side with the nobility of the white race, a highly coloured exaggeration of the depravity of the blacks.

Shakespeare's dramas, on the other hand, show that nobility and valour, like depravity and cowardice, are not the monopoly of any colour².

¹Identified by Willan as "*The Birth of a Nation*, based on a book called *The Clansman*, notable . . . for its glorification of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan in the American south", *Plaatje: A Biography*, 193.

²*Selected Writings*, 212.

Shakespeare's plays, Plaatje argues, show that morality has no logical connection with race. He denies the veracity of art that depicts a racial basis for morality, and questions, in particular, the juxtaposition of white "nobility" and black "depravity". He also challenges the racist implication that blacks are by nature unchristian and untrustworthy and that they can therefore be used as natural symbols of these vices, as in the example of Judas Iscariot being represented as a black man. He argues that Shakespearean art, unlike such racist work, has a "keen grasp of human character", showing that virtue and vice are "not the monopoly of any colour" (212). Plaatje's thinking here echoes that of his contemporary, A.C. Bradley's, published in 1904:

I do not mean that Othello's race is a matter of no account. It has, as we shall presently see, its importance in the play. It makes a difference to our idea of him; it makes a difference to the action and catastrophe. But in regard to the essentials of his character it is not important¹

He adds:

With [Shakespeare] the differences of period, race, nationality, and locality have little bearing on the inward character, though they sometimes have a good deal on the total imaginative effect, of his figures.

For Plaatje virtue and vice occur in various degrees, in any individual of any colour, depending on the individual and upon circumstance, and not on a fixed rule. He leaves open a sense of possibility, a space for change. Plaatje's typically careful phrasing about "nobility and valour" clearly defines what *is not* true, yet he does not limit what *is* true by attempting to define that. The non-racial vision that Plaatje

¹*Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1974) 152 and 172 respectively. Many modern critics would disagree with these views about Shakespeare, but they are close to Plaatje's opinions.

finds in Shakespeare was an ideal which he felt had not been realized in literature and society at the time of his own writing: “we of the present age have not yet equalled his acumen”¹. The open sense of possibility in Plaatje’s phrasing and his refusal to fix the relationship between race and morality suggest a potential for change and growth within individuals and society. This open-endedness is essential to Plaatje’s political vision, expressed most clearly in *Native Life in South Africa*, which seeks a resolution through action designed to bring about change. This vision of possibility also leans his literary work towards the openness of romance, rather than the closedness of tragedy, where the hero’s realization of his *hamartia* ineluctably comes too late to prevent disaster.

Plaatje’s ability to see virtue or value in traditional enemies or opponents is demonstrated by his marriage to a Xhosa woman in defiance of family feeling, and his sense that the situation was saved by the “civilized laws” of the Cape Colony (almost unthinkable phrasing in postcolonial theory):

My people resented the idea of my marrying a girl who spoke a language which, like the Hottentot language, had clicks in it; while her people likewise abominated the idea of giving their daughter in marriage to a fellow who spoke a language so imperfect as to be without any clicks. But the civilized laws of Cape Colony saved us from a double tragedy in a cemetery. . . .²

This description, in which he places his own life and society within the paradigm of *Romeo and Juliet*, also shows that he is both able to see virtue in a traditional enemy and vice in his own people: in this case, the bias against another language group. In his Preface to *Mhudi* Plaatje refers to a similar bias against the traditional enemies of the Barolong, the Matabele:

¹*Selected Writings*, 212.

²*Selected Writings*, 211.

. . . we have been taught almost from childhood to fear the Matabele—a fierce nation—so unreasoning in its ferocity that it will attack any individual or tribe without the slightest provocation. Their destruction of our people, we were told, had no justification in fact or in reason; they were actuated by sheer lust for human blood¹.

Plaatje presents this bias as a common human trait, found in both literary and oral conventions:

In all the tales of battle I have ever read, or heard of, the cause of war is invariably ascribed to the other side. Similarly, we have been taught

Plaatje then goes on to describe how he “incidentally heard of ‘the day Mzilikazi’s tax collectors were killed’”, and how he traced this information further back and “elicited from old people that the slaying of Bhoya and his companions, about the year 1830, constituted the *casus belli*” Thus Plaatje demonstrates a bias amongst his own people, but is careful to show that they share this weakness with other writers and narrators of tales of battle, and that it is a *human* weakness.

All humans have a capacity for both virtue and vice, then: but Plaatje further suggests that their institutions or conventions share this capacity. So much has recently been made of Plaatje’s use of oral literature in *Mhudi* that the assumption that Robert Shepherd, at Lovedale Press, was trying to suppress oral elements has become almost axiomatic in Plaatje criticism². The strong implication has been that oral literature reveals a truth that has deeper roots than much of the written (i.e. colonial) historical “truths” that have become current, and oral elements were therefore excised from the first published text. However, the example that Plaatje gives above again demonstrates his open-mindedness: he recognises

¹*Mhudi*, 11. The quotations that follow are from the second and third paragraphs of this Preface.

²The argument can be traced from Couzens and Gray’s “Printers’ and Other Devils: The Texts of Sol Plaatje’s *Mhudi*”, *Research in African Literatures*, 9.2, (1978) 198-215, through the works of many following critics.

that the human institution of oral literature carries the same balance of virtue and vice as humans do themselves. The oral tradition, as presented by Plaatje, could be used equally to hide truth (“Their destruction of our people, *we were told*, had no justification . . .”), or reveal truth (“while *collecting stray scraps of tribal history*, later in life, the writer incidentally *heard* of ‘the day Mzilikazi’s tax collectors were killed’”)¹.

Plaatje’s view of human character is important to an understanding of his politics. His trust in a Shakespearean non-racialism enables Plaatje to seek virtue even in people or peoples he was opposed to politically, enabling him to put trust in the politics of appeal and negotiation. Like Shakespeare, Plaatje saw in humanity the romance ability to change from vice to virtue, to develop and to grow, while at the same time recognizing the tragedy engendered by an inability to change, or by too late a change.

This ability of humans to develop and change is central to Plaatje’s literary vision, both as a journalist and novelist. Both journalism and fiction were used by Plaatje to inform as well as to transform. Plaatje’s notion of art is essentially moralistic: he implies that “nobility and valour” in the opening quotation of this chapter are admirable qualities to be striven for, and that “depravity and cowardice” are to be avoided. Furthermore, for Plaatje, as earlier for Sidney, art resulted in action. Writing to condemn the same film mentioned above when it appeared in South Africa in 1931, he mentions its effect in America where a witness reported “that on leaving the hall a young fellow in front of her exclaimed, ‘Now I feel like smashing the skull of the first nigger I meet!’”². The arbitrary selection of

¹The two extracts are from the Preface to *Mhudi*, 11. The italics are mine. For a brief discussion which aims to balance the virtues of the oral with written traditions, see “The Oral Versus the Written Tradition”, Kole Omotoso, *Season of Migration to the South: Africa’s Crises Reconsidered* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1994) 116-121.

²*English in Africa*, 3.2, (1976), 73-4.

a victim, indicated in the phrase “the first nigger” which suggests the supposed guilt of every black person, shows that the film had encouraged the stereotype of black evil, drawing a passionate, violent response upon the innocent. Art, in Plaatje’s view, elicits response, and art lacking veracity can result in wrong action.

Thus, if Shakespeare may be seen as an ideal for Plaatje, both as artist and as non-racial humanist, Sidney may be seen as his model in terms of art and its functions, which are to “teach and delight” and to “lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls . . . can be capable of”¹. Even Plaatje’s light romance style, stylized, humorous and full of word play, seems occasionally to echo both Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* and his *Arcadia*².

Plaatje’s own literary works, in which he attempted to show “veracity”, sought through teaching to have an effect in action. As Sidney argues, Xenophon’s *Cyrus* does not only “make a *Cyrus*” with “a particular excellency, as nature might have done”, but—by setting him up as a model for virtue—aims to “make many *Cyruses*” (9). Spenser, in his letter to Raleigh about the “general intention and meaning” of *The Faerie Queene*, indicates that the end of the book is “to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline”. And he also mentions *Cyrus*, indicating that Xenophon, in *Cyrus* and the *Persians*, “fashioned a gouvernement such as might best be”, and is thus preferable to Plato, who

¹Sidney, Philip, *An Apology for Poetry*, in *English Critical Texts: 16th Century to 20th Century*, eds. D.J. Enright and Ernst de Chickera, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 9-11.

²*The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977). Chrisman in *Empire and Opposition* (163) notes that “*Mhudi* is as broad a compendium of rhetoric as Sidney’s *Arcadia*”. Yet there is also a similarity of artistic purpose in their end-directed prose, as well as in their delight in word-play: the playful romance style of both writers is layered over a more serious moral intension.

“formed a Commune welth as it should be”. Spenser notes, also, that his work should be “plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historical fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read”¹

Plaatje’s writing strategies, both in *Mhudi* and *Native Life in South Africa*, have strong affinities with the purposes of these major Elizabethan romance writers. His treatment of the English in these texts, often criticized as being soft, is perhaps best understood in terms of an intention to please and teach. In pre-League of Nation days, the English crown, the Home government and the British public were the only focuses of appeal once petition to colonial authorities had failed. Plaatje was involved in, or familiar with, petitions by the leaderships of both the Tswana people in Bechuanaland (now Botswana)² and the South African Native National Congress. And the appeal could be made in typical African praise poem fashion, with praise where it is due, and criticism also, as is Plaatje’s tactic in *Native Life in South Africa*. The praise poem uses a similar rhetorical strategy to that of *The Faerie Queene*: both forms comment on political life by highlighting faults and praising virtue, always emphasizing the potential ideal of leadership³.

Thus Plaatje tends, in his treatment of the British—who formed the larger part of his readership, and whom he was most trying to influence—to establish for them an ideal image of themselves that they should live up to. Elizabeth Molteno, the South African poet and a friend of Plaatje’s, uses the same

¹“A Letter of the Authors”, in *The Faerie Queene*, 737.

²Khama III, Sebele and Bathoen travelled to Britain to present their people’s case, with some success, “not only to the British government but to the British public at large”: Sanders, A.J.G.M. *Bechuanaland and the Law in Politicians’ Hands* (Gaborone: Botswana Society, 1992) 17. Delegations of appeal to England by various interest groups were fairly common at the time.

³See Jeff Opland, *Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a Black South African Tradition* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1983) 50-51.

techniques in her 1902 poem “Miss Hobhouse” which criticizes the “Terror” which the English “Camps of Death” became for Boer women and children:

I stand here for Old England’s right:
I stand here for Old England’s fame:
For what to me is England’s might
Without her old good name?¹

Thus the ideal, what “might best be”, can be evoked in protest against a less ideal reality. The evocation of such an ideal is often Plaatje’s rhetorical strategy, for instance when he addresses an English audience or readership about the need for their intervention on behalf of South African blacks. An ideal of British social responsibility and justice was personified for Plaatje in friends such as Harriette Colenso, “Nkosazana Matotoba ka So-Bantu”, to whom he dedicated *Native Life in South Africa* for her “unswerving loyalty” and “unselfish interest in the welfare of the South African Natives”. However, Haggard refers to “Miss Colenso” as one of “these gentle apologists for slaughter”, whose “philanthropy has a deadening effect on the moral sense”. He speaks of the negative images presented of colonial officers who pass “through Miss Colenso’s mill”². Harriette Colenso, and her Father Bishop Colenso, are amongst many of the English subjects Plaatje regarded as personifying the more enlightened spirit of Britain to which he appealed. Haggard, significantly, takes an opposing view of these people.

¹From *Breaking the Silence: A Century of South African Women’s Poetry*, ed. Cecily Lockett (Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1990) 62-3.

²*Cetywayo and his White Neighbours*, 11-13.

Plaatje's treatment of the Boers is different. He often criticizes them for hypocrisy and for a lack of the Christian values that they profess¹. Yet this is done with acknowledgement of their potential for Christian kindness and virtue, personified in his works by a few isolated Boer characters.

Plaatje's works, then, are not only related to romance in its structure and vision, but also in intentions.

As Willan says:

Native Life in South Africa was formulated as a direct and often emotional appeal to the British public to right the wrongs being done to the African people of South Africa . . . justified . . . upon the fact that his people shared with the British public a common humanity: natural justice and Christian belief alike demanded their intervention. Throughout the book Plaatje was concerned to demonstrate this common humanity, and to argue that as loyal subjects of the British empire his people were entitled to fair and decent treatment. He was also very conscious of the difficulties caused by the image which his people had in the eyes of the majority of the British public: 'This appeal', he wrote,

is not on behalf of the naked hordes of cannibals who are represented in fantastic pictures displayed in the shop-windows in Europe, most of them imaginary; but it is on behalf of five million loyal British subjects who shoulder 'the black man's burden' every day, doing so without looking forward to any decoration or thanks².

Plaatje's literary purpose is clear: he calls for action and he wishes to "right the wrongs", a phrase which indicates the moral dimensions of his work, his quest for "natural justice", for "fair and decent treatment". He wishes, furthermore, to counter the stereotype of "naked hordes of cannibals who are represented in fantastic pictures", a stereotype which could encourage self-righteous injustice. He seeks, rather, to demonstrate the common humanity colonized black people in fact share with whites.

¹In *Native Life in South Africa*, for instance, Plaatje says that while they attested "the Christian character", "the average Republican's treatment of the natives . . . was seldom influenced by religious scruples", 70, while Chapter 6 of that text provides notable exceptions to this generalization. In *Mhudi*, the general hypocrisy (and bigotry) of "the other Boers at Khing" and Phil Jay's exceptional kindness are shown on 197-8.

²*Plaatje: A Biography* 196-7, quoting *Native Life*, 15.

The danger of the misrepresentation of blacks was clearly apparent to Plaatje who referred to “this demon of misrepresentation and imbecility, which threatens to turn South Africa into a regular sty”¹. Misrepresentation impacted directly upon the political life of a nation governed by a white minority which often gave credit to such misrepresentation, or actively encouraged it.

Plaatje had personal experience of the effect such misrepresentation could have on readers beyond the shores of Africa. His own African nativity and identity had been questioned in America, “so conditioned were American blacks to an exotic image of Africa”². Plaatje explained to an American audience “you have read from your childhood literature concerning South Africa and you are told about swarms of cannibals and gorillas that infest the African forests”³. The “exotic image” in literature and other media could affect attitudes and impact on both social behaviour and political decisions. In his own writing and life, then, he strove to counter this image.

For Haggard, however, the exotic image of Africa was a commonplace, as his Quatermain character observes: “But after all Africa is a land of queer people, and of queer gods too”⁴. Haggard’s Zulu works, therefore, lack the Shakespearean veracity that Plaatje admired. Haggard’s characterisation, despite his disclaimers that argue a more broad-minded approach, tends towards categorization and stereotype along racial or ethnic lines. It seems that Plaatje was willing to use the “style of Rider

¹*Selected Writings*, 66. He also refers to “the army of misrepresenters”, 84, and “this orgy of misrepresentation”, 371.

²Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 268.

³“Special Easter Services held in Liberty Hall”, *Negro World*, 2 April, 1921: quoted in Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 268.

⁴*Allan and the Holy Flower* (London: MacDonald, 1954) 26.

Haggard when he writes about the Zulus”, but certainly not his racial bias. He preferred, in this regard, a Shakespearean model.

The influence of Shakespeare is evident in Plaatje’s particular use of the romance mode. As Chrisman points out, his use of this mode in *Mhudi* is more classically correct than Haggard’s is¹, conforming to a traditional or, more specifically, Elizabethan notion of romance. And this influence also serves to counter, in *Mhudi*, the strong 19th century imperial bias in Haggard’s romances.

Plaatje’s use of the “style” of Haggard, then, is strongly qualified by his understanding of the “Shakespearean veracity”. The present reading of Haggard and Plaatje seeks to examine the ways in which Haggard and Plaatje use romance, each finding his own voice and vision within the mode.

Malvern van Wyk Smith argues that East Cape frontier romances contain “strategic narrative positions” which “threaten to destabilize either the declared thematic intentions of the authorial persona, or to contradict the colonial stance of leading characters in the story”, and that this “undergrowth” led towards the “high romance of empire” represented by Haggard, Conrad and Kipling². *Mhudi* is not a “high romance of empire”, though it clearly shares family resemblances. Plaatje draws on the romance mode, with its “thematic and structural capaciousness”³, partly because he is in the same debate as Haggard is, but partly, also, because the debate requires a translator. Plaatje’s attempt to translate this debate, “to interpret to the reading public, one phase of ‘the back of the Native mind’”, as he put it, and to

¹Chrisman, *Empire and Opposition*, 166.

²van Wyk Smith, “Romancing the East Cape Frontier”, 9.

³“Romancing the East Cape Frontier”, 12.

locate it within South African literature¹ was precisely because he could foresee the alternative in the “‘tragedy of race’ that is endemic to our [South African] literature”².

The “historical facts” Plaatje illustrates in his letter to Molema (63, above) seem to relate mainly to the arrival of the Boers in the South African interior, and to various wars:

The smash-up of the Barolongs at Kunana by Mzilikazi . . . the war of revenge which smashed up the Matabele at Coenyane by the Allies, Barolong, Boers and Griquas . . .

For an understanding of the allegorical force of *Mhudi* it is helpful to see these “historical facts” in a much broader sense, relating to issues such as political dominance, land dispossession, colonial attitudes and clashes of culture. *Mhudi*’s allegory is not the clear one-to-one set of connections of Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (also noted as a possible source for *Mhudi*³). Rather, the allegory tends to be suggestive, evoked by glimpses of parallel histories and incidents and by Plaatje’s use of equivalents and literary allusions. The text accrues a richness that integrates allegory into its tapestry: the allegory is most clearly perceived in individual stitches, perhaps, but best appreciated in relation to a broader, defining pattern.

The complex relationship between history and romance is further compounded: “Worked in between” the historical incident is “plenty of love, superstition and imagination”. Plaatje is consistent in presenting the Shakespearean veracity. The virtues of nobility and valour and the vices of depravity and cowardice

¹Preface to *Mhudi*, 11.

²“Romancing the East Cape Frontier”, 12.

³Stephen Gray, “Sources of the First Black South African Novel in English”, 14.

are shared amongst the people mentioned in both the sections that deal with “historical fact” and those that deal with “love, superstition and imagination”. These incidents are not arbitrary fillers, but reflect and expand upon the same world view that informs the more historical incidents.

Mhudi is in many ways more humanistic than directly political in its leanings. However, this very humanity and sense of natural justice¹ provides Plaatje with the standpoint from which to protest when he perceives injustice being perpetrated. His political protest, therefore, is based on a broad vision of humanity. *Mhudi*, which articulates this vision in a complex way, is not primarily a political work, then, nor strictly historical. Rather, it seeks a human truth beyond the political and historical vision it also articulates. In this it is of a type with Elizabethan romances and romance epics such as those of Shakespeare, Sidney and Spenser. And, as in these works, the political and historical points of view are not superseded by the romance vision, but continually play on the surface of the work, though re-examined in the context of the shaping romance structure.

Romance enables an author to focus on individual characters who are simultaneously symbolic or allegorical representations, as well as on the immediacy of a historically based narrative. Yet the author can still maintain a critical distance induced by romance’s long view of space and time. The merging of the historical and romance introduces a further complexity on the level of characterisation, however. There is a tension between the depiction of historical personages and the more universal human types that are conventional in romance. Romance typically depicts a moral universe with the potential for both good and evil, and this divide is often personified in the characters. Romance also typically allows the possibility of personal and social change. In *Mhudi*, for instance, a character like Umnandi is presented

¹Qualities mentioned by Willan: 32 above.

as virtuous; others are vicious, such as her jealous rival; some are subject to moral change, such as Mzilikazi. The characters in *Mhudi*, even those modelled on historical figures, conform more immediately to romance conventions than to “historical facts”.

Plaatje was, however, keenly interested in the history of South Africa, particularly in that of his own people, the Barolong, and part of his object in writing *Mhudi* was to unearth lost historical facts, or balance distorted versions of history. It has often been pointed out that in *Mhudi* he wishes to put the Great Trek into perspective, as some historians viewed the Trek as a watershed movement in South African history¹. Gerdener, for example, writes: “Die tijd van die Grote Trek mag ongetwijfeld die heldetijd van onse geskiedenis genoem word”². Plaatje’s depiction of the Great Trek questions this unqualified heroism on the part of the Boers, who in fact seek succour from blacks in *Mhudi*. Thus Plaatje’s Shakespearean sense of veracity is brought to bear on his interpretation and critique of history as well.

Plaatje did not merely wish to balance white versions of history: he was also ready to correct misconceptions, or deliberate avoidance of fact, in the history of his own people. As noted above (26), in *Mhudi* he proposes to re-establish a detail of oral history that did not reflect well on the Barolong tellers and was being carefully forgotten. As he says in his Preface:

¹See, for instance, Tim Couzens, “SolPlaatje’s *Mhudi*” (*Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 8.1, (1973) 8: “In *Mhudi*, the Great Trek is put into perspective, and is seen as a mere part of a much greater complex of events and activity.”

²“The time of the Great Trek can undoubtedly be called the heroic period of our history” (own translation), G.B.A. Gerdener, *Sarel Cilliers: Die Vadervan Dingaansdag* (Stellenbosch: n.p., printed by Samuel Griffiths, Cape Town, 1919) 2. The date shows this book to be more or less contemporary with the writing of *Mhudi*, in which Cilliers appears as a character. Gerdener’s “onse geskiedenis” (“our history”) refers specifically to the history of “ons Afrikaanse volk” (“our Afrikaans people”), 1.

In all the tales of battles I have ever read, or heard of, the cause of war is invariably ascribed to the other side. Similarly, we have been taught almost from childhood, to fear the Matabele—a fierce nation—so unreasoning in its ferocity that it will attack any individual or tribe, at sight, without the slightest provocation. Their destruction of our people, we were told, had no justification in fact or in reason; they were actuated by sheer lust for human blood.

By the merest accident, while collecting stray scraps of tribal history, later in life, the writer incidentally heard of ‘the day Mzilikazi’s tax collectors were killed’. Tracing this bit of information further back, he elicited from old people that the slaying of Bhoya and his companion, about the year 1830, constituted the *casus belli* which unleashed the war dogs and precipitated the Barolong nation headlong into the horrors described in these pages¹.

Plaatje, then, has a historiographical motive for writing *Mhudi*: but as the above examples show, he does not allow himself to be limited by partisanship, indicating that various groups characteristically narrate their own versions of history. He continually seeks the humanistic Shakespearean veracity, showing that strengths and weaknesses are common human features, and are to be found amongst both Boers and the Barolong. He simultaneously provides a motive for the Matabele attack, thereby avoiding the conclusion that it was “savage”, motivated by “sheer lust for human blood”. He moves away from the group stereotype taught by his own oral tradition towards a more open-minded humanism.

Plaatje’s characters, then, are partly historical and partly inspired by conventional romance. They exist within the tension of a finely created artistic space, much as the “Bechuana tribes” described in his opening paragraph exist: “Their entire world lay in the geography covered by the story in these pages”. In *Mhudi* Plaatje similarly draws both “historical fact” and historical characters temporarily into the romance story “in these pages”, whence they emerge in lively allegorical moments, including parallels with his contemporary South Africa.

¹Preface to *Mhudi*, 11.

For Plaatje, then, history documents the deeds of peoples with a common humanity, and he strives to break down historical records that are influenced by imposed stereotypes, constantly seeking to show humanity where prejudice might suggest there is none, or to deflate preconceived notions of superiority. “Phil Jay, like many other young Boers, could not write” (142), writes the black author, ironically, but non-judgementally, seeking to counter the stereotype of civilized and heroic Boers bringing enlightenment to depraved and illiterate blacks.

In this vein, Plaatje notes that Phil Jay was “the one humane Boer . . . among the wild men of his tribe” (125). While he counters the stereotype of the Boers as heroes and bringers of civilization, he balances his criticism by showing the possibility of humane behaviour from the same people. His countering of the stereotype does not merely replace it with another. Plaatje typically shows a counter-truth that contains within it the possibility of change and of growth, not of negation.

Ra-Thaga, countering the convention of the savage who has no understanding of finer human feelings, urges Phil Jay on in his love match, and “during their stay at Khing he relieved Phil Jay of all cares regarding the wagons and livestock, while Phil devoted more time to his love affair” (196). These images indicate that, for Plaatje, there was no definite division between “savage” and “civilized” as there was for Haggard: Plaatje deliberately blurs, or deconstructs, these concepts. It is this response to stereotypes that incurs the wrath of Kunene: Plaatje “borrowed literary motifs that to Africans seem infantile—for instance, the love affair between Rathanga (sic) and Mhudi”¹. The standard against which Kunene judges is the generalized response of “Africans”, and unspecified “great African literary classics” (247): Kunene’s Africanist approach ignores Plaatje’s deliberate entry into, and response to, the “almost

¹Kunene, 246.

exclusively European” South African literature mentioned in the Preface to *Mhudi*, and the political and cultural debate such literature evokes.

Haggard’s dealing with race is different from Plaatje’s—although he claims an open-minded outlook—and typifies the attitudes to which *Mhudi* is a response. In the fictional “Introduction” to *Allan Quatermain*, Quatermain meditates:

I say that as the savage is, so is the white man, only the latter is more inventive, and possesses a faculty of combination; save and except also that the savage, as I have known him, is to a large extent free from the greed of money, which eats like a cancer into the heart of the white man. It is a depressing conclusion, but in all essentials the savage and the child of civilisation are identical¹.

For those who doubt his conclusions, Quatermain adds:

As for you, sir, who also laugh, let some man come and strike you in the face whilst you are enjoying that marvellous-looking dish, and we shall soon see how much of the savage there is in *you*.

Savagery, linked by Haggard primarily to blacks and not whites (in whom, he nevertheless suggests, “savagery” lurks under apparent “civilization”), is associated by Quatermain with reactive violence and passion. Commonality between “savage” and “civilized”, therefore, while acknowledged, is “depressing”. Plaatje, however, finds this commonality a stimulating argument for kindness—in the sense of this word that relates it to kinship—for humanity, non-racism and universal justice.

¹*Allan Quatermain* (London: Nelson, 1956) 4.

The divergent views of humankind held by Plaatje and Haggard are bound to produce different interpretations of South African “historical facts”, as well as different types of romance. In *Mhudi* morality is more fluid and the characters are more open to change than in Haggard’s works, where characters tend to be fixed moral types.

In *Mhudi*, for instance, change or development in character is implied when Ra-Thaga says that Mhudi “made me what I am” (171). Chief Massouw, sentencing Ton-Qon, notes a changed sense of justice when he says: “I should blot out Ton-Qon so that his name shall be remembered no more, but for the instructions of the white Missioner Moffat of Coolman” (83). However, the most clear example of personal moral change is central to the romance structure of *Mhudi*: Mzilikazi changes, in the course of the story, from being an arrogant, ambitious, proud tyrant, to a rather more sympathetically presented defeated leader, who finds the cause of his suffering in himself: “I alone am to blame” (185). He finally—morally rejuvenated by the return of Umnandi—begins a new life.

Plaatje’s view—consistent with romance patterning—that individuals and groups can learn and change, tends to make his romance partly didactic in intention, providing images of virtue worthy of imitation, as well as images that reflect his open-minded, non-partisan thinking. Plaatje’s romance becomes a type of quest to find and reveal the essence of virtue, as he understands it. In this, his work is once again more Shakespearean, more Elizabethan in spirit than Haggardian. Haggard’s quests or allegories typically reveal the “heart of darkness”—a phrase used by Haggard in *She*¹ and popularized by the title of Conrad’s novel—or the essence of evil, appropriately situated, in his world view, in Africa, rather than the African images of virtue that Plaatje seeks.

¹*She* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925) 273.

Plaatje's use of Shakespearean modes of thought in *Mhudi* will be explored in conjunction with his relatively unexamined use of Haggard. This study will suggest that, in Haggard, Plaatje found a model that encouraged him to use South African landscape and incident and South African historical fact in his romance, but with the aim of presenting another veracity than Haggard's: the common humanity of peoples. But, it will be argued, Plaatje took only that which was useful from Haggard, and that *Mhudi*, in reflecting Plaatje's values, would naturally have emerged as a counter-novel to that which was objectionable: "you have read from your childhood literature concerning South Africa and you are told about swarms of cannibals and gorillas that infest the African forests"¹.

Plaatje, then, merges the backdrop and plot of Haggardian South African historical romance and a more Shakespearean romance model. His romance characters, unlike Haggard's, are not presented as strange *others*, but as recognisable human beings, albeit within the conventions of European, specifically English, romance. Thus *Mhudi* can be read as the product of two romance traditions, the Elizabethan, represented in this study by Shakespeare, though Spenser would have served equally well, and the colonial, represented by Haggard. Shakespeare and Haggard have been chosen to represent these conventions as Plaatje was demonstrably influenced by both. As Gray notes:

To determine the sources and influences Plaatje used (we now feel) to his advantage and which he surmounted, the researcher has to have recourse to the adventure romance works of popular literature In *Mhudi* Plaatje knowingly reverses a work like *King Solomon's Mines* in many polemical and satirical ways².

¹Kolawole Ogungbesan, in *The Writing of Peter Abrahams* (New York: Africana, 1979) 78, notes the Matabele in Abraham's *Wild Conquest* "seem to have been copied from Rider Haggard", and footnotes a further connection to the "mission-trained" Plaatje's "Haggardian" portrayal of traditional society, 84.

²Stephen Gray, 'Redefining the Canon: The Case for Douglas Blackburn, Stephen Black and Sol T. Plaatje', (essay dated 1985), in *Perspectives on South African English Literature*, eds. M. Chapman, C. Gardner and E. Mphahlele (Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1992) 70. Gray's revision of earlier attitudes reflected in his parenthetical "we now feel", is also reflected in his sense that Plaatje knowingly reverses a work like *King Solomon's Mines*. This can be compared to his earlier statements about counter-novels, noted on 63, above.

In matters of race Haggard was not the least sympathetic of the colonial romancers, and Plaatje's use of the Haggardian romance, while offering a corrective, was no doubt based upon Plaatje's enjoyment of his tales, which were extremely popular and widely read. His use of Haggard as a model, while qualified by his own world view, is neither cruelly ironic nor satirical.

Mhudi, however, naturally counteracts stereotyped images of exotically different blacks that were prevalent in the Haggard tradition and more generally in 19th century imperial writing, "translating" African characters into humanly recognizable equivalents of characters from the Western literary tradition, without, however, allowing them to lose their essential African qualities.

Plaatje, like Sidney, wishes to create exemplary images of virtue, to stir readers towards a better understanding of humanity, which would in turn lead to a better political and social situation for oppressed South African blacks. He also warns about the result of tyrannical action. His purpose, then, is not merely artistic, but, through establishing a sense of shared humanity and human value, also moral and political. However, the political message in *Mhudi* is better understood through an examination of its artistic techniques, specifically an examination of the nature of romance, and the two traditions of romance that Plaatje was consciously using in *Mhudi*.

Mhudi, then, is to be examined—primarily—as a work of art, as a romance. Shakespeare's and Haggard's use of the romance mode will be compared and, in conclusion, *Mhudi* will be discussed in relation to both. Following Couzens' suggestion¹, *Mhudi* will also be read in parallel with *Native Life*

¹Introduction, *Mhudi*, Heinemann, 17.

in South Africa in order to see what light an understanding of romance throws upon the more journalistic, political work.

Shakespeare, who was for Plaatje a model of artistic veracity, has recently become a more problematic figure in South African literary debates and in postcolonialism generally. His works are often seen to represent colonial values, and to represent standards against which the perceived deficiencies of the unlettered and the “unEnglish” could be measured. Somewhat implausibly, Kunene even suggests that Plaatje “was partly cynical about his role” when learning about and translating Shakespeare¹. Shakespeare, nevertheless, could be used in various ways. Olive Schreiner, regarded as a generally progressive—albeit often controversial—thinker, uses the following image to illustrate the possibilities of social change in Africa:

Outside our doors, even as we write and think, sits cowering the little humanape Bushman, and, when we turn from him to the Kaffir working in our kitchen and the bust of Shakespeare on the mantelshelf, we do not only hope and believe but we see physically before our material eyes the infinite growth of humanity, the unmeasurable power of change and the arrival of entirely new traits which is possible in the human creature².

Schreiner’s hierarchical categories, typical of social Darwinist thought of her time, are: the European, who reads and thinks, hopes and believes; the “Kaffir” servant, working the domestic areas, and the “little human ape Bushman” outdoors, cowering. Shakespeare’s bust on the mantelshelf represents an ideal, a peak of social evolution, sharing study-space with one who writes and thinks.

¹Review of Stephen Gray, “Sources of the First Black South African Novel in English”, 245.

²*Thoughts on South Africa*, ed. Margaret Lenta (Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1992, [first published in 1923] 312.

Plaatje expresses very different views of Shakespeare in “A South African’s Homage”:

Besides being natural story-tellers, the Bechuana are good listeners, and legendary stories seldom fail to impress them. Thus, one morning, I visited the Chief’s court at Mafeking and was asked for the name of ‘the white man who spoke so well’. An educated Chieftain promptly replied for me; he said: William Tsikinya-Chaka (William Shake-the-Sword) Tsikinya-Chaka became noted among some of my readers as a reliable white oracle¹.

He hopes, furthermore, that

with the maturity of African literature, now still in its infancy, writers and translators will consider the matter of giving to Africans the benefit of some at least of Shakespeare’s works. That this could be done is suggested by the probability that some of the stories on which his dramas are based find equivalents in African folk-lore².

It might seem that Plaatje is stuck within the now old-fashioned definition of literature as that which is written, and when he says African literature is “still in its infancy” he seems to use “literature” in this limited sense. Yet, when he speaks of the “*stories* on which his dramas are based” (my emphasis), and “natural story-tellers” and “good listeners” who begin to regard Shakespeare as a reliable oracle, when he seeks “equivalents in African folk-lore” to Shakespearean sources—implicitly recognizing Shakespeare’s connection with old oral roots—it becomes clear that, for Plaatje, Shakespeare was no distant icon: he spoke the voice of common humanity, and was available, if necessary through translation, to people outside the study.

¹*Selected Writings*, 211.

²*Selected Writings*, 212.

Although Schreiner's point is the possibility of change, the examples she finds to hand of different stages of human development are racially based: she is in the study, the "Kaffir" in the kitchen. Even the well intentioned were subject to the lack of "veracity" Plaatje saw in the film in London: and in his life, as well as in his use of Shakespeare, Plaatje strove to counter that image. A graphic example of this might be seen in the opening pages of *Native Life in South Africa*: a list of his publications, on the left page, is fronted by a posed image of Plaatje, handsome, well dressed and groomed, flower in his buttonhole, sitting at a writing desk, at work. He presents himself to his readers as a credited man of letters: a point, noted above (32), he also makes in the text:

This appeal is not on behalf of the naked hordes of cannibals who are represented in fantastic pictures displayed in the shop-windows in Europe, most of them imaginary . . .

Plaatje, then, in his life and writing confounds the stereotypes, and makes the exclusive study-space of Schreiner his own. And in his translations and use of Shakespeare in *Mhudi* and other writings, he does not necessarily seek to develop his people towards the model provided by the Shakespearean icon, in a teleological, evolutionary way, but to make Shakespeare available to people with whom he already shares a common humanity, "giving to Africans the benefits" of a reliable oracle. And thus, when his first Sechuana translation of a Shakespearean work was published, it was presented as the beginning of a series of "The Sayings of William Shakespeare"¹, linking him once more with the oral and oracular. The act of translation, for Plaatje, was the act of sharing humanity, of seeking justice.

¹Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 329.

Chapter Two

Romance Possibilities

Much has been written over the years about romance, yet, the genre being so broad and varied, there is no summary of the nature of romance that can be adequate and definitive. The following outline of some romance features seeks to establish certain of the structural and thematic elements common to the romances of Shakespeare, Haggard and Plaatje. Before a reading of the South African romances of the latter authors is presented, therefore, this outline is intended to establish some conceptual common ground as a basis for comparison.

The following outline carries the limitations of brevity. It is largely restricted to a few works from the English Renaissance, specifically those of Shakespeare, but also with examples from Sidney and Spenser. This may seem an arbitrary choice of authors. However, Kermode, amongst others, has argued that Sidney and Spenser provided inspiration for Shakespeare, noting also that:

These works belong[,] as romances, to a tradition stretching back to the Greek novel, but as epics they have purposes relevant to the highest kind of poetry. If one bears in mind that these books are highly serious in their ethical and political intentions, it may seem less surprising that Shakespeare could blend the improbabilities of romance plots with intentions evidently as profound¹.

¹Kermode therefore seeks the reason for the revival of romance in Shakespeare's time "in the great heroic romances of the period, Sidney's *Arcadia* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*", "The Final Plays", in *Renaissance Essays: Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne* (London: Collins/Fontana, 1973), 222. He adds that Shakespeare knew *The Faerie Queene* "perhaps as well as any other book", 229, and cites direct influence, 227.

Spenser and Sidney, as well as classical romance or epic writers, are referred to in so far as they inform the romance outline used below, and—as noted by Kermode above—romance could embrace epic as well. These works, both romance and epic, are those with which an enthusiastic, mission-educated—but also self-taught—South African reader in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as Plaatje, would most likely have been familiar. However, no claim is made for a direct influence on *Mhudi*.

Plaatje's broad reading habits have been noted¹, but much work would still need to be done to establish a fuller sense of the texts he read or even those he alludes to in his writing. He certainly read Shakespearean romantic comedy and romance amongst other Shakespearean plays, translating *The Comedy of Errors*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *Much Ado About Nothing* into Sechuana², and referring to Cymbeline in "A South African's Homage"³. References and allusions to various other Shakespearean works are plentiful in his works⁴.

Similarities between aspects of Plaatje's style and that of Sidney might suggest readings of the *Arcadia*, or possibly *An Apology for Poetry*. Spenser, furthermore, has for many years been the most well-known romance poet of the English Renaissance. That Plaatje read these authors, or the classical authors mentioned below, remains uncertain, however.

¹See Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 21, 39-40 and 276 -7, for instances of his general interest. Voss notes his depth within a more specific range: "Sol Plaatje, the Eighteenth Century".

²Gray, "Sources of the First Black South African Novel in English" 11-12, and Willan "Sol T. Plaatje and Tswana Literature" in *Literature and Society in South Africa*, ed. Landeg White and Tim Couzens (Pinelands: Maskew Miller Longman, 1984), 85 and 89.

³*Selected Writings*, 211.

⁴*Hamlet*, in *Selected Writings*, 167 and *Mhudi*, 118; *Lear*, in *Native Life in South Africa*, 147, for instance. Some echoes, while not always conclusive, are likely to be allusions to Shakespeare. *Mhudi*'s "Since this morning, I have been wishing to dream again", *Mhudi*, 46, can suggestively be compared to Caliban's "when I waked / I cried to dream again", *The Tempest*, III.ii.144-5.

Because of its deliberate fictionality, romance is often seen to be removed from the everyday world of experience and is therefore considered to be a poor medium for the representation of the true nature of things. Rich notes that “realistic” South African fiction contains much that “accrues from a set of metaphors and symbols . . . developed in the era of popular British imperial fiction in the genre of Rider Haggard and John Buchan”. He argues, however, that while “realism tends towards a scientific world view in its observation of outward and worldly social forms, romance has a regressive and primordial tendency”¹ He notes, furthermore, the “. . . joint rejection of romance by both ‘liberal’ and ‘Marxist’ critics in South Africa for its focus upon the irrational”. He says that, “precisely because it does exist outside reason”, romance

. . . demands the subordination of the female to the male *idea* of the romantic, the bland and passive submission to masculine concepts of the desirable and beautiful. In its strictest form, the romantic ideal can have no place for the autonomy of feminine mind which has an ambiguous and ultimately threatening status.

(124)

Rich concludes his essay with an allusion to J.M. Coetzee: “. . . romance formulas remain deeply embedded within the South African literary experience and it may, indeed, take generations of urban living before the nostalgia for the pastoral and idyllic is finally driven from the heart”².

This aversion to romance which typified much South African criticism in the latter part of the last century connected romance to myths of dominance in South Africa, and it was therefore seen as something, much like Plato’s poetry, to be driven out. However, such critics may be blind to the broader

¹Paul Rich, “Romance and the Development of the South African Novel”, in *Literature and Society in South Africa*, ed. Landeg White and Tim Couzens, 122.

²“Romance and the Development of the South African Novel”, 135, where Coetzee’s original words are also quoted.

implications of romance as well as to the romance elements within their own philosophies. As Copleston notes:

Some Marxists try indeed to avoid committing themselves to the view that history is moving towards a goal, a view which seems to imply teleological presuppositions which fit in far better with idealism than with materialism. But it can hardly be denied that Marxism in general has given ground for the impression that it is a secularized version of an originally religious eschatological interpretation of history¹.

Thus, while van Wyk Smith points out that the “*colon* impulse produces the romance, in which the colonial terrain is always an exotic alternative to a ‘real’ existence elsewhere”, and that “the mode is regressive, atavistic”, he also notes that it can be elegiac, with the “European world” being presented “as decadent or constricting”². He further explores the tensions possible within the mode in a later work, where East Cape romances “demonstrate the existence of a deeply flawed discourse, riven by doubts, ambivalences, and alternative voices”³.

Thus it can be argued that the values of romance depend on particular usage, rather than on values intrinsic in the genre. Uphaus, for instance, suggests that romance can be more far-sighted than tragedy⁴, and, as opposed to more realistic modes, romance may deal with patterns that go beyond the perception of the immediate. Rich, indeed, argues that in South Africa the “crisis in realism” evolved into “a partial restoration of the romance mode through the idiom of literary post-modernism” (133).

¹F.C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (London: Methuen, 1975) 48, note.

²Malvern van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest* (Kenwyn: Jutalit, 1990), 9, where he also defines *colon* as “the semi-permanent colonial sojourner who never gives up his metropolitan identity, yearnings, and pretensions”.

³“Romancing the East Cape Frontier”, 1997, 12.

⁴This is the thesis of Uphaus, Robert W. *Beyond Tragedy: Structure and Experience in Shakespeare’s Romances* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1981).

He finds a validity in such romance, which parodies what he perceives as the employment of the genre “in pursuit of white, male and colonial ideals” (135). About half a century before the South African “literary post-modernism” that Rich describes, however, Plaatje had already written a romance that countered the unquestioning use of the mode to further these ideals of dominance.

Rich’s article suggests that a reason why *Mhudi* was often treated with qualified enthusiasm in the eighties and nineties was because many South African critics of the time found romance itself problematic. Vivan’s comment that Plaatje’s “stylistic invention of history . . . to our present taste assumes a strangely post-modern value”¹ suggests why this may no longer be the case.

In *Mhudi*, however, Plaatje was not dealing with the tensions between realist and romantic art. His were the more classical tensions between tragedy and romance. Indeed, both the action and the title of the opening chapter, “A Tragedy and its Vendetta”, suggest that the image of tragedy remained a vivid social potential for the author.

The present outline focuses on romance in its general sense, not limiting the mode to “white, male and colonial ideals”. The rather idealized abstraction of romance that results serves as a pole of “pure” romance, as opposed to the “colonial” Haggardian romance described in the two chapters that follow; and it was between these two poles that Plaatje positioned himself when writing *Mhudi*. Furthermore, this distillation of English Renaissance romance attempts to articulate some concerns central to the Shakespearean romance vision which Plaatje may have shared, and which may thus be used as a conceptual framework from which to approach both *Mhudi* and Plaatje’s other writings.

¹“Sol Plaatje’s *Mhudi*: History as Fiction”, 51.

Tragedy often focuses on the immediacy of the here and now, as the following extracts from the early scenes of some of Shakespeare's tragedies suggest: Romeo asks Friar Lawrence, "but this I pray, / That thou consent to marry us *today*"; Antony says to Cleopatra, "*Here* is my space", and "*Now* for the love of Love and her soft hours, / Let's not confound the time with conference harsh."; and Lear to Cordelia, "*Now*, our joy, / Although our last and least . . . what can you say to draw / A third more opulent than your sisters?" and Iago remarks rhetorically, "O, you are well tuned *now*! But I'll set down the pegs that make this music . . ."¹ Peterson argues that Romeo "in choosing a course of 'sudden haste', with its emphasis on the present, surrenders himself to the circumstances and accidents that are seemingly ruled by Fortune"².

This does not suggest that the suffering in tragedy is either of short duration or confined to the orbit of the hero: in all of the above plays social conflict and suffering are widespread, and endure until the catastrophe changes the social order. However, Peterson suggests that, in the romances, the choices that the characters have between "natural or unnatural love" are "construed in terms of time": "To choose is to choose how to use time. How Cymbeline and Leontes use the past as well as the present determines the shape of future time" (24). And this is equally true of the tragedies, except that Lear, Antony and Romeo, for instance, tragically mistake the use of time, especially as it relates to love, insisting upon the immediate and measurable.

¹*Romeo and Juliet*, II.iii.63-4; *Antony and Cleopatra*, I.i.34 and 44-5; *King Lear*, I.i.82-6 and *Othello*, II.i.199-200. My emphases throughout.

²*Time, Tide and Tempest*, 24.

Peterson notes a relationship between time, trust and love in a perceptive reference to Sonnet 116: “The triumph over destructive time that concludes each of the romances is, finally, effected by love grounded in trust” (35). Sonnet 116 posits a marriage of true, or faithful, minds. Thus it is not a physical union, but a conjunction of unchanging faith, which is not subject to time. Love is the timeless “ever-fixed mark” that is, symbolically, threatened by the tempest early in *Othello*:

The wind-shaked surge, with high and monstrous mane,
Seems to cast water on the burning Bear,
And quench the guards of th’ever-fixed pole.

(II.i.13-15)

The tempest is etymologically related to time, deriving from the Latin for time or season, *tempus*, and is often associated with existence in the mutable sublunary world. Peterson argues that throughout the Renaissance “tempests are frequently symbolic of temporality under both aspects of time, duration and occasion”, and that “Tempests . . . become symbolic of time as duration. Time itself is tempestuous; the world is ‘a lasting storm’” (45-6). In the mutable world, love—which is only love if unalterable—is like the stable pole-star that “looks on tempests and is never shaken”.

The beginning of the sestet conventionally moves Sonnet 116 in a tangential direction. “Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks / Within his bending sickle’s compass come” introduces the measurable time of “his brief hours and weeks”. Yet the closing line of the octave anticipates measurement in nautical, rather than harvest, imagery: love is the star “[w]hose worth’s unknown, although his height be taken”. Measurement, the divisions into hours and weeks, is no indication of worth, as Lear finds after he tries to gauge the measurement of, and quantitatively reward, love. The passage quoted above, “Now, our joy, / Although our last and least . . . what can you say to draw / A

third more opulent than your sisters?" appears, then, to be both about a misguided, quantified love, as well as about Lear's mistaken sense of his ability to control the happiness, not only of the moment, but also of his future:

'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths while we
Unburdened crawl toward death.

(1.i.37-41)

Sonnet 116, then, touches on the relationships between love and time, within the tempest that is our world. But, to return to the beginning of the sonnet, love is reflected in the romance image of a marriage of "true minds". The emphasis is on a cognition of faithfulness, or Donne's "Inter-assured of the mind"¹.

As Peterson (35) says about the end of *The Winter's Tale*:

. . . something beyond art is required to restore Hermione. Paulina identifies it for us. All that is required, she says, to "make the statue move, indeed descend," is that "you do awake your faith".

However, awakening faith, as both Lear and Leontes discover, is tragically difficult, involving the need to see that another's love, which appears to be wanting, is not so, and that the lack lies within oneself. This *cognitio* brings about the re-establishment of the union, the discovery of love behind appearances, which may involve forgiving others, as in *The Tempest*, or realizing that it is oneself who needs forgiveness, as in *Lear* and *The Winter's Tale*. Vengeance is not compatible with love, which never "alters when it alteration finds".

¹From "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", John Donne, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A.J. Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 84.

In the romances, Peterson (16) argues, those who abuse time face retribution from Time the Destroyer:

The prudent man, on the other hand—a Prospero, a penitent Leontes, or a Gonzalo—has learned how to use time. By calling upon the resources of the past, in the form of either history or personal memory, and by making the right choice at the right time, he converts impending destruction into potential renewal.

The structure of Shakespeare's romances involves a translation, through the medium of time, of the tragic into romance¹, and ultimately into a more thorough understanding of time itself. Romance, then, not only uses time as a structural element, but is also essentially *about* time. It reflects the Renaissance merging of Neoplatonic and Christian teleological thought. The romance vision attempts to reconcile the tragic possibilities in the *contemptus mundi* leanings of those Renaissance thinkers who are pessimistically concerned with the mutability of the material world, with the romance possibilities of an idealistic other world, and the divine control which such a world implies.

The romance paradigm developed below rests on a three-tiered time structure, the conclusion of which incorporates an understanding of all the time-frames. This *cognitio* brings about an ability to see beyond the mistaken appearances that lead to the initial confusion, to where, with the revelation of true identities, time's purpose, and purposeful nature, is also revealed. The different time categories work in terms of a lost pastoral past, a confused, tragic present and a budding romance future. The lost pastoral past sets the tone for the confused, tragic present, which is where the larger part of romance is set. In terms of the rebirth or resurrection motifs of romance, it also is the seed of the budding romance future. Thus, the *cognitio*, where this future is revealed and understood, is also an understanding that these categories are in fact only apparent: time includes all, and each time category

¹As argued by Uphaus in *Beyond Tragedy*.

may carry the potential for any of the others, and while romance and harmony are always potentially present, this is equally true of confusion and tragedy.

Thus in the tragic present, one can discern the potential for romance. In the romance ending, one feels the constant presence of the tragic, both in the recently resolved past, and in the impending future. Act II of *Othello* shows how a romance, resolved in the post-tempest reunion on Cyprus, may quickly turn to tragedy.

The understanding that comes through romance is, therefore, not the tragic catharsis, but a wisdom that looks beyond the present hour of suffering. It will, similarly, look beyond the merely celebratory, recognizing the constant potential for lapses into the tragic, and the importance, then, of the human faith that sustains the vision.

The basic metaphor of romance is the seasonal changes between spring and summer at a peak that represents a pastoral beginning, autumn and winter in a tragic trough, and a return to a spring at a new romance peak¹. Schematically, the three time categories may be presented as in the following diagram, with the peaks representing pastoral states of happiness and virtue, and the trough a decline in these:

¹Northrop Frye, in *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), complicates this seasonal metaphor by identifying spring with comedy, summer with romance, autumn with tragedy, and winter with irony and satire. However, the point he is making is different, and does not negate the basic summer and autumn, winter, and spring structure of both romantic comedy and romance.

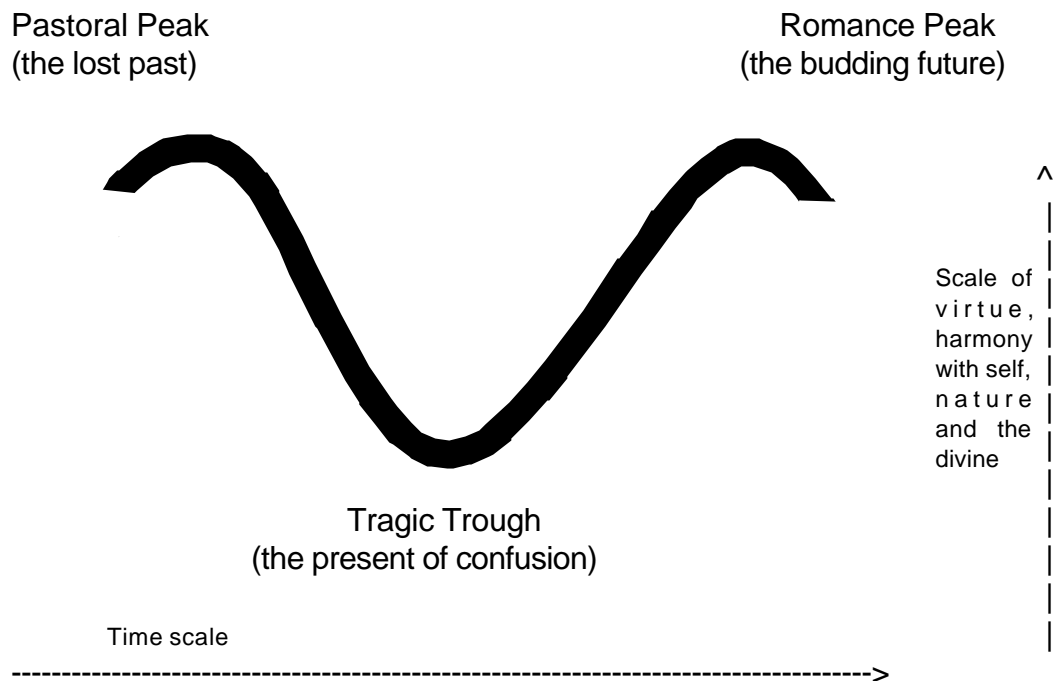


Figure 1

Generally, the characteristics of the pastoral peak are harmony; unity between the divine and humanity, reflected also in family and political unity; love; happiness; innocence; the green pastoral world of youth and life; and simplicity. The characterization of this phase by Polixenes' description of his and Leontes' youth at the beginning of *The Winter's Tale*, includes the conventional pastoral licence towards love:

We were as twinned lambs, that did frisk i'th' sun,
 And bleat the one at th' other: what we changed was
 Innocence for innocence: we knew not
 The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
 That any did . . . Had we pursued that life,
 And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared
 With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven
 Boldly 'not guilty'; the imposition cleared,
 Hereditary ours.

(I.ii.67-75)

The pastoral is a world of happiness and virtue, yet is not—in absolute terms—ideal or immutable: sin and conflict, even if considered in retrospect to be venial, does exist, but is not seen to have destroyed the general tone of happiness. This pastoral peak can be found in versions of the African pastoral, such as in the following extract from A.C. Dube’s “Africa: My Native Land”:

How beautiful are thy hills and dales!
I love thy very atmosphere so sweet,
Thy trees adorn the landscape rough and steep
No other country in the whole world could with thee compare

It is here where our noble ancestors
Experienced joys of dear ones and of home;
Where great and glorious kingdoms rose and fell,
Where blood was shed to save thee, thou dearest land ever known¹.

The emphasis is, typically, on natural beauty, and the “joys of dear ones and of home”: any conflict is sacrificial, and any blood shed, like Christ’s, is to save Africa.

The tragic trough changes all, bringing death (real or apparent); division and distance between friends, lovers, family, or within the state; loss in the state and family; chaos, often symbolized by storms or social conflict; mistaken knowledge, or a dependence upon false appearance; anger, hatred or other passions (such as revenge); sorrow and the winter world of tension and tragedy. In “Africa: My Native Land” the mood after the two stanzas quoted above changes abruptly as the poem declines into this trough:

¹First published in *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 31 October, 1913 (the year of the Native Land Act), reprinted in *Voices from Within: Black Poetry from Southern Africa*, eds. Michael Chapman and Achmat Dangor (Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1986) 33.

But, alas! Their efforts were all in vain
For today others claim thee as their own
No longer can their offspring cherish thee,
No land to call their own—but outcasts in their own country.

A typical feature of this phase of romance is the dominance of the apparent over the real. The occurrence which destroys the pastoral peak sends truth into hiding. When Leontes denies the validity of the oracle that has confirmed Hermione's innocence, for instance, she dies (or disappears), and the true daughter, Perdita, is lost. In *The Faerie Queene* Book I, Una (who allegorically represents the bride of Christ, the oneness of truth, and the true church) is veiled in the fallen world, suggesting that truth is hidden by the limits of post-lapsarian vision. Masks, disguises, veils, false names, mistaken identity and similar devices are all part of the symbolism of confusion in the tragic trough. Thus, "I love thy very atmosphere" in Dube's poem, changes to "outcasts in their own country", where the pastoral has gone, there is "no land to call their own", relationships are shattered and "our noble ancestors" are replaced by a generation of outcasts.

The trough may also bring separation from the divine, especially for rulers who have become oppressive, for in Renaissance thinking princes should be images of God. In *The Tempest* Alonso, king of Naples, becomes corrupt, as does Leontes, when he denies the oracle. The trough is also the place where the virtuous may suffer, and where their virtue is tried. Suffering—apparent suffering, perhaps, (remembering Prospero's comment that "By foul play . . . we were heaved thence, / But blessedly holp hither" (I.ii.62-3)—is endured by Prospero, Miranda and, later, Ferdinand. In *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* Leontes and Leonates become corrupt leaders, respectively, and Hermione, Perdita and Imogen become virtuous sufferers.

The tragic trough is shifted towards resolution by, amongst other typical devices, unveiling, the re-adoption of correct names and identities, and by lovers finding their own selves in the discovery of their partners. Tragic despair is thus translated. In the final stanza of “Africa: My Native Land” the future of freedom is looked upon as God’s gift, with the virtuous sufferer sacrificing her blood for the resolution. This poem indicates that, while the emphasis of romance might be on love, and time (expressed in this stanza by incidental words like “will”, “Till” and Shall”), the political is never far off, which is also true for Shakespeare’s romances:

Despair of thee I never, never will,
Struggle I must for freedom—God’s great gift—
Till every drop of blood within my veins
Shall dry upon my troubled bones, oh thou Dearest Native Land.

The romance peak remakes the pastoral order, but also brings new knowledge and the wisdom gained by working through the tragic trough. There is a recognition of common humanity, of human patterns, the need to recognize and forgive error and to reach reconciliation. In romance epic the restoration is often specifically socio-political, involving the revitalization of a whole community. As is clear from Dube’s poem, this imagery easily lends itself to political mythologising, and as Ridge has pointed out, there were contending versions of the pattern in early South Africa: “Trekking favoured allusions to the Chosen People, and Settlers had regular recourse to the image of paradise”¹. For this reason, amongst others, the romance peak has a broader vision and frame of reference than the relatively naive pastoral peak. Individual situations in the romance peak are often allegorically related to political events. In the romance peak there is—through the characters having experienced the tragic trough—a greater sense

¹“Chosen People or Heirs of Paradise: Trekkers, Settlers, and Some Implications of Myth”, 109, and see 63, above.

of the ineluctable potential for tragedy than one finds at the pastoral peak, and a correspondingly greater poignancy within the celebration.

The *cognitio* is not merely a finding out of some truth. Like Oedipus' self-discovery, it is coupled with a realization of what the nature of that truth means, and is a wisdom wrought by suffering. It is a knowledge that all time is, essentially, the same: the ideal is always present, if hidden and distorted, the potential for tragedy is, similarly, always present, if hidden under the guise of celebration. Time (or destiny, or God) controls, and human vision is extremely limited and mistaken, unless it comes to know time through faith, which is also the ideal of an unfailing human love. What was initially seen as a confused reality is no more than the result of limited human perception, a distance from virtue, or from the divine. This confusion is usually reflected in a social or political lapse into corruption.

Time, as the action of the romance moves from the tragic trough upwards to the romance peak, seems to gain a special quality: the present becomes rich with both a sense of the past revealing itself for what it was, and the emergence of the budding future. *The Tempest*, a play which begins at the structural point of emergence from the tragic trough, reflects this. Prospero says:

The hour's now come,
The very minute bids thee ope thine ear,
Obey, and be attentive Canst thou remember
A time before . . .

(I.ii.36-9)

and explains:

. . . and by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious start, whose influence
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop . . .

(I.ii.180-84)

Prospero's present moment, upon which the zenith of his future depends, begins with a remembrance of the past. Time, in the romances, is not merely more expansive than in the tragedies, where the action is quickly played out and the present moment overrides all, but is also more holistically conceived.

Kermode draws attention to this far-sightedness of romance when he writes of *The Winter's Tale*, finally quoting Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos*, (vii.58.2-7):

. . . like Spenser, Shakespeare is preoccupied by Time as destroyer and renewer, that which ruins the work of men but is the father of truth. Just as the sea appears to be aimlessly destructive, tearing apart father and child, husband and wife, but is in the end seen to be "merciful" because it finally brings them together and restores their happiness, so Time only seems to change things because it must renew their truth.

All things steadfastness do hate
And changed be: yet being rightly weighed
They are not changed from their first estate,
But by their change their being do dilate,
And turning to themselves at length again,
Do work their own perfection so by fate¹.

Romance, according to Mowat, deals in a deliberate artificiality that emphasizes the fact that the world as we see it is a world of appearances, and the basis of romance is that appearance is deceptive. She

¹Frank Kermode, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (New York: Signet, 1963) intro. xxvi-xxvii.

concludes that “the world of the Romances . . . is very much our world”¹. Thus Kermode, in this extract, emphasizes the apparent: “the sea *appears* to be aimlessly destructive . . .” and “Time only *seems* to change things. . . .”

Time is presented (particularly in *The Winter’s Tale* and its source, Greene’s *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*, but implicitly in romance generally) as the “father of truth”, that which reveals the actuality behind mere appearance. Time is, then, an intrinsic part of the romance pattern, which works in terms of the gradual revelation of an unfolding future². Present events are always qualified by the impending sense of future, the working towards a resolution. While the mode of romance may be said to be futurity, the end of a romance invariably thrusts the reader back into the present with all its potential for tragedy³. This forces the reader to deal with the present both in terms of the past, in which romance is often set⁴, and the future, which is part of the romance mode of presentation.

Referring to *Pericles* (II.iii.45-47), Uphaus notes that the romantic understanding and experience of time differs from the tragic in the awareness that “time is *both* man’s ‘parent’ and his ‘grave’”⁵. Spenser, in his letter to Raleigh, says that his intention in *The Faerie Queene* is to depict the present in terms of both the past and the future:

¹Barbara A. Mowat, *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare’s Romances* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976) 64-68.

²See Uphaus, *Beyond Tragedy*, “. . . the experience of time, not always the possession of it, is a central feature of romance”, 36.

³Frank Kermode offers a full discussion of the problem of literary fictions, reality, time and ends in *The Sense of an Ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). See, for instance, 35, 52, 58-64 and 130.

⁴*Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter’s Tale* are set in the historical past. *The Faerie Queene*, too, is set in an historical, mythological past, which has an allegorical relationship with Spenser’s own time, as well as with the reader’s time.

⁵*Beyond Tragedy*, 36.

For the Methode of a Poet historical is not such, as of an Historiographer. For an Historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions, but a Poet thrusteth into the middest, euen where it most concerneth him, and there recouring to the thinges forepasted, and diuining of things to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all¹.

The problem of speaking of what is happening in terms of what will happen is complex, however, especially when a Christian teleological structure informs the romance. The ending of Christian romance often prefigures the great resolution at the end of all time. The achievement of a quest stands in a typological relationship to this end. Having witnessed an image of the end of time in the resolution of the romance, the reader or spectator is returned to the present of his own day, and the fiction is in danger of being exposed—a resolution set in the past does not explain the imperfection of the present. The romance writer often (Spenser and Shakespeare characteristically) deals with this problem by leaving threads in the resolution untied—Redcrosse re-enters the world on his quest, Malvolio is left dissatisfied, and Prospero returns without his magic to the world of politics. In *The Faerie Queene* Book VI Calidore defeats the Blatant Beast:

That neuer more he mote endammadge wight
With his vile tongue, which many had defamed,
And many causelesse caused to be blamed:

(xii.38.3-6)

Yet, at the moment he creates an image of this perfect time in which evil is in bondage, Spenser destroys it and gives the reader a contrasting depiction of the evil that reigns in his own times (which becomes an image of the reader's present). Stanza 38 continues:

¹*The Faerie Queene*, 738.

So did he eeke long after this remaine,
Vntill that, whether wicked fate so framed,
Or fault of men, he broke his yron chaine,
And got into the world at liberty againe.

(ll. 7-9)

The focus of *The Faerie Queene* Book VI ultimately becomes “the world”, a phrase which is repeated in Stanza 40, where the present is also stressed in the repetition of “now”:

So now he raungeth through the world againe,
And rageth sore in each degree and state;
Ne any is, that may him now restraine,
He growen is so great and strong of late. . . .

(ll. 1-4)

The end of romance, in the senses both of purpose and of completion, is the material world (albeit a material world imbued with a vision that goes beyond it) and the fiction serves that end. For medieval romance writers and their immediate followers, and especially for Spenser whose sense of the material world and its mutability was acute, the problem was compounded because reality, for them, lay beyond the material world. Their sense of the real was normally bound up with a sense of revelation in the resolution (an image of the end of time). The Christian or Platonic truth was revealed in the workings of Fortune and then faded with the thrust into the present at the end of the text.

The “present” into which the reader is thrust at the closing of the fiction reflects the position of the characters at their textually earlier entry into the tragic trough: we live in a present which can only be explained in terms of past revelations, and wait for a resolution in the future.

As implied by its three-tiered time structure, and its movement towards romance recognition and understanding, the ability of a character or a society to *change* underlies all romance. This change encompasses both the initial lapse into vice, as well as the reversion to virtue. The central, or questing character, in a romance is seldom morally static.

Change is often necessary on the personal level, when a character must undergo a change in perception or attitude. Leontes, for instance, moves from anger and envy to human sympathy; Prospero moves from a vengeful desire to have his enemies in his power, to forgiveness.

Romance is impossible without the potential for human change. The inability of a character to undergo a change of vision is often the basis of tragedy. In *Lear*, for example, the king refuses the advice of Cordelia, the Fool and Kent, while in *Romeo and Juliet* Romeo ignores the advice of Friar Lawrence to slow down: “Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast” (II.ii.94).

Personal change is usually accompanied by—or often is symbolic of—a change within society as a whole. In *The Comedy of Errors*¹, for example, the Duke of Ephesus who initially says to Ægeon that “we may pity, though not pardon thee” (I.i.97) and that “were it not against our laws, / Against my crown, my oath, my dignity, / Which princes, would they, may not disannul” (I.i.142-44) is later able to dismiss an offer to redeem his life with ducats: “It shall not need, thy father hath his life”. A change of vision, or changes within a character, may result, then, in a change of the law, or social change.

¹Translated by Plaatje: see Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 328.

Social change does not always follow individual conversions, however, and a tension may be set up between the romance resolution and society, as in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*, where the societies that form a backdrop to the main action do not seem to have learned (in the former) the limits of an entirely rational view or (in the latter) a greater humanity. Thus romance is able to set up an ideal resolution and simultaneously critically reflect this resolution against a social situation that does not match up to it. *Romeo and Juliet*¹ provides an interesting inversion of this pattern in that its main action is tragic, but the social backdrop takes on a romance pattern when the feud is exchanged for peace.

More typically a romance in its structure, *The Tempest* reflects a change from the political domination of Naples over Milan to a reconciliation that unites the two powers in a new political arrangement through the marriage of Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, with Miranda, the daughter of the Duke of Milan, which becomes both the action and symbol of unity. The wedding in Africa which is the object of the journey in the play is also ultimately celebrated by Gonzalo, suggesting a further ideal of reconciliation between the European powers and the African (which reverses the image of enmity between Italy and Africa symbolized by the death of Dido in the *Aeneid*). Thus, in romance, a whole people (or peoples) may be moved into a new order of being, into a new way of perceiving themselves and others who may either have been at a distance, or previously held in enmity.

Romance, furthermore, typically brings about a development in the relationship between the changed characters and the divine or spiritual realms: Bottom's description of his vision in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (VI.i.205-220), with its confused expression suggesting the inability of humanity to grasp truths

¹Plaatje had started a translation: see Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 333.

that go beyond reason, is more pertinent to the core meaning of the play—being in fact a comic version of Arthur’s dream in *The Faerie Queene* (I.ix.13-15)—than Theseus’ final and rationally dismissive “More strange than true” (V.i.2). In *The Winter’s Tale*, on the other hand, the more typical romance pattern has Leontes moving from the claim that “There is no truth at all i’th’oracle” (III.ii.141), echoing as it does Oedipus and Jocasta’s tragic denial of oracular truths in *Oedipus Rex*¹, to a new awakening of his awareness of the divine, reflected in the ministrations of Pauline.

Change, then, is an essential quality of romance. It brings, in a reversion to virtue and love, a new awareness, which often involves a better understanding of time, and results in practical and visible transformations in the action. In tragedy this awareness is often present—Oedipus, Lear, Hamlet and Othello all become self-aware—but it comes too late for the protagonist to reverse the consequences of a prior lack of self-knowledge or awareness. In this sense the romance structure implies a change in perception that leads away from tragic intransigence towards change, and leads to practical implementation in the social and political realms. Where this is not the case, tension is set up between the romance resolution and the faulty social order in which it takes place.

The tension between tragic and romance possibilities in many of Shakespeare’s plays is pertinent to a study of Plaatje’s works and the world within which he wrote. Shakespeare’s early romantic comedies do not lean heavily into tragedy, but rather into comic complexity. Nevertheless, in their structure they reflect the basic romance paradigm within which they generate a tension between an idealized romance ending and the less than perfect society within which such an ending occurs. In this they anticipate the

¹Translated by E.F. Watling as *King Oedipus* in Sophocles, *The Theban Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1947): see 45 and 49 for examples of Jocasta’s denial of the validity of prophecy and divination.

ending of *Mhudi* with its balance between a personal love which represents a social ideal and the divided society within which such love occurs.

Romance moves “beyond tragedy” not only on a personal, but also on a social and political level. Romance, then, is not necessarily different in nature from tragedy, but moves beyond it, looking for a new season. *King Lear*, for instance, was adapted by Shakespeare from the anonymous romance *King Leir*¹, and a submerged romance still lies beneath the tragic surface of Shakespeare’s version of the play: virtue eventually triumphs over vice, Lear sees the original folly of his ways and is reunited with Cordelia in love. But in *King Lear* the general moral movement from the tragic trough is accompanied by personal suffering, with Lear’s repeated cry of “Never, never, never, never, never!” (V.iv.308) emphasizing the irretrievable loss which marks the difference between the romance and the tragic visions. Similarly, despite its being based on a revenge tragedy structure, which form it problematizes, *Hamlet* moves towards a sense that “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends” (V.i.10). *Othello*, on the other hand, has a completed romance structure in its second act, but the romance is pulled back into tragedy.

The tension between tragedy and romance, then, is naturally always present and often serves to conceal the fact that, despite their essential difference, tragedy and romance share generic similarities. One mark of distinction between these related genres is tragedy’s emphasis on vengeance (especially in the case of revenge tragedies) and the willingness in romance to seek reconciliation and forgiveness. In Euripides’ *Medea*, Medea is wronged and initially has the sympathy of the chorus. When her plans for

¹Bullough, Geoffrey, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol VII. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975) 337 ff.

vengeance become clear, however, that sympathy is lost¹. Medea, largely through later reworking of the drama by Seneca, became one of the prototypes of the revenger in the English Renaissance. Thus, the revenger may get rid of evil but becomes—through his or her own actions—as much a threat to society as the original villains. At the end of *The Revenger's Tragedy* the revenger, who has been the focus of audience sympathy, is finally led off to execution².

Thus revenge tragedy represents a bloody purge, without new knowledge or wisdom, without reconciliation or forgiveness, and the revenger is seen to be as great a danger to the new social order as any vicious member of the old.

Romance seeks to break the cycle of wrong-doing. In the *Odyssey*, one of the earliest romances to be written down, Odysseus arrives home, is re-united with his wife, and regains his political authority. He is able to dispense with his deception and disguise, and reveal his true nature. Yet his revenge upon the suitors is bloody and unforgiving. This inevitably leads to a civil conflict which has the potential to begin another cycle of tragedy. It is only the intervention of the gods that breaks this cycle, fulfilling Telemachus' constant prayer that he can deal with the suitors without himself invoking blame³.

As suggested by the *Odyssey*, as well as *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, one of the functions of romance is to settle the desire for revenge, and to move in the direction of forgiveness and reconciliation.

¹In *Medea and Other Plays*, trans. Philip Vellacott (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), the Chorus in *Medea* moves from the sympathetic "Medea, poor Medea! / Your grief touches our hearts" (28) to the horrified "Since you have told us everything, and since I want / To be your friend, and also to uphold the laws / Of human life—I tell you, you must not do this!" (42).

²Cyril Tourneur, ed. R.A. Foakes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975) V.iii.104-5.

³His prayer is that Zeus will make a day of reckoning, when he will destroy the suitors without himself having to "make restitution", *Odyssey*, 14 and 21.

For this reason romance needs both the elements of change, and also of reconciling difference within a bond of common humanity. In *The Tempest* the wedding between Alonso's daughter and "an African" is criticized by the villainous Sebastian (II.i.125-138), to which Gonzalo responds:

My lord Sebastian,
The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness,
And time to speak it in.

(138-140)

Yet, by the end of the play the same wedding is celebrated by Gonzalo:

O, rejoice
Beyond a common joy, and set it down
With gold on lasting pillars: 'In one voyage
Did Claribel her husband found at Tunis . . .

(V.i.207-210)

As pointed out by numerous recent critics, *The Tempest* has many elements that can be read as a reflection of a germinating colonial attitude in an archetypal colonial situation, but the wedding, which is the beginning of the quest journey, becomes a point of celebration at its end. The imperfect world of difference is acknowledged within the same vision that reconciles all in a common humanity. The same tension of meanings may be found in Prospero's relationship with Caliban. He notes Caliban's descent from Sycorax, a witch who had been expelled from Argier¹, for "mischiefs manifold, and sorceries terrible", yet ultimately says ". . .this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (I.ii.264 and V.i.277-8). Depending on the way the allegory is read (and with master-servant, islander-coloniser, human-monster,

¹It should be noted that the Africans who banished her, in a human act of clemency pertinent to images of African justice in a study of *Mhudi*, did not, in return for one act of kindness, have her killed: I.ii.263-267.

magi-witch child, virtuous-vicious relationships only some of the many possibilities), this comment is either a paternalistic reflection of an imperfect world, or a human's recognition of another aspect of his own nature, and the ultimate oneness of humanity.

Romance harmony may be inclusive, and uniting, or it may in fact reflect the tensions between a group that is unified and others excluded because of difference. While Shakespeare's romance tends towards the inclusive, while noting difference, Spenser's tends to draw strong moral, class or religious divides between groups. The potential in romance to lean either towards inclusivity or exclusion is of extreme importance when such a medium is transported to a colonial situation like South Africa in the decades that preceded and followed the 1910 Union constitution.

Chapter Three

Stella: the White Woman who Dies and Shines

Nada the Lily is a romance text in which Haggard “writes about the Zulus”¹, and as such will be read as the type of text Plaatje had in mind when writing *Mhudi*. However, *Nada the Lily* itself ought to be placed in the context of Haggard’s own romance vision, as manifested in his other works.

In Haggard’s African works two romance structures may be discerned. The first of these is the more conventional, completed romance, which affirms love, harmony and life, as well as faith in an ideal and in moral values. Like Spenser before him, Haggard’s own imperial vision adds Christian civilisation and peaceful progress, enforced by military vigour, to the more traditional romance virtues. Haggard’s resolved romance reflects pure Christian love, ending in an affirmation of its value and influence. Haggard typically portrayed this love as being between whites, usually English characters of Anglican persuasion.

The second romance type, while related to the themes and structures of the first type, is more gothic, emphasizing a blighted love, perverse values, and resultant death in a world where morality does not triumph, and where the spiritual wasteland is not naturally opened to progress. In terms of his imperialistic vision, this romance type indicates at once the need for civilized intervention, and also—by its very self-destructiveness—clears the path for this. Such romance will be referred to as “unresolved”.

¹Though, as Peter Berresford Ellis notes in *H. Rider Haggard: A Voice from the Infinite* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 201, Haggard’s three romances *Marie* (1912), *Child of Storm* (1913) and *Finished* (1917) “were to comprise his trilogy on the fall of the Zulu nation”. This trilogy was written closer in time to *Mhudi* than *Nada the Lily* (1892) was.

The perverted love of the more gothic, unresolved romance usually reflects the relationships of black, heathen characters such as Nada in *Nada the Lily* and Mameena in *Child of Storm*¹.

The incomplete romance is in effect a tragic inversion, at best an unfortunate parody, of the complete romance pattern. In romances of this type Haggard typically depicts black social life as an incomplete realisation of the perfection that is potential within white—what Haggard would term “civilized”—society. Simple classification like this, though useful for the argument, inevitably introduces grey areas and exceptions. Ayesha, for instance, is a white tragic figure. However, in *She* she is inextricably linked to African scenes, landscapes, customs and peoples. The thought of her going to England makes the narrator, Holly, “absolutely shudder to think what would be the result of her arrival there”, where she would “assume absolute rule over the British dominions”². Thus Ayesha, white as she is, and descended from a line socially acceptable to Haggard, is nevertheless a false life-force, a temptress, an African goddess, a danger to English civilisation.

Similarly, the Zu-Vendi in *Allan Quatermain* are white Africans, primitive but marriageable, and open to English influence through the characters who settle there. In *Queen Sheba’s Ring*³, moreover, the narrator, Richard Adams, marries “an Oriental”, a Copt: but she was “a lady of high descent, the tradition in her family being that they were sprung from one of the Ptolemaic Pharaohs Also, she was a Christian, and well educated in her way”. Oliver, also keeping to resolved romance patterning, marries Maqueda, described as “this black lady” (28) and a “benighted African Jew” (79), but also, on the former page, as having “a sweet and comely face”. Her extreme beauty is emphasized throughout,

¹The 1952 edition (London: Macdonald) has been used throughout.

²*She*, ed. Daniel Karlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 256.

³London: Everleigh Nash, 1910.

and her darkness is qualified by her pedigree, which goes back to the Sheba loved by the Biblical Solomon, who sets the moral precedent for this attachment: the relationships in the text therefore follow Biblical type, and Adams' lost son, Roderick, is—like his mother—a Christian.

Haggard also often used the African world as a primitive foil against which to comment, sometimes negatively, upon the “civilized” world of Europe. The Zu-Vendi people in *Allan Quatermain*, for example are “upright and generous-hearted people” who have the “blessing of comparative barbarism”, and who live in a primitivistic world unsullied by “greed, drunkenness, new diseases, gunpowder, and general demoralisation which chiefly mark the progress of civilisation amongst unsophisticated peoples”. Yet, Curtis, who notes this, also wishes to rid the country of the Zu-Vendi priesthood, which he hopes will put an end to “the disastrous civil wars which have devastated this country for centuries”, and will “pave the road for the introduction of true religion in the place of this senseless sun worship” (275). The Zu-Vendi, a fictitious people, are thus used to reflect back on English civilisation, and also on the responsibility of the English as colonisers, noting both the good and evil that colonisers can bring to “unsophisticated peoples”. As such, the African setting is often used as a type of “wild pastoral” against which the courtly centre can be both praised and criticized.

Haggardian romance, both complete and incomplete, tends to work towards the colonial ideal: “savage” peoples do not prosper; those of superior blood, usually white and English, do; and the romance pattern of love interests tends to follow these blood patterns.

Ellis, however, considers that Haggard's attitude to Mameena in *Child of Storm* displays a non-racial view:

The English hunter, Allan Quatermain, in *Child of Storm*, admits of the Zulu girl Mameena: “This beautiful girl with the ‘fire in her head’, this woman who was different from all other women I had ever known, seemed to have twisted her slender fingers into my heart strings and to be drawing me towards her”¹.

However, Ellis isolates this quotation from its place in the romance structure. Like the heroines of the incomplete romance structure, Mameena is associated with death, rather than life. Dying at the end of the story, she says: “. . . and since I have now no husband, who take Death to husband” She is thus akin to Nada, also beautiful and deadly. Zikali, furthermore, says “She was a wonderful witch, was Mameena; and there is this comfort for you—that she pulled at other heartstrings as well” (232).

Thus Haggard’s romance structure determines that any attraction for the African beauty is inappropriate, and remains unfulfilled. A parallel is set up between Quatermain and Saduko, both caught in Mameena’s net. Saduko is given the choice between following the roads of wisdom or of spears: the road of wisdom is loveless, that of spears is the path of love and blood. Saduko chooses the road of spears, while Quatermain implicitly chooses the longer path of wisdom². He is the one “who cannot be deceived” (237), whose path to death “will be long” (231), whose heart is “white like his skin”, who “would tell neither more nor less than the truth” (209), and to whom Zikali says:

¹A *Voice from the Infinite*, 9.

²A similar parallel and contrasting figure is provided by John Dunn, whose character is not fully developed in this romance, merely being presented as “another white man in the country who was much mixed up with Zulu politics” (180), but who, in *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours*, is spoken of as “an ambitious man” who “probably has designs on the throne”. Haggard adds that Dunn “understands the value of money”, his “popularity and influence with the Zulus are overrated, though he has lived amongst them so many years, and taken so many of their women to wife”. He concludes that “if white men are set over Zulus at all, they should be *gentlemen* in the position of government officers, not successful adventurers” (35, Haggard’s emphasis).

If you had gone, Macumazahn, you would have missed seeing the end of a strange little story, and you, who love to study the hearts of men and women, would not have been so wise as you are today.

(232)

These two roads are also symbolized by the two stones Zikali uses for seeing into the future of the two men: a white stone for Quatermain, a black for Saduko.

Thus, in the fuller structure of the romance Haggard indicates that love between himself and Mameena, attractive though she is, is inappropriate, and therefore unfulfilled. Indeed, Quatermain responds to Mameena when she says about their colour difference that snow and soot don't mix well:

“ . . . snow is good to look at, and so is soot, but mingled they make an ugly colour. Not that you are like soot,” I added hastily, fearing to hurt her feelings. “That is your hue”—and here I touched a copper bangle she was wearing

(68)

The mingled “ugly colour” is personified in the book by Sikauli, or “Scowl”, introduced as “a Kafir of mixed origin” (18) and later presented as “my servant Scowl, who . . . hailed from the Cape and was half a Hottentot . . .” (48). He is “a humorous-looking fellow, light yellow in hue, for he had a strong dash of Hottentot in his composition” (21) and is referred to by Saduko as Bastard¹, who does not know who his “father and all [his] relatives” are (57). It is said that his “dash of Hottentot blood made him cunning and cautious” (51), but he faithfully uses the Dutch / Afrikaans language and epithet of obeisance: “*Beetje varm, Baas*” (196). Scowl's efforts to save Quatermain earn him the following

¹The word “Bastard”, according to *A Dictionary of South African English*, Jean Branford (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1987) 22-3, is “used of any established half-caste or other mixed race”

rhetorical question: “Oh, it is the fashion to abuse natives, but from whom do we meet with more fidelity and love than from these poor wild Kafirs that so many of us talk of as black dirt which chances to be fashioned to the shape of man?” Despite this fidelity, Scowl disappears from the narrative, without further mention, after he helps the wounded Quatermain from his horse (201).

Thus, despite Ellis’s claims that Haggard’s “tales remain remarkably free from the racial prejudices to which many of his contemporaries succumbed” (3), it appears through the romance patterning—or, rather, the unresolved pattern of the romance—that Haggard constantly emphasizes an essential difference between races. And, although this romance is set in a mythical Zululand, Haggard also shows an awareness of how problematic a liaison between the races would be in colonial Natal. Mameena says that, should she not have “let him go”, “a fine story would have been spoiled and I should have become nothing but a white hunter’s servant, to be thrust away behind the door when the white Inkosikazi came to eat his meat” Saduko, similarly, asks Quatermain to look after Mameena “. . . even though it be only as a servant in your house” (178). Thus there is no real marriage of equality offered, unless Quatermain is to accept the John Dunn path, and stay in Zululand, cut off from his own, as Mameena invites, perhaps tempts, him to at the beginning of the story:

Take me to wife, Macumazahn, and I swear to you that in ten years I will make you king of the Zulus. Forget your pale white women and wed yourself to that fire which burns in me

(70)

Quatermain chooses—wisely, the narrative insists—not to take her, and Mameena later comments, using the romance’s leitmotif: “Go you your road, Macumazahn, and I will go mine as the wind blows

me” (129). There are two reasons suggested in the story for Quatermain’s choice of his “own road”. Firstly, Mameena is a passionate, ambitious woman, linked in the text to both Helen of Troy (16-17) and Cleopatra (75), both beautiful and destructive temptresses. Of Helen and Mameena, Quatermain says “they both were lovely; moreover, they both were faithless, and brought men by hundreds to their deaths” (17). She embodies two of the temptresses in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* Book II, the book of temperance: Philotime, who represents ambition, and Acrasia, the witch, whose sexual seductions appeal to men’s lower natures. She, like Nada, does not participate in the traditional woman’s work of planting and harvest (67), and has no children: she is thus, like Nada, a symbol of sterility, representing the opposite of family and domestic values, and the values of husbandry, so important to Haggard. Indeed, she kills a child in order to get rid of a husband (as she herself admits, 228-9).

Zikali calls her “the greatest witch in all the land” (226) and she is constantly associated with entrapment and death. Thus she personifies Zikali’s road of the spears: as Quatermain says when he refuses her, “And can I help you, Mameena, to tread a road that at the best must be red with blood?” She links herself to this road, saying she is “destined to tread that road”, and adds dismissively, “What is blood in Zululand” (71).

But her road also separates her from Quatermain because she is black (despite the constant emphasis on her non-black, copper appearance). As Panda puts it: “Well, the White man walks one road—or some of them do—and the Black man another. They both end at the same place, and none will know which is the right road till the journey is done” (110). And this sums up the barren, incomplete romance

of the work: separation, rather than union (Quatermain determines not to marry again, 60), and all ends in death, rather than the resolved romance's vision of life.

And yet, behind Mameena, as indeed behind much of this romance, including its narrator, is Zikali¹. Quatermain counters when Zikali sums up "Mameena's work": "I believe it was your work, and not hers", to which Zikali says: "I did not make these forces, Macumazahn; I did but guide them towards a great end . . ." (233). Zikali hints that the English would have reason to thank him for his work, which is aimed at the destruction of the Zulu, the House of Senzangakona. And Zikali's motive, as he explains to Quatermain, is revenge (42-44). Thus, as in *Nada the Lily*, the driving force behind the events is revenge, not—as is typical of the complete romance—love.

And, as Haggard has Zikali note, the breaking of the military strength and leadership of the Zulu may play into British hands, for Britain is presented as the real strength in the work as Mameena acknowledges as she projects her ambitions: "If you wished it even you could sweep out Natal and make the whites there your subjects, too. Or perhaps it would be safer to let them be, lest others should come across the green water to help them . . ." (70). Or, as Mameena puts it when she first studies Quatermain: "white—white, one of those who rule". Indeed, whiteness is symbolic in the text, with Zikali saying that Quatermain's spirit "is still a white spirit" (42), and that he has a "white heart".

For all of Haggard's protestations to the essential sameness between the civilized and the "savage", it is the sagacious white man who is able to resist the temptation and survive to tell the story, and the

¹He explains to Quatermain: "Well, I tell the story to you, Macumazahn, who have had so much to do with the tale of the Zulus since the days of Dingaan, because I wish that someone should know it and perhaps write it down when everything is finished" (42): the last word plays on the last title in Haggard's Zulu trilogy.

British who will be ultimate victors. Thus Ellis's claim that Haggard shows a lack of racial prejudice is not well grounded. This becomes even clearer when the two main women characters in the romance, Mameena and Nandie, are contrasted. Both are supposed to be black, Zulu women. However, Haggard's descriptions indicate that Mameena, at least, is not so. She is, in every respect, physically and mentally, even spiritually, different by nature from Nandie. She does not look like a Zulu, and—in the context of the behaviour of other Zulu women in the text—does not behave like a Zulu. She is more akin to the literary figures of Cleopatra and Helen, to Philotime and Acrasia, than to any flesh and blood Zulu woman, and is, in short, a symbolic representation.

But, in order to make Quatermain's attraction for Mameena believable, she cannot be physically too dark, for Haggard seems conscious of Coleridge's comment on Desdemona and Othello—"it would be something monstrous . . . [i]t would argue a disproportionateness, a want of balance . . ."¹, which indicates either that Haggard accommodated his contemporaries' prejudices, or shared them, not that he rose above them, as Ellis claims.

Similarly, in *King Solomon's Mines* Quatermain notes the wisdom of avoiding a liaison with black women in general, and Foulata in particular, noting that Good "like most sailors, is of a susceptible nature"² as opposed to his own age and wisdom. After Foulata's death he comments:

I am bound to say, looking at the thing from the point of view of an oldish man of the world, that I consider her removal was a fortunate occurrence, since, otherwise, complications would have been sure to ensue. The poor creature was no ordinary native girl, but a person of great, I had almost said stately beauty, and of considerable refinement of mind. But no amount of beauty

¹Coleridge on Shakespeare, 188.

²London: Cassel, 1926, 162.

or refinement could have made an entanglement between Good and herself a desirable occurrence; for, as she herself put it, “Can the sun mate with the darkness, or the white with the black?”

(279)

Besides the lack of human sympathy in considering her death a “fortunate occurrence”¹, Quatermain makes it clear that Good’s affections are for an extraordinary woman, and therefore should not be viewed as typical. Foulata is “no ordinary native girl”, and one who had “stately” beauty, and “considerable refinement of mind”. Haggard’s disingenuous narrative *legerdemain*, making Quatermain note his own opinion as if it were Foulata’s “Can the sun mate with the darkness”, attempts to make his prejudice seem a part of the natural order, acknowledged by the woman herself.

Mameena is also “no ordinary native girl”. When Quatermain first meets her, she is described as having a “perfect” figure, “that of a Greek statue indeed”, and, though she is all but naked, Quatermain focuses his description on the face, emphasizing non-Zulu features:

Her features showed no trace of the negro type; on the contrary, they were singularly well cut, the nose being straight and fine and the pouting mouth that just showed the ivory teeth between very small. Then the eyes, large, dark and liquid, like those of a buck, set beneath a smooth, broad forehead on which the curling, but not woolly, hair grew low. This hair, by the way, was not dressed up in any of the eccentric native fashions, but simply parted in the middle and tied in a big knot over the nape of the neck, the little ears peeping out through its tresses.

(59)

His later description of Nandie should be read, as Haggard’s phrasing suggests, in conjunction with this:

Nandie the Sweet was not a great beauty, as was Mameena, although her figure was fine, and her stature—like that of all the race of Senzangakona—considerably above the average. To begin with, she was darker in hue, and her lips were rather thick, as was her nose She

¹Noted by Gray, *Southern African Literature: An Introduction*, 126.

was a simple, honest-natured, kindly, affectionate young woman of high birth, no more; that is, as these qualities are understood and expressed among her people.

(121)

Nandie, who represents the faithful, loving, productive wife in this romance, belongs, it is clear from Haggard's phrasing, only to the world of the Zulu: her virtues are to be understood as being so "as these qualities are understood and expressed among her people". She holds no other attraction for Quatermain. She represents the primitive, the pastoral ideal, as Haggard suggests in his use of the words "simple, honest-natured". She belongs to the softer, more domestic aspect that Haggard saw amongst South African blacks, the potential—as depicted in *Allan's Wife*¹—that could be guided by benign white rule, once the warrior spirit had been rooted out.

Thus, Nandie is attractive in terms of her own culture, "no more", and her lack of beauty, Haggard makes clear, is linked to those very traces of the negroid type that Mameena is said to lack: "To begin with, she was darker in hue, and her lips were rather thick, as was her nose". In short, her lack of physical beauty, her lack of Mameena's "quick, sympathetic perception" (121) is because she is African, and Mameena—a literary type placed into a quasi-Zulu context—is not².

Mameena personifies what Haggard understands to be the ambitious, war-mongering aspect of the Zulu, and in this she is, like Nada, a symbolic representation. This is the warrior side of the Zulu that is

¹*Allan's Wife: with Hunter Quatermain's Story, A Tale of Three Lions, and Long Odds* (London: MacDonald, 1951).

²Haggard typically attributes virtues, skills and beauty found in Africa to non-African origin. His description of Saduko, who was "a person quite out of the ordinary run of natives", a person of "breeding and intellect", is pertinent: "undoubtedly it was a very fine face, with little or nothing of the negroid type about it; indeed, he might have been a rather dark-coloured Arab, to which stock he probably threw back" (19).

attractive and interesting, but, as Haggard sees it, dangerous: it is represented as being sterile, and deadly.

Haggard's own interpretation of his "philosophy" strives to be more open-minded than the tale itself suggests. He opens his romance with a generalization: "We white people think we know everything" (15), and goes on to say that "white" knowledge, however, leaves out that "which we have forgotten" ("primitive" nature, perhaps), or that which "white people" do not think it "polite to mention" (probably sexuality). His "white people" have not studied human nature "in the rough". This "raw material", the "virgin ore", is Haggard's Africa, for he contrasts the two ends of "the ladder": the "Kafir hut" and the "golden palace".

Thus, while Haggard insists on the universality of human nature ("While man is man . . . he will remain man"), he also notes the two ends of the ladder, the ape-man and the angel (or rather, as he corrects himself, that "last expression of humanity"). The ladder image is at once the superstructure of Neoplatonic/Christian thought, evoked by the reference to "angel", as well as that of a social Darwinism, evoked by "ape-man". Both these philosophies involve a moral as well as a physical structure, with the lower rungs of the ladder being both physically and morally inferior to the upper rungs. Schreiner's image of the bust of Shakespeare in the study and the Bushman outside the door (44, above) is a more secular image of the same concept, but without Haggard's Neoplatonic/Christian mythical content. Haggard posits, for instance, a "last expression of humanity upon which I will not speculate", and angels which belong "to a different sphere" (15).

For Haggard, “the savage . . . nakedly and forcibly” expresses the “eternal principles which direct our human destiny” (16). Thus, what Haggard calls “the savage” in humanity, is not fully evolved, and is lower on the ladder than those he calls “[w]e white people”, who have forgotten these “savage” aspects of human nature (15).

The experiences of Quatermain, then, are offered to “interpret this our universal nature”. It would seem that, despite Haggard’s typical insistence that he writes substantially about historical truth¹, his work is basically an allegory which uses his own interpretation of historical events, coupled with much fictionizing, as a vehicle for interpreting “our universal nature”. And Haggard’s opinion of this aspect of human nature is unflattering. He says that humanity will always have the “same passions”, the “same ambitions”, and “he will know the same joy and be oppressed by the same fears” (15). These are the “eternal principles”, “nakedly and forcibly expressed”, which direct human destiny.

However, Haggard’s list is extremely limited: other human attributes such as kindness, love, compassion, wisdom, reason, are omitted from what he considers essential human nature. In *Child of Storm* Quatermain, though supposedly unsophisticated in his ways, personifies many of these qualities. His wisdom is emphasized, and he tries unsuccessfully to protect a victim of execution from death. As a person of honour (Saduko being his foil in this respect) he is able to resist feminine temptation. These characteristics are not, according to the allegory, part of eternal human nature, and are placed further up the ladder, with civilisation, where one also learns to handle the technologies of writing and firearms².

¹“Leaving Mameena and her wiles on one side, the tale of the struggle between the Princes Cetewayo and Umbelazi for succession to the throne is true”, vii.

²It should be noted, however, that Haggard does wash a gentle irony over his depiction of Quatermain (see 232, for example) “Now, as I did not think it worth while to contradict his nonsense so far as I was concerned personally . . .”, where the tale makes evident it is not nonsense. Herman Charles Bosman exploits this type of irony more fully in his Groot Marico stories, *The Collected Works of Herman Charles Bosman* (Halfway

Thus, when Ellis claims that Haggard shows none of the racial prejudice of his contemporaries, we should be alert that Haggard, at best, is ambiguous in this matter. When he concludes an argument claiming that the Zulu “have a social system not unlike our own”, Quatermain adds:

Now, let him who is highly cultured take up a stone to throw at the poor, untaught Zulu, which I notice the most dissolute and drunken wretch of a white man is often ready to do, generally because he covets his land, his labour, or whatever else may be his.

(74)

Haggard’s social commentary is set in the literary framework of the pastoral, where the poet uses a primitive, country perspective to cast a critical light on the court or the metropole. Here, Haggard—as he does in the opening pages of the romance—speaks about the ignorance of “we white people”, who have forgotten primitive traits. Furthermore, the way of life of his Africans is without the decadence that typifies English society: “they do not get drunk until the white man teaches them so to do” and “their towns at night are not disgraced by the sights that distinguish ours”. It is the dissolute, “drunken wretch of a white man” who throws the stone (metaphorically, from the proverb, “criticizes”) at the Zulu. The “highly cultured” person, informed that the Zulu social system is “not unlike our own”, is not expected to do so.

Such informed people are mentioned in the Author’s Note: “. . . the late Mr F.B. Fynney . . . with the exception of the late Sir Theophilus Shepstone and the late Sir Melmoth Osborn, perhaps knew more of that land and people than anyone else of his period” (vii). Haggard’s English sources are all dead, leaving him alone to bear the truth. But, more pertinently, Haggard’s phrasing suggests that the Zulu either did not know as much as these authorities about themselves, or did not qualify to be included in

House: Southern; Cape Town and Pretoria: Human and Rousseau, 1988).

the phrase “anyone else”. Thus, Haggard argues for a common human experience that does not, in fact, always manifest itself in the tale he tells.

Child of Storm, then, and *Nada the Lily* (which will be more fully discussed in the next chapter) exemplify the incomplete romance. Haggard’s more conventional, resolved romance is illustrated by *Allan’s Wife*, although *Allan and the Holy Flower*, *People of the Mist* or *Benita*¹ could equally serve as examples. This more conventional, complete romance establishes a norm against which the incomplete African romances of *Nada the Lily* and *Child of Storm* can be read. The latter both deal “with the Zulus”, and thus might exemplify the style Plaatje had in mind when writing *Mhudi*.

Allan’s Wife begins with typical Haggardian claims of veracity, its “realism” lying in the claim to its being a “manuscript” left by the dead Quatermain. It starts as a simple description of events about incidents in the writer’s youth, although the cosmic fight between the two “magicians” establishes the typical Haggardian potential for the supernatural. However, the first part of the story is mere incident: the romance itself, or the romantic essence of the story, begins with the journey across “a vast sandy waste” to the central “great solitary peak” where “the white man lives” (77). It is here that the allegorical core of the romance begins, and any “meaning” in the story is condensed into this core.

The “great solitary peak”, later known as Babyan Kap, or Babyan Peak, surrounded by wasteland, enables Haggard to emphasize the impenetrability of the place of his adventure. This is typical of his settings, and has the advantage for him of at once suggesting the mysteriousness of Africa, and the difficulty the ordinary reader would find in verifying his story by travel, or recourse to other travel

¹*The People of the Mist* (London: MacDonald, 1951), *Benita*, (London: Cassell, 1906).

literature. The myth of the undiscovered land, therefore, helps Haggard to deal imaginatively with the allegorical core. Further, it helps Haggard to place this core in the setting of an “inland island”. Although located in a desert, the setting of the farm Babyan Kraals, over which Babyan Kap looms, is akin to that of island romances from Acrasia’s island in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* and Caliban’s in *The Tempest*, and the Homeric islands upon which these are based, through to *Robinson Crusoe*¹, as well as adventure yarns such as *Treasure Island*², and its counter-novel, *Lord of the Flies*.

Despite the early attempt to establish the veracity of the text and the reality of the supposed manuscript, in the Babyan Kraals episode the narrative moves into symbolic or allegorical modes, marked by the end of the journey through the Bad Lands. The travellers fall into an exhausted sleep: “I remember thinking that it was a good place to die in. Then I remember no more” (79). Quatermain then awakes (like Prince Arthur and Bottom before him, 67 above) to a sense of blessedness and vision:

I woke with a feeling as though the blessed rain were falling on my face and head. Slowly, and with great difficulty, I opened my eyes, then shut them again, having seen a vision.

(79)

The vision is, in fact, Stella who is also called the Star. The names reflect her otherworldly, divine nature, and her ultimate unobtainableness in this life, for Quatermain must seek her in the hereafter. It also recalls the focus of Sidney’s sonnet sequence, *Astrophel and Stella*. She is referred to as “the woman of my vision” and “this dream woman” (79). Romance visions of the otherworldly, like those

¹Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

²Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (London: Thomas Nelson, n.d.).

of Arthur and Bottom, often begin with a sleep, and the suggestion of confusion between dream and reality.

Although Haggard attempts to cover the symbolic with the “realism” of the first person narration, the allegory shines through. We glimpse Haggard’s ideal: a woman of the wilds who is yet sophisticated, and who is made by destiny to be his wife. In Africa, Haggard’s ideal is a “white girl, too, and not a Kaffir woman”, who speaks in “English, the sweetest voice that I had ever heard” (79). The imperialist vision implied here becomes even more manifest later in the romance.

If Quatermain meets a semi-divine, idealistic woman at this flux between reality and dream, he also meets her moral counterpart: Hendrika, the Babyan Frou. As in Spenser her moral nature may be gauged by her relationship with beasts (she is half human, half baboon), as well as by the related emphasis on passions in her nature, rather than on control or reason. Although she is assisted by Stella and Mr Carson to become more human, more rational, she eventually loses the battle, becoming mad and destroying that which she loves. In Spenser’s terms such a loss of reason would be an equivalent distancing from the divine, which is in turn signified by Stella.

She is as naturally a servant to Stella as Caliban is a slave in the *Tempest*, although, amongst the baboon pack she is superior, and leads. She is granted a cunning intelligence (90 and 108), but her clearest characteristic is bestial passion.

The distance between Stella and the Babyan Frou is not only spiritual or moral, or defined in terms of master-servant or human-beast relationships, but also, as Haggard's diction makes clear, a distance of evolution:

The woman was young, of white blood, very short, with bowed legs and enormous shoulders. In face she was not bad-looking, but the brow receded, the chin and ears were prominent—in short, she reminded me of nothing so much as a very handsome monkey. She might have been the missing link.

(79)

She is a half human, half baboon “missing link” in a classificatory system which allows Stella, the personification of virtue, to say “. . . I believe that the baboons are almost as human as the Bushmen”(150)¹. But she also represents a reversal of evolution: the characters in the romance guess that the baboons captured her when she was an infant, and that her regression towards the bestial is the result of her upbringing amongst the baboons. That this backsliding is both moral and evolutionary is implied by the malice involved in the baboons' capture of her (the characters have no evidence for guessing that she was captured rather than found), as well as her physical appearance: her behaviour, like her face, is monkey-like (79), and she uses her feet to grip a bough (81). In appearance she is not a human brought up by baboons, she is too simian: rather, her appearance is that of an allegorical figure representing a link between the baboon and the human, a link that Haggard also suggests belongs to the “Bushman”, although in his scheme the “bushman” would have “risen” to such a level, and Hendrika has “slipped back” to that level.

¹See Schreiner's “human ape”, 44 above.

This sense of “slipping back” is a modern version of the *topos*, already old in Renaissance times, of the foundling raised in the wilds: the wilds could be either hard and rough, with the foundling becoming beast-like; or soft and pastoral, with the foundling becoming a virtuous shepherd-like figure. The fate, and allegorical meaning, of the foundling will depend upon the view of nature the author wishes to present, although often the question is vexed and filled with paradox and complexity. In the present romance, too, there is more than one view of nature: the Bad Lands indicate the harsh, unforgiving aspect, which includes the elephants of Chapter 3 of the novel, and the warlike Zulus of Chapters 4 and 5, as well as the softer image of nature imaged in Babyan Kraals’ fertile farm-land, and the peaceful Basotho (92-4). However, the name of the mountain, “Babyan’s Kap”, which looms over the farm, symbolically suggests a core of earthly evil in the midst of this pastoral paradise, and topographically signals the tension between earthly evil and the virtues of the divine which humanity has sought since the expulsion from Eden: indeed, expulsion from the Babyan Kraals community is compared to this fall (101).

A foundling “left to nature” in this African setting symbolically represents the relationship between humanity and nature. Conventionally the foundling is a girl, like Perdita in *The Winter’s Tale* or Pastorella in *The Faerie Queene* Book VI. *Allan’s Wife* deals with this situation using three examples: Tota, Stella and Hendrika. Each of these is white, and each cut off, to a greater or lesser degree, from European metropolitan life, the “court” of the old pastorals.

Tota, orphaned by the Zulu attack, is saved from certain death by Quatermain, then by Stella, and later by the people of the Babyan Kraals community in the battle with the baboons. In this harsh world she

is vulnerable: in constant need of protection, she images the frailty of young white womanhood in Africa, a leitmotif of early colonial romance¹.

Stella is taken by her father from England: “this civilized world which is a lie” (16). He initially intends to ignore the “civilized world”: “I think that my father’s first idea was to let me run wild altogether, but he gave it up”, says Stella:

I suppose I must seem very wild and savage to you, but I have had one advantage—a good education. My father has taught me everything, and perhaps I know some things that you don’t. I can read French and German

(99)

While this explanation begs the questions of what a good education in Africa is, and how she is able to judge of its quality in her isolation, Mr Carson’s version of events is given a little later:

Many years ago a great shame and sorrow fell upon me, so great a sorrow that, as I sometimes think, it affected my brain. At any rate, I determined to do what most men would have considered the act of a madman, to go far away into the wilderness with my only child, there to live remote from civilization and its evils. I did so; I found this place, and here we have lived for many years, happily enough, and perhaps not without doing good in our generation, but still in a way unnatural to our race and status. At first I thought that I would let my daughter grow up in a state of complete ignorance, that she should be Nature’s child. But as time went on, I saw the folly and wickedness of my plan. I had no right to degrade her to the level of the savages around me, for if the fruit of the tree of knowledge is a bitter fruit, still it teaches good from evil

(109-110)

¹See Gray, *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* 116, where he generalizes from the specific example from Frederick Marryat’s *The Mission*.

He adds, “. . . I was doing her a bitter wrong . . . I was separating her from her kind and keeping her in a wilderness where she could find neither mate nor companion” (110). Mr Carson’s, and Haggard’s, understanding of “her kind” is obviously the English gentry: she is as isolated by attitude as she is by location.

The parallel of the “isolated” girl taught by her father with the dramatic situation in *The Tempest* is clear, and also involves an emphasis on book-knowledge, as Stella’s explanation, given in answer to Allan’s question, makes clear:

“Yes,” I said, “but how do you get all these luxuries of civilization?” and I pointed to the books, the crockery, and the knives and forks.

“Very simply. Most of the books my father brought with him when we first trekked into the wilds; there was nearly a waggon load of them. But every few years we have sent an expedition of three waggons right down to Port Natal. The waggons are loaded with ivory and other goods, and come back with all kinds of things that have been sent out from England for us. So you see, although we live in this wild place, we are not altogether cut off.

(98-99)

It can be concluded, then, that “civilization”, for Haggard, was as paradoxical as the opposing concept, nature or the wilds. On one hand it is “a lie”, on the other a source of knowledge and of courteous ways of living: “books, the crockery, and the knives and forks”. One can live in the wilds, it is implied, as long as one is not “cut off” from the benefits of civilization. It is, of course, advantageous to be cut off from its vices. Like many pastoral ideals, the idealized wilderness is never entirely cut off from the courtly, and is, in fact, a mixture of the best of both¹.

¹In the conclusion of *Allan Quatermain* the English characters are cut off, but wish to re-establish the Kukuana peoples under new beneficial rule and Christianity in another version of the pastoral.

The third example of the woman “cut off” from her European civilization is Hendrika, and she has become a monster, a Caliban figure. For Haggard and his English characters she is naturally a servant, and dependent upon Stella and Thomas Carson for education, and for her very humanity. She is bestial, and is, as the story progresses, overcome by the passion of jealousy (which merges her Caliban model with that of Othello). She becomes unreasoning, and murderous: her actions, like Othello’s, ultimately destroy Stella, the romance’s ideal. In this respect, the brief extract from *Othello*, referred to above (53, 93), where the tempest threatens to “quench the guards of th’ever-fixèd pole”, is pertinent.

Symbolically, then, if Stella represents the ideal in the romance, Hendrika represents the qualities that threaten that ideal. She represents simultaneously the child of nature, upon whom no lasting civility can be impressed, and the backsliding European, who loses touch with what is courtly in that culture. Thus, Babyan Kraals can be read as a modern African version of the classical *locus amoenus*, stumbled onto by the hero, and destroyed before the end of the story, much like Calidore’s vision in *The Faerie Queene* Book VI, canto x. The disappearance of the *locus amoenus* is typical of romance, and serves a function similar to that of the elusive Holy Grail, which establishes its visionary presence only to become the symbol of the possible, the object of quest. Haggard’s vision crystallizes his religious, his agricultural, imperialist, race, class and political interests.

Babyan Kraals is a type of earthly paradise. It is not entirely spiritual, as Spenser’s might have been, but is presented as a place hard won by vision, care and labour. Haggard’s description of the place does reveal, however, the hand of destiny. The passages dealing with the topography of Babyan Kraals are worth quoting and discussing at some length:

The space of ground, embraced thus in the arms of the mountain, as it were, was laid out, as though by the cunning hand of man, in three terraces that rose one above the other. To the right and left of the topmost terrace were chasms in the cliff, and down each chasm fell a waterfall, from no great height, indeed, but of considerable volume. The two streams flowed away on either side of the enclosed space, one towards the north, and the other, the course of which we had been following, round the base of the mountain. At each terrace they made a cascade, so that the traveller approaching had a view of eight waterfalls at once.

(91)

The symmetry of the scene, which makes it appear artificial, removes the landscape from the ordinary realms of the natural into an apotheosis of nature. The personification in the phrase “embraced thus in the arms of the mountain”, and the seemingly man-made terraces “laid out, as though by the cunning hand of man”, with “cunning” used in its old sense of skilful, or clever, suggest at once the seeming care of nature and the way in which nature seems to be naturally adapted to man’s skills in both husbandry and aesthetics. The twin waterfalls are grandiose, and their unusual symmetry suggests a divine orderliness in the scene, picked up a little later, in the human sphere, in the sense of the “orderly” kraals (92), and the sense of harmony is emphasized by the reflection that the sight was beautiful because of its “combination” of elements.

Besides these aesthetic considerations, water in South Africa is generally scarce, a point emphasized by Haggard in the description of the Bad Lands. Thus, the overabundance of water in the two streams, which “made a cascade, so that the traveller approaching had a view of eight waterfalls at once” (91), evokes a supra-natural place of plenty, emphasized in the same paragraph by the “extraordinary richness and depth of the soil”. The orange trees—unexpected in that part of South Africa—provide another link to classical notions of paradise: orange trees were associated with the Garden of Hesperides, and were used by Botticelli in his *Primavera* as part of an abundant but ordered image of the garden of

love, a garden with which Haggard's Babayan Kraals, with its links to Eden (101 and 105), has much in common¹. Regal and divine imagery add to the sense that Babayan Kraals is a blessed *locus amoenus*:

Then over all brooded the peace of evening, and the infinite glory of the sunset that filled heaven with changing hues of splendour, that wrapped the mountain and cliffs in cloaks of purple and gold, and lay upon the quiet face of the water like the smile of a god.

(94)

The “crowning wonder of the scene”—words which suggest an upward, hierarchical movement, typical of Spenser's description of the paradisiacal—are the buildings “built of blocks of hewn white marble” (92). These buildings, once again, are a combination of elements, “constructed like an ordinary Zulu hut” (though “five times the size”), but “fitted together with extraordinary knowledge of the principles and properties of arch building”: sure evidence, in Haggard's vision, of white craftsmanship. Stella disingenuously says that “one white man” could not have built the buildings. It doesn't strike her that the builders could be anything but a number of white men, and this attitude is reflected in the footnoted reference (93) to Anderson's *Twenty-five Years in a Waggon* (vol. ii. 55), which Haggard specifies, entering his text under the guise of “Editor”.

The combination is of African structure and white ingenuity and craftsmanship, and the edifices symbolize Haggard's vision of the imperial, where the African is raised to new heights by the white colonist. The significance of the main group of buildings, the living quarters, is emphasized, once again, by symmetrical structure—the two lesser groups stand behind the main group. The central hut in the

¹See Ronald Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli: Vol. I, Life and Work* (London: Paul Elek, 1978) 73-4.

central group is the place of books and learning (95). In another group, the central hut functions as a natural chapel (100). Mr Carson says “We live as it were in a hermitage, with nature for our only friend” (97). The community at Babyan Kraals is an apotheosis, not of raw nature, but of the combination of nature and nurture, nature and spirit, the natural and the cultivated, the natural inhabitants and their beneficent colonizers, the natural African and the skilful and learned European, natural fruitfulness and good husbandry.

And thus this *locus amoenus* is not a pastoral retreat so much as a georgic retreat, it is the apotheosis of husbandry. For Haggard, the conditions of this apotheosis are peace, hard work, discipline and guidance. And Haggard’s catalyst is the white man and his religious vision, which is also the romance vision of this story.

Quatermain’s journey—a modern form of the quest—starts and ends in England, a place that is the source of the books and of the missionary endeavour, but also represents the “civilized world which is a lie”. It is also the place of residence of the “lady who was half a Spaniard—a papist” (13), a symbol of faithlessness, who runs away with “that foreign cousin of hers” (15): “That is what comes of marrying a papist, Carson”, says Quatermain’s father, described as “bigoted” (16)¹.

From England the young Quatermain moves to Africa:

¹The full description of Quatermain’s father is “he was as good and charitable a man as ever lived, but he was bigoted”. Behind the Quatermain fiction, it is Haggard who provides the praise which the adjective “bigoted” does not really remove. In the context it is a justified or allowable bigotry, a trait that has been attributed to Haggard himself. In *Montezuma’s Daughter* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895) a similar sentiment is expressed about Spanish blood (15). This seemingly minor point becomes important in this study—bigotry leads to the racist excesses that Plaatje was wishing to combat in *Mhudi*, in which he notes the “bigotry” of the Boers in matters of religion (197).

In those days civilization had not made any great progress in Southern Africa. My father went up the country and became a missionary among the Kaffirs, near to where the town of Cradock now stands.

(18)

Quatermain is saved from running “absolutely wild in such surroundings” by the company of his “gentlest and most refined” father (18), who also provides him with the “little education I got”. Quatermain lives among a “little settlement of whites”, the most interesting of whom is “a drunken Scotch blacksmith”, a typical example of the capable but backsliding white, a reminder that Quatermain could have “run wild”, in those “cut off” surroundings. However, Quatermain learns the skills considered necessary for South African survival:

. . . I never had much leaning towards books I was always a keen observer of the ways of men and nature. By the time I was twenty I could speak Dutch and three or four Kaffir dialects perfectly, and I doubt if there was anybody in South Africa who understood native ways of thought and action more completely than I did. Also I was really a very good shot and horseman I could bear any amount of exposure and privation, and I never met the native who was my master in feats of endurance.

(18)

After his father’s death—one of the many losses in the romance—Quatermain treks north, his most prominent companion being Indaba-zimbi, who, in romance terms, is the typical guide figure¹.

¹Examples include the Palmer in *The Faerie Queene* Book II and Virgil in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, both of whom often explain the spiritual or moral meaning of things to the questing knight or pilgrim. Tension exists in this conventional relationship in the case of the young Quatermain and Indaba-zimbi. Quatermain does not always acknowledge the spiritual abilities of the seer, who nevertheless guides him to Babayan Kraals where he “will find great happiness—yes, and great sorrow” (74). However, this ironic aspect of the Quatermain figure is never fully developed, in the way Bosman’s ironic narrators are, and does not detract from the seriousness of the description of his travels. Quatermain simply does not let Indaba-zimbi’s knowledge get the better of his reason:

In his divinations I did not believe, yet I came to the conclusion that he was speaking what he knew to be the truth. It struck me as possible that he might have heard of some white man living like a

On his “quest” he meets representatives of other South African historical role-players¹: a Zulu impi, improbably placed in the northern Cape, but echoing the Matabele movement through that part of the country; and the Boers, represented, through the figure of Hans Botha, as having “a great objection to authority, or, as he expressed it, a ‘love of freedom’” (46). Botha not only fled British “authority” but left another trek after quarrelling with its leader. He, and through him the Boers, are a further example of the European “cut off”. He finally sees the folly of his “love of freedom”:

Oh, Heer Allan, your father, the Predicant, always warned me against trekking north, and I never would listen to him because I thought him a cursed Englishman; now I see my folly. Heer Allan, if you can, try to save my child from those black devils²

(48)

The implication is that the Boers would be safest under British authority. The fully Africanized European, the Babyan Vrou, seems to be symbolically related, by her Afrikaans name, to the Boers in general, governed by passion as she is. Representations of Boers are an important aspect of Haggard’s South African work, and are pertinent in a reading of Plaatje, who, while attempting to combat misrepresentation of blacks, still attempted to balance outrage at Boer behaviour towards blacks with

hermit in the wilds, but preferring to keep up his prophetic character would not say so (74).

He uses the magical to enhance the romance nature of the narrative, but leans on the privilege of being a first person narrator to show the ultimate superiority of reason, as well as to suggest that Indaba-zimbi is a clever trickster and therefore not entirely truthful. However, Indaba-zimbi’s divination is always proved to have worked and to reveal the truth, working ironically against the Quatermain character. The suggestion is that Africa is somehow exotic and different, perhaps even spiritually irredeemable (31-2). Plaatje, in *Mhudi*, wishes to refute this notion, emphasizing, instead, the common humanity of all races. Furthermore, Indaba-zimbi always remains a servant of Quatermain’s. After breakfasting in the luxury of the Babyan Kraals residence, Quatermain finds Indaba-zimbi “sitting outside as fresh as paint” (99). This automatic assumption of a master-servant relationship is also criticized by Plaatje in *Mhudi* (197).

¹Both *Nada the Lily* and *Mhudi* similarly deal with the historical meeting of different South African groups.

²It is possible that this latter phrase, or one like it, stimulates Plaatje’s use of “red devils”, which the Matabele call the Boers in *Mhudi*, 106.

his artistic ideal of non-racial veracity. Plaatje's depictions of Boer characters echo Haggard's in their representations of cruelty towards black people, but are qualified by the potential for virtue personified by the lovers.

Haggard's rather more stereotypical depiction of Boer cruelty is vividly portrayed in *The Witch's Head*¹, where a symbolic fight between the Boer giant Van Zyl and the English hero Jeremy occurs. In the allegory the Goliath-like Van Zyl (a personification of "how a Boer deals with a nigger") is overcome by British fair play, personified by the David-like Jeremy. The fight begins when Van Zyl, encouraged by his wife, cruelly beats a "Hottentot boy of small size . . . a servant or slave of the giant" (162). Van Zyl assures his wife, who cries "slaat die swartsel" (163), that he would "thrash enough to satisfy even you, and we all know that must be very hard where a black creature is in question". Jeremy intervenes on the boy's behalf².

The Zulus Quatermain meets are also stereotypical. When he first sees them they are at rest: "some were lying down, some were cooking at fires", but "others were stalking about with spears and shields in their hands" (44). This motiveless aggression is activated when Quatermain is discovered: "From either side a great Zulu was bearing down on me, their broad stabbing assegais aloft, and black shields in their left hands", and after he shoots one, he finds the "other savage was almost on me" (45). Quatermain later says:

¹This episode from *The Witch's Head* (London: Spencer Blackett, n.d., 163-169), taking place at the time of the British annexation of the Transvaal Republic, is a clear political allegory suggesting both Boercruelty and the moral basis for British intervention.

²After being criticized for his depiction of Boers, Haggard defends himself in *Diary of an African Journey*, 137-8. See also Malvern van Wyk Smith, "Looking Before and After: The Boers and the Anglo-Boer War in the South African Imaginary", (conference paper read at "The South African War: A Reappraisal", Bloemfontein, 11-14 October, 1999) where he explores "a crisis about Boer identity" that emerged "in the decades before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War".

Years of merciless warfare had so hardened these people that they looked on death as nothing, and were, to do them justice, as willing to meet it themselves as to inflict it on others. When this very Impi had been sent out by the Zulu King Dingaan, it consisted of some nine thousand men. Now it numbered less than three; all the rest were dead. They, too, would probably soon be dead. What did it matter? They lived by war to die in blood. It was their natural end. "Kill till you are killed." That is the motto of the Zulu soldier. It has the merit of simplicity.

(61)

This Impi apparently cannot go home:

. . . that must be the Umtetwa regiment that Dingaan sent against the Basutus, but who could not come at them because of the marshes, and so were afraid to return to Zululand, and struck north to join Mosilikatze.

(47)

Given Quatermain's feeling that they would "probably soon be dead", the Zulu presented in this romance are a wandering war machine, largely motiveless (despite the sense that they "are very bitter against the Boers, because of the battle at Blood River and the other fights", 52), merely fighting till they are themselves killed. Being a male grouping, alone in the wilderness, they are not self-generating. They cook, but being a war-party do not till or cultivate, neither do they sustain domestic skills. They show no appreciation of the human feelings of love and compassion. Sususa, the chief, for instance, has his own wounded brother killed rather than risk encumbering the regiment: "he gave an order to one of the indunas, and turned away" (60), an act which Quatermain describes as "cold-blooded cruelty".

The Zulus, as presented here, are a thumb-nail sketch of the typically Haggardian image of Zulus who are courageous, disciplined, cruel and warlike. They lack human feelings, domestic life and true spiritual enlightenment. Just as the text suggests that the Boers should have stayed within the pale of British

authority, it further implies that the Zulus, who represent one aspect of Haggard's African society, would require redeeming British enlightenment and guidance, becoming otherwise destructive, even self-destructive.

The Zulus, however, are contrasted with the Basotho. The refugees at Babyan Kraals "belonged to the Basutu and peaceful section of the Bantu peoples rather than to the Zulu and warlike" (94).

Most of the Babyan Kraals residents, "natives, whose race I have never been able to determine accurately", are refugees who have turned to Mr Carson "for shelter" (100). While it is not stated what they are refugees from, the inference is that there is something "out there" in the natural state of Africa that they wish to escape from. Possibilities are the drought of the Bad Lands or the different groups of people, such as the Boers and the Zulu. The natural state of Africa is seen to offer no hope, while, by contrast, Babyan Kraals has been made into a paradise, expulsion from which "must have seemed as heavy as the decree that drove Adam from the Garden of Eden" (101).

These African people of undetermined race, who are seemingly leaderless, are thus unrestricted by laws and customs. They represent the malleable social material of Africa, perfectly suited for Haggard/Carson's ideal community. Quatermain says that "for natives, the people were most industrious" (100). The "tribesmen", who call themselves the "Children of Thomas", and who call Mr Carson "'Baba,' or father" are able to "accumulate considerable wealth". Mr Carson, who manages the community on a co-operative system, is also their judge and spiritual leader (101).

Thus, in Haggard, the vulnerable natural African is saved by, and profits greatly from, the intervention of the British aristocratic landowner and amateur missionary:

... he began to believe that he really was a clergyman. For instance, he always married those of his people who would consent to a monogamous existence, and baptized their children.

(100)

Their physical and spiritual lives are managed by Carson in this isolated African paradise. The situation becomes Haggard's version of the ideal that Gonzalo, in *The Tempest*, expresses in his speech beginning, "Had I plantation of this isle . . ." (II.i.145-170), with Thomas Carson taking the controlling, Prospero role. Haggard's suggestion is that to turn raw, natural, dangerous Africa into a paradise, the workers would need to be raceless, or removed from their ethnic context— "tamed" is the word Haggard uses about the Matabele in another context¹. They would need a strong male overseer, a beneficent ruler, who would bring a liberal contract to the workers. At Babayan Kraals Mr Carson receives a "tithes of the produce". As this phrasing suggests, he also brings Christian religion. He is, then, the benign secular and spiritual patriarch, they the grateful "Children of Thomas"².

Quatermain's quest ends within this *locus amoenus* where he finds his "Stella". He marries her according to the custom of the place. He agrees, however, to make his permanent home in England, a return to the place of departure where Quatermain finally writes the manuscript, "now that I am at leisure here in England . . ." (12). Yet, in true romance mode, the ideal is seen to be achieved, only to be almost immediately lost again. Stella dies because of her abduction by the Babayan Frou, her moral and symbolic counterpart. In romance terms the ideal is vulnerable because of the moral frailty of the

¹"... the Kukuanas or, rather, the Matabele, have been tamed by the white man's bullets . . .", *King Solomon's Mines*, (*Post Scriptum* added to the 1905 edition).

²In *Allan Quatermain*, Haggard depicts a similar community. He also grants them the ability, and the moral right, to fight against the Masai. The missionary Mackenzie says, "I would not show any white man the door for all the Masai in the world", 38. The battle takes place in Chapters 5-7.

matter of which it is moulded: the baboon, the pre-human, the wild African element, the backsliding European.

Stella, the ideal, vanishes, and with her the entire community. Quatermain, like a true romance hero, must enter again the real world of troubles. When, in the chapter called "Fifteen Years Later", Quatermain visits Babyan Kraals, it is ruined:

There, overgrown with grass, were the burnt ashes of the kraals, and there among the ashes, gleaming in the moonlight, lay the white bones of men. Now it was clear to me. The settlement had been fallen on by some powerful foe, and its inhabitants put to the assegai.

(158)

The enemies of the community destroy it with "the assegai". In the romance allegory this act suggests that the war-like African destroys the ideal Afro-European community, and is a reflection on the frail matter upon which the community is built. In the balance between the "Basutu and peaceful section of the Bantu peoples" and the "Zulu and warlike", once again, it is the morally deficient, but powerful, that overthrow. The victory of the virtuous is possible, as evidenced in the early existence of the ideal community, and its successful battle against the baboons, but must await another time. Not only does Indaba-zimbi prophesy that he will meet Quatermain in "a further land", but it is also suggested that Quatermain will meet Stella there, and so, with all its sense of sorrow and loss, the romance ends with the word "hope".

Allan's Wife, then, is a classically complete romance, despite the tragic element, and the revenge personified in Hendrika, the Babyan Frou. It bears a relationship to the type of romance written by Spenser, sharing common elements, logic and structure with his romance, and to a certain extent, a

similar purpose. *The Faerie Queene*, particularly in the context of Spenser's duties in Ireland, can also be read as a colonial romance. *The Tempest*, too, can be read as a colonial text, but this play tends to complicate many of the elements that are found in Spenser, and is far more ambivalent. Haggard's "simplicity", or unparadoxical romance, echoes Quatermain's attitude to the Zulu soldiers' motto, "It has the merit of simplicity" (61).

Allan's Wife can be read as a resolved romance in the sense that it contains most of the classical elements: the central (female) figure of virtue who is by name and nature unobtainable; the semi-divine place, the *locus amoenus*, blessed and rich, which topographically reflects the ideals that govern the romance, and the hero who seeks this perfection. The ultimate loss of the perfection throws the hero (and reader) back into the everyday world in which the ideal is no longer present, and exists only as a possibility to live towards. Quatermain notes as the narrative closes:

I felt then, as from year to year I have continued to feel while I wander through the lonely wilderness of life, that I had been preserved to an end She is lost to me now, but she is lost to be found again.

(156)

This is expressed in the main narrative thread of *The Faerie Queene*, by Prince Arthur, who has spent dream or vision time with the Faerie Queene, as follows:

When I awoke, and found her place deuoyd,
And nought but pressed gras, where she had lyen,
I sorrowed all so much, as earst I ioyd,
And washed all her place with watry eyen.
From that day forth I lou'd that face diuine;
From that day forth I cast in carefull mind,
To seek her out with labour, and long tyne,

And neuer vow to rest, till her I find,
Nine monethes I seeke in vaine yet ni'll that vow vnbind.

(I.ix.15)

Thus the long view of romance establishes the ideal, usually described as a dream experience (107) even if it does not always survive in the fallen world. Haggard's romance, as is typical of the genre, also depicts the counterparts of the ideal: the morally evil elements, personified as well as exemplified in certain aspects of character and landscape (Hendrika, the baboons, the Zulu, Babyan Kap and the Bad Lands), all of which pose a threat to the hero, and to the ideal itself.

Stella is the personification of that ideal: she has a good education, and is not corrupted by the evils of either her mother country, or of Africa. She is a pastoral child of nature, combining the best of both worlds, omitting the worst. She is the spiritual guide of the text (paralleled by the more conventionally comic, romantic figure of Indaba-zimbi, the heathen prophet), pointing Quatermain towards an understanding of love in its Christian, Neoplatonic form. She says of their love:

It is Love who speaks in everything, though till we hear his voice we understand nothing. But when we hear, then the riddle is answered and the gates of our heart are opened, and, Allan, we see the way that wends through death to heaven, and is lost in the glory of which our love is but a shadow.

(106)

The "way" suggests the Christian pilgrim travelling through the fallen world, and "our love" is a shadow of the divine in Neoplatonic thinking. This moment of revelation, in which the lovers first come together, is watched by Hendrika, much as Iago watches Othello and Desdemona, and says "O you are well tuned now! But I'll set down the pegs that make this music . . ." (II.i.199-200).

The difference between the two women in this scene, Stella and Hendrika, reflects Haggard's conception of "the scale of humanity" (108), the Neoplatonic, social Darwinist ladder that morally defines humankind, and governs Haggard's political vision as well, for in Neoplatonic thinking, the top should govern the bottom, the head the body, reason the passions. True love leads one up the ladder, and, as Hendrika perceptively says to Stella, "Without you to love I shall go mad and become a baby again" (123). Yet, "complete happiness is not allowed in this world" (125), and the completed love pattern of this romance must remain achieved and lost, but lost in order to guide Quatermain through life:

But certainly our illusion, or the great truth of which it is the shadow, did survive, as to this day it survives in my heart across all the years of utter separation, and across the unanswering gulf of gloom.

(125)

And thus, despite all the death in the romance, the completed love pattern has love surviving as a guide, as a promise, and this is personified in the heroine, Stella, the unattainable but steady Star.

Chapter Four

Haggard's Romance of Irresolution

Allan's Wife, a “resolved” romance, is the paradigm which lies behind much of Haggard's other African romance. The allegorical meaning of *Nada the Lily*, an “unresolved” romance, may therefore be sought in its relationship with the completed model.

One of the first issues confronted when turning to *Nada the Lily* is the role of the narrator in the romance: the Dedication, undersigned by Haggard, is written for Theophilus Shepstone, “for many years Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal” and ends with praise in *imbongi* fashion. In *Nada the Lily* Haggard also comments on historical incidents, establishing his own political standpoint. He speaks of “how first you [Shepstone] mastered this people of the Zulu” (7), and how “Her majesty and you alone” are entitled to the Zulu royal salute. But if Haggard establishes himself as a living personage in this Dedication, one who “must leave the ways of action that I love and bury myself in books”, he also establishes a link with his romance by adapting the stylized voice of his Mopo narrator, heard in such phrases as: “If you knew not Chaka . . .”, “. . . a song has been sung in my ears . . .”, “Is it not true, my father . . .”, “Many years have gone by since then, and now you are old, my father.” These phrases connect the Dedication, written by the Haggard persona, with the story, where Mopo, the narrator of the Zulu events, speaks in a similar voice: “There are great names in the story, my father” (22).

¹*Cetywayo and his White Neighbours*, 56.

In the Dedication Haggard takes upon himself the voice, and the knowledge, of Mopo, the only character in the story who knows each detail of the power struggles and intrigues, and the moral bases for them. Mopo is, furthermore, both kingmaker and king-breaker, manipulating events throughout. By adopting Mopo's "voice" in the Dedication Haggard implies that he tells the full Zulu tale with the narrative authority and wisdom of Mopo¹.

These claims of authority and veracity are repeated, in another guise, in the Preface where Haggard's intentions, artistic and otherwise, are set out. Haggard feels the book deals with a completed cycle, the rise and fall of the Zulu nation, whose rise was brought about by Chaka: "when he appeared, at the commencement of this century, it was as the ruler of a single small tribe" (11). Mopo's comments on Chaka's prophecies (26) indicate that the Zulu nation and power came into being with Chaka, and ended with the fulfilment of his dying prophecy. In the Preface Haggard says:

Then the Zulus were still a nation; now that nation has been destroyed, and the aim of its white rulers is to root out the warlike spirit for which it was remarkable, and to replace it by a spirit of peaceful progress.

(11)

The completeness of the subjugation is implied by "its white rulers" and legitimized in the romance's Dedication. The "warlike spirit" of the Zulu nation is opposed to the "peaceful progress" brought by whites, the agents of beneficial change, the Zulu being the passive recipients: "the aim . . . is to root out

¹In *Diary of an African Journey* Haggard renders his address to a Zulu *indaba* in the same style, telling the chiefs that he "had heard all their history from the lips of those Great Ones [Shepstone and Osborn] and had learned to love them [the Zulu] with a love, that although since those days I had wandered far across the blackseas and up and down the earth, I had never forgotten through the falling years" (199). Here, also, the romance style and imagery is coupled with a claim to have heard "all" their history. On the same page Haggard notes the position of the grave of Siganda, "this old, old Zulu, the chief who fought in Chaka's battles and was present at the massacre of Retief", who had declared "that much of what I wrote in *Nada the Lily* was quite true".

the warlike spirit . . . and to replace it” Any change, it is implied, is necessarily forceful, requiring a nation to be “destroyed” and the conquerors to “root out” their spirit. There is little sense that change is a natural aspect of human life, or that a change for the better could come from within: a superior teaching agent from outside is needed to conduct this violent lesson. Haggard’s attitude is echoed in *Cetywayo and his White Neighbours* where he argues that in Natal “we”, the English, “must civilise first and Christianise afterwards”:

To do this there is but one way. Abolish native customs and laws, especially polygamy, and bring our Zulu subjects within the pale of our own law. Deprive them of their troops of servants in the shape of wives, and thus force them to betake themselves to honest labour like the rest of mankind.

(54)

The relationship between the races is only superficially amicable, he argues, for “at heart neither loves the other”:

The two races are so totally distinct that it is quite impossible for them to have much community of feeling; they can never mingle; their ideas are different, their objects are different, and in Natal their very law is different.

(57)

In Haggard’s view, then, Zulu people differ in nature from their white teachers:

Savages they are, and savages they will remain, and in the struggle between them and civilisation it is possible that they may be conquered, but I do not believe they will be converted. The Zulu Kafir is incompatible with civilisation.

(58)

The character of the Zulu people, Haggard implies in the Preface to *Nada the Lily*, can be read in the figure of Chaka, whom he identifies with the Zulu: they did not exist as a nation before Chaka, and faded soon afterwards. Thus, he implies, by understanding Chaka, and his reflections in his son Umslopogaas and in his brother, we understand the Zulu:

An attempt has been made in these pages to set out the true character of this colossal genius and most evil man,—a Napoleon and a Tiberius in one,—and also that of his brother and successor, Dingaan . . .

(Preface: 11-12)

For Haggard these key figures epitomise the Zulu spirit as depicted in the romance, and our getting close to them as readers, following the life and story of Mopo, becomes the romance quest into the “true character” of Zulu or African nature. Thus Haggard’s romance characters become allegorical figures.

Despite Haggard’s numerous claims of veracity, it is apparent from the outset that we are dealing with romance, myth-making and allegory¹. However, the claims of veracity are themselves interesting. The direct sources he mentions are not Zulu, but a Mr Leslie, Mr F.B. Finney, a former Zulu border agent, and Mr John Bird, former treasurer to the Government of Natal (it is clear elsewhere that Haggard did have direct contact with Zulu sources: however he acknowledges these names in his Preface). Haggard’s sources, then, offer a colonial perspective which is, in turn, tempered by his own political vision and artistic needs. “The fate of the two lovers at the mouth of the cave is a true Zulu tale, which has been considerably varied to suit *the purposes* of this romance”, he says, adding that “Most, indeed

¹Dan Wylie notes the myth elements evident in much white writing about Shaka, “Shaka and the Myths of Paradise,” *English in Africa* 22.1 (1995), 19-47.

nearly all, of the historical incidents here recorded are true *in substance*" (12, my emphases), and, significantly:

As for the wilder and more romantic incidents of this story, such as the hunting of Umslopogaas and Galazi with the wolves, or rather with the hyænas,—for there are no true wolves in Zululand,—the author can only say that they seem to him to be of a sort that might well have been mythically connected with the names of those heroes. Similar beliefs and traditions are common in the records of primitive peoples, as in the Völsunga Saga.

(13)

The "wilder and more romantic" elements of the romance show, firstly, that, despite claims of veracity, Haggard is ready to move into the rather more undefined areas of the mythic. He characteristically introduces a sense of the numinous, a gothic sense of truth beyond understanding, into his romances. Mysterious objects are typically described as "allegorical"¹. Yet this movement into "wilder and more romantic incidents", into the allegorical, is not a deviation from his more "factual" mode. Read in conjunction, we find that the one comments upon the other. The story of Umslopogaas, Chaka's son and blood², should be read as an allegorical rendition of the true nature of Chaka and the Zulu people as Haggard depicts them, with typical emphasis on masculinity, brotherhood, bloodthirstiness, strength and martial qualities. The episode is part of Haggard's "attempt . . . to set out the true nature of this colossal genius and most evil man" (11-12).

¹See, for example, *Benita*, 21 and 251, and *She*, 233, where Ayesha sings a "strange and most thrilling allegorical chant", and 264, where the statue of Truth is the "grandest allegorical work of Art".

²In Haggard blood often carries the characteristics of the race or family. See Gareth Cornwell, "The Early South African Novel of Race", *Perspectives on South African English Literature*, ed. M. Chapman, C. Gardner, and E. Mphahlele (Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1992) 77, and his reference to J.M. Coetzee's 'Blood, Flaw, Taint: the Case of Sarah Gertrude Millan', *English Studies in Africa*, Johannesburg, 23.1 (1980).

Many of Haggard's romances have English heroes, men following the "ways of action that I love" (9), who quest into African darkness and find out its very nature and its secrets, often changing the course of events in the culture of the peoples they encounter. In *Nada the Lily* Haggard minimizes this device of an intrusive quest, and the white character becomes a scribe. Instead, the story is narrated by one who was present and who, like most Haggardian adventurers, significantly influences events. Like Iago in *Othello*, Mopo manipulates much of the action in the romance. He is therefore the only character who can piece the story together, and it is this authority that Haggard appropriates in the Preface.

Yet, as Edward Boyd has pointed out, Mopo is himself "controlled" by his scribe:

... the character who gives the book more than a merely narrative significance is peripheral and does not even have a name. He is the anonymous white man of the prologue and epilogue, the man through whom the whole story is interpreted and relayed, the unobtrusive narrator and audience, the man who is occasionally referred to and always in paternal terms. He is a symbol, the white colonist who is there symbolically at the beginning of it all and who is still there, with an even more meaningful symbolism perhaps, when it is all over with the great Zulu nation destroyed, shattered and dispersed. *Nada the Lily* is really about that white man. The book is an almost perfect projection of the nineteenth century colonial mind, with all its conflicting and coexistent attitudes¹.

There is a tension, then, in the way the narrative is presented in *Nada the Lily* that does not exist in either *Allan's Wife* or the later *Mhudi*: the narrator who speaks throughout the story is not the final narrator, and "passes on" the narrative to the white man so that he can write it down for prosperity. This is another indication of the defeat of the Zulu nation, which also becomes a defeat of the oral tradition: "Perhaps I have lived to tell you this tale, my father, that you may repeat it to the white men

¹Introduction, *Nada the Lily* (London: Macdonald, 1968) 14.

if you will” (23). Thus it is the white man who becomes the final narrator, manipulated by the author Haggard.

But, despite this passing on of the story, and the important role of the white narrator, as the story progresses it is the narrative force of Mopo that is foregrounded. By contrast, the narrative figure in *Allan's Wife* is Allan Quatermain. His journey is a pilgrimage, a quest towards an ideal which vanishes once found, ultimately leaving him in quest of the place where he will find Stella again. Thus, when in *Nada the Lily* Haggard drops the central narrator figure who is also the quester, he also dispenses with the notion of the individual quest. He replaces the quester with a revenger, as Mopo's prime motive is vengeance. In this way the “New Testament” sense of reconciliation and the search for the ideal, is replaced in *Nada the Lily* by the “Old Testament” sense of vengeance.

Despite the strong sense Haggard gives at the opening of the romance that he is dealing with past times and a completed cycle of history, the romance pattern itself remains incomplete and unresolved. While *Allan's Wife* establishes the ideal of love and virtue as well as the paternalistic social ideal of European-led racial harmony, *Nada the Lily* establishes a world of sterile love, intrigue, social destructiveness that turns the landscape into a wasteland. This negativity in *Nada the Lily* is personified by the Grey Witch of the mountain who holds death in the cave that represents her genital region. And love is replaced by a spirit of vengeance, which harkens back, not so much to Elizabethan romance, but to the revenge tragedies of that era.

The revenger in revenge tragedy typically manipulates events. This is also true of Mopo, who is by nature opposed to the ideals of *Allan's Wife*, so that images of the ideal are largely absent in *Nada the Lily*. Indeed, the ideal is only imaged negatively, through the horror of its absence. *Nada the Lily*

focuses on those elements of the romance structure which depict the evil or morally deficient side, and omits, to a large extent, the moral ideals imaged in *Allan's Wife* by Stella and also by the *locus amoenus*, Babyan Kraals, and the community that lived there.

Nada the Lily, rather, focuses on the equivalents of the Babyan-frau, the war-like Zulu, and the sterile "Bad Lands" elements of *Allan's Wife*. These, in *Nada the Lily*, emerge as the *motif* of destroyed kraals, the Witch Mountain, the cave of death, the "place of dead men", situated in the natural centre of generation in "the lap of the Grey Witch" (phrasing from 125, and 136). They are also depicted in the sterile love of Nada and Umslopogaas, as well as in the wolf people who are spirits of men who ate human flesh and left the bones of their victims between the breasts of the Grey Witch (127 and 129), another image of death in a valley of fertility. And Nada, who is called the Star of Death by Galazi (244), is the antithesis of Stella, the Star in *Allan's Wife*.

As a romance, then, *Nada the Lily* deals thoroughly with only half of the traditional romance elements, those of death, while images of love, life and reconciliation, normally symbolized by the heroine and marriage, are omitted, and the romance ends unresolved. The romance focuses upon those elements that tend to undermine the ideal that romance normally establishes in its resolution. We enter into the "true character of this colossal genius and most evil man", Chaka, and the Zulu people he founded, in order to discover what is lacking, what constitutes their moral deficiencies and how the "white rulers" can "root out the warlike spirit" and "replace it by a spirit of peaceful progress" (11). Thus, *Nada the Lily* describes Haggard's view of African social potential, and suggests that which needs to be "rooted out" in order to establish his ideals of peace and of progress. The romance structure of *Nada the Lily* serves Haggard's imperialistic political vision.

Although *Nada the Lily* is not truly a quest, it does follow the same sort of allegorical patterning: the story leads the reader into the very “heart of darkness”¹, and reveals the “true character” of Chaka, the “most evil man” who founded a people with a “warlike spirit”. This figure, that blends the historical and the allegorical, opposes the “peaceful progress” that is Haggard’s ideal. And thus the allegory leads towards the political, and towards Haggard’s imperialistic solution: the incompleteness of the romance, the lack of a harmonious resolution of love, leaves work to be done by British military forces, missionaries and settler farmers².

The romance, an allegory of the Zulu people who are personified in Chaka, as well as in his relatives, is also Mopo’s story of vengeance. His story begins on the pastoral peak:

Our tribe lived in a beautiful open country; the Boers whom we called the amaboona, are there now, they tell me. My father, Makedama, was chief of the tribe, and his kraal was built on the crest of a hill, but I was not the son of his head wife. One evening, when I was still little, standing as high as a man’s elbow only, I went out with my mother to see the cows driven in. My mother was very fond of these cows, and there was one with a white face that would follow her about. She carried my little sister Baleka riding on her hip; Baleka was a baby then. We walked till we met the lads driving in the cows. My mother called the white-faced cow and gave it mealie leaves, which she had brought with her. Then the boys went on with the cattle, but the white-faced cow stopped by my mother. She said that she would bring it to the kraal when she came home. My mother sat down on the grass and nursed her baby, while I played round her, and the cow grazed.

(23)

¹See the discussion of this phrase on 67, above.

²Haggard notes in *Diary of an African Journey* that “through reading my romances” people had come to South Africa, concluding that he “must have had some hand in providing South Africa with what it so sadly needs, British population” and that his romantic work “appears to have some practical influence in the world” (234: see also 150).

This idyllic scene immediately precedes the first entry of Chaka into the story, and is linked to him because it reflects the pastoral values which Chaka destroys. The description initially establishes a sense of place, ownership and authority: it is “beautiful open country”, where the chief’s “kraal was built on the crest of a hill” (although the destruction of this is suggested in the present possession by the Boers). But more important is the domesticity of the scene and the child’s relationship with his mother, for the scene emphasizes both the maternal and the domestic.

The setting is pastoral or perhaps georgic, focusing on the rhythms of country life: “One evening” the mother and two children went “to see the cows driven in”. The main emphasis is on the mother, “my mother” being the most repeated phrase in the extract, and her feelings of fondness for the white-faced cow, and her peaceful presence: “My mother sat down on the grass and nursed her baby, while I played round her and the cow grazed”. His relationship with his chiefly father is not as strong, as he is not a principal child. This relationship, like Edgar’s in *Lear*, is later destroyed by another’s deceit: “I learned, moreover, that my father had ordered out all the men of the tribe to hunt for me on the morrow and to kill me wherever they found me” (35).

Descriptions of deceit and division dominate over those of love, care, family relationships, domesticity, pastoral peace and ordered husbandry, which are rare in the romance. In the opening pastoral scene, the peaceful world is immediately shattered by the entry of Chaka and his mother, whose request for hospitality is turned down on the grounds of animosity based on differences of “tribe”. This incident, and the unlikely anger of Mopo’s mother, bring about the destruction of the peace and the family unit, and eventually of the entire “tribe of the Langeni”. But, besides the death of the many people involved, Haggard emphasizes throughout the romance that it is also a destruction of a way of life. Chaka

destroys families¹, family values, healthy connections with women (mother and sister in this case), pastoral and georgic settings, and the rhythms of husbandry: in short, Chaka's "warlike spirit" destroys the spirit of "peaceful progress". As Mopo notes at the beginning of his story, with telling tension between the Biblical symbols of garden and wilderness:

If the woman Unandi and her child [Chaka] had died that day on the veld the gardens of my people would not now be a wilderness, and their bones would not lie in the great gully that is near U'Cetywayo's kraal.

(25)

In *Allan's Wife* Haggard notes the difference he perceives between the Basotho, the "peaceful section of the Bantu peoples", and the "Zulu and warlike"². Yet even these peaceful peoples need, according to Haggard, the guidance of a Mr Carson, and Quatermain comments that "for natives, the people were most industrious"³. The warrior ways of the Zulu, Haggard suggests in both *Allan's Wife* and *Nada the Lily*, are opposed to a more settled and progressive existence, and both romances imply that colonization can change the African wilderness into a place of peace, love and justice, the garden. In *Nada the Lily* Chaka's kraal, Duguza, finally becomes "a place of the white men—it is called Stanger": here "the white man gives out justice", where before "Justice never walked", the "white man holds the land" and "goes about his business of peace". Here "young men woo the maidens", where Zulu maids have "kissed the assegai" (178).

¹Chrisman notes "Shaka's murderousness towards the family unit" in *Empire and Opposition*, 135.

²*Allan's Wife*, 94.

³*Allan's Wife*, 100.

This sense that traditional African ways of life stood in the way of progress and needed to be changed by European guidance was often articulated during the colonial period. Shillington, writing about the Southern Tswana says:

Inspired by Robert Moffat of Kuruman, the LMS missionaries believed that the first prerequisite for conversion to Christianity was to develop among the men the industrial habit of agricultural cultivation, through the important innovations of the plough and irrigation. Basically they hoped to change the Southern Tswana pastoral society into communities of small-scale individual farmers, independent of 'heathen' chiefly control. . . . In order to be assured of candidates for conversion, therefore, they had to persuade their 'flocks' to adopt this settled, agricultural way of life¹.

J.S. Moffat, ex-missionary and magistrate, considered the chiefs' authority in the Taung district in 1895 and the 'tribal system' generally were a "bar to all progress"². Thus conversion to Christianity involved making people independent of chiefs, breaking down indigenous authority structures, and changing a mobile, basically pastoral world into a more settled, georgic world. 'Pastoral' is not used in the literary sense, here, but in the factual sense that the people referred to were indeed pastoralists. As Shillington says:

Before the nineteenth-century introduction of irrigation techniques and ploughs, however, the products of cultivation were sparse and undependable, and seldom marketable. Arable production, therefore, was of secondary importance within the Southern Tswana economy of

¹Kevin Shillington, *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana: 1870-1900* (Braamfontein: Ravan, 1985) 17.

²Cape Parliamentary Papers, G5-'96, *Blue Book of Native Affairs*, 51-2, quoted in Shillington, 207. The Southern Tswana were Plaatje's people, and the quotations should be read against the opening pastoral pages of *Mhudi*. By the end of the romance, this pastoral world has disappeared, and has ambiguously been replaced by the progressive image of the couple in an ox-wagon. Here Ra-Thaga is still faithful to his chief, despite J.S. Moffat's concerns about their negative influence.

the early 1800s and hoe cultivation was allocated to the women Cattle-keeping was a more productive and dependable occupation in the early nineteenth century

(9)

In this sense cattle-keeping or other pastoral activities might have meant more freedom to wander and more independence, whereas agriculture would have meant less freedom and more dependence upon weather, tillage and infrastructure, both social and physical. Ultimately, agricultural practice would have meant greater dependence upon integration into a market economy. Adapting a more “settled, agricultural way of life” meant that an area would need to be developed and maintained, and not simply migrated from if conditions became poor.

For Haggard, the warlike spirit destroys the potential for peace, and with it the resultant progression from a wandering pastoral life to the more settled and acceptable georgic. That Haggard felt strongly about the georgic impulse and attached symbolic importance to it can be shown from a few lines he gives to Quatermain in *She*:

After breakfast we went for another walk, and watched some of the Amahagger sowing a plot of ground in scriptural fashion—a man with a bag made of goat’s hide fastened around his waist striding up and down the plot and scattering seed as he went. It was a positive relief to see one of these dreadful people do anything so homely and pleasant as sow a field, perhaps because it seemed to link them with the rest of humanity¹.

¹*She*, 201.

Elsewhere in *She* Haggard makes clear that the Amahagger are cannibals¹. The fact that it is unusual for the Amahagger to sow is, for Haggard, a facet of their moral deficiency: they fall into the warlike category, and are cannibals, and are but tenuously linked to the “rest of humanity”².

Haggard sees sowing as “homely and pleasant”. The word “homely” associates the activity with a settled state, a sense of community, domesticity, and peace. And this is the type of domestic, homely peace that Chaka and his mother enter upon, and ultimately destroy, at the beginning of *Nada the Lily*.

Haggard attaches moral values to certain landscapes and settings, and to certain rural activities. He also, of course, attaches other moral values to the opposite qualities of landscape and activity. And the allegory becomes clear: Chaka, who personifies the warlike spirit of the Zulu, is the antithesis of the spirit of domesticity, of peace, homeliness, pleasantness, and the things that “link them with the rest of humanity”.

Haggard’s undoubted admiration for the Zulu, then, is tempered by his sense that they remain “savages”³. In *Cetywayo and his White Neighbours* he describes the English Resident in Zululand as

¹See, for instance, 84-5, 89, 99.

²Haggard’s use of “link” in this context captures some of the debates regarding evolution current at the time. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1879, CCXL, 298 is cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Compact Edition, 1971): “The early critics of the hypotheses of evolution were not slow to fix upon ‘missing links’ and their nature”.

³While the argument of this study suggests that such blatant racist attitudes are also embedded in the deep structure of Haggard’s romances, it should nevertheless be borne in mind that Haggard’s feelings were perhaps a little more complex. Most of the texts quoted were written when Haggard was a young man, including *Cetywayo and his White Neighbours*, and Haggard notes in his later *Diary of an African Journey* that “we generally modified the hard and sharp views of youth as we grew older” (130, where he also notes, perhaps paradoxically, that “*Cetywayo and his White Neighbours* is a true history”). His admiration and concern for the Zulu speaking people is expressed in chapters seven and eight of *Diary of an African Journey*, which describe a journey through Zululand and his meeting with John Dube, the first president of the South African Native National Congress. Here Haggard records Dube’s objection to the 1913 Land Act (226), and his own apprehension about it (230). Haggard’s undoubted concerns, as well as his objection to colonial attitudes towards the Zulu-speaking people, are perhaps most poignantly expressed on page 231 of

living “in the midst of thousands of restless and scheming savages” (36). Their political system, founded by Chaka who “reigned like a visible Death, the presiding genius of a saturnalia of slaughter” (3), removed settled, domestic human sensibilities, “subordinating all the ties and duties of civil life to military ends” (18). Haggard argues that Chaka enforced this way of life because

... it was found that men without home ties were more ferocious and made better soldiers, and the result of these harsh rules was that the Zulu warrior, living as he did under the shadow of a savage discipline, for any breach of which there was but one punishment, death, can hardly be said to have led a life of domestic comfort, such as men of all times and nations have thought their common right.

(18)

As the imagery in *Nada the Lily* indicates, with its constant killing of children, families, and the destruction of homesteads¹, the Zulu character, as understood by Haggard, has no root in settled domesticity and love, the very ideals depicted in the Babyan Kraals of *Allan's Wife*. The affections of this people have been transferred to warfare:

But even a Zulu must have some object in life, some shrine at which to worship, some mistress of his affections. Home he had none, religion he had none, mistress he had none, but in their stead he had his career as a warrior, and his hope of honour and riches to be gained by the assegai. His home was on the war-track with his regiment, his religion the fierce denunciation of the isanusi, and his affections were fixed on the sudden rush of battle, the red slaughter, and the spoils of the slain.

(18-19)

his diary. Yet these sympathies are, in a complex way, laced through with patronizing, imperialistic attitudes. Haggard thought that “repudiating the British connection is a madness” that would never be popular again—where he quotes Henry Cloete (75) in whose views he “rejoiced” (see also 318).

¹One of many instances is on 314: “. . . I reached the town, and lo! It was blackness and a desolation. ‘Here is the footmark of Dingaan,’ I said to myself, and walked to and fro, groaning heavily.”

Haggard metaphorically merges the warrior and lover: “his affections were fixed on the sudden rush of battle”. In *Nada the Lily* the same thoughts lie in the deep structure of the romance. Chaka’s son, Umslopogaas, loves Nada, but she is symbolically opposed to the settled domesticity of work, and is constantly associated with death: “. . . Nada brought death upon the robbers as on all others” (276). She herself notes that “[l]ittle luck has come to those who have but sought to look on me” (278), and Galazi speaks of her arrival in terms of this association with death: “So the Star of Death has risen on the People of the Axe” (279), adding that “Death walks ever with [Nada]” (284).

Umslopogaas, then, who marries Nada for love, nevertheless marries death. And Nada, who “hoped to give [Umslopogaas] children” (311), dies childless, a symbolically barren beauty. Her feelings and desires of love are frustrated, and the romance resolution that unites her and Umslopogaas in marriage is perverted in their symbolic separation by a rock as she lies in the cave of death, which is also the womb of the Grey Witch.

While her last speeches pick up echoes of a romance resolution in “Speak not of vengeance, husband” (312), this resolution is frustrated, as the title of the following chapter, “The Vengeance of Mopo and his Fosterling”, indicates. Nada’s words expressing her love for Umslopogaas foreshadow Ra-Thaga’s closing words of *Mhudi*: she wants “love, and love only, in my heart, and your name, and yours only, on my lips” (312). Yet Nada’s are dying words, selfish in their focus on one person, as is typical of her love, which is never community-spirited. Ra-Thaga’s, by contrast, are a renouncement of vengeance, a new commitment to life and love, and include obedience to his chief and, by extension, his people¹.

¹The ending of the Lovedale edition (see Voss, 200) is differently rendered in the “manuscript” Heinemann edition (188) in which reference to the chief is dropped.

Haggard's purpose in *Nada the Lily* is to show, through the action, the characters and the romance structure, the nature of the Zulu people and of Chaka, their founder. The wolf (or hyæna) people on the mountain of the Grey Witch are "mythically connected" with Umslopogaas and Galazi¹, and are symbolic of the Zulu spirit: Chaka is the "hyæna man" (227), who laughs like a wolf (64).

The Grey Witch herself is an image of femininity perverted in the core of fruitfulness, and is another of Haggard's comments on the Zulu national character. The witch is a personified haunted mountain: the place of the cannibal's bones lies between her breasts; and the cave of death, where Nada dies and is buried with the misogynist warrior Galazi, is beyond her lap in her very seat of generation.

Even the Zulu "mysticism, magic, and superstition", to which Haggard draws attention in the Preface (14), is not honoured by the name religion, although he points out that the Umkulunkulu, whose character "seems to vary" depending on the individual, may be considered as the equivalent of God in the mind of an "able and highly intelligent person". However, *Inkosazana-ye-Zulu* appears in the text as a divine spirit of vengeance, legitimizing Mopo's vendetta. Thus, admirable and impressive as Haggard found the Zulu people, he nevertheless depicts them as standing against "civilised values", and destroying the things that "link them with the rest of humanity", and in need, ultimately, of the "business of peace" that the British pursue. Mopo's own people do not sustain the idyllic world described above. It is suggested that the community pulls itself apart, that there is an innate self-destructiveness within that leads to the annihilation of the family and the georgic ideal. Chaka strikes Mopo's mother, symbolically depicted as the centre of the pastoral scene, on the head, and she dies:

¹Preface, 13. Haggard also notes here that "there are no true wolves in Zululand", and that the hunting would be "with the hyænas", despite the fact that his descriptions of the beasts and their behaviour are clearly applicable to wolves rather than to hyænas.

Well, they buried my mother, and she was soon forgotten. I only remembered her, nobody else did—not even Baleka, for she was too little—and as for my father, he took another young wife, and was content. After that I was unhappy, for my brothers did not love me because I was much cleverer than they, and had greater skill with the assegai, and was swifter in running; so they poisoned the mind of my father against me and he treated me badly.

(28)

But he and his sister Baleka loved each other: “she clung to me like a creeper to the only tree in a plain” (28). These two, who love each other, are isolated from their own people, who eventually hunt them down, led initially by the witch-doctor, Noma: “Oh! he was evil!—he was cunning as a jackal, and fierce like a lion” (31). Later the search is taken up by his own father: “we saw a party of my father’s men pass searching for us” (39).

Thus love itself, represented by the loving brother and sister, all that remains of the little family unit, is under pressure within Mopo’s own people, his own extended family. In the pursuit that follows it becomes clear, from the evidence of a kraal destroyed by Chaka, that the fugitives are fleeing one form of destruction only to embrace another: “Death is behind us and before us—we are in the middle of death”, says Baleka, whose name significantly means “run”, when they see Chaka’s kraal (44). This image of the woman fleeing, and the final entrapment by death, lies at the heart of this romance. In the various communities of *Nada the Lily* love, family values, the ideal, are all fugitives from the destructive force unleashed and personified by Chaka.

The evidence of the destroyed kraal is simply an elaboration of the earlier destruction of the ideal. If Mopo’s people are cruel, and chase love from their village (much as Lear, in expelling Cordelia, symbolically drives true love from his court), they meet an even greater version of this propensity in

Chaka, a fact symbolically presented when the pursuing warriors are confronted by Chaka outside his kraal. A laughing Chaka appears with a group taking a prisoner to execution. He explains:

Yesterday a kraal of wizards yonder was eaten up by my order—perhaps you two saw it as you travelled. This man and three others attacked a soldier of that kraal who defended his wife and children. The man fought well—he slew three of my people. Then this dog was afraid to meet him face to face. He killed him with a throwing assegai, and afterwards he stabbed the woman. That is nothing; but he should have fought the husband hand to hand.

(48)

The ethics of bravery and warfare are more valuable to Chaka than a kraal that was “eaten up” and a man who “defended his wife and children”. The description of this carnage emphasizes that the georgic ideal, as depicted in *Allan’s Wife*, is under attack:

On the third evening we reached some mealie gardens, and saw that they had been trampled down. Among the broken mealies we found the body of a very old man, as full of assegai wounds as a porcupine with quills. We wondered at this, and went on a little way. Then we saw that the kraal to which the gardens belonged was burned down.

(39)

And, on the same page:

All about lay the bodies of dead people, scores of them—old men, young men, women, children, little babies at the breast—there they lay among the burnt huts, pierced with assegai wounds. Red was the earth with their blood, and red they looked in the red light of the setting sun. It was as though all the land had been smeared with the bloody hand of the Great Spirit of Umkulunkulu.

There is a woman survivor¹, a little way from whom “lay a man dead”, her husband, and: “In front of the woman were the bodies of three children; another, a little one, lay on her body” (40). She describes the attack:

“It was an impi of Chaka, Chief of the Zulus, that ate us up,” she answered. “They burst upon us at dawn this morning, while we were asleep in our huts. Yes, I woke up to hear the sound of killing. I was sleeping by my husband, with him who lies there, and the children. We all ran out. My husband had a spear and a shield. He was a brave man. See! he died bravely: he killed three of the Zulu devils before he himself was dead. Then they caught me, and killed my children, and stabbed me till they thought I was dead. Afterwards they went away. I don’t know why they came, but I think it was because our chief would not send men to help Chaka against Zweete”.

(40)

It is clear from his defence of them that the man loved his family, and from her pride that the woman loved him: the destruction of the family is also a destruction of family values, of domesticity, and is once again described as an attack upon the ideal, in the sense that the mealie gardens themselves are “trampled down”. The whole kraal is destroyed because of a refusal of its people to embrace warfare. The peaceful, the agricultural, the homely, once again, succumb to Chaka’s warlike nature.

Chaka, the Mars figure, is described leading his troops into battle against Zwide, using for the first time the “short stabbing spear”, although the Zulu use of this assegai is anticipated in the text by the first description of Chaka, who as a boy carries “a short stick” (25) with which he kills Mopo’s mother. Other characteristics in the young boy that prefigure the man are his size, his readiness to prophesy, to react to perceived insult (“when he scowled his eyes were like the sky before a thunderstorm”, 24), to attack and kill, and his disdainful treatment of his mother: he drinks from the gourd without offering her— “I think that he would have drunk it all had not his thirst been slaked” (25), Mopo observes. The implication is that Chaka’s character was formed at birth, it is innate. As Chaka’s mother, Unandi, says:

¹A model, perhaps, of Plaatje’s woman survivor in *Mhudi*, who also narrates events, 38.

“As a babe he bit my breast and tore my hair; as the man is, so was the babe” (57). He is not a developing character, but a stock Mars figure. Any development in his character is merely an accumulation of horror, like Marlowe’s characterization of Tamburlaine. Haggard, then, in his characterization and plot, does not give Chaka, and by extension the Zulu people, the chance to be different from what they are in his work. They are set, stock characters, unlike Mzilikazi in *Mhudi*, a Zulu tyrant who, as Plaatje’s story progresses, learns and changes.

Baleka, the fugitive, claims to exist in the middle of death, and so do Chaka’s warriors. However, they dismiss death, exchanging the bride, the heroine of romance, for the bride of death, thus perverting the romance ideal:

What was death? Was it not well to die for the king? Death was the arms of Victory. Victory should be their bride that night, and oh! her breast is fair.

(51-52)

While Haggard expresses admiration for the loyalty and selflessness of the Zulu warriors, he makes it clear that they ultimately run counter to the social ideal. In the above extract a bridal image is used for Victory, for her arms are victorious death. The romance marriage is thus inverted, and becomes a marriage with death for the victory of the Mars figure. This description is followed by a war-song, which is a further inversion of the pastoral ideal:

*We are the king’s kine, bred to be butchered,
You, too, are one of us!
We are the Zulu, children of the Lion,
What! did you tremble?*

(52)

This song is described as the “*Ingomo*, the music of which has the power to drive men mad”, and it is “thrown along from regiment to regiment—a rolling ball of sound”. This image of collective madness is followed, on the same page, by a description of Chaka “stalking through the ranks”:

He walked along like a great buck; death was in his eyes, and like a buck he sniffed the air, scenting the air of slaughter.

Thus, as in *Allan’s Wife*, the morally deficient are linked to madness, the bestial, and slaughter. Mopo summarizes the early Zulu battles, beginning with the slaughter of two thousand Zulu warriors who had retreated in battle. He continues:

That fight was but one war out of many. With every moon a fresh impi started to wash its spears, and came back few and thin, but with victory and countless cattle. Tribe after tribe went down before us. Those of them who escaped the assegai were enrolled into fresh regiments, and thus, though men died by thousands every month, yet the army grew. Soon there were no other chiefs left Then we poured into this land of Natal. When we entered, its people could not be numbered. When we left, here and there a man might be found hidden in a hole in the earth—that was all. Men, women, and children, we wiped them out: the land was clean of them.

(54)

Haggard couples the political expansionism of Chaka with the destruction of the ideal, the family: “Men, women, and children, we wiped them out”. Also, “this land of Natal” is, in terms of human population, turned into a wasteland. Besides being part of the “empty land” justification for colonization, this land which “was clean” of humans suggests a wantonness in destruction. The land is not colonized for settlement, there is no peaceful progress that results from these wars. The only progress is in the fact that “the army grew”: the war-like Zulu grow on warfare, not through a domestic, settled fertility in the family.

Chaka, who epitomises the Zulu spirit, even destroys the very core of his own domestic life. He calls his wives his “sisters” (55), thereby denying a marriage bond based on love. Furthermore, “he would have no children though he had many wives”. Every child born to him by his “sisters” is “put away at once”. He suspects a child would kill him: “when I join the spirits of my fathers let the strongest take my power and my place!” Thus the natural affections of parenthood are denied, replaced by the warrior’s sense of “the strongest”. He also urges Mopo to kill his children: “. . . kill thy children as I kill mine, lest they live to worry thee. The whelps of lions are best drowned” (62).

Those who display love amongst the Zulu, are immediately under threat. When Baleka and Unandi plan to save the baby Chaka has fathered on Baleka, Unandi is initially reluctant, but is won over by Baleka who appeals to her motherly instinct: “Think, thou hast no grandson to comfort thee in thy age[.] Wilt thou, then, see all thy stock wither?”, and referring to Chaka’s other relatives:

“They are not of thy flesh, mother. What? thou dost not harken! Then as woman to woman I plead with thee. Save my child or slay me with my child!”

Now the heart of Unandi grew gentle, and she was moved to tears.

(57)

Their reward for this display of maternal feeling, for affection and protection of their domestic life, is death. Baleka is killed by Chaka who reminds her of the time she spoke secretly to Mopo “*when a child was born to thee*” (172, Haggard’s emphasis).

Baleka’s response is both a demand for vengeance, with an echo of the older Hamlet’s ghost, and a reminder of the destroyed pastoral values of childhood:

“ . . . Swear to me that you will live on and that this same hand of yours shall take vengeance for me.”

“I swear it, my sister.”

“Swear to me that when the vengeance is done you will seek out my son Umslopogaas if he still lives, and bless him in my name.”

“I swear it, my sister.”

“Fare you well, Mopo! We have always loved each other much, and now all fades, and it seems to me that once more we are little children playing about the kraals of the Langeni. So may we play again in another land!”

(173)

She also re-affirms her maternal love for Umslopogaas, and her love for her brother. She is killed, ultimately, for standing against the morals of Chaka, and in this she is consistent with the first image we have of her and Mopo, evoked in the passage by her memory of “little children playing”, then fleeing from forces opposed to love and care.

Similarly, Unandi meets her fate when Chaka discovers that Umslopogaas, his child, is a changeling, and alive.

“Thou wouldst give me a son to slay me and rule in my place; now, in turn, I, thy son, will rob me of a mother. Die, Unandi!—die at the hand thou didst bring forth!” And he lifted the little assegai and smote it through her.

(94)

This murder strikes at the notion of the family in two ways—it is the murder of a woman who refused to murder her son: “Thou wouldst give me a son . . . I . . . will rob me of a mother.”

It is clear from the above that Haggard’s romance structure—as presented in *Allan’s Wife*, with the depiction of the ideal, and of the forces that threaten it—govern *Nada the Lily*, too. The stereotyped,

undeveloped characterization and the division of characters into easily discernible moral camps emphasize this structure. The women characters are often more sympathetically presented, as natural holders of the domestic ideal, but the male characters seem to be too engrossed in warfare to worry about domestic activity, the pasture, and agriculture. If they want cattle, a sign of wealth, they plunder.

Mopo is the one character whose role is ambiguous: he sometimes identifies himself with the Zulu, as when he uses the first person plural: "Such were our battles in the days of Chaka!" (54), and "That is how we dealt with cowards in those days of Chaka, my father." And, typical of the polygamous Zulus, he does not understand monogamous love:

. . . the Slaughterer loved her, and her alone, and that is a strange sickness to come upon a man.

(284)

He also identifies himself with the attitudes to women that Haggard presents as typically Zulu:

It was a boon granted me as *inyanga* of medicine, saying it was well that a doctor should know the sicknesses of women and learn how to cure their evil tempers. As though, my father, that were possible!

(55)

Yet he is opposed to Chaka and his ways. He is not generally opposed to the warfaring ways Haggard attributes to the Zulu, but has a personal grievance, and works his vengeance from that basis. Like the revenger from Elizabethan revenge tragedies, he must participate in the corrupt court, and be part of its blood, becoming guilty by association but always keeping his eye on vengeance. And, like the revenge

tragedy heroes, Mopo occupies an ambiguous moral position, opposing the corrupt, and becoming corrupt himself.

Thus, while *Nada the Lily* can be read as an “unresolved” romance, in the sense that the romance cycle is not completed in the story, it also bears some relationship to the revenge tragedies. Conventionally in these works a tyrant¹, steeped in blood, is killed in order to restore a disrupted world of love and order. Although clearly different in spirit and mode of presentation, the patterning of revenge tragedy is not entirely incompatible with romance. While the forces of evil are not reconciled with those of virtue, they wear themselves out in blood and revenge, and virtue stands in the wings, ready to take over.

There are elements of revenge tragedies in *Nada the Lily*. Baleka’s call for revenge echoes that of the older Hamlet’s, and Mopo’s strategies in dealing with evil are similar to those of the revengers of these plays. Yet there are also, as demonstrated above, many elements which evoke a story with as complete a romance structure as *Allan’s Wife*. The merging of an “unresolved” romance with elements of revenge tragedy suggests that in Haggard’s view the “court” (here Chaka’s court) is out of control, at the expense of the pastoral virtue evoked in the “complete” romance elements. The “Old Testament” edict of vengeance threatens the pastoral, or romance, “New Testament” values of love, harmony and forgiveness. In *Nada the Lily* the romance ultimately remains unresolved and the intriguing revenger is victorious. The answer Haggard seems to suggest is, in dramatic terms, a *deus ex machina*, like Athene who at the end of the *Odyssey*² simply orders that the cycle of revenge is replaced by

¹Chaka knows he is called a tyrant, 55.

²“Odysseus . . . hold your hand! Stop fighting your countrymen, in case you incur the wrath of Zeus the Thunderer.’ / Odysseus obeyed her . . . Then Pallas Athene . . . established peace between the two sides”, 370.

forgiveness and social harmony. In political terms, the British play this role: they come, he implies, to bring justice and peace, and to establish a better society.

And yet, despite the emphasis on killing and the destruction of the domestic ideal, there is a gesture, in *Nada the Lily*, towards a love story, towards the development of the love ideal (also noted on 123, above). The romantic sub-plot turns to tragedy: it has all the elements of romance but, as it bears an allegorical relationship to the main story of Chaka, and Mopo's revenge, it tends towards the same tragic conclusion. The story of Umslopogaas is in some ways a mythic repetition of the larger political story of Chaka and Dingaan, and Nada represents a flawed domesticity, a woman of death, like the Grey Witch. Thus their love itself is flawed, or frustrated: it reaches towards an establishment of the ideal, but falls short.

The ancestry of both Umslopogaas and Nada is of symbolic importance. In romance, as in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, ancestry often determines characteristics, not only because blood is passed on, but also because, in establishing the symbolic nature of a character, ancestry helps the author to typify certain qualities or values. Thus, in *The Faerie Queene* Book I, canto vii, Spenser describes a giant:

An hideous Geant, horrible and hye
That with his tallnesse seemed to threat the skye;
The ground eke groned under him for dred:

(8.4-6)

The greatest Earth his uncouth mother was,
And blustering Æolus his boasted syre;

(9.1-2)

The giant's height threatens the sky, or the heavens, and suppresses the ground, presumably causing the suffering of people. His ancestry reveals that he is associated with the Earth, which in the Neoplatonic scheme is composed of sinful matter, whereas the wind which sires him refers to his boastful, vain nature, and also reveals the weakness of the substance whereof he is made. Thus when he is killed, he deflates:

But, soone as breath out of his brest did pas,
That huge great body, which the Gyaunt bore,
Was vanisht quite; and of the monstrous mas
Was nothing left, but like an emptie blader was.

(I.viii.24.6-9)

Thus the giant's ancestry becomes his nature, and Spenser uses this ancestry as a way of defining him, as a way of making him an image of the earthly failing of human pride.

In *Nada the Lily*, similarly, the lovers Umslopogaas and Nada are children, symbolically, of their ancestry. Umslopogaas is the child of Chaka the warrior and Baleka the fugitive of love, and he merges the nature of both in the duality of his own nature. He is partly warlike, partly a lover. Nada, too, has an ancestry that renders her different from the other women in the romance:

. . . I believe that her blood was not all Zulu, though this I cannot say for certain. At least her eyes were softer and larger than those of our people, her hair longer and less tightly curled, and her skin was lighter—more of the colour of pure copper. These things she had from her mother, Macropha; though she was fairer than Macropha—fairer, indeed, than any woman of my

people whom I have seen. Her mother, Macropha, my wife, was of Swazi blood, and was brought to the king's kraal with other captives after a raid, and given to me as a wife by the king. It was said that she was the daughter of a Swazi headman of the tribe of the Halakazi, and that she was born of his wife is true, but whether he were her father I do not know; for I have heard from the lips of Macropha herself, that before she was born there was a white man staying at her father's kraal. He was a Portuguese from the coast, a handsome man, and skilled in the working of iron.

(65)

Nada is not fully Zulu. Her only Zulu blood is from her father, Mopo who, like Baleka, is placed symbolically against Chaka. Her other blood-lines are Swazi and apparently Portuguese. In *Nada the Lily* the Swazi are presented in an ambiguous light, as enemies of the Zulu, but with some moral deficiencies of their own. Galazi, for instance, has a grievance against them, and they are attacked by the forces of Umslopogaas and Galazi.

While the Portuguese man, the other part of Nada's blood line, is a very minor figure, about whom we know only that he was a "handsome man, and skilled in the working of iron" (65), we have evidence from other Haggard texts that suggest that his being Portuguese, coupled with his fathering a child adulterously, make him morally ambiguous, a miniature of the backsliding white figure¹.

There is a symbolic tension, then, in Nada's moral character: she looks almost white, and "the beauty of Nada was rather as is the beauty of the white people than of ours" (65). The power of her beauty over people is immense, but she is not fully developed as the romance heroine: she is flawed, corrupted

¹In *Montezuma's Daughter* Thomas Wingfield is half Spanish, and his father tells him: "Keep your heart English, Thomas . . . Hate all Spaniards except your mother, and be watchful lest her blood should master mine within you" (15). The unfaithful Mrs Carson, in *Allan's Wife*, is "half a Spaniard—a papist" (13). The slave-drivers in *The People of the Mist* are described in racial terms: "One, their leader, appeared to be a pure-bred Portugee, some of the others were Bastards and the rest Arabs" (75). The Yellow Devil, whose name links him both with his infernal nature and the wickedness of gold, is Portuguese, and "believed in his day to be the very worst man in Africa" (98).

by her blood. Her beauty, instead of leading towards virtue in true Neoplatonic fashion, leads towards death. And ultimately her whiteness tends to be associated with death and sterility, rather than with the fruitfulness of Babyan Kraals, and the heavenly figure of Stella.

Her sterility is associated with the fact that she does not work in the fields as the other women do. This makes the women bitter, and one comments, referring to a lily she carried: “. . . she must bear flowers also. Surely they are fitter to her hands than the handle of a hoe” (280). This bitterness among the women causes strife, and it culminates in an argument about work in the fields:

. . . Nada came from her husband’s hut when the sun was already high, and went down through the rock gully to the river to bathe. On the right of the path to the river lay the mealie-fields of the chief, and in them laboured Zinita and the other women of Umslopogaas, weeding the mealie-plants. They looked up and saw Nada pass, then worked on sullenly. After awhile they saw her come again fresh from the bath, very fair to see, and having flowers twined among her hair, and as she walked she sang a song of love. Now Zinita cast down her hoe.

(284-285)

When the women challenge her to work she argues that men had always kept her from work, and that Umslopogaas had expressly forbidden it.

There is tension, at this point in the romance, between two aspects of the ideal. Both love and the pastoral or georgic ideals of agriculture seem to be corrupted. At the end of the above interchange Zinita’s “face grew evil”, and she eventually betrays Umslopogaas and Nada to Dingaan, working against her own domestic order. And Nada’s love, too, is tainted, corrupting Umslopogaas, and bringing into his own family circle the threat of division and death, and not the “peace and love” she wishes him upon their marriage (283).

Thus, Nada's beauty and love remove her from the georgic, and the working wives destroy Umslopogaas and Nada, and their own community. The ideal, corrupted as it is, implodes.

Haggard suggests that the reason for this corruption is the material from which the ideal of love, peace and harmony is constituted. Firstly, it is African, and not Christian. In *Allan's Wife* Haggard implied that Africa did not provide a good basis from which to construct the ideal, or that it needed something added to it. By itself the African could not form an ideal. Similarly, the love of Umslopogaas and Nada would seem to have an innate self-destructiveness about it, as evidenced by the typical romance split, or separation of the lovers, which ultimately remains unresolved. This separation is brought about by Umslopogaas's wanting to bring a lion cub to Nada as a love token. The gesture is as rash as the token is inappropriate, and Umslopogaas is carried off by the adult lion and is thought to be dead. The device is typical of romance.

Their love, furthermore, seems to have a quality of the incestuous about it. Although the reader knows that Umslopogaas is not Nada's brother, the characters do not know it, and their love grows despite this. While love that grows despite hidden identity is conventional in romance, particularly romantic comedy, their love has an undercurrent of incestuousness which makes it akin to that of revenge tragedies such as *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*¹. Another threat to their love comes about when they are married, and is related to the jealousy of the other wives. Thus the polygamous African way of life also contributes to the vulnerability of the ideal.

¹John Ford, ed. Brian Morris (London: Ernest Benn, 1978).

The nature of the love, absolute and self-centred as it is, also contributes to the collapse. Nada and Umslopogaas become idle, less than themselves. They become neglectful of things that are important to their survival and the survival of their community. Their love is similar in type to that of Dido for Aeneas, which causes Dido to neglect her establishing the city of Carthage, and Aeneas to forget his duties towards the establishment of Rome¹.

However, their characters, too, play a large part in the destructiveness of their love. Nada is languid, inactive and uncreative. With the exception of her love for Umslopogaas, she is self centred. Mopo himself suspects her of deviousness, and her beauty often causes death.

Umslopogaas is a hero figure. Boyd says: "He is the complete archetypal figure of the popular hero"², and is "the greatest neo-mythical figure". Yet, like Macbeth, he is a flawed hero. A reflection of his father Chaka, he also engages in conquering peoples and expanding his empire through warfare. His attributes as a typical Haggardian Zulu warrior are emphasized by his connection with Chaka's blood, but his love for Nada has the effect of making him neglect his warrior nature (until he fights his final battle, for her).

The symbolic meaning of Umslopogaas's character, however, cannot be fully understood without reference to his period as one of the wolf brethren. His relationship with the wolves may be compared to that of another human leader of animals, the Babyan-frau in *Allan's Wife*. Hendrika's relationship with the baboons is part of the allegorical structure of *Allan's Wife*. It reveals her moral position, and in this is related to her beastlike qualities and her madness. Hendrika and her baboons form one moral

¹*Aeneid*, 99 and 105 respectively.

² *Nada the Lily* (London: Macdonald, 1968) Introduction, 16.

pole in the story, and are opposed by Stella: the contrast is between Hendrika—the earthly, the corrupt, the insane, the bestial, the degraded, the inarticulate and the immoral; and Stella—the divine, the pure, the rational, the fully realized human, educated and articulate, the moral. The tension is between the fallen and corrupt, and the ideal. The human leader of the baboons, then, has an important role to play in the romance scheme of *Allan's Wife*. The human leader of the animals in *Nada the Lily* has a similar symbolic function.

In *Allan's Wife* the symbolic importance of the baboons is that they are semi-human beasts, and Hendrika is merely another manifestation of this duality. Haggard mentions the closeness between baboons and humans by referring to “bushmen”, whom he also considers to be man-beast in nature. Thus the baboons are symbolic, and are clearly placed upon the Neoplatonic chain of being, both in an evolutionary and a moral sense. In *Nada the Lily* the connection with the beast is with the wolf, which has a different symbolic value. The wolf is an old symbol of destructiveness and ferocity, as de Vries notes in his *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*¹. He lists the wolf as representing “general evil as the chaotic, destructive element in the universe and man”, also linking wolves with cruelty, murder and the devouring of corpses. They are ridden by the Valkyrie in North European mythology, and are the symbol for the profession of warriors. He notes that the tradition of the werewolf has the human being changing into a ferocious animal. The wolf symbolizes the bloodthirsty, ghoulish side of man's nature. As the wolves in *Nada the Lily* are also ghosts, they help to establish a connection with the more evil side of the spiritual world. But Haggard's wolves are specifically the ghosts of the eaters of human flesh, and thus provide a symbolic link with cannibalism.

¹A. de Vries (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976) 505-6.

Haggard's purpose in writing of "the hunting of Umslopogaas and Galazi with the wolves" is stated in his Preface: the incidents are "mythically connected with those heroes" (13). Haggard describes the sorts of incidents that would explain the nature of his heroes in a romance context. His earlier stated purpose was to "set out the true character of this colossal genius and most evil man", that is Chaka, and his brother, Dingaan (Preface, 11-12). It becomes clear that the mythical material is being used in an allegorical way to "set out the true character" of his heroes. Just as the baboons at Babyan Kap are part of an allegory, the wolves in *Nada the Lily* are an allegorical representation of certain aspects of the heroes and thus reveal the African character. In *Allan's Wife*, through the romance structure and allegory, it was suggested that the African material was flawed. Similarly, through the allegory of the wolves, suggestions are made of a sterile manly world of hunting and warfare, a haunted world that has its roots in cannibalism and the bestial. When Galazi and Umslopogaas don their wolf hides, their natures change:

Galazi stood there awhile, and the moonlight fell upon him, and Umslopogaas saw that his face grew wild and beastlike, that his eyes shone, and his teeth grinned beneath his curling lips. He lifted his head and howled out upon the night. Thrice Galazi lifted his head and thrice he howled loudly, and yet more loud.

(135)

And then Umslopogaas also howls:

Umslopogaas, looking into their red eyes, felt his heart become as the heart of a wolf, and he, too, lifted up his head and howled, and the she wolves howled in answer.

This reversion to base nature, and the closeness of man to beast, is part of the reason that the love between Umslopogaas and Nada, so potentially pastoral, does not work out and becomes self-destructive. Umslopogaas is chief of the “she wolves”, which suggests a male-female relationship on a bestial level. Galazi, the leader of the male wolves, disdains contact with women, and sees it as a destructive sign of weakness.

If the episodes of hunting with the wolves symbolically or mythically represent some aspect of the characters of the two men involved, the place upon which it occurs is also symbolically important. The *locus amoenus* in *Allan's Wife* symbolically represents the ideal in that work, but is surrounded by the peaks called Babyan Kap, a place associated with the baboons which are also allegorically important. Similarly the Witch Mountain symbolizes the gothic dimension of the characters in *Nada the Lily*.

The feminine aspect of the mountain is important, as it counterbalances the masculinity of the two men who hunt upon it. Also, in some respects, it captures the essence of the story in that Nada finds her resting place within the cave situated upon the witch's lap, and symbolically finds her home or her meaning in that cave. Nada is often associated with death, her beauty often leads to death, and her symbolic home is in the cave of death where she is buried with Galazi, the woman hater. Symbolically, then, Nada is eternally separated from her husband in the cave, eternally divorced from love, in an ending that inverts the traditional union and reconciliation of romance.

The Witch Mountain, in fact, symbolizes the very opposite of the romance spirit. Its main focus, in its femininity, is its association with death. This is graphically portrayed in Galazi's description of his first ascent of the mountain. He passes the forest which brings him to the “legs of the old stone Witch who sits up aloft there for ever waiting for the world to die” (121). He then climbs the “legs”:

So I climbed up the steep rock, where little bushes grow like hair on the arms of a man, till at last I came to the knees of the stone Witch, which are the space before the cave. I lifted my head over the brink of the rock and looked, and I tell you Umslopogaas, my blood ran cold and my heart turned to water, for there, before the cave, rolled wolves, many and great. Some slept and growled in their sleep, some gnawed at the skulls of dead game, some sat up like dogs, and their tongues hung from their grinning jaws¹.

Beyond the “knees” of the stone Witch is a cave, and before it are wolves, images of death. Thus, when confronting the essence of womanhood in the genital-like cave, instead of finding fertility, birth and love, Galazi finds death. This topographical representation of women might be contrasted with Spenser’s use of similar topography in his Garden of Adonis, where Spenser wishes to associate the woman’s body with love and fruitfulness. He initially establishes the garden as an earthly paradise:

But were it not that Time their troubler is,
All that in this delightfull Gardin growes
Should happy bee, and have immortal blis:
For here all plenty and all pleasure flowes:
And sweete love gentle fitts emongst them throwes,
Without fell rancor or fond gealosy.
Franckly each Paramor his leman knowes,
Each bird his mate; ne any does envy
Their goodly meriment and gay felicity.

There is continuall Spring, and harvest there
Continuall, both meeting in one tyme:
For both the boughes doe laughing blossoms beare,
And with fresh colours decke the wanton Pryme.

(III.vi.41 and 42.1-4)

¹A parallel incident of similar construction might emphasize the symbolism of this moment. In *Allan’s Wife*, 44, Quatermain is hunting a “blesbock” when he stumbles upon some people:

I reached the ridge, which was strewn with stones, looked over it, and saw—a Zulu Impi!

I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Yes, there was no doubt of it. They were halted about a thousand yards away, by the water; some were lying down, some were cooking at fires, others were stalking about with spears and shields in their hands; there might have been two thousand or more of them in all.

Having associated the ideal of love with the earthly paradise in a *locus amoenus* of fruitfulness and plenty, Spenser turns to the topography:

Right in the midst of that Paradise
There stood a stately Mount, on whose round top
A gloomy grove of mirtle trees did rise,
Whose shady boughes sharp steele did never lop,
Nor wicked beastes their tender buds did crop,
But like a girlond compassed the hight;
And from their fruitfull sydes sweet gum did drop,
That all the ground, with pretious deaw bedight,
Threw forth most dainty odours and most sweet delight.

And in the thickest covert of that shade
There was a pleasant Arber, not by art
But of the trees owne inclination made,
Which knitting their rancke braunshes, part to part,
With wanton yvie entrayld athwart . . .

The *Mons Venus* described by Spenser coyly hides the pleasant “Arber” which is the very place of love and pleasure. The mount also suggests a reclining woman, adopting the position of love. In Haggard the topography suggests the frigidity of a sitting woman, and the cave, exposed as it is to his gaze as he crests the hill of her knees, is surrounded by images of death.

The contrast between the two descriptions is the difference between holy ground and damned ground, or wasteland. Galazi eventually enters the cave, or enters the very place of womanhood, love and life. The symbolism is made clear by the light of the sinking sun: “its darkness was made red with light” (122). The setting sun evokes the passage of time, and death, the red colour suggests both the blood of death and the physical symbol of the female body that the cave represents. Haggard emphasizes these associations by repeating them two pages later:

Now all the place was filled with groans and choking howls, the wolves rolled over and over beneath him who sat above, and in the blood-red light of the dying sun the sight and sounds were so horrid that I trembled like a child.

(124)

The figure of “him who sat above” is the image of death that Galazi finds within the cave. The seated dead man is mere skin and bones, a target for the wolves who jump up to devour him, scraping the back of the cave smooth in their efforts to reach him. The images of death are made more ominous when coupled with the fact of their being found within the anatomical seat of love, and the constant rubbing of the cave’s walls, till the “rock is smooth and shines” (123), is a horrid image of an inverted love, driven by a hunger for bones, within the place of death.

Nada the Lily, then, like *Child of Storm*, deals specifically with the Zulu people, placing them fixedly within the round of a completed cycle of history, a history which ended, according to Haggard, with the Zulu defeat by the British. *Child of Storm* is the second part of the Zulu trilogy which ends with the symbolically titled third volume, *Finished*. Both *Nada the Lily* and *Child of Storm* focus on death, which is associated with a beautiful and destructive woman (who is, in both cases however, not typically Zulu in appearance and behaviour). Both also end with frustrated love, sterility and the sense that vengeful manipulators of events have made sure of the destruction of their enemies.

There is no sense of the ideal created in either book, but rather images of the breakdown of societies, depicted against the backdrop of Zulu and colonial history. Without English characters and their true love, Haggard implies, there is no resolved romance in Africa.

Chapter Five

Romance, Equivalents and Translation

In Haggard's romances Africa is typically portrayed as a counter-European centre of death and despair. It is presented as a place of social and spiritual difference, and of irrational forces (magical and human) that reflect a wild world of unmastered potential.

Unlike Haggard's romances, Plaatje's Africa-centred romance view typically seeks life, rather than death, hope instead of despair; and, instead of difference, he seeks equivalent linguistic and social structures that reflect common humanity; a commonality that aims at understanding and harmony.

Plaatje's political and social objectives coincide with his literary romance objectives. His romance aims at a recognition of the human values of others, legal and political equality, and a sense of common humanity expressed in his notion of "equivalents". For Plaatje "equivalents" are linguistic structures that are essentially the same in various cultures, even if expressed differently. An understanding of these equivalents would help bring peoples to a greater understanding of each other, and to the romance vision of social harmony. The meaning of "equivalents", taken from the title of his book, *Sechuana Proverbs with Literal Translations and their European Equivalents*¹, is expanded here to take in social, as well as linguistic, behaviour. However, this extension immediately prods translation into the political arena.

¹London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1916.

Dan Izevbaye sums up some of the problems associated with translation in the colonial context. Whereas translation “is generally considered important as an activity that enables cultures to communicate through the medium of texts”, he notes that “at the beginning of the colonial era . . . translation became a deliberate instrument for cultural change”, and that the “cultural exchange involved in the translation of texts was an unequal one”:

The effect of translation activities in colonial times has been more culturally disruptive than conservative. It helped to establish the structure of new intercultural relations whose beginning was the initial marginalization of the host cultures and languages. The theory that the translated concept loses much of its initial meaning needs to be modified in light of the African colonial experience. The translated European concept is an invader. It overwhelms its host language by forcing through as much of its original meaning as the receptor language can tolerate: equivalents are often only verbal substitutes for alien concepts, and the invasion is ultimately epistemic¹.

The tone and phrasing might sound far from Plaatje and his ideal of translation. Yet Izevbaye is talking about a *type* of translation, a translation that is parasitic upon a “host language”, that is invasive. As Ridge has pointed out,

The compelling power of a discourse and the valuations inscribed in it are not normally carried intact across cultural boundaries. In fact, the closer a discourse is to being hegemonic for a cultural community, the less likely it is that its valuations will have the same unquestioned status for others².

He gives a concrete example in tracing Colenso’s involvement in the “Langalibalele affair” in Natal, where the “colonial and imperial governments were dramatically at one against the ‘black threat,’ and,

¹“Elesin’s Homecoming: The Translation of *The King’s Horseman*”, in *Research in African Literatures*, 28 (2), 1997, 154.

²Stanley G.M. Ridge, “A Sifting Process: The Truth, Language and Bishop Colenso”, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 88, 1994, 24.

armed with a new legitimating discourse, could make it unacceptable and virtually impossible to hear any other side”¹. Ridge notes Bishop Colenso’s opposition to the miscarriage of justice in the trial of Langalibalele (1873-5), chief of the Hlubi, noting that at root it was a problem of language. He records that Colenso challenged the “official translation” as misrepresenting evidence presented in Zulu, and notes how Colenso worked to reveal the “colonial or imperial bias of the translator”².

Plaatje’s emphasis on interpreting and translation throughout his career also stresses the importance of good, accurate, fair and sympathetic representation of the voice being translated. His moving from court translation, through journalism to literary work suggests how his comments on court interpreting can similarly be extended into political comment and literary work: “I think I have shown that it is impossible for the South African courts to mete out substantial justice without the aid of good interpreters”³. Careful and meticulous interpretation is a condition for justice, he argues, and “there hangs in the balance the liberty of a man”⁴:

The law guarantees protection to the man with a black skin as much as it does to the man with a white skin, and until you get black interpreters to translate for black prisoners, that guarantee exists in theory only and not in practice⁵.

¹“A Sifting Process: The Truth, Language and Bishop Colenso”, 32. See also Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 113-4.

²“A Sifting Process: The Truth, Language and Bishop Colenso”, 9-10.

³“The Essential Interpreter”, in *Selected Writings*, 59.

⁴*Selected Writings*, 54 and 52.

⁵*Selected Writings*, 53-54. Plaatje makes it clear, however, that he is not as concerned with race as with attitude and aptitude, 53 and 60.

Nadine Gordimer's use of the phrase "black interpreters" in the title of her book on African writing¹ shows the natural extension of Plaatje's point from the court-room to the world of literature. Plaatje, as Willan notes, "saw himself as the inheritor of two different sets of literary traditions" and "believed passionately in the importance of interpreting the one to the other"². Yet for Plaatje, Willan argues:

the act of translation was not so much a slavish and meaningless imitation of an alien cultural form, but a demonstration . . . of the capacity of the Tswana language to comprehend and express Shakespeare's meaning. At the same time it served as a claim to vindicate the value of the Tswana language more generally: if Shakespeare could be successfully translated into Tswana, Plaatje believed, then Tswana's claim as a language and culture that deserved recognition and preservation was immeasurably enhanced³.

And, in a phrase already quoted from the Preface to *Mhudi*, Plaatje saw his role as creative writer as *interpreting* "to the reading public, one phase of 'the back of the Native mind'"⁴.

Thus, as Izevbaye concludes, "This colonial use of translation is being reversed in postcolonial African writing. Translation is becoming an instrument for the recovery of identity, of tradition, even of an elusive cultural essence. The reversal began as a practical means of transforming the colonial word without abandoning it"⁵. Or, as Ridge argues in another context:

From its foundation in 1912 [in which Plaatje was involved] and through much of its existence, the oldest of the black political movements in South Africa, the African National Congress, has

¹The book, *The Black Interpreters: Notes on African Writing* (Johannesburg: Spro-cas/Ravan, 1973), unfortunately does not discuss Plaatje.

²"Sol T. Plaatje and Tswana Literature", 98.

³"Sol T. Plaatje and Tswana Literature", 88.

⁴*Mhudi*, Preface, 11, and 10, 34, above.

⁵"Elesin's Homecoming: The Translation of *The King's Horseman*", 154-5. Izevbaye, however, sees the "earliest form of this reversal" in the works of Achebe and Soyinka, "just before Nigerian Independence".

depended on a common language, not only to cross ethnic boundaries, but to participate and stake a claim to participation in a wider, inclusive, national life¹.

Sympathetic understanding of language and the ability to translate sensitively across cultural and social differences are prerequisites for the social harmony aimed at by romance in its most inclusive forms. An ideal of social understanding and harmony implies that one culture does not dominate the other linguistically, culturally, or politically. If the necessary social or linguistic skills to negotiate between cultures are absent, a translator or an interpreter becomes essential to achieve this harmony by translating human actions that may otherwise appear strange or “exotic”, and become the mark of “difference”. There is a distinction between Haggard’s central narrator figure—who emphasizes the otherness, the strange and different, the African gothic qualities of his story, and Plaatje’s narrator—who, as translator or interpreter—explains and humanizes African situations.

Plaatje typically casts his writings in a romance mould, in which present difficulties are highlighted and potential solutions are constantly sought, even if by implication. The discussion of Plaatje’s texts in this chapter will focus on the inter-relatedness of the romance paradigm, the notion of “equivalents” and the role of the translator or interpreter, who—if not personified in the narrator, as in *Mhudi*—may be implicit in the text itself.

The more traditional (basically Shakespearean) romance paradigm, which here has been called the resolved romance, formed part of Plaatje’s outlook. This romance pattern presents a three-tiered time structure: a lost past, a confused present and a resolution which images or looks towards a better future, based both on new social relationships as well as a re-establishment of previously lost values. While

¹“Mixed Motives: Ideological Elements in the Support for English in South Africa”, in *Ideology, Politics and Language Policies: Focus on English*, ed. Tom Ricento (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000) 159.

it celebrates the victory of harmony, the resolution itself, time-bound as it is, is always in a state of tension with the forces which oppose it. The cameo romance resolution in Act Two of *Othello*, when the united Desdemona and Othello are threatened by an Iago who wishes to untune the harmony of their union, illustrates how tenuous a romance resolution is within a mutable world. These and other typical elements will be sought in the budding romance vision which can be found in the works Plaatje wrote besides *Mhudi*.

*The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje*¹ was never prepared by the author for publication and for literary scrutiny, yet the text reveals much about the specific situation Plaatje was in, the political situation of the day, and also Plaatje's *weltanschauung*². Thus, while neither in fact nor in intention a romance, in the literary sense, the diary nevertheless reflects Plaatje's romance vision within the context of a specific historical situation. While he lives through and records the trauma of the Mafeking³ siege, he constantly seeks the romance ideal, and the diary itself thus becomes a type of quest. The *Boer War Diary* is a self-conscious text, the writing of a diary being by nature self-reflective⁴. It has been speculated that Plaatje's use of the diary form, and of the medium of English, was imitated from the English diarists for whom he typed during the siege⁵. Contact with the work of at least three diarists

¹A revised Centenary Edition was published in 1999, entitled *The Mafeking Diary of Sol T. Plaatje*, edited by John Comaroff and Brian Willan, with Solomon Molema and Andrew Reed (Cape Town: David Philip, Oxford: James Currey). Where notes are substantially different this edition may be cited. Textual references throughout are, however, to the first, 1972 edition.

²Comaroff, Introduction to *Boer War Diary*, xxv.

³"Mafeking" is an English corruption of the Tswana "Mafikeng", meaning "place of stones". While the town is now called by its original Tswana name, "Mafeking" is used in this study both to avoid confusion and to reflect the usage in Plaatje's time (although the Tswana is used in quotations where Plaatje does use it).

⁴Comaroff suggests that Plaatje's journal was more reflective than those kept by his British counterparts, however. He describes these as "long on events, short on analysis and even shorter on richly textured self-reflection", Preface to *The Mafeking Diary*, 4.

⁵Comaroff, Introduction, xviii.

would have given Plaatje stimulation, a fellow feeling, a purpose and a broader sense of the possibilities of the genre, including subject matter and style. He writes:

I have started keeping an official diary from today, all of the doings in connection with Native Affairs. This is somewhat bothersome as besides this one I am typing Mr. Bell's, Dr. Hayes' and Capt. Greener's simultaneously.

(82)

So much keeping of diaries within the context of a specific, time-limited situation such as the siege suggests that the authors were aware of the unusual quality of that situation, the special sense of historicity and the importance of the time being lived through. Ultimately, the diary form emphasizes a self-conscious awareness of time in general, even when entries reflect a lack of activity:

As quiet as last Saturday. 'Sanna' only sent in two shells (7a.m.) which fell short of the town. The day was uneventful.

(Monday, 19th February; 97)

The siege took place within the wider context of land conflicts between the Barolong and Boers. The British, who had their own interests in the Transvaal, offered some protection to the Tswana from Boer expansionism¹. Thus the conflict offered the Tswana the possibility of a new political dispensation should Britain defeat the Boers².

¹A brief historical summary of the interaction between these groups before 1900 can be found in Maylam, Paul, *A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s* (London: Croom Helm, Cape Town: David Philip, 1986) 119-27.

²Maylam notes: "During the war many Africans had identified with the British cause in the expectation that a British victory would bring political and economic advancement for blacks", 138.

Since the medium of siege tactics is time, those involved would have had a heightened sense of temporality. Thus, even seemingly dull day-to-day survival itself could become politically, spiritually and morally charged, and a way, ultimately, of thwarting the Boers. As noted in Chapter Two (55), an inclusive awareness of time, in which “expectation” for the future is balanced by “historical awareness”¹, but where resolution is nevertheless continually sought, is an intrinsic part of Shakespearean and Spenserian romance.

The entire text of the diary can thus be read as operating within the typical romance three-tiered time structure. The three tiers would reflect the times before, during and after the siege, with the diary itself beginning (and truncatedly ending) *in medias res*, in the trough of confusion. While the diary form typically concentrates on the present, there are reflections on the past, or “historical awareness”, and the future, or “expectations”, in the text.

The present is an inconvenience that will pass with time, in the same way—for instance—that Viola says in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, a romantic comedy:

O Time! Thou must untangle this, not I;
It is too hard a knot for me t’ untie.

(II.ii.40-41)

In the case of Plaatje’s Mafeking the issue, similarly, was to survive the passage of time till relief was brought by the troops from England, who were moving up from the Cape. The whereabouts of these

¹The tension between “expectation” and “historical awareness” is briefly discussed by Kole Omotoso, *Season of Migration to the South*, 141.

troops and the timing of their arrival was a matter for constant conjecture. This imperial relief was coupled in Plaatje's mind with a strong sense of divine justice, and the defeat of the Boers.

In Plaatje's diary a happier past is reflected on different levels—in Barolong history, remembered social liberties, and memories of his domestic situation. Plaatje saw the Barolong past as a time of liberty, political power and independence. Describing the physical site of Mafeking, which was originally chosen for strategic reasons, he says:

The Stadt had such an advantage over the situation that it was quite impregnable amongst the trees in the Molopo—while the surroundings are a wide, wide plain which one can examine from the rocks without being observed. That is one reason why Montsioa held out against the Boers for so many years.

(31st October; 5)

Later he adds:

. . . Mafikeng has since its creation never been cursed by being a Boer Laager, despite strenuous endeavours to make it such. It still bears the name given it by Tau's band of Barolong, who came from Lake Ngami in about 1750. They were a peaceful lot of men, yet they plundered everybody who dared interfere with their migration, and earned for themselves the title of 'Baga Rungoana le Bogale'.

(10th December; 38-39)

Comaroff's note indicates that the latter praise expression can be rendered literally as "they who are uplifted and fierce", which could imply supernatural inspiration¹.

¹Comaroff, (ed.) *Boer War Diary*, 151, note 42.

Despite Plaatje's continued confidence, the siege threatened this historical liberty, just as it currently denied the personal liberty of the inhabitants. On a rare morning of silence from the Boer guns (owing to a British attack), Plaatje enjoys a sense of the now lost freedom:

The Dutch snipers being conspicuous with their silence, one walks with the privileged liberty of a fellow in Jones Street, Kimberley.

(29th November; 18)

Kimberley, being part of the pre-Union Cape Colony, was often seen to be comparatively liberal in its racial attitudes, and Plaatje hoped that the Colony laws would spread to the rest of Southern Africa, instead of the threatening Boer Republic laws. Thus Plaatje's "privileged liberty" in the streets of Kimberley reflects what Plaatje took to be his right, at this moment denied. A similar sentiment is expressed in the entry for 3rd January 1900 "and we walked about as freely as if we were in Cape Town" (65).

At the time of writing Plaatje was recently married, with a young son, and although the family's life had been characterized by separation, the memories of his family are described in terms of pastoral and religious peace:

Still, I remember last year when I spent three lengthy, solitary days in old Ma-Diamond's beautiful garden and she fed me with the first issues of her fructirous grove in fruits and greeneries. I told her how happy we would both be if my kind little wife, whom she very much longed to see, was with us; we were consoled, however, by the knowledge that she was on that day presenting my first-born to his Saviour under a magnificent Christmas Tree somewhere, and that she would sooner or later bring us our darling little boy who would positively be the happiness of our hearts next Christmas (today), in the same garden, the cultivation of our aged lady friend.

(24th December; 49)

These images from the past, whether of earlier Barolong glory, a remembered personal liberty or a family pastoral, are now interrupted by changing political conditions. War is declared and the Boers surround the previously undefeated Mafeking, denying personal liberties and enforcing continued family separation. Plaatje, describing Christmas time, evokes an Easter image in which he is “nailed to a sick bed with very poor attention—worst of all, surrounded by Boers” (24th December, 49). The siege can thus be seen as a manifestation of the present, of the tragic trough of confusion, sited within the broader time-frame of a lost past and a future imagined to be better.

Plaatje’s focus in the diary is naturally on the present, but just as his views of the past can be gleaned from his entries, the future, too, is implicit in his writing. A typical entry, “. . . future operations against the Transvaal, when the Troops cross the border” (26th December 1899, 51) indicates that Plaatje shared the general feeling that a British victory was ultimately inevitable, and that reinforcements from Britain would turn the tide of the war. Indeed, the Boer leader, General de Wet, also expressed this opinion: “We knew, I need scarcely say, that humanly speaking ultimate victory for us was out of the question—that had been clear from the very beginning”¹.

Plaatje and other blacks in the siege expected their lost freedom to be restored, even expanded, by British victory. He speaks of a “miscellaneous collection of Natives from Johannesburg who expected the war to last a month or less”, “. . . after which they would return to the revolutionized Rand” (64). He notes on 24th February of the same year: “We will get Transvaal” (100). These references by Plaatje to the lifting of the siege and ultimate British victory imply that the expansionist, Republican

¹Christiaan Rudolf de Wet, *Three Years War*, no translator acknowledged (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1902) 79.

Boers, often referred to in the text as the “enemy”, would no longer threaten the lives and liberties of blacks. For Plaatje “enemy” was not merely a military term, but implied a moral or spiritual enemy as well. His confidence of a future victory that would re-establish, in a changed form, lost values and liberties from the past was also a reflection of his belief in Providence¹.

Direct references to the future in the text are limited, but always implicit, though at times tempered by the increasing horror of the siege and a frustrated despair. Entries at the beginning of the diary are more optimistic than later, when the reality of a long siege and trying conditions had set in. As early as 6th November 1899 (7) Plaatje notes that the Boers had moved “Au Sanna”, the siege cannon: “They must have got a scent about the arrival of the Troops and are temporarily stationing her there, preparatory to her departure”. (This optimism, though typical, is tempered in the next part of the entry, which notes that she was firing from her new position). Ten days later Plaatje notes:

Heavy rains fell during the night Bechuanaland grass, after a rain like this, takes a very short time to grow and by this day next week we will have the country as green as a garden. This, and the undoubted nearing arrival of the Troops, will render Rantho’akgale’s² dream of starving us out an impossibility.

(16th November; 12)

The merging of pastoral imagery and the Troops’ arrival is continued in the next day’s entry:

¹His faith in “Providential Protection” is expressed in entries from Thursday 7th December, 1899 to the Saturday of that week (33-36).

²“Rantho’akgale” was the name given to the Boer General Piet Cronje. Comaroff’s note that the name may be translated as “an old sore”, suggesting a long-time enemy (*The Mafeking Diary*, 176) is strangely at odds with Willan’s note that the name means “a person of great knowledge and wisdom, commanding respect”. However, it is typical of Plaatje’s humanity and careful phrasing that in 1932 he is able to describe Cronje, listed as amongst Chief Montsioa’s Transvaal friends, as “a former adversary [of the chief] and the noblest Minister of Native Affairs that ever sat in a Kruger cabinet”. After this qualified compliment, Plaatje notes that Cronje “spoke the Barolong tongue almost like a Native and answered to the Native sobriquet of ‘Rantho’akgale’”, *Selected Writings*, 419 (where Willan’s note is also found).

What a pleasant morning. One often wishes that it could be mutually agreed that both sides should lay aside their guns and go out picnicking, and not resume operations until Monday morning, January 1st, when the Troops will be in the country for certain.

(13)

Plaatje's sense of well-being at this time is reflected at the end of this entry. His healthy pony and income generated by extra work, both enable him to "keep pace with the hard times", and he feels he has good reason to "sing the twenty-third psalm". This pastoral psalm, reflecting both on the present and the future, contrasts suffering with providential care, opening with "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want".

In times of increased despair Plaatje expresses his faith negatively, as in the entry for 18th February (97): "I am wondering if the heavens, like the Imperial Government, have also shut their ears to our prayers". This entry interestingly unites the arrival of the Troops, and the defeat of the Boers, with the will of the heavens. The following frustrated entry also expresses a despair through which an underlying faith shows:

Another shell burst in the south; we wonder how long this is going to last. Instead of getting brighter, the prospect in front of us is darkening itself. I am inclined to believe that the Boers have fully justified their bragging, for we are citizens of a town of subjects of the richest and the strongest empire on earth and the Burghers of a small state have successfully besieged us for three months—and we are not even able to tell how far off our relief is.

(3rd January; 66)

Plaatje still sees the relief of Mafeking as a certainty, as is evident in the final phrase, "how far off our relief is", and thus as a matter of time. His claim to, and ultimate expectation of, liberty is expressed in "we are citizens of a town of subjects of the richest and strongest empire on earth", which is also a

political claim of equality with the white citizens. The common identity expressed in “we are” indicates, that—for Plaatje—the siege community had one political purpose and a common political right, expressed in the words “citizens” and “subjects”, and common expectations from “the richest and strongest empire”. The frustration of the moment, expressed in this entry, reveals what Plaatje’s usual expectations—indeed, demands as a citizen—were.

Any expectations for a better future were, however, for the present frustrated by the siege. Plaatje notes the significant date that marked the dawn of the twentieth century, which for many had become a symbol of hope for a new world order:

The first day of the first week of the first month in 1900. Not at all a lovely morning. The distant pop of the Mauser distinctly shows that there is no holiday for poor beleaguered us

And, in the same entry (although this seems to have been written later in the day):

In the afternoon David stood watching a train of merry girls, amidst whom were Meko’s sisters-in-law in the best of millineries, celebrating the New Year with several jolly games. All of a sudden ‘Sanna’ came round and spoiled the whole thing. Mr. Briscoe’s garden is an intolerably near spot for 94 pounds of mortar to burst while a train of giggling girls are enjoying the first day in the first year of the twentieth century near Bokone

(63)

Plaatje’s sense of the significance of time, the dawn of the twentieth century, symbolized by the attempted celebration of the “merry maidens” (l. 27), and by the pastoral image of Mr Briscoe’s garden, are in tension with the reality of “Not at all a lovely morning”, “no holiday”, “poor beleaguered us”, “‘Sanna’ [the Boer siege gun]”, “spoiled the whole thing” and “94 pounds of mortar”.

In terms of the romance scheme, the shattering of a pleasant past and of pastoral peace ushers in the tragic trough of confusion, suffering, pain, separation and death. However, there is the constant optimistic attempt to find the ideal, to appreciate life amidst the constant threat of death: “I have never before realized so keenly that I am walking on the brink of the grave”, reads one entry, while another says that “one fairly concludes that life is really worth living, even during a siege”¹.

As in the tragic trough of romance, the passage of time is the medium of resolution, as may be seen from the entry for Saturday, 18th November, 1899, where it is also evident that the besieged had expected to be relieved well before the turn of the century:

We have just got definite information that the Troops landed at Cape Town on the 4th Instant and that they are given 6 days rest prior to proceeding north. There is a general dismay in Fool’s Paradise where their movements were not being studied before telegraphic communications were cut between this and the civilized world. Bets were freely entered that they would be here on the 30th Ultimo, then the Sunday after, etc., etc.; and bets are still pending that they will be here day after tomorrow. I have the honour of not sharing this dismay for, having expected them to reach here on the 20th, I prolonged my period to the middle of December when October went past and we had heard nothing of their whereabouts.

(13)

While the constantly expected arrival of the troops is linked to a sense of futurity, of an impending better life, of both physical and political liberty, and of a moral victory over vice, the “Fool’s Paradise” mentioned in this entry reflects a typical romance state of present confusion in the siege community (Plaatje’s “middle of December”, it transpires, is also mistaken). The truth of the situation is typically not clear to participants in the action: in Shakespearean romance this confusion is symbolized by disguise

¹ 7th December; 32 and 14th November; 11, respectively.

and mistaken identity, and, as argued by Peterson¹, a misunderstanding of the nature of time by the characters themselves.

Confusion and a search for truth are, indeed, part of the human condition: Spenser's image of the veiled Una in *The Faerie Queene* (I.i.4.4) suggests that truth will be veiled from the start of post-lapsarian humanity to the Biblical end of time. However, the Mafeking siege situation tended to emphasize this confusion. Because of a lack of news, people resorted to interpreting visual and audible signs, guessing at time, trying to find what the reality was, and what the future would reveal.

Thus, framed between brief entries that reflect either a longed-for pastoral past or a potentially romance future, the main body of the diary concentrates on the confusion and inconvenience of the "now". However, the notion of the present is complex in a diary, which typically reflects the mundane everyday, on one level, but might also deal with a broader summary of recent events, as well as with wider issues raised by such events, or with more general issues of the epoch. The following entry conveniently shows these distinctions:

We rose in high spirits preparing for a heavy day's shelling. We wonder whether yesterday's rapid outburst was because they received a fresh supply of ammunition or that Philjune told them that they had just begun to do damage; but they only hit harder. During the day only an occasional Mauser and about six bangs from their thinner artillery kept us cognizant of the fact that we are beleaguered. What a contrast to unfortunate yesterday.

As a rule the 'Native Question' has, I believe, since the abolition of slavery, always been the gravest question of its day. The present Siege has not been an exception to this rule for Natives have always figured pre-eminently in its chief correspondence.

(8th December; 33)

¹*Time, Tide, and Tempest*, 16.

Here the diarist writes of firstly, the day's events, within, secondly, the context of the fairly immediate past. Thirdly, he discusses the more historical present ("The present Siege") within, fourthly, the context of the issues of the epoch ("the gravest question of its day").

Besides being helpful for defining different time frames within the present, this extract also serves to underline that, for Plaatje, race ("the Native Question") is the most serious issue of the present age. This gives us both a sense of Plaatje's constant underlying theme, the keynote of his writing, as well as a useful analytical tool. It is instructive to read the individual entries of the diary within the broader context of the race issue.

In terms of race Plaatje's philosophy as reflected in the diary is quite clear: he notes and objects to racism. Yet Plaatje does not slip into reactionary "pro-black and anti-white" racism: rather he judges on merit, showing already the seeds of the philosophy he articulated later: "nobility and valour, like depravity and cowardice, are not the monopoly of any colour . . ." ¹.

While the siege diary focuses on the present, tensions underlying the entries are reminders that, for Plaatje, the above non-racial philosophy is the ideal constantly strived for, and that he interprets the war as a battle to achieve this ideal. The Boers in the diary represent expansionist Republican racism, and the British are presented as opposing this. Plaatje typically casts this battle within the context of a Providentially governed universe, and he has a strong sense of the moral orders of good and evil. The battle, then, is at root a moral battle, the desired outcome of which is non-racial social harmony.

¹*Selected Writings*, 212.

However, the war represents one level of the present: the everyday life within the line of investment represents another level of struggle. Plaatje's ideal of human equality is clearly absent amongst the separated communities within the besieged town:

P.S. The following shows that there is a very great difference between white and black even in a besieged town: "Fresh meat rations to be reduced to 3/4 lbs. From Monday inclusive." It is a notice by Capt. Ryan, D.A.A.G., to the townites.

(13th January, 74)

The white "townites" were much better off than their black fellow citizens in the Stadt¹. Plaatje's phrase "even in a besieged town" emphasizes the inappropriateness of this situation in a community that should ideally have been drawn together by the siege, expressed by "we are citizens of a town of subjects of the richest and the strongest empire on earth" (3rd January, 1900, 66). However, in an earlier entry Plaatje notes that the *Mafeking Mail* "regards the native as a mere creature" (14th December; 45). Thus, although Plaatje's ideal may have been racial equality and harmony, he was not blind to its absence in the everyday life of the siege community.

However Plaatje, for whom fallibility "was not the monopoly of any colour", did not exclusively blame the English for lack of harmony. In a description of a meeting between the Civil Commissioner and the Barolong, Plaatje speaks disparagingly of the Barolong chief Wessels, who "threw a different complexion on the otherwise excellent harmony which characterized the commencement of the proceedings". Plaatje, the translator at this meeting, comments:

¹See Comaroff's note 42, *Boer War Diary*, 157, where he observes that rationing in the *stadt* "was much tighter than in town". The difference in the rationing of food for whites and blacks in Mafeking, and the resultant black suffering, is discussed by Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus, 1992) 405-410.

It is an excellent thing that the C.C. is so patient or else things could happen that would cause great joy in the Boer laager when they became known there.

(21st January; 78)

This extract depicts Plaatje's political and romance vision in cameo: his ideal is "excellent harmony" between the races, facilitated by the leaders of British and Barolong with the aid of the "essential interpreter". The setting in this extract is a meeting, where negotiations are conducted with a translator, on the home ground of the Barolong. This implies effort on the part of the Civil Commissioner to implement participative governance, on the African model of the *kgotla*¹. Disruption of this by Wessels, who undermined Plaatje's efforts as translator as he "misconstrued and misinterpreted everything said", poses the threat of a Babelish chaos which would benefit the more threatening, more racist enemy outside the town.

Harmonious relationships, then, between British and Barolong, help keep the threatening Boers at bay, and in this tableau Plaatje indicates his romance leanings towards the preference for a harmony which will lead to peace, a harmony in which misunderstandings are absent. Yet, Plaatje notes with concern the ever-present potential for defeat, for chaos, for tragedy, in the image of the Boers rejoicing in their laager. Generally, his descriptions of confusion are telling: "The Game Tree fiasco appears to have been a heart-rending burlesque" (29th December, 1899, 55).

The context for these remarks can be established by examining the way the diary refers to the broader historical battle of the Anglo-Boer War. Blacks served as labourers, and sometimes fought, on both

¹Kevin Shillington notes that Tswana men attended the regular *kgotla* "to discuss and settle the administrative and judicial affairs of the local ward or village", *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana: 1870-1900*, 10.

sides during the war, and it is not easy to make sensible generalizations about the attitudes blacks had towards either the British or the Boers.

While on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape bitter Wars of Dispossession¹ were fought between Briton and Xhosa, in the northern Cape Colony the Tswana appealed to Britain for protection against Boer expansionism. Furthermore, British interests were manifold: Britain's capitalistic interests, which played a large part in her involvement with the Transvaal, may have been at variance with the more liberal spirit of Britain which had seen the abolition of slavery, and the legal ideal of equality before the law. Thus, Britain could show a different aspect to different people. Plaatje usually argued that Britain, which governed the Cape during his youth, protected—against Boer aggression—the “civilized laws of Cape Colony”², which allowed for social harmony, equality before the law, and which offered a limited African franchise. This franchise was being used by many blacks, after the Wars of Dispossession, as a non-violent form of struggle to regain lost rights. Mbeki says:

The young men who qualified at these [missionary educational] institutions in the Cape soon registered as voters, and entered a new arena to take up the struggle which was drawing to a close on the field of battle. This first-generation product of the mission schools threw themselves unreservedly into the task of recruiting and helping those who could fulfil the conditions for qualifying as voters. According to the Cape constitution, the franchise was open to any man—black or white—who occupied property worth at least £25 or earned at least £50 each year. It is not difficult to see that given the enthusiastic recruitment, the African voters would, in the course of time, have returned to parliament a significant number of MPs to play a decisive role in influencing legislation for the benefit of all the people of the Colony³.

¹Mbeki's term, from *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: A Short History*, 1.

²The phrase is from “A South African's Homage”, in *Selected Writings*, 211.

³*The Struggle for Liberation*, 2.

Many black people in the northern Cape, then, were in support of British war efforts. As Peter Warwick notes about black communities in the area at that time:

The Boer forces . . . were intent . . . upon reshaping social relations in the interests of the predominantly Afrikaner farming community, which before the war had been under some pressure from the success of black peasant agriculture and a scarcity of farm labour. The eager participation of black peasants and artisans in the British war effort was closely related to defending their roles as citizens with control over their own skills, produce and labour¹.

Plaatje's identification with British interests during the siege, then, is not inconsistent with his overriding concerns with the "Native Question" and his search for social justice: his opposition to the Boers was similarly based on these concerns. Thus Plaatje generally refers to the British in favourable terms, and includes himself and the entire siege community in their interests, often expressed by a collective "our". British action is often seen as noble and gallant, as the diarist saw virtue as being on their side:

The English are among the foremost warriors of their day. Here we have only a few soldiers representing the wisdom of their nation in a most demonstrative manner. They not only invent miracles but know how to utilize them at random, under thunder and lightning, through all circumstances.

(Tuesday, 19th December; 46)

The Boers, conversely, are depicted as vicious, deliberately evil, "Woman Slayers" (8 March 1900, 110) and racist. Thus, morally, Plaatje saw the scale of justice tilting in "our" favour:

We spent this day in church. The pulpit was occupied by Mr. Lefanya, who warned his hearers to be very careful in their prayers, and remember that their God was the enemy's God: we, however, have the scale in our favour as we have never raised our little finger in molestation

¹*Black People and the South African War: 1899-1902* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1983) 124.

of the Transvaal Government, or committed an act that could justify their looting our cattle and shooting our children in the manner they are doing.

(Sunday, 12th November, 1899; 11)

Plaatje's constant use of contrasting musical and tempest imagery—with the same symbolic force with which both are used in Shakespeare's plays¹—encodes this perceived moral and political divide between the competing forces. From the opening entry Boer gunfire is described in terms of a tempest:

Sunday, 29th [October, 1899]

Divine Services. No Thunder. Haikonna terror . . .

But if the Boer firing is associated with destructive thunder and terror, the firing of the British is quite differently described in the same entry:

. . . no music is as thrilling and as immensely captivating as to listen to the firing of the guns on your own side. It is like enjoying supernatural melodies in a paradise to hear one or two shots fired off the armoured train; but no words can suitably depict the fascination of the music produced by the action of a Maxim, which to Boer ears, I am sure, is an exasperation which not only disturbs the ear but also disorganizes the free circulation of the listener's blood.

(1)

Plaatje then describes how the residents of Kanya mistook, joyfully, the sound of Boer firing for that of the British:

. . . they have been entertained . . . with the melodious tones of big guns, sounding the "Grand Jeu" of war, like a gentle subterranean instrument, some thirty fathoms beneath their feet . . . they have listened to it . . . with cheerful hearts, for they just mistook it for what it is not:

¹G. Wilson Knight notes that the "basic symbols of tempest and music in vital opposition unify Shakespeare's world", *The Shakespearian Tempest* (London: Methuen, 1953) xxiii. Much of his argument in this text could also inform readings of Haggard and Plaatje.

undoubtedly the enrapturing charm of this delectable music will give place to a most irritating discord when they have discovered that, so far from it being the action of the modern Britisher's workmanship going for the Dutch, it is the "boom" of the State Artillerist giving us thunder and lightning with his guns.

The use of the words "fathoms" and "enrapturing charm of this delectable music" give just a hint of Ariel's supernatural music in *The Tempest*. The entertaining British guns are "melodious", "gentle", "delectable", with "enrapturing charm", or, more prosaically, they reflect "the modern Britisher's workmanship".

Boer guns, on the other hand, produce "most irritating discord", they "boom" and give "us thunder and lightning". The entry for 7th December also combines musical and tempest imagery:

I wonder why the Boers are so "kwaai" today. During the last few days we seldom had a "Sanna" shell during the forenoon, and then a day's complement was only between 2 and 4, but this morning we had 7 between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. from "Sanna" only, besides a heavy thunder from the smaller artillery and a shower of Mauser which played the accompaniment.

(31)

A musical simile is used to describe how the armoured train silenced Boer firing: "It was like a member of the Payne family silencing a boisterous crowd with the prelude of a selection she is going to give on the violin" (29 October 1899, 1). The British firing, in this comparison, is likened to a cultured woman violinist using the authority of her music to still the audience. Christ's calming of the storm, Cassio's depiction of Desdemona having a similar influence, and Prospero's storm, "so safely ordered"¹, are not far from the symbolic essence of this description of the British guns, while the Boers are the "boisterous crowd", uncultured, unappreciative, in need of silencing.

¹*Matthew* 8, 23-27; *Othello* II.i.67-73; *The Tempest* I.ii.29.

Similar imagery is reflected in “Distant howls in the Dutch Reformed Church told that they held service there for the first time today” (Sunday, 26th November, 18) where the “boisterous crowd” takes on a bestial sound. The image also suggests a corruption of Christianity, a charge Plaatje emphasizes in *Native Life in South Africa*¹.

The tension between the British and the Boers is set up, then, not only in the fact of the war, but also symbolically in Plaatje’s description of day to day events. The conflict, as well as the partisan role of the Barolong, is graphically described in the entry for 9th December (36):

Too little, if anything, has been said in praise of the part played by that gallant Britisher—the Barolong herdboys. Cattle are now grazing on what may be termed ‘disputed’ territory, just where the Dutch and English volleys cross each other; and it is touching to see how piccaninnies watch their flocks, and how in the bright sunshine along the wide plain south and west of the Stadt—especially when after filling his belly with a lunch of black coffee and beef—the Dutch artilleryman would turn his attention to them, and sate his iniquitous whims by sending a shell right in the midst of a group of them. God would guide it flying over their little heads and it would kindle a mortal fire near them: it is an imposing sight to see them each running after a fragment and calmly picking it up. They would quietly mind their stock or drive them home under a severe shell fire with the tenacity of the African in all matters where cattle are concerned².

(9th December 1899, 36)

The pastoral innocence of the children, spiritually marked by the nativity hymn image of shepherds who “watch their flocks”, is disturbed by the “iniquitous whims” of the Dutch. Having established their innocence, Plaatje sees the safety of the herdboys as divine protection against the evil of mortal fire. Plaatje places the Barolong herdboys, with all his pastoral innocence and bravery, squarely on the side

¹See 148, for instance.

²In Plaatje’s terminology, reflective of his political vision, “British” is used not only to represent Britain as Empire, and also may be used to represent the Barolong and other African races as loyal members of the Empire. Another little boy, Phalaetsile, “of only about 7 years old” escaped from the Boers and “made an earthen plan of the Big Gun fort” by way of news and intelligence for the besieged: “He really has sympathy for Britain in his little heart”, Plaatje notes (8th January 1900, 72).

of the British, and the Boers are presented as a threat to all that is pastoral and innocent. However, the innocent African pastoral, including the bravery and tenacity of the boys, and their honour in dealing with cattle, is blended with the notion of the “gallant Britisher”: the herders’ role in looking after food while under fire is seen here as an important part of the war effort.

The equation of “gallant Britisher” and “Barolong herd” implies a unity of purpose, a unity of identity, even, between members of these groups. This ideal of unity within the siege community was not, however, always evident in everyday life within the line of investment. The equation represents Plaatje’s own political and social ideal of equality, the broader issue—in his view—of the war, than the day-to-day reality.

There was, in fact, much difference and tension in the everyday world of the investment, as is evident from Plaatje’s entries. This is graphically illustrated by the physical divide between the Stadt (the original Mafikeng) and the white town (the Mafeking of the text) as well as in the different lifestyles which included, in the siege, different rations being allocated to each group.

Thus, references to the siege community in terms of unity or oneness of purpose often reflect Plaatje’s dogged emphasis on the ideal which he saw as potentially present in society, and the realisation of which he anticipated from the war effort. Tension is created within the text when this ideal is found to be wanting, and the entries should be read with an awareness that for Plaatje this was a constant crisis of hope and disappointment. This dichotomy is reflected in Plaatje’s use of the second person possessive plural below:

The big gun is away from its fort. Many people say it has left us for good, but I am inclined to the belief that they have moved further away as their present position is very dangerous [being] under a continuous shellfire from *our* little Nordenfeld . . .

The plenteousness of *our* pantry since yesterday causes us to keep up a birthday with the Mahlelebes today. That Mr. Bell is given half of one ox is sufficient sign that this is not yet the last of it.

(14th January; 74, my emphasis)

The first “our” refers to the united, common citizenry. The second “our” refers to Plaatje’s immediate social circle in the Stadt which, in their plenty, is able to supply Plaatje’s white superior, Mr. Bell, with meat. Plaatje’s terms of reference sway between these two worlds, sometimes comfortably, as the former entry shows, when he is able to be a little patronizing towards his white superior, sometimes less comfortably, or ironically, as when he notes:

We have very great difficulty in feeding the Natives. There are about 7 000 of them in the Stadt only, besides those at the location and the servants employed in the town.

(6th February; 87)

Here Plaatje’s use of “we” includes him within the circle of administrative authority that was dealing with the siege situation. He notes that, when horses’ oats were being issued for human consumption, there was “a general murmur abroad which we hope by energetic surveyance soon to overcome, and to satisfy the discontented masses”. This is followed by the entry two days later: “The oats were intended for horses, but . . . it is being thought of as human food. There is a general grumble all *round here also*”¹. The latter entry, obviously referring to residents in the Stadt, makes it clear that the earlier

¹ My emphasis. The entries are for 6th February, 87, and 8th February, 89, respectively.

complaints are from the “townites”, the white “discontented masses”. Plaatje sees himself as part of a superintending team where the discontented masses who need to be satisfied are both white and black.

There is, however, a poignancy in Plaatje’s attempting to live up to an ideal in a world that militated against it, causing him to seem at times distant from “the Natives”, who are referred to as “them” in the above extract. Yet Plaatje finds the siege situation also teaches him about the suffering of ordinary black folk. He—with a job backed up with extra work for others, and with “European rations”—lived in a way not typical of the average black person. Thus he observes:

. . . and white people are now going to buy food in rations and be compelled to buy small quantities, the same as blacks. I have often heard the black folk say money is useless as you cannot eat it when you feel hungry, and now I have lived it and experienced it.

(24th January; 78)

Plaatje—through lived experience—learns the wisdom of what he has often “heard the black folk say”. Having money is no guarantee of having food, and Plaatje learns that his rather privileged position in this regard does not alleviate hunger, and “what the black folk say” about money has a truth never before realized.

Thus the sense of community, of oneness, of non-racial, common interests brought about by the siege, represented in an entry such as that for 22nd of January: “The same hammering of the big gun. [It is the] lot of a beleaguered community and we are awfully tired of it” (78), was often undermined by a sense of divide, of real differences between communities and their perceptions.

While Plaatje might seem sometimes to have a shifting, schizophrenic, response to the difficulties of the situation, he nevertheless lives in and seeks to understand the points of view of both worlds, separated artificially as they were by an over-emphasis on racial difference. In coming to terms with these worlds, Plaatje notes differences, but constantly seeks that which is common. For Plaatje, in ideal terms, these worlds were not separate, but were one. Because of his social standing in both communities, and his multilingualism, but especially because of his job as interpreter, he saw it as his responsibility to bring the separate worlds to a better understanding, not only in his daily life during the siege, but also in the text of the diary: indeed, his entire literary and political career had this end.

Two factors thus emerge as typical of Plaatje's literary technique. One is his constant effort to explain, to interpret, and the other is his drawing attention to cultural or linguistic equivalents. Behind these literary impulses lies the notion that humans of different tongue and culture can communicate and understand each other: humanity is essentially the same, and apparent differences can often be explained in terms of a culturally equivalent situation.

This sense of a common humanity is reflected in Plaatje's typical use of equivalents, where a white character might be equated to a black person of similar nature or appearance (or *vice versa*). The word "equivalent" (as noted above, 146) is taken from Plaatje's published *Sechuana Proverbs with Literal Translations and their European Equivalents*. Thus an "equivalent" might be a corresponding, if not exact, similarity between members of different cultures or of equivalent cultural utterances. Drawing attention to "equivalents" is seen as part of Plaatje's role as translator and mediator between different cultural groups. In his Introduction to *Sechuana Proverbs* he notes:

The similarity between all pastoral nations is such that some passages in the history of the Jews read uncommonly like a description of the Bechuana during the nineteenth century. In the Psalms the similarity is so emphasized that it seems difficult at times to persuade oneself that the writer was not a Mochuana

(11)

In his *Boer War Diary*, Plaatje is at pains to note “equivalents” between people and situations. Describing the Court Martial before which Sgt. Major Looney appeared, he evokes sympathy for the man who was reduced to the ranks and sentenced to serve five years penal servitude:

I felt so sorry for him—such a pretty young fellow. I understand that he has a wife and a child¹. His face is exactly like Mamasinoké's. He is a white Ralisa.

(22nd February, 1900; 99)

Similarly, while complaining of the annoyance caused by young officers who do not know about “Natives and their mode of living”, Plaatje refers to the Civil Commissioner, by contrast, as a “White Native”:

From a Serolong point of view this whole jumble is more annoying than comforting. For this they may be excused, as the arrangement is in the hands of young officers who know as little about Natives and their mode of living as they know about the man on the moon and *his* mode of living.

It came to their notice that some Barolongali were selling kaffir beer the other day. They look upon it as wasting, or if the scale of this luxury was to continue, they were going to make a case against the party and would have, had the Civil Commissioner not been what he is—a White Native.

They do not know that kaffir beer to a common Morolong is “meat vegetables and tea” rolled into one, and they can subsist entirely on it for a long time. If ever you wish to see the sense of the word economy, observe the kaffir beer by the amount of water poured into the corn to what is yielded. If prohibited, I wonder what is to become of the bachelor, who is a fighting man and soldier and can therefore not brew it for himself, as it is not sold in any of the three [stores].

¹Which was Plaatje's own family situation.

(5th January; 68-69)

This entry notes an interaction between the English “young officers” and the Barolong, and the resultant annoying “jumble”, similar to the confusions and misunderstandings typical of romance. This “jumble” stems from a lack of understanding on the part of the “young officers” about “Natives and their mode of living”. Plaatje’s entry is typical, in that he is able to articulate the point of view of both sides, from his space between the two cultures. Thus, from “a Serolong point of view”, which Plaatje sees as excusable—if not in accordance with the common purpose brought about by the siege—the incident is annoying. The officers, however, “look upon it as wasting”. As noted earlier in the entry, “From an official’s viewpoint, this restriction is a wise policy, as it prevents the decrease of our supplies from passing faster than the days of the siege”. But the “jumble” is resolved by the wisdom of the Civil Commissioner, the “White Native”.

If the Civil Commissioner’s understanding of the “Native and their mode of living” resolves the situation, it is Plaatje who interprets it in this entry. As interpreter/commentator he puts both sides of the argument. The rationality of not wanting “our” supplies to be exhausted is explained, but countered by “what they do not know”. Plaatje adds: “If ever you wish to see the sense of the word economy”, where “you” could either be used impersonally (like “one”) or as a direct reference to the reader, making the entry more of an explanation or interpretation than it is on face value.

Plaatje, furthermore, uses the African traditional brewing of beer to teach the meaning of an English word, concluding his argument in favour of the continuation of brewing, concurring with the judgement of the Civil Commissioner, and showing the inherent wisdom of old African practice as opposed to the view of the “young officers”.

Plaatje's entry, though, is an explanation or a defence not only of traditional African practice, but, typically, of the rightful role of the Barolong in the siege. He describes the bachelor (who has no wife to make his beer), as a fighting man and a soldier. The role of blacks in the war, and in the siege itself, was an issue hotly contested by both British and Boer¹. Yet Plaatje's view is typically clear: bachelors are here allocated their traditional role as fighting men and soldiers. This is not necessarily the way they would have been perceived by the British. But Plaatje, in his role as interpreter between the two worlds, makes clear that what could be seen as a young black man illegally wasting resources could legitimately be interpreted as a soldier patriotically maintaining his health. He himself would see it in this way, and he implies that the "White Native" does so as well.

The phrase "white Lenkoane"(27th December, 1899; 52), also applied to the Civil Commissioner, and other such constructions imply an essential sameness between people of different races, as do similar equivalents Plaatje uses in his later writings. This recognition of common human nature, and its expression, is typical of Plaatje's thinking and is constantly reflected in his work. Other examples in the *Boer War Diary* are the "black Sherlock Holmes" (12th November, 1899; 9) and "Sergt. Abrams, the White Morolong", who is "the father of the Barolong snipers" (27th, March, 1900; 126). This recognition of sameness is the political and social ideal Plaatje seeks, and he sees his role as interpreter and translator as facilitating common understanding between peoples in order to achieve this ideal.

Like division in society, the splitting up of families and the distance from a lover are basic features of the romance paradigm. In Plaatje's case the spatial divide between himself and his family is linked with the siege situation. The relief of Mafeking would solve the inconvenience of confinement, the political

¹See Colonel Baden-Powell's letter to General Snyman, quoted in the *Boer War Diary*, 33-35, and also Peter Warwick, *Black People and the South African War 1899-1902*, 19.

situation, as well as his family situation, and would—in true romance fashion—be a moral victory: the triumph of time, virtue and love.

If Plaatje's situation in the siege can be read as a period of confusion in a set of events that are expected to unfold within the patterns of romance, his marriage itself can be seen as the resolution of a romance story. In the entry for 25th, December, Christmas day, in 1899, Plaatje reflects on both the siege situation and his marriage:

Contented little black faces musing over their gifts reminded me of a little fellow far away, who enjoys whatever he gets at the expense of the comfort of a bewildered young mother, deserving a Christmas box from his father but unable to get it. It squeezed out of my eyes a bitter tear—its course is bitter for I have never felt anything like it since the long and awful nights in 1897 when my path to the union that brought about his birth was so rocky.

(50)

Thus, on the Christmas day of 1899, Plaatje reflects on the “rocky” path that led to his marriage and the birth of his son, and their present separation from him. His entry links that time of suffering with his present situation: yet the “rocky” path leads to a union, a reconciliation. Thus, despite the end of the entry “Surely Providence has seldom been so hard on me”, the Christmas context, and the sense that Providence controls, tends to put the suffering in the context of the long term reconciliation of romance. The present separation will lead to reunion. In a later text, also reflecting on his marriage, Plaatje writes:

While reading *Cymbeline*, I met the girl who afterwards became my wife. I was not then as well acquainted with her language—the Xhosa—as I am now; and although she had a better grip of mine—the Sechuana—I was doubtful whether I could make her understand my innermost feelings in it, so in coming to an understanding we both used the language of educated people—the language which Shakespeare wrote—which happened to be the only official language of our country at the time

It may be depended upon that we both read *Romeo and Juliet*. My people resented the idea of my marrying a girl who spoke a language which, like the Hottentot language, has clicks in it; while her people likewise abominated the idea of giving their daughter in marriage to a fellow who spoke a language so imperfect as to be without clicks. But the civilized laws of Cape Colony saved us from a double tragedy in a cemetery, and our erstwhile objecting relatives have lived to award their benediction to the growth of our Chuana-M'Bo family which is bilingual both in the vernaculars and in European languages¹.

This reflection on his courtship and marriage (discussed on 26, above) is clearly set within the tense space between Shakespearean romance and Shakespearean tragedy. *Cymbeline* begins with “You do not meet a man but frowns”, the result of a marriage that caused family problems, but the romance ends with reconciliation: “The fingers of the powers above do tune / The harmony of this peace”, “let / a Roman and a British ensign wave / Friendly together” and “Never was a war did cease, / Ere bloody hands were washed, with such a peace”. In *Romeo and Juliet* the love ends, as Plaatje points out, with a “double tragedy in a cemetery”. According to him, it is the “civilized laws of Cape Colony” that bring reconciliation out of the potentially tragic situation. And those very laws of the Cape were being defended in Mafeking, against the Boers who were “at present in authority”.

The latter phrase is from Plaatje's description of his role in the departure of a number of black people from the investment. He significantly refers to this departure as an “exodus”, a national quest towards a promised land which is romance in structure and epic in focus. He uses Biblical equivalents which frame the incident within an allegorical correlative, and which provide evidence of the way Plaatje interprets his situation.

Plaatje's entry for 27th February reads:

¹Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 211.

On horseback all day, gathering people together and arranging for their exodus tonight

The Civil Commissioner, who arrived on the scene half an hour earlier, looked like their Moses, and Private (now sergeant) Abrams C.P., their Aaron It is doubtful if there ever was an Exodus so momentous as the one on the day on which Israel came out of Egypt: the house of Jacob from people of a strange language; when Judah was his Sanctuary and Israel his dominion. But if brother Moses was in Mafeking this evening he would himself admit that these people's exodus gave more work or thought, considering that they are flying from a common enemy, starvation, and they do not expect to travel 3 miles before being fired on by another enemy—the Boers.

(102)

Thus, Plaatje establishes both similarities and differences between the two situations: each is an exodus, but if the Israelites were moving towards a promised land, these travellers were fleeing starvation and moving towards the other enemy, the Boers. Thus the promised land is ironically described:

But this unfortunate 900 we want to get rid of, and that is why we are sending them away to Canaan where we have 'milk and honey', green makatane etc. which are really milk and honey compared with the mule flesh in store for them . . .

If the promised land can only offer "makatane", it is better than the horseflesh that those remaining in the investment would have to eat. But the bigger problem was the Boers:

The Israelites, for instance, when they left Pharaoston . . . were driven out by the enemy with the approval of everyone in authority . . . but we have not consulted the Boers who are at present in authority and [who] will surely have things their own way. This disadvantage the Moses-Aaron crew did not have.

Thus, with the Boers still "in authority" the promised land is not a possibility, and the travellers move from one enemy to another. The implication is that there could be no promised land till the Boers were

removed from authority: the temporary nature of this situation is implicit in “the Boers who are *at present* in authority”. The imagery Plaatje uses here (of people in bondage, of the need to travel away from a disadvantageous situation, of divine control, of Biblical parallels) is returned to in later works. Chapter 22 of *Mhudi*, discussed below, is called “The Exodus”, and in *Native Life in South Africa* Plaatje recalls that God says to the “Israelites in their bondage”:

‘I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows, and am come down to bring them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.’ And He used Moses to carry out the promise He made to their ancestor Abraham in Canaan, that ‘unto thy seed will I give this land’. It is to be hoped that in the Boer churches, entrance to which is barred against coloured people during divine service, they also read the Pentateuch.

(84)

Ultimately, the relief of Mafeking takes place beyond the scope of Plaatje’s unfinished text, as does the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer war, and the negotiations to establish peace amongst the two Boer republics and the colonies. In terms of the romance paradigm, these historical developments seem to lead appropriately towards the South Africa Act of 1909, which established the Union of South Africa.

The siege story is completed in *Native Life in South Africa*. The loyalty of different groups of black South Africans (280-6) and the unity forged by a common cause seem to have brought about the anticipated political results, following the romance paradigm, when the Barolong are publicly thanked by the British after the siege. They receive political assurances from Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary:

You ask in your address that the conditions secured to you, when you were transferred from the Imperial Government to the Colonial Government[,] should remain as they are. I do not think that Sir Gordon Sprigg [“the Cape Premier of the day”] or anyone who may succeed him will alter them in any respect, and should anyone attempt to alter these conditions, you will have your appeal to His Majesty’s Government.

(292)

After this, and other promises, Plaatje notes that the “Barolong felt that they were reclining on a veritable rock of ages” (293), and he still felt certain in 1904 about black political security in the Cape: “Here the Native question is settled”¹

Thus the siege narrative, completed in *Native Life in South Africa*, alludes to the romance resolution inherent in, and anticipated, by the *Boer War Diary*. However, this narrative in *Native Life in South Africa* is one thread in a larger story in which the political situation is utterly changed, and the romance possibilities, that seemed to be promised in the lifting of the siege and British victory, have rapidly altered into tragic realities. The very union, as Plaatje repeatedly pointed out, was flawed:

The root of the evil involved in the legislative tendencies of the Union Parliament lies in the Act of Union which excluded coloured taxpayers from the exercise of the franchise. The result is . . . the legislature is not obliged to take any notice of their protests².

¹*Selected Writing*, 100.

²*Selected Writings*, 250-1.

Plaatje summarized black hope in the Union, and later dismay, in an address to the second Pan-African Congress in Paris, 1921, in his absence read for him by Dr W.E.B. Du Bois:

Up to the end of the last century, we had in South Africa two British colonies (the Cape and Natal) and two Boer Republics (the Orange Free State and Transvaal). Then we had the South African war during which the success of British arms 'cleaned up' the whole subcontinent and hoisted the British flag all over. One of the objects of this 'clean up', it was alleged, was to free the coloured races from the Dutchman's yoke¹.

Despite many black people being "intensely loyal to Queen Victoria", the 1909 imperial act of Parliament which united the colonies allowed Boer republicans to dominate Parliament, and enabled them to bring in legislation that further limited the rights of blacks. Thus, the English victory seemed ironically to empower the Boers. Instead of bringing Cape laws to the Transvaal and Free State, as Plaatje had hoped it would, Union inexorably brought Republican laws to the Cape. Many English-speaking colonists added to the call for more oppressive measures: "The Native should be made to feel that unless he is a servant in the employ of a master, he has no place for the hollow of his foot"². As Plaatje adds in his address to the Pan-African Congress:

From then on the new parliament became notorious for the most barbaric legislation that ever characterized white man's rule in South Africa; the effect of it being that the South African Native today finds himself an exile and a helot in the land of his ancestors³.

¹*Selected Writings*, 265.

²Plaatje quotes this as being typical of articles in the English *Farmer's Weekly* at the time: *Selected Writings*, 243-4.

³*Selected Writings*, 265.

The process lead to the promulgation of the 1913 Native Land Act which

. . . has cut off the very roots of Native life by depriving us of nature's richest gift—our ancient occupation of breeding cattle and cultivating the soil¹.

Thus, in the space between the truncated *Boer War Diary* and *Native Life in South Africa*, instead of a new romance beginning of freedom, Plaatje found himself at the beginning of another series of journeys, a new set of more daunting romance quests. And *Native Life in South Africa* begins with a reference to a different type of siege, with the black South African on the outside of political space, land ownership and other civil rights.

Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth.

(21)

The “South African natives” are forced by the Act, gazetted the day before, to move continuously: “We frequently met those roving pariahs, with their hungry cattle . . .”. They rove because, unlike in a quest, they are both directionless and legally unable to stop. They have no destination, no land, no Canaan. Extending the Exodus imagery, Plaatje frequently refers to the new times as a parallel to those of “the Pharaohs who knew not Joseph”², where “pharaohs” refers to a new breed of whites who are ungrateful for, or ignorant of, earlier black assistance. The Biblical image also carries moral suggestions, the blacks

¹*Selected Writings*, 254. These anti-pastoral effects of the Act are, ironically, exactly what Haggard suggests are brought about by the life-styles and inherent nature of Africans.

²*Selected Writings*, 272, 322 and 415-6, for instance.

having the virtues of Joseph, the whites having the vices of the ignorant and slave-keeping heathen pharaohs.

If, in the Mafeking siege, Plaatje was able to envisage a community at one with itself, those hopes were largely shattered by the time he wrote *Native Life in South Africa*, and the political situation—specifically the effect of the Natives' Land Act on rural black people—forms the main theme of the text. Related to this are themes of Boer land hunger, and their desire to turn blacks into slaves, or something resembling slaves (71, 72 and 84, for example), or to exterminate blacks (19, 90).

Native Life in South Africa immediately places the reader in the tragic trough, with romance possibilities seemingly far off: however, Plaatje is not by nature pessimistic, and his romance vision pervades even the tragic incidents which form the substance of this text. Part of this romance vision is implicit in the function of the text which is described as both a “plea” and an “appeal” (19), written to support the work of a delegation sent to petition “His Majesty the King, against this law” (180). The relationship of text to action is a characteristic that Plaatje shares with Sidney and other Renaissance writers of romance (see 29 above). The romance implicit in this text depends on action outside the text for resolution, and this in turn depends on the success of the appeal, and upon capturing the sympathetic humanity of the reader or listener, on being able to interpret the situation:

Mine is but a *sincere* narrative of a melancholy situation, in which, with all its shortcomings, I have endeavoured to describe the difficulties of the South African natives under a very strange law, so as most readily to be understood by the sympathetic reader.

(Prologue, 14, my emphasis)

This disclaimer at the beginning of the text is very different in tone from, but united in intention with, the triumphal note that Plaatje strikes at the end. Referring again to the oppressive law, he hopes:

... you will in the interest of your flag, for the safety of your coloured subjects, the glory of your Empire, and the purity of your religion, grapple with this dark blot on the Imperial emblem, the South African anomaly that compromises the justice of British rule and seems almost to belie the beauty, the sublimity and the *sincerity* of Christianity.

(404, my emphasis)

The word that rounds the text is “sincere”, and Plaatje uses the sincerity of his narrative to challenge the sincerity of the Christian belief of his auditors and readers. Plaatje’s use of the word picks up two of its nuances: on page 14 it refers to truth, and, in the latter use, to purity. Plaatje’s intention is to use truth to re-establish a political purity that has lapsed. Rhetorically, this word brackets a work in which the Christianity of white South Africans is constantly questioned by their impious actions and cruelty. The tragic core of the text, then, is seen as a movement away from spiritual or moral purity. The romance impulse is a desire, reflected in this practical attempt, to restore political, social and moral purity. The Easter imagery at the end of the text offers the direction, the point of true unification, for the literal wanderers described in the text, as well as their morally wandering oppressors.

Read against this romance structure, *Native Life in South Africa* looks back on both “Cape ideals of toleration” (25) and “primitive native socialism” (119) as representing the pastoral peak. The “Cape ideals” are described in *Native Life in South Africa* by Dr Abdurahman. His tone, characteristically more measured than Plaatje’s own, suggests some of the flaws typically found at the pastoral peak:

Now although there never was a time when the white and the black races stood on a footing of practical equality—civilly and politically—it is a fact that, under the old Cape constitution, theoretical equality was ensured to all, irrespective of race or creed. The coloured races were, in this Colony, treated with much consideration, if not with absolute equality.

(154)

And Plaatje notes that the Land Act has destroyed these “Cape Ideals” (182): “The fact that the traditional liberal policy of Cape Colony has broken down through this law can no longer be disputed” (177). Referring to the earlier “primitive native socialism” that white rule in general has destroyed, Plaatje notes:

There were no mothers of unwanted babies; no orphanages, because there were no stray children; the absence of extreme wealth and dire poverty prevented destitution and the natives had little or no insanity; they had no cancer or syphilis, and no venereal diseases because they had no prostitutes.

(119)

The idealism and rhetoric, in which negatives or absences are used to express a virtuous state, sound much like Gonzalo’s version of the Golden Age myth in *The Tempest* (II.i.149-159). The “primitive state” also had “natural hygienic and moral laws”, and protected the “native girl” “against seduction and moral ruin”: a woman, “in former times”, was regarded as the cradle of her race, and her person was “sacred and inviolate under the law” (118). When Plaatje reflects on “the best and happiest days of our boyhood” on the “picturesque Vaal River”, however, the imagery merges this Golden Age rhetoric with the language of pastoral: “How the . . . happy days . . . came crowding upon our memory!—days when there were no railways, no bridges, and no system of irrigation” (81). These lacks work to the young Plaatje’s advantage when wagons accumulate at the swollen river and he and his peers profitably sell milk:

We recalled the number of haversacks full of bottles of milk we youngsters often carried to those wagons, how we returned with empty bottles and with just that number of shillings. Mother and our elder brothers had leather bags full of gold and did not care for the “boy’s money”

(81-2)

Plaatje notes that “we hardly had any use for the money, for all we wanted to eat, drink and wear was at hand in plenty”. The imagery is of an abundance, of brothers, cousins, money, food, clothes, goodwill, and especially milk:

. . . there was always such an abundance of the liquid that our shepherd’s hunting dog could not possibly miss what we took, for while the flocks were feeding on the luscious buds of the haakdoorns and the blossoms of the rich mimosa and other wild vegetation that abounded on the banks of the Vaal River, the cows, similarly engaged, were gathering more and more milk.

(82)

The past tense here captures not only the past of the author, but enforces his point that “the gods” gave no warning that “Englishmen would agree with Dutchmen to make it unlawful for black men to keep milk cows of their own on the banks of that river”, and that the age of such liberty and abundance has passed.

The tragic note of the text is struck, then, against the counterpoint of the lost pastoral, and this is captured in the first word of the text “Awaking” (21), which hints at the passing of a dream, parallel to Caliban’s waking to a harsher reality, and weeping to dream again (*The Tempest*, III.ii.142-5).

The situation of South African blacks forms the main thrust of the argument in *Native Life in South Africa*. Their suffering is caused by the greed and land hunger, the desire for near-slave labour, and the

lack of humanity and Christian principles of the Republican Boers. One of the chief vices attributed to the Boers, however, is that of ingratitude. Plaatje cites the help rendered by the Barolong to the Boer trekkers, an incident that forms the background for *Mhudi*. Using the loyalty of blacks to Britain during the South African War, and numerous other acts of support, the main thrust of Plaatje's argument is that Britain should live up to her professed principles, and should avoid the ingratitude that so characterizes the Boers. Plaatje's depiction of the situation of South African blacks balances the real, the experienced with the rhetorical and the symbolic—foreign deserts become more hospitable than their native land:

We parted sadly from these unfortunate nomads of an ungrateful and inhospitable country, after advising them to trek from the Union into the arid deserts of Bechuanaland.

(91)

Thus the tragic core of the book is rendered in terms of an inhuman ingratitude, and widespread human suffering. Chapter 9 rather tenuously links the sorrow caused by the Land Act with superstition about the number thirteen, and 1913 itself, but Plaatje uses this rhetorical base to enter into a narrative about the death of his son:

He first saw the light in the last quarter of 1912, on the very day we opened and christened our printing office, so we named him after the great inventor of printing type: he was christened "Johann Gutenberg".

(142)

Gutenberg died early in 1914, an "eloquent testimony of the indelible gap left in our domestic circle as a visitation of 1913" (145). His eyes, according to Plaatje, were "riveted on the New Jerusalem, the City of God", while his cousins who has died during 1913 "[e]vidently . . . were beckoning him to leave

this wicked South Africa and everything in it, and come to eternal glory” (144). The Biblical imagery contrasts earthly sin in South Africa with Saint Augustine’s City of God, which, called *Hierusalem*, is an image used by Spenser as the divine end of the earthly pilgrim’s quest (*The Faerie Queene*, I.x.55-7). In this conceit South Africa reflects both earthly suffering and a spiritual wasteland, where the “god of colour prejudice” is worshipped, where “truth and goodwill” are opposed by white voters and “their Afrikander god”¹.

This family loss contrasts sharply with the memories of domestic happiness Plaatje recorded in his *Boer War Diary*. He depicts it as a reflection of the political situation, much as he does with the later loss of his daughter, Olive, named after Schreiner. *Mhudi* is dedicated to his daughter’s memory:

To the memory
of our beloved Olive
one of the many youthful
victims of a settled system . . . ²

Personal loss, for Plaatje, is seen within the context of his people’s problems generally. Yet he is not led by this into self-pity: during the course of Gutenberg’s funeral Plaatje recalls an earlier death³:

As we saw the solemn procession and heard the clank of the horse’s hoofs, we were suddenly reminded of that journey in July 1913, when we met the poor wandering young family of fugitives from the Natives’ Land Act. A sharp pang went through us, and caused our heart to bleed as we recalled the scene of their night funeral, forced on them by the necessity of having to steal a grave on the moonless night, when detection would be less easy.

¹The phrases are from *Selected Writings*, 370-1.

²Olive’s illness and, and racial incidents she suffered from in the time just prior to her death, are alluded to in *Selected Writings*, 261-2, 288 and 341.

³The incident he recalls here is originally described in *Native Life in South Africa*, 89-90.

(146)

The recollection brings to Plaatje “a spirit of revolt”, despite the solemnity of his own child’s funeral, “against this impious persecution”. Recalling all that his people have done for “these colonists”, he calls for “something to”:

Strike flat the thick rotundity o’ the world!
Crack Nature’s mould, all germens spill at once!
That make ungrateful man!

(147)

The quotation from *Lear* emphasizes unsympathetic human ingratitude and the resultant suffering, and Plaatje uses it to depict equivalent anguish and feelings of impotence in the South African situation. Here, the personal and general tragedy is caused by the “sublime ingratitude of the Union Government” that Plaatje refers to later in the text (246).

The image of the abandoned Lear upon the heath is, however, immediately followed by an equivalent image from Matthew’s Gospel of Christ’s abandonment:

The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.

(147)

And the latter, with its scriptural comfort, its far-sighted romance anticipation of redemption, over-rides the tragedy, the desolation of *Lear*: “How very Christlike was that funeral in the veld” . . . “it had no

carriages, no horses, no ordained ministers” (147). Plaatje here extends the act and the meaning of translation into some of its other senses. Moving from the normal sense of “to make a version from one language or form of words into another”, through “to express (one thing) in terms of another” which is reflected in Plaatje’s normal practice of noting equivalents, Plaatje here *translates* in the wider sense of “to change form, appearance or substance; to transmute”, which also implies something of the spiritual meaning of translate: “to carry to heaven without death”¹.

Plaatje translates a tragic experience by finding a divine equivalent, which adds an ultimate romance dimension to the suffering. The victim of the suffering is simultaneously exulted, both morally and spiritually. For Plaatje, tragedy—political, social or personal—is not a final state. Even the deepest despair is translated into a romance equivalent. As he confronts this core of tragedy, Plaatje follows Lear’s words regarding “ungrateful man” (147) with a recollection of the Gospel: “When one is distressed in mind there is no greater comforter than an appropriate scriptural quotation”. For Plaatje, the suffering of Christ leads to victory, and recalls the “celestial expression” on the dead Gutenberg’s face, “his deep brown colour” which seemed to say: “Be at ease, I have conquered” (145).

Plaatje’s mention of the Madonna of the crucifixion (148) has the effect of a *pietà*, bringing in the grieving parent as well as the dead child. Coupled with his earlier reference to Christ’s “command”, “Suffer little children to come unto Me” (143-4), this places the parallel death of the children within a spiritual framework, with the clear implication that the sinners, the morally wrong, are those who support the Natives’ Land Act, specifically the Boers: “The veld funeral party, like the funeral party of the Son of Man, was in mortal fear of the representatives of the law” (148).

¹Definitions from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, (Compact Edition, 1971).

The translation of the deaths of innocent victims into a victory has its corollary in a corresponding emphasis on the nature of the evil, translated in turn into unholy action. Plaatje's linkage of immoral action and tragic consequence is underscored by an allusion to Lady Macbeth when he hopes: "this stain, which so greatly disfigures the Christian character of the Boers would be removed" (148).

The reference to Shakespeare's tragedy also, however, typically notes the possibility of a moral change. This change—a translation of the tragic to the romance—forms the essence of Plaatje's vision and his argument of appeal. If tragedy is not transmuted to romance, the impulses of which are love and reconciliation, the opposing impulses of race hatred and revenge threaten to continue to prolong the tragic. It is apt, therefore, that Plaatje begins the chapter with another reference to Shakespeare's works, in this case *The Merchant of Venice*:

And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.

(136)

Shylock's threat of revenge, which touches on the motive opposite to the romance resolution, is echoed in the chapter when Plaatje recalls the veld funeral:

The solemnity of the funeral procession, of which we formed the mainmast, almost entirely disappeared from our mind, to be succeeded by the *spirit of revolt* against this impious persecution as these things came before us. What have our people done to these colonists, we asked, that is so utterly unforgivable . . .

(146, my emphasis)

Although the possibility for such reaction against oppression is downplayed in Plaatje's text, his "spirit of revolt" (146) indicates its constant potential. Plaatje's passions are seldom expressed in terms of anger. His phrasing when discussing the treatment of women links anger to a spiritual state: "the soul rises up in 'divine discontent' against a state of affairs no nation should tolerate" (119). This may intensify to images of a retribution both political and divine: "we shall be the last to laugh when we see him [the oppressor] swept off like the obdurate Pharaoh in the waves of a political Red Sea"¹. This image, also alluding to the Exodus narrative, aptly merges political anger and power, and spiritual intervention.

Thus, while Plaatje clearly knows anger and "the spirit of revolt", he strategically chooses to emphasize the loyalty of South African blacks, and notes their preference "to seek redress for their grievance through constitutional rather than by violent means"². Throughout *Native Life in South Africa* Plaatje rhetorically plays this loyalty off against Boer rebelliousness, described particularly in Chapter 23.

Plaatje's anger, caused by a combination of personal and social suffering brought about by racial injustice, is prefigured in the adapted quotation from *The Merchant of Venice* that heads Chapter 9, and which Plaatje uses to make equivalent situations, literary and actual, clear:

He hath disgraced me and laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what is his reason? I am a Kaffir.

Hath not a Kaffir eyes? Hath not a Kaffir hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Is he not fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter as a white Afrikander?

¹*Selected Writings*, 173: written on 3rd January, 1914, this extract from an editorial is closely contemporaneous with the death of Gutenberg.

²*Native Life in South Africa*, 203.

Plaatje's objection, in his "Homage to Shakespeare", against the black Judas (see 25 above) seems here to have been simply inverted, with his parallelism between the "representatives of the law" (148) in the times of both the crucifixion and the Land Act. However, the depiction of Judas as a black is a fixed symbol, which allows no room for change or growth: Plaatje's image of the Boers as being impious in their treatment of blacks is immediately qualified by examples of exceptions, as well as by his opening up the possibility for a change of heart.

Thus, a chapter which begins, somewhat flippantly perhaps, with reference to superstitions about the number thirteen, and unfortunate events in the year 1913, develops into one of the most tragic sections in the text, on personal, social and spiritual levels. Yet this meditation, which might be seen to form one of the "allegorical cores" of *Native Life in South Africa*, also seeks a translation of the tragedy, a change to a moral victory which would benefit all the peoples of the country: the blacks politically and materially, and the Boers morally and spiritually. Typically, then, Plaatje's sense of tragedy looks towards redemption: he does not confine "white Afrikanders" to the role of villain, and suggests that the "stain, which so greatly disfigures the Christian character of the Boers" would be removed if the predikants "would but tell their congregations that it was gross libel on the Christian faith, which they profess, to treat human beings as they treat those with loathsome disease" (148).

Plaatje ends the chapter, which—in its images of death added to the general suffering of people, and in its echo of Lear's elemental cry—goes to the heart of the tragic, by giving examples of times when Boers supported their leaders in humane behaviour towards blacks. The essence of his argument is that the situation is not statically polarized. There is the potential for human change:

. . . the Dutch throughout South Africa, as did the Dutch of Cape Colony, under the able leadership of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, may pursue a fresh course—the course of political righteousness.

(150-1)

Plaatje saw “political righteousness” as political action guided by moral values¹: “practical Christianity” as he later calls it (265). That Plaatje saw the political and ethical spheres as inextricably bound is evident from his title for Chapter 2: “The Grim Struggle between Right and Wrong, and the Latter Carries the Day”. This title heads a chapter dealing with parliamentary debate extracted from the Union Hansard of 1913 (36) and ending with a division list showing the names of those who voted against and those who voted “in favour of repression” (56).

Plaatje’s argument, sliced into its basic elements in this way, might seem simplistic, and even weak in its readiness to find imperial ideals as solutions to African problems. However, the economic and political strength of the British Empire, in pre-League of Nations days, meant that the better side of British values was often seen as the final court of appeal. The attitude towards Britain may be gauged by the moving of the 1914 South African Native National Congress to “hospitable and British Kimberley” after the Union government’s reluctance to hold it in Johannesburg (212). Furthermore, Plaatje notes that Dr J. E. Mackenzie’s “fine speech” had re-assured Congress delegates that “English ideas” were not “utterly obliterated”: Dr Mackenzie’s speech indicated his belief that “nobility was not confined to any particular race or colour” (214), and thus these “English ideas” are an echo of the Shakespearean ideals that Plaatje articulated in his homage to Shakespeare. Attitudes towards the Empire in South Africa may also have been influenced by the fact that the Empire was threatened at the time of Plaatje’s writing,

¹The current notion of “political correctness”, by contrast, needs have no ethical dimension.

not by radical forces of liberation, but by German forces perceived to be even more repressive than the British, forces often supported by the Boers.

Plaatje's argument in another part of the text may help to throw some light on his own writing methods. Plaatje describes General Botha, the Union Prime Minister, addressing his constituents to justify the projected invasion of German South West Africa (354). Some remarks he made displeased the "coloured loyalists", but, Plaatje says, "Without wishing to defend the Premier, the remark, in our opinion was justifiable". He argues that Botha "naturally" had "to appeal to the sentiments of his hearers", as this was a recruiting speech, rather than a declaration of policy. Nor, adds Plaatje, "could Englishmen, having regard to the circumstances, very well take umbrage at another remark of General Botha's in the same speech. It was, we believe, a clever appeal to the feelings of backvelders . . ."

Plaatje thus allows a certain amount of rhetorical licence, given circumstances and mode of address. This would not be so much a deviation from the truth, but a presentation of an opinion in a way that an audience would best be able to understand: essentially, this is at one with Plaatje's understanding of the rhetoric of translation, the use of the language (or idiom) of the receiver. This reflects Plaatje's humanistic belief that culture was translatable, and one of Plaatje's rhetorical strengths, constantly employed in appeals to the assumed fair-mindedness of his English readers.

The ideals of Cape fairness and proposed fairness in the Union, moreover, are not presented as naive absolutes, although Plaatje, for the rhetorical reasons mentioned above, does tend to favour an idealistic representation of these. A picture painted of British atrocities on the Eastern Cape frontier, for instance, would not have served his intentions of appeal to the British public made partly by encouragement and flattery, and by presenting a picture of loyal, reasonable, eager, progressive, native inhabitants, who

were not savage, unreasonable, vicious or rebellious. This, of course, was the argument from Plaatje's opponents, with typical attitudes from the South African War of 1899-1902 being carried over into the debate about black participation in the Great War of 1914-1918.

In the former war the Natal cabinet argued that "the methods of native warfare are barbarous at all times" and that "if the Natives should in accordance with their methods of warfare mutilate the dead, kill wounded men, murder women and children" the Government which permitted them to fight would be held accountable. The cabinet further argued that "even if ordered by Europeans it would be impossible to restrain Natives and keep them under control in accordance with the usages of civilized warfare". It was concerned that allowing "Natives" to participate in the war would "establish a sense of independence amongst them" which would "lead to the lessening of the prestige of the white man"¹.

These arguments were echoed at the time of the latter war: ". . . it will be surprising if they do not return to South Africa spoiled", and "Did they realize that the coloured man when he donned uniform, said to the white man: I am now your equal, the equal of your wives and children"².

In order to counter this sort of argument Plaatje's rhetoric in *Native Life in South Africa* emphasizes the loyalty and rationality of the black point of view, while engaging the sympathies of an English readership.

¹Warwick, *Black People and the South African War 1899-1902*, 16-17.

²These responses to South African blacks participating in the First World War as labourers, from the East London *Daily Dispatch* and from the South African Parliament, are quoted in Norman Clothier, *Black Valour: The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918 and the Sinking of the "Mendi"* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1987) 16-17.

Plaatje depicts the suffering caused by the 1913 Land Act within the context of an argument which looks towards its alleviation. Such alleviation would require a change of attitude and of conditions equivalent to the ending of romance—the movement from the tragic trough of suffering toward a resolution which would bring about a new order. Thus the values emphasized in *Native Life in South Africa* are progress, harmony, understanding between races, development and learning, and a South Africa in which political and legal equality govern behaviour. Such development could be built on, and should not undermine, African values.

Native Life in South Africa is, like *Mhudi*—though in a different way—eclectic in terms of genre. One of its facets is that of reportage, and in this sense too the text is a collage, duplicating sections of Hansard, quoting stories from different newspapers, reprinting the text of lectures given by Plaatje. As a reporter of current situations, Plaatje was careful not to let events overtake him and the text has a sense of growing with time: “When the narrative of this book up to Chapter 18 was completed, it was felt that an account of life in South Africa, without a reference to the war or the rebellion would be but a story half told, and so Chapters 19 to 25 were added”¹. The section entitled “Report of the Lands Commission: An Analysis” was added yet later, to a second printing of the text².

Native Life in South Africa, thus, has three endings, each representing a development of events. The first, at the end of Chapter 18, is triumphant. Despite setbacks he had suffered at the hands of government officials, he had found a warm welcome in the Brotherhood, whose “practical Christianity” (265) he admired. Chapter 18 ends with the words of the “Brotherhood Song of Liberty”:

¹Prologue, 18. Plaatje notes on this page that “. . . Chapters 20 to 24, unlike the rest of the book, are not the result of the writer’s own observations. The writer is indebted for much of the information in these five chapters to the native press and some Dutch newspapers”

²Willan, in *Selected Writings*, 184.

No! True freedom is to share
All the chains our brothers wear,
And with heart and hand to be
Earnest to make others free.

(270)

Thus, despite setbacks, the notes of liberty mark the initial ending of the text. This is followed by the ending of the Epilogue (403 and 404), while the final text closes with a “Report of the Lands Commission: An Analysis”.

The second ending, that of the Epilogue, concludes with a passage reminiscent of the symbolic winter on the opening page of *Bleak House*¹. Plaatje describes his experience of the English winter.

This has been the most strenuous winter that the writer has ever experienced: a dark, dreary winter of almost continuous rains, snowflakes, cold, mud and slush. Reading of the severity of English winters at a distance, I never could have realized that the life I have lived in England during the past four months was possible—an existence from which the sun’s rays are almost always obliterated by the inclement weather, by snow and by fog. I cannot describe the sensations caused by the dismal gloom of the sunless days—a most depressing life—especially in December, when it would suddenly turn dark, compelling one to work by gaslight when the clocks indicated that it was high noon. Not till then did I realize why some people are said to worship the sun. I find that I have unlearned my acquaintance with the larger planets and heavenly bodies (a knowledge acquired since boyhood) because the winter fog and clouds have continually hidden the moon and stars from view.

¹Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, eds. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York and London: Norton, 1977) 5.

Plaatje notes the difference between reading and experience—a pertinent point in a book about distant suffering. Childhood associations and adult experience are used to mark a process of learning. However, the full symbolic import of this description is only evident in the next paragraph.

But now that the country is throwing off its winter cloak and dressing itself in its green, gorgeous array; now that King Day shines in all his glory through the mist by day, and the moon and stars appear in their brilliancy in the evenings; now that, as if in harmony with the artistic rendering of Easter anthems by your choirs, the thrush and the blackbird twitter forth the disappearance of the foggy winter with its snow, sleet and wet; now that the flocks of fleecy sheep, which for the past four months have been in hiding and conspicuous by their absence, come forward again and spread triumphantly over the green as if in celebration of the new spring; now that the violet and the daffodil, the marguerite and the hyacinth, the snowdrop and the bluebell, glorious in appearance, also announce, each in its own way, the advent of sunny spring, we are encouraged to hope that, ‘when peace again reigns over Europe’, when white men cease warring against white men, when the warriors put away the torpedoes and the bayonets and take up less dangerous implements, you will in the interests of your flag, for the safety of your coloured subjects, the glory of your Empire, and the purity of your religion, grapple with this dark blot on the Imperial emblem, the South African anomaly that compromises the justice of British rule and seems almost to belie the beauty, the sublimity and the sincerity of Christianity.

(404)

This closing passage of the Epilogue, which is a reproduction of an address Plaatje gave in England, might seem in danger of being dismissed as sentimental and clichéd: yet it says much about Plaatje’s typical mode of expression.

Plaatje presents himself, immediately before this closing passage, as witness: “This has been the most strenuous winter that the writer has ever experienced”, which leads into the descriptions of the spring in the paragraph quoted above. But the symbolism of the former paragraph is underplayed, compared to that in the latter. In the former, a world of previously unrealized suffering is experienced and recorded. However, Plaatje’s role as witness here coalesces with an image he presents of himself:

I cannot describe the sensations caused by the dismal gloom of the sunless days—a most depressing life—especially in December, when it would suddenly turn dark, compelling one to work by gaslight when the clocks indicated it was high noon.

Plaatje also presents himself as the worker by gaslight, the writer alone with his lamp, conscious of his role: “I cannot describe the sensations” But the emphasis is on the acquisition of knowledge, through experience (“this has been the most strenuous winter”), through reading (“Reading of the severity of English winters at a distance”), through reflection (“Not till then did I realize”), and, parenthetically, childhood associations (“a knowledge acquired since boyhood”). Even the loss of the associations of childhood is referred to as “unlearning”. Underlying the simple description is the image of a man gaining wisdom: who survives the strenuous winter, finds that reading of a foreign situation from a distance may reflect the unlikely truth, and discovers how boyhood knowledge is unlearned in the face of wider experience. The African idyllic boyhood of clear nights showing “heavenly bodies” is replaced by the knowledge of a harsher world, and it may be borne in mind that in much Christian allegory, the hiding of the heavenly by clouds is taken as a symbol of God’s face being hidden by earthly evil¹. Thus Plaatje as witness is also Plaatje the wiser man, the writer in the lamplight of a darker world.

When he turns from this world in the next paragraph, introduced by the transitional “but”, the symbolic import of the weather, though underplayed, is still evident. In romance fashion, the imagery is not that of a naive pastoral world, but of a rebirth out of experience. It is Easter time, the time of resurrection after crucifixion. It is spring, with clear skies after winter storms “ . . . the moon and stars appear in their brilliancy in the evenings” It is a world of harmony between churchgoers and nature, which is represented by the thrush and blackbirds that “twitter forth the disappearance of the foggy winter and

¹In Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, for example, “loftie trees yclad with sommers pride, / Did spred so broad, that heauens light did hide” (I.i.7.4-5) symbolically warns that this is a place of spiritual darkness.

its snow, sleet and wet”. The similarity to Blake’s skylark and thrush in “The Ecchoing Green”¹, is pertinent, but marked also by this difference: Blake’s poem marks the beginning of a cycle, the Virgilian movement from pastoral innocence to epic; Plaatje’s, more typically romance in structure, moves from a cycle of suffering to a new ending, a rebirth. Blake depicts the pastoral peak while Plaatje depicts the re-emerging romance peak.

In this abundance of rebirth, natural and, in the Easter time, spiritual, “we are encouraged to hope that . . . you will . . . grapple with this dark blot on the Imperial emblem, the South African anomaly that compromises the justice of British rule and seems almost to belie the beauty, the sublimity and the sincerity of Christianity”.

Plaatje concludes rhetorically: “Shall we appeal to you in vain? *I hope not.*” The echo of “we are encouraged to hope” by the more personal and emphasized “*I hope not*” moves the language from the relatively innocent pastoral imagery to political rhetoric, from the comfort of description to the urgency of appeal. Plaatje’s romance vision is complicated hereby: it is held together by hope and vision, not by actuality. The potential for the failure of that vision is held in the ironic desperation of the last words, which throws the piece back on the current state of affairs: “this dark blot . . . that compromises the justice of British rule and seems almost to belie the beauty, the sublimity and the sincerity of Christianity”. Plaatje’s romance vision does not lose sight, then, of the uncertainties of the present situation, the necessities of the then current war, and the potential for his vision’s lack of fulfilment.

¹William Blake, *Selected Poetry*, ed. W.H. Stevenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) 21-22.

The final ending of the text is perhaps his most bleak, radically qualifying his romance vision, though not absolutely destroying it. The Report of the Lands Commission, tabled in 1916, represented a final betrayal for Plaatje, who argues:

Whenever, on behalf of the natives, the hardships disclosed in this book were mentioned, the South African authorities invariably replied that these hardships would cease as soon as the Commission submits its report. This has now been done.

(406)

The report brought no relief from hardship, but rather promised further suffering. For Plaatje, the report bears out

. . . that the main object in view is not segregation, but the reduction of all the black subjects of the King from their former state of semi-independence to one of complete serfdom.

(408)

And he feels the betrayal:

And when the burden loaded on our bent backs becomes absolutely unbearable we are at times inclined to blame ourselves; for when some of us fought hard—and often against British diplomacy—to extend the sphere of British influence, it never occurred to us that the spread of British dominion in South Africa would culminate in consigning us to our present intolerable position, namely, a helotage under a Boer oligarchy. But when an official Commission asks Parliament to herd us into concentration camps

(435)

From the framework of a tragic present, then, Plaatje depicts in this work his projected ideal. Yet this ideal is tenuous, threatening tragedy if not fully realized, throwing the reader back into the dangers of the

real. Plaatje's argument for a fair future reflects the recognizable romance paradigm, but unfolding events cause him to balance romantic and tragic visions of the future:

. . . the only thing that stands between us and despair is the thought that Heaven has never yet failed us. We remember how African women have at times shed tears under similar injustices; and when they have been made to leave their fields with their hoes on their shoulders, their tears on evaporation have drawn fire and brimstone from the skies. But such blind retribution has a way of punishing the evil alike with the guilty, and it is in the interests of both that we plead for some outside intervention to assist South Africa in recovering her lost senses.

The ready sympathy expressed by those British people among whom I have lived and laboured during the past two years inspires the confidence that a consensus of British opinion will, in the Union's interest, stay the hand of the South African government, veto this iniquity and avert the nemesis that would surely follow its perpetration.

(436)

The multiple rhetorical elements that constitute this ending demonstrate both Plaatje's varied concerns and his opinion of them. The passage is both political and spiritual, as the opening reference to "Heaven" suggests, and the faith that "Heaven has never yet failed us" is part of Plaatje's romance optimism. Thus, the opposing "despair" broadens out from the everyday despair of those he has witnessed suffering from the affects of the Land Act, to the political despair of those leaders trying to do something about the situation, and to his own personal despair, as Plaatje often uses a rhetorical plural in the text. It also, however, becomes a spiritual loss of hope, only prevented by the thought of Heaven's consistent help.

This declaration of potential despair and hope is followed by past injustices recalled, but the unspecific portrayal of these injustices allows Plaatje to move from the quasi-historical to the symbolic and into the mythical: "under similar injustices" African women have shed tears and have "been made to leave their fields with their hoes on their shoulders", and their dried tears, the end of their pain, has "drawn fire and

brimstone from the skies”. This retribution has all the appearances of being divine, except that Plaatje calls it “blind retribution” which punishes both innocent and guilty. While the phrase “fire and brimstone” recalls Christian retribution, the plurality of “the skies” hints at the pagan gods. Plaatje leaves his meaning vague enough to be read as a mixture of divine, or poetic, justice, and the earthly justice meted out by the aggrieved. The responses to the situation, the divine and the more human, political reaction, merge and threaten to bring about the “nemesis that would surely follow”.

Plaatje’s imagery places the worldly political within the realms of a divine justice, where the charge that South Africa has lost her senses takes on moral overtones. The “outside intervention” could be read as both coming from British people and British opinion, as well as from “Heaven”, and thus the hymn which follows and closes the book appeals to “God’s grace” to hold the country “fast”, “until justice shall prevail” (437).

Plaatje’s romance vision is still intact but, as the text’s final subheading “Courting Retribution” (433) suggests, the harmony, unity and love that romance implies is threatened by “blind retribution”, which leads the way of tragedy. The concluding hymn indicates that a country can implode through inner moral decay, but the call is for

. . . God’s grace! Oh may it hold thee fast,
My country, until justice shall prevail . . .

(437)

The word “until” suggests that, as in the Mafeking siege, the medium of the struggle is time. And, as in the Golden Age imagery, the lack of justice brings suffering. Plaatje retains his vision, using his rhetorical

powers both to articulate it and to urge intervention. His awareness that his enemies were still in authority and increasingly legislating his people into slavery, however, makes the promised land that had seemed so close after the end of the Anglo-Boer war, seem yet farther off.

Chapter Six

Mhudi: The Black Woman who Lives

The last chapter shows that Plaatje did not merely write *Mhudi* “after the manner of romances”, but that his entire vision had, in its deep structure, a romance basis which pervaded his interpretation of daily events, as well as his historical and political vision.

Though he described *Mhudi* as being in “the style of Rider Haggard when he writes about the Zulus”, his use of elements from Haggard would naturally have been shaped by his own cast of mind, his own understanding of history and politics, and his own understanding of human nature. Uppermost in his mind would have been the question he had noted as being the most pressing of the century, the race issue (see 162 above): and his understanding of race would have determined the way he presented both black and white characters in *Mhudi*.

It is unlikely that, in writing *Mhudi*, Plaatje deliberately set out to write a reverse image of the colonial romance. He imitated the style, and used other elements, that he found in Haggard, but his own writing was clearly more strongly influenced by his own vision than by the exotic image of Africa typical of Haggard.

Considering the rhetorical nature of Plaatje’s vision articulated in *Native Life in South Africa*, *Mhudi* is—on the surface—a remarkably undidactic story. Its purpose is understated, adding to the complexity of the text. However, C.S. Lewis claims that writing with a deliberate moral is not the most creative

approach to composition, and argues that “everything in the story should arise from the whole cast of the author’s mind”:

Let the pictures tell you their own moral. For the moral inherent in them will rise from whatever spiritual roots you have succeeded in striking during the whole course of your life¹.

The “pictures” that Plaatje conjures in the romance “tell their own moral”. *Mhudi*, without articulating a clear, didactic moral code, nevertheless reflects its author’s active and intense mind, as well as his ethical, political, social and spiritual beliefs. Certain elements of Haggard’s image of Africa are naturally still found in Plaatje’s work, for he would have discovered elements both useful to him as well as those which conflicted with his understanding of Africa and Africans. Plaatje would also have kept the romance vision of Shakespeare—whose attitude to race he admired and to whom he often alludes in *Mhudi*—clearly in mind as a qualifying literary model.

Of Haggard’s many romances, *Nada the Lily* probably had the most direct influence on Plaatje², and shares many parallel incidents and features with *Mhudi*. Both are historical romances, focusing on black South African history, and each is set at a time when warfare between different South African groupings was taking place. Both mark the coming of the Boers in wagons, and both note the presence of other colonists—missionaries, traders, hunters and farmers—and colonial towns and borders. Each work notes an initial defeat of the Boers by black forces, and also the expedience of a black group combining forces with the Boers in order to overthrow a tyrant³.

¹“On Three Ways of Writing for Children”, in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966) 33. Lewis did not regard writing for children as an inferior craft and his comment is not limited to this genre.

²Chrisman, in *Empire and Opposition*, sees *Mhudi* as a “direct response to the Haggardian historical romance of *Nada*”, 7.

³Mzilikazi in *Mhudi* and Dingaan in *Nada the Lily*, 316-7.

Both romances are set in the fairly immediate past, and their stories have supposedly been passed down by narrators mentioned in the text. In Haggard, Mopo is the protagonist and tells his own story; in *Plaatje*, the narrator is further in the background, and appears only occasionally. As the narrated past is a generation further back in *Mhudi* than in *Nada the Lily*, *Plaatje*'s narrator does not appear in the action directly, having been himself told of the events within the oral tradition. He is consequently not as important a figure as Mopo¹, who appears in and influences the action. Like other allegorical romance characters in Haggard, Mopo is supernaturally old: necessarily so, in this case, to have done all that he describes².

The texts also display a similarity of structure and incident. Each has a common romance pattern which is, typically, played out in time. Conventionally important in romance, time inevitably brings about change, reveals truth and rights wrong, leading through the tragic trough to the romance peak. Although *Nada the Lily* is not resolved in all these ways at the end (as showed in Chapter Four), Mopo indicates that the skeleton of this pattern underlies this text:

Thus, my father, does destiny make fools of us men. We think that we can shape our fate, but it is fate that shapes us, and nothing befalls except fate shall will it. All things are a great pattern, my father, drawn by the hand of the Umkulunkulu upon the cup whence he drinks the water of his wisdom; and our lives, and what we do, and what we do not do, are but a little bit of the pattern, which is so big that only the eye of Him who is above, the Umkulunkulu, can see it all.

(197)

¹This narrator figure has been at the centre of some controversy. It was strongly felt by Couzens and Gray in "Printers' and Other Devils" (see 27, above) that the editing out of this figure was a deliberate suppression of oral influence in *Mhudi*. This point should be balanced against the fact that a model for such a narrator figure could readily have been found in Haggard's romances.

²Ancient figures are typically Haggardian: Ayesha in *She*, Gagool in *King Solomon's Mines* and Zikali in *Child of Storm* and *Finished*, for example.

Mhudi's structure is more typical of romance, moving from "A Tragedy and its Vendetta" and "Dark Days" to the closing chapters, "A Happy Reunion" and "A Contented Homecoming". Phil Jay points out this romance pattern of change when he notes that the world spins round like a wagon wheel (198). Chrisman argues that *Mhudi* is more classically correct in terms of romance structure than *Nada the Lily*¹, and this reflects the text's ultimate reliance on Plaatje's own romance vision and on the Shakespearean model rather than the Haggardian, upon whom he relies for more stylistic or thematic elements, as well as for South African content.

The common romance theme of love, or the destruction of love, is central to both *Nada the Lily* and *Mhudi*, and becomes a driving force in each work. But another driving force, opposed by nature to love, that each has in common is vengeance. Mopo's sister, Baleka, talks him into becoming "great to the great end of vengeance" (107). Vengeance, in this text, thus becomes an end in itself, and reaches its apotheosis in Mopo's vision where those killed by Chaka demand justice from *Inkosazana-y-Zulu*, the Queen of the Heavens. Her answer, that she will teach Mopo "to wreak [her] vengeance on the earth" (105), justifies vengeance by divine decree. Nothing in Haggard's text that emanates from Africa is able to halt or counter the growing cycle of vengeance. Even the more pastoral or domestic figures, such as Mopo's mother and Zinita, the chief wife of Umslopogaas, ultimately react with vengeance in situations of confrontation (24 and 286). The only counter to this spiralling cycle of vengeance is the brief evocation of Stanger (178-9), where the British provide the novel's romance images of love, forgiveness, peace and justice.

In *Mhudi*, by contrast, Ra-Thaga's desire for vengeance on the Matabele is coupled with Mhudi's wish for the gods to forgive Mzilikazi (180). Vengeance, at the close of the text, is "satisfied" (200), and

¹Noted above, 33.

it does not become an end in itself, or part of an unbroken cycle. The defeat of Mzilikazi ultimately teaches him his weaknesses and sends Umnandi back to him, allegorically making him whole again. In *Mhudi* the divine sanction for vengeance, which in *Nada the Lily* forms part of the allegorical core, is replaced by the image of a multi-cultural gathering of grace-like women—the angel-like Annetje, the good Umnandi, and Mhudi¹—in the chapter “Mhudi and Umnandi” (176-7), and by Mhudi’s sense that “perverted might” will be overthrown “by a force that is more powerful than treachery” (68). In *Mhudi*, for instance, Mzilikazi’s vengeance upon Boya is not divinely sanctioned: within the moral scheme of Plaatje’s romance, by contrast, it precipitates a downfall that leads to self knowledge and a new life.

Another similarity is the use, in both romances, of prophecy, which in the case of *Mhudi* has been much discussed, probably because, instead of balancing the prophecy against the fuller romance pattern, especially the grace-like image of the group of women, it has sometimes rather narrowly been seen to contain the essential political message of *Mhudi*. In *Nada the Lily* prophecy and the supernatural are integral to both the plot and theme and influence the mystical, gothic tone of the story. With the novelist’s retrospection Haggard uses prophecies to predict events in fact fulfilled by history. Chaka, stabbed and dying, prophesies the coming of white men, and the defeat of the Zulu nation by them (194), and this, by the time the romance ends, is fulfilled. A similar technique is effectively used by Plaatje. Mzilikazi’s final prophecy moves the reader beyond the time of the novel into contemporary times in a description that echoes the conditions reflected in *Native Life in South Africa*, lending the romance much dramatic, existential and political force.

¹Couzens in “Sol Plaatje’s *Mhudi*”, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 8.1, 1973, 17-18, notes that Mhudi “comes to friendship with the women who are symbols of what is virtuous in the other peoples”. Chrisman, however, says that “instead of the trio of romance pairs representing, as some have suggested, a set of equally sympathetic and significant representatives, the Boer couple serve as a foil to the other two”, *Empire and Opposition*, 198. It is possible that the changing patterns of the groups allows for some validity in both views. The “romance pairs” perhaps symbolise the potential for virtue which is not always fully realised.

Each story soon has its main protagonists wandering as lone fugitives from groups which have murderous intent. In *Mhudi* the Matabele stalk survivors of the destroyed Barolong community, in *Nada the Lily* Mopo and Baleka flee murderous members of their own community. Similarly, both romances have episodes in which characters are lost in the wilderness. Mhudi says:

I continued my stay at this spot for several days. Beginning to feel less fearful, I used to saunter out by day, refresh myself with a drink of water at the pool, then wander along the gully to gather some roots and wood berries about the slope . . .

(41)

The episode ends with her running into the arms of Ra-Thaga, where she finds love. In *Nada the Lily* the wilderness episode is very brief. Nada and Umslopogaas are lost together:

So Nada rose, frightened, and hand in hand they stumbled through the darkness. But in the wind and the night they lost their path, and when at length the dawn came they were in a forest that was strange to them. They rested awhile, and finding berries, ate them, then walked again. All that day they wandered, till at last the night came down, and they plucked branches of trees and piled the branches over them for warmth, and they were so weary that they fell asleep in each other's arms.

(66)

Nada expresses a wish to die, but Umslopogaas, leaving her briefly, finds the way, and gathers, like Mhudi, "many berries and a root that is good for food". Umslopogaas, with much pain and self sacrifice, carries Nada home: "and the end of it was that both recovered and loved each other more than ever before".

Plaatje's treatment of the conventional-love-in-the-wilderness *topos* differs from Haggard's in the slightly ironic treatment of Ra-thaga, who is both saviour of Mhudi and also saved by the humble heroine, whereas Umslopogaas is the characteristic heroic male rescuing the lost woman.

Other similar features are the use of song¹, and lion episodes. Gray comments upon the latter, seeking the source for these in Shakespeare, Bunyan and African oral tradition. Haggard, both in *Nada the Lily* and in hunting episodes involving Allan Quatermain in other works, could equally be sources for what is a fairly typical feature of romance in general, but African colonial romance in particular. The lion episodes in *Mhudi*, which follow the romance type by being unrealistic—even a little wooden—have in common with Haggard the wild sort of bravado the presence of lions supposedly induces. Both texts use similar descriptions of roaring lions: Haggard's "he roared till the earth shook" from *Nada the Lily* (87) is echoed by *Mhudi*'s "it gave a startling roar that shook the earth beneath my feet" (70). Gray's reference to African orature is perhaps more pertinent than his reference to Shakespeare and Bunyan as sources for the lion episodes in *Mhudi*. Plaatje's lions are, nevertheless, close to Haggard's in type and spirit².

Incidental similarities such as the above are coupled with similarities of the typical romance motifs and structure found in both works, going back further than Shakespeare's romances. The splitting of families, or parting of family members, and apparent deaths of family members or lovers form the basic structure of many romances. *Mhudi* has instances of both of these, the destruction of the Barolong community being the clearest example. Others are the apparent death of Baile (or Mhudi, from Baile's

¹*Nada the Lily*, 74; *Mhudi*, 51 and 72.

²His suggestion (in "Sources of the First Black South African Novel . . ." 23) that Plaatje allegorically represents the British lion in these episodes appears fanciful in that there is little evidence in the novel or in Plaatje's works generally to corroborate such a reading.

point of view), of the spies, and of Umnandi. The seemingly miraculous return of such lost people evokes typical romance images of rebirth or resurrection. Families are split in the hunting and war-faring episodes of Ra-Thaga (who promises finally and fittingly to respond to his wife's voice in future) and in the parallel separations of Mzilikazi and Umnandi and Phil Jay and Annetje.

Nada the Lily also has the difficulty of maintaining family life as a central theme. Throughout the text families are split or destroyed. Here the romance motif is used by Haggard to comment on Chaka, and by extension Zulu and African norms and values. Mopo and Baleka flee their community early in life. Mopo is separated from Nada and his wife Macropha, as well as from Umslopogaas whose apparent death saves him from the likelihood of being hunted down by Chaka. This essential romance characteristic of the Chaka figure—the destruction of the family, of love, of the domestic—does not undergo the conventional romance resolution, with reunion and reconciliation at the end of the text.

Each story opens with an evocation of the idyllic past. In each case the pastoral scenes are interrupted by the arrival of Zulu peoples. *Mhudi* begins with a description of a lifestyle that is at once a description of daily pastoral simplicity and of political independence. Plaatje describes a historical period, making use of literary conventions rather than those of historical writing. He constantly emphasizes pastoral content, or the classical *otium*: “They raised their native corn which satisfied their simple wants” (23), “These peasants were content . . .” (24).

However, this idyllic world is not perfect. Plaatje gives enough hints to indicate that the pastoral bliss was based partly on ignorance. He speaks of traditional life as paradoxically “humdrum yet interesting”:

. . . the peasants were content to live their monotonous lives, and thought nought of their overseas kinsmen who were making history on the plantations and harbours of Virginia and Mississippi at that time: nor did they know or care about the relations of the Hottentot and the Boers at Cape Town nearer home.

(24)

Thus, as is typical of pastoral, the world of contentment and simplicity is contrasted with the more courtly, more urbanized, and usually more corrupt metropolitan world. Other examples are “these simple folk were perfectly happy without money and without silver watches” (25), and “the simple women of the tribes accepted wifehood and transacted their onerous duties with the same satisfaction and pride as an English artist would the job of conducting an orchestra” (24).

These latter examples contrast pastoral simplicity and contentment with the trappings of civilisation, and indicate that the pastoral peoples, “Strange to relate”, felt no lack. And Plaatje, the author, the narrator, and the cultural translator not only uses examples his readership would be familiar with, but indicates that he, a descendent of the peoples he describes, is at home with the articles and aesthetics of the metropole: “the beauty spots of the Cape and the glory of the silver trees” (24).

However, the former examples are of a different sort, for pastoral may conventionally criticize vicious aspects of the court while praising its virtues. Haggard’s criticism of aspects of the English civilisation he otherwise values is typical of the convention. In *Mhudi* the pastoral society is unaware of and

unconcerned about the issues of slavery and racism: “their overseas kinsmen who were making history on the plantations and harbours”, and “the relations of the Hottentots and the Boers at Cape Town”. Plaatje elsewhere notes that the “Native Question” has “since the abolition of slavery, always been the gravest question of its day”¹. Thus, part of this pastoral contentment is a lack of knowledge about the issues of slavery and race: issues that were about to confront this very society with the arrival of the Boers, who firstly attempt to keep “all the land” (154) won by the allies in the war against the Matabele, and who permanently retain some captive Matabele herds as slaves (155). They later—according to Mzilikazi’s prophecy—will use Bechuana youths as “pack-oxen”, turn the “women into beasts of burden”, and rob “them of their cattle, their children and their lands” (188).

Plaatje, then, does not depict this pastoral world as a social ideal. The people exist out of the stream of world events, unaware of their “overseas kinsmen who were making history”, uninterested in the Cape Peninsula and the beauty and glory of “their own sub-continent” (24). They similarly scorn experimental attempts to improve their stock by cross-breeding, and have no ambition even to see Monomotapa (24)². The life described here is, unlike Mhudi’s, or Plaatje’s own, an unquestioning and unimaginative existence.

Furthermore, theirs was a “patriarchal life”, where “woman’s work was never out of season”. The reference evokes Ovid’s Golden Age, where, by contrast, there is no work, and no seasons. Lenta has noted that in *Mhudi* Plaatje valued the “innovative impulse in women”³, and Plaatje was certainly aware

¹*Boer War Diary*, 8 December 1899, 33, and see 161 above.

²By contrast, Mzilikazi wishes to conquer Monomotapa, 184.

³Margaret Lenta, “The Need for a Feminism: Black Township Writing”, 55.

of, and admired, Olive Schreiner and her feminist work. He was probably, Willan argues, also influenced by his women friends in London, from whom Plaatje “had derived a keen insight into the parallels between . . . racial and sexual discrimination” and who had done much “to strengthen his conviction that women, more than men, possessed the qualities from which a more just and humane society could emerge”¹. Lenta sees the isolated, pastoral marriage of Mhudi and Ra-Thaga, which takes place outside of society, as an “end of the tribal separation of the sexes and their functions”, and “the beginning of a new kind of relationship, which the young couple mark in the name they give their home, Re-Nosi, meaning We-Are-Alone”.

Plaatje’s heroine, Mhudi, and her types, Umnandi and Annetje, all establish their own modes of behaviour, and do not meekly fit in with patriarchal systems (although Umnandi perhaps tends towards feminine obedience): all have the ability to, or are required to, teach their husbands. This instructive role of the women characters, who—like the heroines of Shakespearean comedy—lead the male characters into a new vision of society, is much emphasized in *Mhudi*. Ra-Thaga, for instance, notes that “[Mhudi] made me what I am”, and that Annetje will help Phil Jay understand his own people, the Boers, properly. Similarly, Umnandi must “urge [Mzilikazi] to give up wars” (179). Plaatje suggests that, rather than merely reverting to the earlier pastoral world, the peoples in the romance have a lot to learn, in order for society to improve: Mzilikazi must be taught humanity (69), Moroka wishes to teach that assault is a crime (113), and Moshueshue teaches through a “magnanimity [which] had no parallel in the history of Native warfare” (148) that there are new social possibilities.

¹*Plaatje: A Biography*, 360.

The text indicates that the opening patriarchal pastoral world, while it has certain values that should be retained, is not the “Perfect environment in which to live” or the “nearly perfect society” as claimed by Christie *et al.*¹. Plaatje’s pastoral world at the opening is typical of the conventional pastoral peak of romance: it is idyllic, like that which opens *The Winter’s Tale*, yet has weaknesses which need to be resolved, through tragic action, in the maturity of time. As noted in Chapter Two, at the pastoral peak, “the pastoral world is a world of happiness and virtue, yet is not—in absolute terms—ideal or immutable: sin and conflict, even if considered in retrospect to be venial, does exist, but is not seen to have destroyed the general tone of happiness” (58 above).

Thus, the early pastoral world of *Mhudi* is immediately set within contexts which make it a world of tension. References to contemporary history in these pages emphasize both its fragility, and the fact that it is of the past: their implements “today would be pronounced very crude by their semi-westernised descendants” (23) and “Kunana, near the present boundary between Cape Colony and Western Transvaal” (24).

In *Nada the Lily* Mopo’s pastoral childhood is destroyed when Chaka enters with his mother—trouble is predicted, and much of the later action in the romance springs from this meeting with the future chief.

Similarly, the pastoral world in *Mhudi* is destroyed by the entrance of a group of Zulu people:

Upon these peaceful regions over one hundred years ago there descended one Mzilikazi, king of a ferocious tribe called the Matabele, a powerful usurper of determined character who by his sword proclaimed himself ruler over all the land.

¹S. Christie, G. Hutchings and D. MacLennan (eds.) *Perspectives on South African Fiction* (Johannesburg: AD. Donker, 1980) 76.

Mzilikazi's tribe originally was a branch of the Zulu nation which Chaka once ruled with an iron rod. Irritated by the stern rule of that monarch, Mzilikazi led out his own people who thereupon broke away from Chaka's rule and turned their faces westward.

(25)

In the romance paradigm, that which destroys the pastoral world becomes the evil that has to be overthrown so that a new version of pastoral can be re-established. The pastoral world needs to be rebuilt by emphasizing its values and rooting out its own vices, as well as vices that enter from an outside source. Thus Mzilikazi is described here as a "usurper", who "proclaimed himself ruler over all the land", as the leader of a "ferocious tribe", and not in terms of the sympathetically presented romance character he later becomes.

Here he is the Haggardian Zulu, "driving terror into man and beast", "like a swarm of locusts" (25). It is not, then, Mzilikazi the man to whom Plaatje objects, but the qualities he represents at this moment: the usurper, proclaiming himself ruler, who drives terror into men, who is like the Biblical plague of locusts. At the end of this romance, its resolution is threatened by a similar quality of behaviour, personified in the Boers. In terms of Couzens's "model theory"¹, with Plaatje's 1830s standing in an allegorical relationship to post-1913 South Africa, the moral quality of oppression, not the individual perpetrators, is the vice which is opposed to the peaceful pastoral world. Plaatje's Shakespearean model indicates that virtue and vice are not the monopoly of any race. Thus, as we get to know other

¹Couzens, Introduction to *Mhudi*, Heinemann edition, 17-18.

Matabele characters, this initial view of the people is balanced by Umnandi and Gubuza, whose influence gradually helps Mzilikazi change and establish a new moral platform.

This potential for change and growth in *Mhudi* is where, despite the similarities it shares with *Nada the Lily*, its essential difference from that text is found. In the potential for growth into a better society Plaatje departs from the Haggardian model, relying more upon the Shakespearean, and upon his own cast of mind. Plaatje's romance characters, like those of Shakespearean romance, can learn, adapt and change, and this change can come both from outside influences, as when Chief Massouw is favourably influenced by "the white Missioner Moffat" (83), or from internal African influences, like those of Moshueshue, or Mhudi.

Unlike Haggard's, Plaatje's romance characters are not fixed types. Herein lies both the hope and the despair of *Mhudi*, for as Mzilikazi grows in moral stature, the Boers replace him as villain. Originally fugitives and victims who are sympathetically received and helped by the Basotho, the Boers change into the "wild men"¹ of a "tribe" (25) and become usurpers who want to have all the land. And, indeed, the opening of *Native Life in South Africa* reflects the coming of the two concerns that the Bechuana tribes had the pastoral luxury of ignoring at the beginning of *Mhudi*—the racist relations between the Hottentots and the Boers at Cape Town and the slavery of the plantations:

Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth.

(22)

¹The irony of this phrase is enriched by comparison with Mopo's "I do not understand, who am but a wild man, nor have I found more knowledge in the hearts of you tamed white people", *Nada the Lily*, 227.

The destruction of the pastoral dream is reflected in Plaatje's use of "awakening" and "found himself", suggesting perhaps that more alertness may have prevented this entrapment. Thus the Boers in *Native Life in South Africa* do to the "South African native" what Mzilikazi does at the beginning of *Mhudi*, and what Mzilikazi predicts at the end of the work.

The ruin of the pastoral in *Nada the Lily* is also the destruction of the domestic ideal, with families, including women and children, killed or scattered, with gardens and homes destroyed. It is ongoing throughout the text, becoming synonymous with Haggard's depiction of the Zulu way of life. In *Mhudi* the invasion of Bechuana territory by the Matabele disrupts the pastoral world, bringing offensive manners. They demand that tribute be laid "at the feet of Mzilikazi, ruler of earth and skies" (27).

The latter phrase¹ parallels many Elizabethan images of Pride, the first of the deadly sins. Examples from Marlowe and Spenser are in the Evil Angel's offer to Faustus: "Be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky"², and Mammon's "God of the world and worldlings I me call / Great Mammon, greatest god below the skye"³. This boast typifies Mzilikazi's human arrogance. In another echo of Faustus, the defeated Mzilikazi, "like one in delirium", "wished that he held the keys to open the gateways of the elements of thunder and lightning, so as to command these forces" to destroy his enemies (186). Mofolo's Chaka similarly echoes Faustus when he wishes Isanusi to take him "to the very limits of [Isanusi's] wisdom and strength"⁴.

¹This phrase is repeated by Nomenti, 101, and a little more ironically on 183.

²Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (I.i.75), in *Elizabethan Plays*, ed. Hazelton Spencer, (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1933).

³*The Faerie Queene* (II.vii.8.1-2). Spenser's "below the skye" implies mundane fallibility.

⁴Thomas Mofolo, *Chaka*, translated by Daniel P. Kunene (London: Heinemann, 1981) 100. These parallels and echoes are not necessarily deliberate allusions. They are noted, however, because the Elizabethan

Mzilikazi's proud confidence at the end of Chapter 5, "Revels after Victory", is maintained despite Gubuza's warning. He wishes that "all the neighbouring nations must be subjugated and broken down until our law should govern from the desert to the sea", and until Chaka, from whom he had earlier fled, "himself acknowledged our supremacy".

The characters in *Nada the Lily* exist in an amoral world, or—at most—a world governed by the divine decree of vengeance. Mopo has had a life of suffering, but as avenger he achieves his aims, and—unlike the typical Elizabethan revenger—he is not punished for them. Mzilikazi's human and political arrogance is that of a despot, and, as comfortable and cheerful as he is depicted to be within the context of his victory in Chapter 5, literary allusions are reminders that he is placed by Plaatje within a moral world, where the arrogant ruler may expect a tragic fall.

The tension between an amoral and a moral world is emphasized by Plaatje in the debate between Mhudi and Ra-Thaga, where Ra-Thaga argues that "might is right", that the world is governed by a Darwinian notion of "the survival of the fittest", which phrase is associated with Ra-Thaga when he confronts six lions, and feels "helpless and afraid" (63). He later argues for the validity of vengeance, and both he and Phil Jay are finally driven by the desire to revenge (116, 122-3). However, Ra-Thaga's desire for vengeance is not without a sense of parallel divine retribution. He feared that the Matabele "this ferocious nation was super-human, and that nothing in the world would ever punish them":

Could it be a fact, he asked himself, that there is absolutely no power to exact judgement in return for all the wrongs and cruelties of the past, and for the loss of so many of his relatives who died guiltless deaths at the hands of the Matabele? The idea was revolting.

(117)

Ra-Thaga leans here towards Mhudi's way of seeing things. Moving from the "survival of the fittest" argument he previously employed, he looks for a "power" that will exact judgement. Yet his emphasis is still on vengeance, on exacting judgement. Mhudi, in the meantime, has progressed in her understanding to where, through interaction with Annetje and Umnandi, she is able to understand that virtue and vice are not the monopoly of any colour (176-177). This reflects a maturity from her initial feelings about other groups, for she is typically suspicious—wisely so, it is clear—about all groups she encounters, the Matabele, the Qoranna and the Boers. Her attitude towards the Qoranna is typical:

The idea of the daughter of a Hammersmith marrying a man whose language was as full of clicks as that of the wild Masarwa, was too hard for Mhudi's conception. The destruction of her people and burning of their homes seemed to have no effect on her tribal pride. She knew very little about the Qoranna; in all her life she had never seen more than one; so that a group of them, nearly all sounding the Qoranna clicks in turn, was a spectacle so grotesque that she felt it difficult to believe that they understood one another. 'What a life,' she thought, 'to be married to a man whose language a girl could not understand! . . . I have never met anyone who could master the clicks and gibberish of the Masarwa'.

(74)

Plaatje's connection of marriage and a language "full of clicks" echoes the recollection of his own marriage in his homage to Shakespeare: "My people resented the idea of my marrying a girl who spoke a language which, like the Hottentot language, had clicks in it"¹. Thus, at this moment Mhudi is not represented as her wise self, but, like Plaatje's own relatives who also changed, and "lived to award their benediction", Mhudi is a young woman in the process of learning. Similarly, the "tribal pride" which

¹*Selected Writings*, 211: this piece was published in 1916, not long before *Mhudi* is thought to have been written.

dominates the young Mhudi's thinking is not reflective of Plaatje's non-partisan ideal. Plaatje had written in 1913 about the Land Act:

. . . that act has united the Native races in a way which was never dreamt of in the philosophy of Meintjes Kop [the site of the Union Buildings]. In the far away corners of this Union, the mutual understanding and fellow feeling of the black and coloured people is surprising. They have stood up as one man . . . to protest against this treatment at the capital of the empire Amongst the largest contributors towards the fund are Natives who, at the beginning of this year, would have scorned the idea of contributing towards the fund of the Congress not wholly composed of members of their tribe. Tribalism and clanishness is melting away . . . and a bond of sympathy and co-operation is being automatically weaved amongst the coloured races of South Africa¹.

Thus, Mhudi, like the pastoral scene at the beginning of the romance, is virtuous, but in need of growth.

Her early naivety is reflected in her own early characterization of herself:

On that last afternoon I had taken a pestle to hurry along with my cookery duties, when, suddenly, the watchmen's horns sounded in different parts of the town. Being preoccupied with my work I paid but passing attention to such masculine affairs My mother had told us one evening that two Matabele had been killed. In our girlish simplicity we hardly enquired for the reason. We took it that these Khonkhobes had no business in our country, and that it was just and proper that they should be sent off or put to death.

(37-8)

Mhudi's "just and proper" here is qualified in her later belief that "the *crime* of one chief who murdered two indunas" was insufficient "justification for the massacre of a whole nation" (67, my emphasis).

¹This address and call for unity, "Along the colour line", was delivered by Plaatje to the African People's Organisation, a "predominantly but not exclusively coloured organisation, of which he was a member" Willan in *Selected Writings*, 163. The extract itself is from 167-8. The opening allusion to Hamlet's "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (I.v.165-6) is typical of Plaatje's absorbed use of Shakespeare.

Mhudi's development follows a typical romance process. Her early pastoral simplicity, which reflects that of her society, is followed by the approach of evil, of death (in her community, and, from their perspective, her own apparent death), isolation and suffering. A pastoral rebirth and re-awakening is followed by a re-union with her people, and a final union with her husband that also reflects a new pacific commitment.

Examples of this type of romance journey, or quest (although it is not, in the case of these heroines, voluntarily undertaken) are the histories of Perdita, Imogen, Marina and Miranda from Shakespeare's romances, or Pastorella, from *The Faerie Queene* Book VI.

Miranda, from *The Tempest*, is the model for Stella in *Allan's Wife*, and the contrasts in the treatment of the type by Haggard and Plaatje are telling. Miranda's early memories are of being tended by four or five women (l.i.47), and she doesn't remember "teen", or sorrow (l. 64) or the crying (ll. 133-4) in her early life. Her father, likewise, conjures a brief idyll: he loved his brother, his state was reputed the prime in dignity, he was the foremost student of the arts (ll. 70-74). A usurper destroys this peaceful domestic and political situation, and Miranda is (with her father) left to the elements whence she rises, like Haggard's Stella, a child who carries the best of both her culture and of nature. Each becomes fully herself, a representative of virtue who bears the prosperity and hopes of her people. Stella, of course, dies, and her community with her: but she nevertheless remains the ideal for both Quatermain and Haggard.

Both Miranda and Stella have a caring father and a library to help with their education. Mhudi's patriarchal and oral society do not give these options. She carries within herself, however, her oral traditions, and the sensibilities of her people. New experiences, which include death, isolation and

communion with nature, her meeting with Ra-Thaga, and their woodland marriage, are all part of a romance quest, and also part of her learning experience.

In romance, which deals with long passages of time, much of the action occurs “offstage”, and is narrated by the characters (*The Tempest* and *Allan’s Wife* again serve as examples). Mhudi’s narrative follows this convention, taking her life-story from naive and innocent pastoral girlhood:

The flocks had left the fold and we separated the kids from their mothers in order to milk the goats on their return from the bush next afternoon. The summer shone overhead and the shades of the camelthorn trees were cool; so we took our wooden pestles, sat merrily in a circle under the shady branches busily pounding the corn to prepare porridge for the evening meal.

(37)

The pastoral innocence is emphasized by the rhythmic sense of continuity, in the expectant “evening meal” and “next afternoon”. Mhudi is placed, here, within the circle of her social life: a maiden, doing woman’s work. This scene is broken up by the killing of the two Matabele (who had themselves broken the peace of the previously described pastoral calm of the Bechuana).

Vivan has compared the destruction of Kunana by the Matabele with the destruction of Troy as described in the *Aeneid*¹. The epic nature of the Latin text is built on the romance foundations of the *Odyssey*, and Virgil combines the two genres. Plaatje, similarly, subtitles his romance “An Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago”, combining his romance with an epic base. The subtitle is

¹Itala Vivan, “Sol Plaatje’s *Mhudi*: History as Fiction”, 45-47.

almost an anagram of his “Native Life in South Africa”, taken back a hundred years¹. Vivan’s argument, which depends rather too much on each book beginning with the destruction of a city, and the bucolic aspects of each², nevertheless helps to draw attention to epic elements in the deep structure of *Mhudi*. Both the *Aeneid* and *Mhudi* begin with the destruction of a city and the death of its inhabitants and the necessity of the survivors keeping their cultures (the household gods of the *Aeneid*) alive so that the cultures can be reborn in a new, invigorated form. This romance epic pattern underlies Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* as well, and—though muted—is still discernible in Shakespeare’s romances.

The romance shape and epic import in the deep structure of *Mhudi* is more clear perhaps from the table of contents than from the love story and adventures of Mhudi and Ra-Thaga: as Vivan notes, the chapters “become like the cantos in an epic poem”³. The chapters can be grouped: “A Tragedy and its Vendetta”; “Dark Days”; and “Mhudi’s Alarming Experience” give way to more pleasant scenes in “Rays of Sunshine”; “Revels After Victory”, leads into “The Forest Home” and “Mhudi and I”. This new idyll is again threatened by “Strangers”; “A Perilous Adventure”; “Arrival of the Voortrekkers”; and “A Timid Man”. In the centre of the storm is the chapter “Queen Umnandi”, which leads into the confusion of battle: “Soothsayers and Battles”; “Light and Shade of Memorable Days”; “With the Boers at Maroka’s Hoek”; “Queen Umnandi’s Flight”; “The Spies—Their Adventures”; “Halley’s Comet—Its Influence on the Native Mind”; culminating in “War against the Matabele”. A new growth is introduced by Mhudi’s bravery and faith in “Mhudi’s Leap in the Dark”; “Mhudi and Umnandi”; “The Exodus” (like

¹Noted by Voss, Introduction to *Mhudi*, 16-7, who also notes that the subtitle contains an echo of the title of Plaatje’s pamphlet “The Mote and the Beam: An Epic on Sex-Relationship ’twixt White and Black in British South Africa” (*Selected Writings*, 274). In this pamphlet Plaatje’s argument is basically that accusers should be wary of the beams in their own eyes, a reversal of perspective also typical of *Mhudi*.

²Vivan, 47-48.

³Vivan, 56.

the version at the end of *Paradise Lost*¹, Plaatje's exodus is an ambiguous affair, significantly near the end of the book and not at the opening place it has in the Bible); "A Happy Reunion" and the final "A Contented Homecoming". The prophecy of Mzilikazi in *Mhudi*, like that of Tiresias in the *Odyssey*, however, indicates that the homecoming is not the true end of the story.

Vivan's evocation of the *Aeneid*, although possibly not directly helpful in dealing with individual pages of *Mhudi*, nevertheless helps to establish the strong epic sincerity which underlies Plaatje's typically light romance presentation. Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, however, is a far more helpful epic parallel, in terms of both symbolism and the poetic structure that underlies *Mhudi*. Both have political and historical concerns that are coupled with moral issues². *The Faerie Queene*, furthermore, demands attention to allegory, and *Mhudi* has allegorical levels that are easily missed by the reader looking for social realism. It is helpful, for instance, to read the completed romance of Umnandi and Mzilikazi, the image of the African ideal, as an image of the betrothal of Una and the Red Crosse Knight (or, in the epic paradigm, the envisaged betrothal of Prince Arthur and the Faerie Queene). Against this, on another level, *Mhudi* and Ra-Thaga, like the Red Crosse Knight at the end of the quest, must re-enter and deal with the real world, the world they have been battling through since the early chapters of the romance. This is the world where evil needs to be fought, it is the world of pilgrimage, where a battle won is a moral lesson learned.

¹John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. G.H. Cowling (London: Methuen, 1926) Book XII, 552-649.

²Spenser and Plaatje, both romance writers who also wrote prose political works, are interestingly placed towards the beginning and the end of British imperial dominance. While both were guided by Christian values, Spenser's Puritanical exclusivity and emphasis on difference (between Una and Duessa, for example, or Anglican and Catholic, or English and Irish) and Plaatje's more communal sense of equivalents mark the variety of thought that is possible within the romance mode.

The “Happy Reunion” of Mzilikazi ends on a romantic epic note, with Umnandi’s son extending “the awe-inspiring sway of his government”, with the son wielding “a yet greater power than that of his renowned father”. This suits the pattern of Plaatje’s romance: yet Plaatje was well aware that the history of Lobengula was vastly different, leading to the overthrow of his realm and the establishment of Southern Rhodesia¹. As is clear from the discussion of *Native Life in South Africa* and the *Boer War Diary* in the last chapter, Plaatje was familiar with the sense that the romance ending is thrust up against the continuation of life and struggle in the real world: it is an ideal—more permanent in its guidance than its realisation—that always leads into the next phase of the journey².

Thus the pastoral world, an image of the ideal, is continually evoked, then challenged, in *Mhudi*. In the opening pages it is challenged by the arrival of the Matabele. After the arrival of the Matabele, the pastoral of Mhudi’s girlhood conjured both by herself and Ra-Thaga (37) is destroyed after the killing of Bhoya. In “Rays of Sunshine” it is both evoked and challenged, and in “The Forest Home” and “Mhudi and I” it is strongly evoked but challenged by the “Strangers” of the next chapter. The text works through these tensions towards the establishment of the final version of the pastoral in the last two chapters. This is itself challenged by Mzilikazi’s prophecy, as well as by the evocation of *Native Life in South Africa* in the subtitle of *Mhudi*, which reinforces the closure of the romance, and the opening out into a harsher historical reality.

¹See Peter Becker, *Path of Blood* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979) 280-283 and Chennells “Narrative in Sol Plaatje’s *Mhudi*”, 55. Chrisman, noting the convergence of the romance and historical modes, however, calls this closure “real history”, saying that “nowhere else in *Mhudi* does Plaatje unite the fictive and real in this way”.

²C.S. Lewis touches on the relationship between “story” and “real life”: “We grasp at a state and find only a succession of events in which the state is never quite embodied . . . but can any such series quite embody the sheer state of being which was what we wanted?”, *Of Other Worlds*, 20.

This patterning, which reflects the pastoral peak, tragic trough and romance peak discussed in Chapter Two (56, above), is the structuring paradigm of *Mhudi*. Plaatje uses it to shape the story of each major group in the text, the Barolong, the Matabele and the Boers. The English, who are significantly in the background in *Mhudi*¹, are not given a similar pattern to work through. The most perfect version of the romance pattern is played out in the history of Mzilikazi and the Matabele. Against this pattern, which is fully resolved in the text, the Barolong cycle is resolved only in the personal history of Mhudi and Ra-Thaga, but is left poignantly incomplete in the light of Mzilikazi's prophecy. The Boers, on the other hand, have a romance cycle which seems not only to be incomplete, but in the process of slipping into the tragic trough, where Mzilikazi begins his cycle².

The history of the Matabele begins with typical romance narrative, with the narrator of *Mhudi*³ indicating that

Mzilikazi's tribe originally was a branch of the Zulu nation which Chaka once ruled with an iron rod. Irritated by the stern rule of that monarch, Mzilikazi led out his own people who thereupon broke away from Chaka's rule and turned their faces westward⁴.

(25)

¹Scattered references to them are found: Missioner Moffat (83), fisheaters (115), Grahamstown, English congregation, English soldiers (178), Cape Colony (24, 87), English laws, and King George of England (88), Mr Archbell (90): but they are everywhere implied by the use of their language, and by allusion to English literature: they are interestingly absent from and present in *Mhudi*, which has no Quatermain figure to represent them.

²Walter, Brian, "The Romance of Protest: Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*", *Literature, Nature and the Land: Ethics and Aesthetics of the Environment*, Collected AUETSA Papers 1992, eds. Nigel Bell and Meg Cowper-Lewis, University of Zululand, Ngoye, 1993, 198.

³It is not certain that the narrator in the opening pages is the same as the Half-a-Crown narrator (whose style is entirely different) that Couzens and Gray see as the authoritative oral voice in the Heinemann version, based on Plaatje's typescript: "this Half-a-Crown character is the narrator of the whole of *Mhudi*", they argue in "Printers' and Other Devils", 207 (also see 27, above). It is possible that the consistent persona of the narrator was not fully realised in the typescript, and was dropped for artistic rather than for the political reasons suggested by Couzens and Gray.

⁴Nomenti's version of the story appears on page 100: "... our tribe was forced to flee from Chaka's tyranny".

At this point in the narrative “. . . Mzilikazi, king of a ferocious tribe . . . a powerful usurper of determined character proclaimed himself ruler over all the land”. Like Antonio, the usurper in *The Tempest*, or Leontes, who falls into tyranny in *The Winter’s Tale*, Mzilikazi destroys both political stability and a pastoral way of life. As the Barolong are defeated, Mzilikazi’s pride and ambition grows, till he wishes Matabele law to govern from “the desert to the sea”, and for “Chaka himself [to acknowledge] our supremacy” (59), and he hopes to overthrow Moshueshue, normally taken as an example of kind and wise African leadership¹:

He had for years been cherishing a beautiful ideal. He had made preparations for overpowering and annexing adjacent tribes and augmenting his armies with the fighting forces of the conquered peoples; and, having trained and inspired them with Matabele courage, he had dreamt of possessing the most invincible army that ever faced an enemy; then, with his power thus magnified, he had looked forward to a march on Zululand and the establishment of an idyllic empire, stretching from the sandy woods of Bechuanaland to the coast of Monomotapa, and along the Indian Ocean, through Tonga- and Swaziland, as far South as the coast of Pondoland; and then he should hem in and subdue the wily Moshueshue of Basutoland! So much for human ambition.

(184)

In Shakespeare’s plays the king usually personifies the state of the nation: if Lear banishes his loving daughter, and goes mad, this is reflected in civil strife; Leontes’ anger, similarly, reflects a sterility and sadness in the nation, as well as enmity with erstwhile friends; Prospero’s banishment reflects the submission of Milan to Naples. Mzilikazi’s ambition is reflected in the general praise for both himself and Langa in “Revels after Victory”: “Oh, Langa, descendant of the Great Matshobani, we are proud of you! No race with such valiant princes should be ashamed of its royal house” (53) is typical.

¹Used later by H.I.E. Dhlomo as an image of the ideal African leader in *Moshoeshoe*, published in *Collected Works*, eds. Nick Visser and Tim Couzens (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1985).

While the Matabele glory in victory, however, a cautionary word is spoken by Gubuza. Gubuza, like Gonzalo in *The Tempest*, is a virtuous character who provides not only commentary on the actions of others, but displays true moral values by his own actions. Like Mhudi, or like Plaatje himself, he has travelled and learned from mixing with other cultures:

Gubuza has sat at the feet of many a wise man; I have been to Zululand, to Swaziland, to Tongoland and to Basutoland. I know the Northern forests, I know the Western deserts and I know the Eastern and Southern seas. Wiseacres of different nationalities are agreed that cheap successes are always followed by grievous aftermaths. Old people likewise declare that individuals, especially nations, should beware the impetuosity of youth¹.

(54)

Gubuza's willingness to speak against the popular voice is reflected in his dress, where the influence of other African peoples is evident:

Although the Matabele usually walked unshod, Gubuza was distinguished by using sandals like those worn by the Barolong. For some reason, the soles of his sandals were invariably made from the dewlap of an eland, instead of the ordinary cow-hide.

(53)

Gubuza's "unpatriotic views" are proved by time and events to be correct, and typical of his loyalty. Gubuza's disapproval of Matabele tyranny is Plaatje's example that virtue and vice are not the monopoly of any race. He is joined in this role by Umnandi², who is introduced in the central chapter

¹Plaatje uses similar phrasing to describe his extensive knowledge of "the coloured man": "I have seen him right across the country to the thirstland of the Kalahari. I have seen him from the Atlantic shores in the western province to the Indian Ocean in the east, and clear across the country to the northern Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia". *Selected Writings*, 163-4. See 346 for another example.

²This name, which means the sweet one, is used by Haggard for Chaka's mother in *Nada the Lily* and for "Nandie the Sweet" in *Child of Storm*, 121.

of the book. Umnandi, like Cordelia¹, Miranda, Perdita, Imogen and Marina, is exiled from her due place in the court; and this is as symbolic a division as those of Shakespeare's heroines. Each of these heroines is an image of the Neoplatonic type of beauty which is a reflection of their virtues—their virtues themselves being symbolic of the moral potential within their respective societies. Thus their exile reflects the degree to which the courts they are removed from are corrupt. Umnandi is introduced in Neoplatonic, almost heraldic terms:

Here, we may be permitted to digress and describe the beauty and virtues of one of King Mzilikazi's wives—the lily of his harem, by name Umnandi, the sweet one . . . the off-spring of a lineage of brave warriors with many deeds of valour to their credit.

(96)

Plaatje indicates that Umnandi symbolically represents Mzilikazi's potential for virtue, both personally and as king:

“That daughter of Mzinyati”, [Mzilikazi] said to himself, “was the mainstay of my throne. My greatness grew with the renown of her beauty, her wisdom and her stately reception of my guests. She vanished and, with her, the magic talisman of my court. She must have possessed the wand round which the pomp of Inzwinyani was twined for the rise of my misfortune synchronised with her disappearance. Yet she was not the only wife in my harem. How came it about that all was centred in her? What was the secret of her strength? It is clear that calamities will continue to dog my footsteps until that wife is found”.

(185-6)

¹*King Lear* is a tragedy, but contains many romance elements residual from its source play *King Leir*, which was a romance (see 69, above). *Othello* is, similarly, a tragedy built around a romance structure. The reunion of Othello and Desdemona on Cyprus, when the wars are washed away by the storm, reflects the true romance ending.

The “brightest star in the social circles of the Matabele” (134), an image which links her with Stella in *Allan’s Wife*, is charitable, sympathetic especially to other women:

Now Umnandi was a great favourite in the city. She was a mother to all the attendants at Court, for whenever there was not enough meat to go around, she would always provide for others at her own expense. If one evening an old woman ran short of water or firewood, she never appealed to her in vain. If the daughters of a light-foot mother were heavy-heeled one day, and pounded not enough corn for the cooking pot, and she wanted a little to adjust the deficiency, Umnandi always had some to spare. These beneficiaries of her bounty literally worshipped her

(99-100)

Umnandi’s virtues which, as with all heroines in the Neoplatonic mould, are evident in her beauty, also associate her with the hearth, with the family, with domestic duties (96), which are the very qualities Haggard’s Africans either lacked or destroyed:

Gazing at the beautiful form of Umnandi, she regarded her beaming countenance illumined in the glow of the wood-fire on the hearth, and found it inconceivable that the idol of the court should be capable of any kind of infamy.

(101-2)

She is associated by “the writer” with the “remarkable passage in the Song of Songs”: “I am black but comely O ye daughters of Solomon” This extract served as Plaatje’s personal motto (see 8, above), and is another instance of his use of equivalents, for he equates Umnandi, her beauty and virtues, with the Biblical speaker.

Not only does this give Biblical precedent for black beauty, but anticipates the situation of black South Africans in the sense that the speaker is “looked upon” for being black, that her “mother’s children were angry” with her, that she was made to keep vineyards, without being able to keep her own. The “writer’s” comment, that when he “changed ‘vineyards’ into ‘cornfields’, he thought he could visualise her appearance in his mind’s eye”¹, is subtle. By translating Biblical vineyards into South African cornfields, he conjures the appearance of Umnandi and—associating her with the Biblical Ruth—also anticipates the political situation of the “South African Native”, who is “looked upon” for being black, who works others’ cornfields, and not her own.

Umnandi, therefore, enters the text rich with associations—she is the image of African beauty and virtue, looking back towards the celebrated Biblical figure, and forward towards the oppressed South African woman of the twentieth century.

Like Nada, she incurs the wrath of fellow wives², but in Umnandi’s case it is a measure of their, and not her, passion and vice. This jealousy at the court, and the resultant intrigues, exemplified by Nomenti’s murderous scheming (98-101), further symbolizes Mzilikazi’s ethical state, and that of the Matabele in general. By this time Mzilikazi has begun to realise his moral position:

... the King knows it too. He said that the army that went to Kunana years ago, exceeded his orders. Instead of avenging Bhoya’s death they left the guilty murderers alone and slew the innocent tribesmen and the women, consequently the fate prophesied for us is not unlike that of the Barolong.

(100)

¹An echo, perhaps, of Desdemona’s “I saw Othello’s visage in his mind”, *Othello* I.iii.252.

²The chapter called “The War of the Women” in *Nada the Lily* is based on similar strife.

Umnandi's childless state is also symbolic. Plaatje earlier makes the point that, amongst the Bechuana, "childless marriages were as rare as freaks" (23). This creates problems in her marriage, and is maliciously used by the jealous wives, until Umnandi would have "given up her beauty and stately mien . . . in return for the birth of a baby boy as a present to her husband and his people" (97). The fact that the baby would be for Mzilikazi "and his people" indicates the symbolism of such a birth¹. It would be a personal, domestic and political event, much as the reunion of fathers and daughters, and any subsequent marriages, in Shakespeare's romances, as well as in Spenser's more national romance epic, are not only domestic but also political occasions.

As Umnandi is a symbol of the potential virtues in her people, and in Mzilikazi himself, her disappearance from court comes at a decline of Mzilikazi's military power, as well as heralding a further moral decline. His army suffered defeat by the Bangwaketse, an event linked by the "magicians" with Barolong revenge for the destruction of Kunana (104). The arrival of the Boers, associated by the Matabele with witchcraft, further hints at the undermining of Matabele strength. In terms of moral decline, Mzilikazi becomes a tyrant like Haggard's Chaka, sentencing not only the "wizards" to death, but also his defeated army (108). Although there "were but few to deplore the loss of the thirty witches" (110), and it was hoped that other "magicians" would learn from this that they were "subject to the law", those put to death were executed for speaking the truth about Mzilikazi's need to move his nation northwards, away from the sphere of the Barolong. Mzilikazi becomes a tyrant who "knows not what he does", as Gubuza notes (109). In the midst of "Soothsayers and Battles", the chapter in which Mzilikazi is thus afflicted, he hears that Umnandi has disappeared, and the condemned soldiers pointedly

¹Its needing to be a boy reflects the patriarchal needs of her society.

speculate: “Can her mystery have something to do with these death sentences on the doctors and ourselves?” (109).

At this moment of crisis in Matabele fortunes, Gubuza, Umnandi’s warrior counterpart, appears, saves the soldiers, and becomes *Gubuza-Mkomozi*, the Comforter, and the “hope of the Matabele” (163). This, however, does not save the king from further decline. In “the open space where the assemblies are held and cases were tried”, Mzilikazi has the ears and feet cut off two people remotely connected with Umnandi’s disappearance, and then, echoing Goneril¹, orders the warders to “Pluck out their eyes!” In the Matabele place of justice, then, Mzilikazi acts like a tyrant of injustice, like a Haggardian Chaka. This is all the more significant in that, in many respects, *Mhudi* is a text which debates justice, giving many instances of African court procedure².

Mzilikazi’s defeat by the Barolong, Boer and Griqua allies is simply the culmination of a process of decline. His armies flee “in wild disorder” (160), the chaos of which is the equivalent to the tempests common in romance. Emphasizing the significance of this imagery, Mzilikazi asks about the “cataclysm”, “Could not the storm have been averted?” (185), and the Matabele are said to be under a “heavy cloud of death” (183). The imagery of chaos is developed into that of the anti-pastoral wasteland:

These thoughts tormented Mzilikazi all the way, until he reached the crest of the last slope, from which elevated position he could see his people resting among the woods. He heard the bitter wail of the children who hungrily shrieked aloud for food. He saw anxious mothers pressing their empty breasts into the mouths of crying babies, but the teats of starving mothers failed to still the gnawing pangs of hunger and the little ones kept up their weak discordant wail.

(186)

¹*King Lear*, III.vii.5.

²The judgements of Massouw (82) and Moroka (132-3), for instance. Plaatje’s experience as a court interpreter would have alerted him to the important role of wise justice.

His defeat, his fall into the tragic trough, leads to the “exodus” (163)—so significant in Plaatje’s imagery—and he finally comes to the tragic realization: “I alone am to blame” (185).

In tragedy, the hero’s growth into a self-aware knowledge of his *hamartia* comes too late to prevent his fall. While this can be true of romance as well, for Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale* suffers and causes suffering, an emphasis on the passage of time in romance allows for redemption, symbolized in that play by the ministrations of the Biblically named Paulina. The redemption, coupled as it is with reunion, is personal, but also domestic and political.

In Mzilikazi’s case his growth into self-awareness is a reversal of his moral position as he moves from tyrant to sympathetically presented human being: “Looking about him he regarded the sympathetic faces of his bodyguard, then remembered with a tremor that none but Mzilikazi was the culprit” (185).

The action of *Nada the Lily* takes place in an amoral world. Its gothic horror is directed at the reader, and the characters themselves show no moral growth or self-knowledge. Its tyrants, Chaka and Dingaan, die unrepentant, and the romance resolution becomes impossible. While at times in *Mhudi* Mzilikazi resembles a Haggardian Zulu tyrant, it is always clear that this is a decline of his potential and dignity. His subsequent growth of self awareness and his change of moral status does not typically occur in Haggard’s Zulu characters, but is typical of Shakespearean romance.

Willan’s useful reading of *Mhudi* is perhaps a little limited by its emphasis on the epic at the expense of romance: “it is as an epic that *Mhudi* is best defined”¹. Thus despite his note that “When Umnandi is

¹Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 352.

reunited with her husband at the end of the book, the symbolism is clear: the rebirth of a nation beyond the reach of Boer and Barolong” (359), he says that the last two chapters “come almost as an anti-climax, and are devoted mostly to tying up loose ends in the personal relationships developed by the main characters” (351). The romance epic model of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, or an alertness to the political symbolism of Shakespeare’s romances, might provide a deeper reading of both the epic and romance nature of *Mhudi*. Such a reading could shift the interpretive emphasis from an anti-climactic tying up of personal loose ends, closer to *The Sense of an Ending*¹, where the ending gives a point to the entire text.

Mzilikazi does not merely move out of the sphere of influence of the Boers and Barolong. In fact, his wife is returned to him, with provision for her safety and with intercessions on her behalf, by the Bakwena chief Sechele, who becomes “my brother Sechele” (193), and who is rewarded with “ten snow-white cows . . . so that the Bakwena may also rejoice with us”. This marks an end of domination (noted on 159), and the caring display of Sechele’s friendship, earlier called “doubtful” by Mzilikazi (187), establishes him a “brother”, and marks a new unsubservient relationship between the two. This is the equivalent of the new domestic and political arrangement at the end of *The Tempest*, marked by the proposed wedding of Ferdinand and Miranda, which establishes Naples and Milan in a union in which Milan is no longer submissive.

The new Matabeleland is described as “the land of promise”, immediately after the chapter called “The Exodus” (190). This “land of plenty” is envisaged by Mzilikazi in pastoral terms, as Mzilikazi symbolically indicates the road with his assegai, changing from warrior tyrant to “prosperous” king, with “power and influence” and an awe-inspiring sway of . . . government” (194):

¹The title is Kermode’s: see 63, above.

. . . we shall enter the land of ivory, far, far beyond the reach of killing spirits . . . Our hunters up in the North have discovered some fertile territories whose rivers abound with endless schools of sea-cow; whose forests are alive with long-horned families of rhinoceri; whose jungles are marked by the tracks of elephant and giraffe; where the buffalo roam and the eland browse, where the oryx and the zebra invite us to the chase.

(189)

No longer called the ruler of earth and skies, Mzilikazi becomes “Monarch of the woods and glades and ruler of the hills and vales!” (191), which reflects the end of his dream of dominating southern Africa. He becomes ruler of a pastoral world which re-establishes that which he destroys at the beginning of the text.

His moral reform is linked to the return of Umnandi, described as “resurrected” (192). In an echo of *The Tempest* where Ferdinand and Miranda each offer love-service to the other (II.i), Umnandi’s return is an expression of love: she “would gladly be a faggoter and watercarrier for the King’s meat pots”. Her arrival brings “domestic reconciliation” and uplifts the whole people: she symbolically presents the king, first with her long-carried fertility amulet, and ultimately “a son and heir to the Matabele Kingdom” (193).

The description of the reunion not only echoes Shakespearean romance, it translates the mode into an African setting, indicating the common humanity shared by all peoples, and in doing this it counters the Haggardian image of the Zulu tyrant, who is past redemption, who will kill until he is killed. Plaatje demonstrates the romance ability of a character to develop, to change, and grow morally. His Mzilikazi is—despite what he has done—nevertheless an “object of much sympathy” (190), which is not true of Haggard’s Zulus. Umslopogaas, whom Haggard presents as an admirable character, evokes awe rather than human sympathy.

Umnandi, the former exile, is welcomed as a “national heroine”, and takes her rightful place as “the fairest among royal wives”: her rival, the principal wife, is dead, and the other wives demonstrate a “hopeless inefficiency” (190). On her official homecoming she heads a procession of fifty young girls, and the same number of singing women:

She was easily recognised by the prominence of her bejewelled costume, rich with beads and ornaments. Her kirtle of foxes and young leopard skins exposed amazing bangles of ivory and wristlets of solid gold while necklaces of rare value added to her barbaric splendour.

(193)

Umnandi has generally appeared in humble dress and situations. Here she is almost like a Haggardian African queen, or Ayesha, who is described in a similar style: “About the waist her white kirtle was fastened by a double-headed snake of solid gold”¹ with the kirtle and gold being common to both descriptions. In *Allan Quatermain* the twin queens of Zu-Vendis each wear “the usual torques of gold” (138), and are described as “royal . . . in every way—in form, in grace, and queenly dignity, and in the *barbaric splendour* of their attendant pomp” (139, my emphasis).

These Haggardian African queens are white—in the case of Ayesha, of Arabic origin. The Zu-Vendi are of uncertain origin, with possibilities of their being Egyptian, Assyrian, Jewish or Persian conjectured in the text². Yet the Zu-Vendi are nevertheless racially divided, in a way that suggests moral and class divisions:

¹*She*, 155.

²With “Phœnician” added in a footnote.

The best-bred people in the country are . . . pure whites with a somewhat southern cast of countenance; but the common herd are much darker, though they do not show any negro or other African characteristics.

(147)

The two queens predictably are differentiated by colour, with Nyleptha's "loving kindness" reflected in her "dazzling fairness" and her hair, "a veritable crown of gold", and the "tender majesty" of her "glorious grey" eyes (138). Sorais' appearance reveals cruelty, coldness, "passion in repose", like a calm, powerful sea "instinct with the spirit of the storm", and she is olive in complexion, with coal black hair and dark eyes (139).

Ayesha combines these elements, her physical beauty is white: "the kirtle ended on the snowy argent of her breast" (155), but her "beauty, with all its awful loveliness and purity, was evil", and in describing it Haggard refers to her "changing eyes of deepest, softest black", adding that her sublimity "was a dark one—the glory was not all of heaven". Ayesha, like Nada—"the Star of Death"¹—is thus the antithesis of Stella. Ayesha lives as an embodiment of dark evil, while Stella, who has a "spiritual look" (159) dies, smiling "as an angel might smile", and "pointing to the radiant heavens" (152-3).

Haggard's powerful, beautiful women often have this light and dark ambiguity, their beauty being tinged with evil, their life associated with a corresponding death.

Umnandi's appearance, when she emerges in romance fashion as her fulfilled self, echoes in tone and vocabulary the Haggardian description of "barbaric splendour", but the meaning of the symbolized

¹*Nada the Lily*, 244.

woman is the opposite of the Haggard type. Umnandi, like Ferdinand in *The Tempest*, is tested, and proves her love, returning to Mzilikazi when he is suffering adversity, offering to be his “faggoter”, much as Ferdinand becomes Miranda’s “patient log-man” (III.i.67). Her regality is linked with a “domestic reconciliation” that brings contentment to Mzilikazi as well as “his brave tribesmen” (191). She is the central pillar of both Mzilikazi’s life (193) and his “house” (194). Before she can be welcomed she “should prepare a meal . . . by her own hand; likewise none might taste of beer until the deft hands of his beloved Umnandi had ground moulted grain and prepared for him her familiar and delectable brew” (192). Her welcome is thus realized in organic time: the time of the grinding of grain and the preparation of beer. Umnandi’s domestic duties, and time itself, are thus symbolically integrated. Umnandi, the “faithful daughter of Umzinyati” (193), represents the domestic ideal of Africa, an ideal Haggard typically presented as being destroyed by Africans. She is a faithful, loving pastoral queen, who is so humble and grateful to be welcomed as a “national heroine” when she returned to her “Monarch of the woods” that “her fern-draped feet shook with excitement and exultation” (192).

In Umnandi, Plaatje inverts the more sinister, gothic image of the African queen as depicted by Haggard, translating her instead into the more familiar—to his anticipated readers—pastoral queen of the Shakespearean romance, an image of faith, virtue, love and beauty: the image, ultimately, of a peaceful domestic and political settlement.

However, romance does not merely present an image of the ideal: it typically thrusts the reader back into the world, where—as the image fades—the quest continues. Umnandi’s resolved romance establishes this ideal in the second last chapter of *Mhudi*, and that ideal fades into a different country (the later Zimbabwe), outside of “the story in these pages” (23), and into the future of Umnandi’s

princely son. The final chapter turns homeward from “The Exodus”, towards “A Contented Homecoming”.

If the romance of the Matabele is resolved in the text, the stories of the Boers and the Barolong are not: throughout the final chapter the echo of Mzilikazi’s parting prophecy sounds in the words of the Boers, “who profess Christianity to the point of bigotry”: “they remonstrated with Phil Jay and held that it was unnatural to reward a Kafir for anything he did as liberally as if he were a baptised Christian” (197).

Mzilikazi is a classical figure in the Renaissance mould. His *hamartia* is ambition and pride, his evil is the subjection of people to laws, taxes and unfamiliar customs. In *Mhudi* Mzilikazi is initially presented as an African Macbeth figure, just as Chaka in the Preface to *Nada the Lily* is called a Napoleon and a Tiberius in one. However, in the resolution Plaatje counters Haggard’s feeling that the warlike spirit of the Zulus should be “rooted out” and replaced by imperial intervention. Plaatje allows Mzilikazi a romance redemption, allowing salvation for the African people—an internal African, not a foreign, salvation.

In *Mhudi*, then, Plaatje presents the Matabele as a model of the resolved romance, and it is against this model that the stories of the other groups in the text should be read. Part of Plaatje’s purpose in his writing a narrative of redemption for the Matabele, traditional enemies of the Barolong, is to indicate that virtue and vice are not determined by race. After hearing oral stories of Matabele ferocity and reading Haggard’s version of the Zulu, Plaatje nevertheless offers a story that indicates that all humans can err, and, through learning, can undergo the sort of moral change that can transform society. This romance change serves as a model in *Mhudi*, indicating what is possible in human society. In this the text is

similar to *Native Life in South Africa*, which also depends upon learning and the changing of attitudes for its “resolution” (although this would, of course, take place outside the text, though imaged within it).

The story of the Matabele becomes *Mhudi*'s paradigm, and Plaatje draws parallels between the Boers and the Matabele at the beginning of the text (much as, at the end, he draws parallels between the Matabele and the Barolong). The allegorical relationship between the Matabele and the Boers is emphasized by Plaatje's careful phrasing in his description of the Matabele:

. . . trekking through the heart of the Transvaal, they eventually invaded Bechuanaland where they reduced the Natives to submission.

(26)

The Afrikaans word “trekking”, used here to describe the movement of the Matabele, anticipates the Great Trek which comes later in the text; while the quasi-official use of “Natives” flips the time frame back into the world of oppressive legislation in the early 20th century. The moral parallel between the groups is constantly made clear by such use of language. The pastoral in Africa was challenged by tyrants before the Boers arrived. The Boers, who come to find God, and who see themselves as bringers of civilisation, are ironically paralleled with a Zulu tyrant. The parallelism comments on both groups, and on both pre- and post-colonial Africa.

Like the Matabele, the Boers enter a land of which they soon want to take ownership. Like the Matabele, they move away from a rule they consider tyrannical (the Cape's liberal government, which prohibited slavery, and which Plaatje uses as the most benign model of governance in *Native Life in South Africa*). But their differences are also marked. Their pride is manifested in religious bigotry:

“They were God’s chosen people, so they argued” (197). Considering themselves so, they make clear distinctions between the races, keeping Hottentot servants whom they treat with cruelty¹, showing racial prejudice when they forbid Ra-Thaga from using their cup.

The God they serve is usually referred to by Plaatje as “their God” or “the God of the Boers” (178), and would seem to be a divinity who, belonging to a specific people, gives religious sanction to racial division—as Plaatje puts it in *Native Life in South Africa*, “the God of colour prejudice” (313), elsewhere “the demon of colour prejudice”². He makes the point explicit in a description of the 1929 general election in which the Nationalist-Labour Pact increased its majority: “the ignorant voters of the platteland have carried the day against truth and goodwill for their Afrikander god”³, where an “orgy of misrepresentation” is accused of “lumping us all as a barbarian menace to European civilization”.

The tyranny that the Boers threaten (they do not begin to impose it by the end of the text: the narrative is logically continued in *Native Life in South Africa*) is of a different moral order to that of Mzilikazi. He had planned, he claims, that he wanted to “incorporate [the Bechuana] with ourselves so that together we could form one great nation” (187), thus ultimately ignoring difference, and looking for unity amongst peoples. Gubuza, similarly, has gained wisdom by travelling, sitting “at the feet” of wise people in Zululand, Swaziland, Tongaland and Basutoland (now Lesotho): his wisdom is African, gleaned from different peoples.

¹Plaatje’s description of Boer cruelty (124 and 176) interestingly echo elements of Haggard’s description in *The Witch’s Head* (163-169).

²*Selected Writings*, 171.

³*Selected Writings*, 371.

Thus the Boers in the texts are depicted not only as being cruel and land-hungry, but also conscious of themselves as a race apart, threatening to become tyrants of a new type. At the end of the text they are in a similar position to that which Mzilikazi was in at the beginning. Yet Plaatje, typically, does not condemn any group utterly. He says about Mzilikazi's governance that "Perhaps the new administration might have worked well enough; but unfortunately, the conquerors not only imported a fresh discipline but they also introduced manners that were extremely offensive . . ." (26).

While the romance is being resolved for the Matabele, the Boers are just beginning a new cycle, slipping into the tragic trough, and threaten to bring suffering to their erstwhile allies, the Barolong, and—if Mzilikazi is taken as a paradigm—suffering to themselves as well.

Plaatje's well-documented depiction of Boer cruelty and racism should, however, be seen in terms of the romance paradigm of *Mhudi*, as well as the romance cast of his own mind. It should also be read against the non-racist Shakespearean standard that was Plaatje's ideal.

Just as the tyrannical Matabele had Gubuza and Umnandi to signify the potential for virtue within an oppressive people, as well as the possibility that the people might change, the Boers have Mhudi's "two favourites": Phil Jay, "the only humane Boer at Moroka's Hoek" (196), and Annetje, of whom she says "The Boers are cruel but they sometimes breed angels . . . and Annetje is one of them" (176). Annetje is named Hannetje in the Heinemann edition, based on Plaatje's typescript. This is the same name of the "noble wife" of the "kind Dutchman" who, in the chapter called "Our Indebtedness to White Women", in *Native Life in South Africa*, is said to be the "salvation of our people" by Aunt Mietje: "No, no, Hannetje is not a Boervrou, she is an angel"¹.

¹*Native Life in South Africa*, 109.

The Boers, when they enter the story, are “in search of some unoccupied land to colonise and to worship God in peace” (88), but their search is also political: “We are after freedom. The English laws of the Cape are not fair to us”. From the Barolong perspective, however, which is representative of Plaatje’s own opinion of the old “Cape Ideals”¹, the English rule is just, and follows the Biblical precedents of David and Solomon. The Cape of Good Hope, as Plaatje expanded on the “Cape Ideals” in *Native Life in South Africa*, was “The one colony whose administration, under its wise statesmen of the Victorian era, created for it that tremendous prestige that was felt throughout the dark continent, and that rested largely upon the fact that among its citizens, before its incorporation with the Northern States, it knew no distinction of colour, for all were free to qualify for the exercise of electoral rights”. Plaatje’s sympathetic view of Cape justice was also based on a perceived equality before the law, and a law that sought justice. Whether Plaatje’s description of justice in the Cape was merited, or whether it was an allegorical space used for rhetorical purposes, the ideal of justice lies behind *Mhudi*, as it does behind the Golden Age. The departure of Astrea, the star goddess of Justice, signalled the final end of that earthly paradise. Justice in the Golden Age is natural, and an absence of justice, in its broadest sense, is the opposite of the pastoral ideal. The Boers, looking for their God, are at the same time putting themselves out of the reach of “Cape” justice, and their world ultimately becomes “God-forsaken” (199).

The difference between Boer and Barolong is dramatized in the Chapter “With the Boers at Moroka’s Hoek” when Sarel Siljay and six others were invited to take part in a trial, which is presented as typical of Barolong hospitality, and their readiness to hear other points of view (130-131). The trial is complex and in need of “a Solomonic decision” to avoid violence (131). All, including the Boers, are given a chance, and precedent is referred to, in a previous judgement of King Chosa. Yet Moroka is not bound

¹*Native Life in South Africa*, 188.

by tradition, and seeks, rather, a lasting solution that brings about peace: “The past must be forgotten. . . .” (133). Moroka’s judgement brings about general satisfaction that “restored the Sabbath calm”. The opinion of the Boers, by contrast, is conservative, and would oblige the parties to forget about their childhood loves, in much the way that their “stern visaged elders” regard the young lovers on page 199. It is heartless, and would ensure conflict. The suggestion is that the Boers, “a race of proverbial Bible readers, who profess Christianity to the point of bigotry” (197) are not able to use Solomonic wisdom to adapt, but rather impose the law in a way that would, in fact, violate the Sabbath. Their trek from the “Solomonic”¹ laws of the Cape, then, suggests this unwillingness to adapt, for the idealized Cape forbids slavery, and holds people equal before the law. The Boers’ interpretation of the Bible is limited, as Phil Jay himself points out:

“What did Paulus mean”, he asked, “when he said to the Galatians ‘There is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, male nor female, White nor Black, but all are one in Christ Jesus’”.

(197)

This question from Mhudi’s “one humane Boer” expresses Plaatje’s belief in the sins of slavery, ethnic and race differentiation, and sexism, all of which the Boers in the text practise to some extent. Thus, they do not live up to their own Christian standards, their bigotry is also hypocrisy, and, as a people, they do not come to self knowledge and self fulfilment within the text: their romance remains—unlike Mzilikazi’s—unresolved.

¹Besides the obvious Biblical reference, this word—already important to Plaatje because of his own name—would also have been associated by him with the Cape’s Judge Solomon, who, in a judgement reported in the *Mafeking Mail* noted that “the law does not recognise a difference between white and black”, and personified Plaatje’s understanding of the Cape’s judicial system: Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 98.

Plaatje graphically represents this irresolution by using parallels to the main romance story. Gubuza and Umnandi, who personify martial and domestic ideals, have their virtuous counterparts in Phil Jay and Annetje, whose love is encouraged by Ra-Thaga in a scene which reverses Haggard's stereotypical African characters. Ra-Thaga serves as a friend, encouraging Phil Jay's love, creating opportunities for him. He is sensitive and caring, full of the romance ideals in a way that Haggard's Africans are not. Just as the Barolong assist the Boers in conflict, through Ra-Thaga they also assist them in love.

And this love, though realised in the text, is significantly not consummated. Mhudi's two favourites would "one day becom[e] man and wife" (196), when "the Pastor should have come and done his work" (199). And Phil Jay's impatience is significantly expressed in "Oh, when will the predikant reach this God-forsaken place?"

The encampment of the Boers is a God-forsaken, spiritual wasteland, despite their wishing to find a place to "worship God in peace". As Moroka says of them: "they said they were proceeding in search of God. Well, they have found the Matabele instead" (120). Their search does not lead to either peace or God, but they find their counterparts, the Matabele, and conflict. Thus their search is not yet ended, their romance remains unresolved, and this is reflected in their two virtuous characters, Mhudi's favourites, being in love, but unable to resolve their story in marriage, for the lack of a predikant: their wedding is in the future. And thus Plaatje, while painting a picture of Boer cruelty and bigotry, of their tyrannical potential, also shows the way towards resolution, a better, more Solomonic understanding. The invitation from the Barolong, "the country round about was wide and there was plenty of land for all" (88), suggests the potential for Africa to unite, rather than divide, peoples.

Read against the romance pattern, the history of the Boers in *Mhudi* protests against what, by the time it was written, had become Boer tyranny or the rule of the “demon of colour prejudice”. Yet, while protesting, Plaatje typically seeks virtue within all peoples. He sees the romance potential for change, the need to unify in a wide land of plenty, a political promised land. But he suggests that land is yet God-forsaken.

The Matabele resolve their romance, and the Boers begin to replace them in the tragic trough. The case of the Barolong, read against the romance paradigm, is more complex. Mostert claims that Plaatje’s bias in favour of his own people, the Barolong, is evident, as is his alleged bias in diminishing the “momentous arrival of the Boers” (see 20, above). However, the Barolong are not depicted in this text as the constant ideal. Even Mhudi, who does begin to symbolize that ideal, is, like Desdemona, humanly imperfect, and has to grow into her role.

In the Preface to *Mhudi* Plaatje explains his “reasons for a Native venture” into South African literature:

In all the tales of battle I have ever read, or heard of, the cause of the war is invariably ascribed to the other side. Similarly, we have been taught almost from childhood, to fear the Matabele—a fierce nation—so unreasoning in its ferocity that it will attack any individual or tribe, at sight, without the slightest provocation. Their destruction of our people, we were told, had no justification in fact or in reason; they were actuated by sheer lust for human blood.

By the merest accident, while collecting stray scraps of tribal history, later in life, the writer incidentally heard of ‘the day Mzilikazi’s tax collectors were killed’. Tracing this bit of information further back, he elicited from old people that the slaying of Bhoya and his companion, about the year 1830, constituted the *casus belli* which unleashed the war dogs and precipitated the Barolong nation headlong into the horrors described in these pages.

(11)

These paragraphs posit “the other side”, as seen by the teller of stories: thus the Matabele become fierce, unreasoning and “actuated by sheer lust for human blood”. In stories from the “other side” they are turned into stereotypes in the Haggardian mode. And while the “other side” is typified in this fashion, by corollary, the side with which the teller is sympathetic becomes the innocent victim. This division of morality does not accord with the non-racial concept Plaatje attributed to Shakespeare. Hence the oral tradition which presents the Matabele as unreasoning tyrants is balanced in the next paragraph by Plaatje’s discovery, almost hidden within the oral tradition itself, of the *casus belli*: “the slaying of Boya and his companions”. That the result was “the horrors described in these pages” indicates that Plaatje does not wish to minimize or detract from the suffering. He wishes, rather, to show it in all its human complexity, with human failings and virtues on each side of the conflict.

The Barolong, then, do not have an unblemished history: they are also subject to the romance movement from the pastoral peak, through the tragic trough, to the romance peak. Their romance, however, is—like that of Desdemona and Othello—fulfilled early in the text, and a new and complex phase is entered.

The Barolong fall into the tragic trough comes about through the actions of Tauana:

Chief Tauana . . . received the visitors with indifference and, without informing his counsellors in any way, he commanded some young men to take the two to the ravine and “lose them”, which is equivalent to a death sentence.

(27)

Although Maylamsays of Tswana socio-political structures that “Great authority was vested in the chief, who possessed supreme executive, legislative and judicial powers”¹, Crowder paints another picture:

The central institution of the Tswana state was not the Chief but the *kgotla*, the assembly which made all administrative, political and judicial decisions. All adult males had the right of participation in discussions in the *kgotla*, which was presided over by the Chief at the level of the state or by headmen in the wards of the capital city and the outlying villages. Technically all voices in the *kgotla* had equal weight, and the Chief had to listen to anyone who wished to speak before he came to a decision. In fact members of the royal family and headmen had great influence on decisions, many of which were agreed in advance with the Chief. While a Chief was born to his position, as indeed was a headman, he was also responsible to the people. The Tswana have a saying, ‘A Chief is a Chief by the people’, which means he has to take account of their views—for in the old days a Chief who alienated his subjects would be assassinated, driven into exile or be deserted by his people, who would vote with their feet by removing themselves from his jurisdiction and establishing a new state . . . [the Chief] did in reality have to respond carefully to public opinion and ensure majority support not only among his headmen but also among the people².

Both these extremes of government are displayed amongst the Barolong in *Mhudi*. Tauana had the messengers killed “without informing his counsellors in any way”, dealing only with “some young men”. The reaction amongst the chief counsellors was that amends should be made, and all men of influence should attend a “tribal picho and arrange a settlement” (27). Their response indicates that they are aware of the impropriety and danger of Tauana’s actions which initiate the tragedy and fall indicated in the chapter title: “A Tragedy and its Vendetta”.

¹A *History of the African People of South Africa*, 47.

²Michael Crowder, *The Flogging of Phineas McIntosh: A Tale of Colonial Folly and Injustice, Bechuanaland 1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, 22-23).

Plaatje's are the politics of negotiation, rather than of impetuous action. His depiction of Tauana's actions is cautionary, and Gubuza, on "the other side" of the conflict, speaks with Plaatje's voice when he questions the revenge attack by the Matabele:

I have heard nothing from previous speakers to indicate that the Prince had asked Tauana for any reasons; nothing to show that he would not in due course have appeared in Inzwinyani and explained his action.

(54)

Thus, Plaatje argues for reason, negotiation, understanding, rather than the "impetuosity of youth"¹. And, if the Barolong have given way, tragically, to impulsive action at the beginning of the romance, which results in the "horrors described in these pages", Plaatje shows that—after their destruction and disunity has been resolved in the gathering at Thaba Ncho—they are equally capable of realizing the other extreme of the *kgotla* ideal. Chief Moroka, in the case of Noko and Poe, has to deliver a "Solomonic decision":

Chief Moroka giving judgement said: "Now you have all heard diverse views on the marriage tangle before us. You have heard the views of the old men; you have heard the views of the younger men and the views of the women too; you have heard the views of white men. And neither side can complain of being ignored. As a child I remember being told of a case among the Bangwaketse almost like the present one.

(132)

¹Plaatje's doubts about socialism seem to be partly based on a difference in negotiating techniques, his own being related to his understanding of traditional African ways. He records in *Selected Writings*, 237:

The ten Transvaal[socialist]delegates came to Congress with a concord and determination that was perfectly astounding and foreign to our customary Native demeanour at conferences. They spoke almost in unison, in short sentences, nearly every one of which began and ended with the word "strike".

Moroka, while giving judgement himself, nevertheless listens to both sides, as well as the elders, women, younger men, and white visitors, and also reviews precedent from the past. Thus Plaatje shows the ideal of Barolong justice in the *kgotla*, but contrasts it with an earlier miscarriage of justice.

The Barolong are therefore not presented in *Mhudi* as a static ideal. Like the other groups they have to grow towards it, they have to undergo change. Mhudi, for instance, initially approves of Tauana's actions, thinking "it was just and proper that they should be sent off or put to death" (38) as the Matabele have "no business in our country". Similarly, she has her love for the Boers "shattered as quickly as it had been formed", and considers Ra-Thaga's friend, Phil Jay to be "the one humane Boer that there was among the wild men of his tribe" (125).

Mhudi's "tribal pride" (74) is qualified by her later meeting with her two counterparts from the Matabele and Boer peoples, Umnandi and Annetje in an allegorical union of women. The values learned by Mhudi and Umnandi are articulated, and a cross-cultural bonding occurs, transcending stereotyping and its resultant conflict.

The symbolic meeting takes place in the chapter called "Mhudi and Umnandi", preceded by "Mhudi's Leap in the Dark". In the latter chapter Mhudi—like Plaatje himself¹—suffers from malarial fever, and she dreams, during an feverish attack, that her husband is in danger. She rises, with "a wonderful change in her condition" (164) and sets off to find him, soon encountering, with the abruptness of Spenser's symbolic storms², a tempest. The "angry elements" attack her, the "legions of nature" are in

¹Willan, *Plaatje: A Biography*, 56, and see Mhudi's previous attack in *Mhudi*, 64-66, where she is in danger from a lion and ends up killing it while Ra-Thaga holds its tail.

²See, for instance, *The Faerie Queene* (I.i.6.5-9), and the equally symbolic storm in *Lear*, of which this is an echo.

conflict, the rain from the “dark heavens” “deluged the earth”. The tempest imagery accords with her dream of death, and marks the beginning of her quest for the life of her husband. The imagery, as well as the nature of her journey, is typical of romance. The tempest in romance is, however, seldom given to simple allegory. In *Othello* the tempest at once symbolizes the destructive power of evil, that threatens even the stable pole star (see 53, 93, above), and is also the agent that washes away all the wars. In *The Tempest* the storm is equally ambivalent. In *Mhudi* the storm which signifies the beginning of Mhudi’s journey introduces images of chaos, destruction and death. But coupled with this is the observation that the “unprecedented severity of the storm” inspired Mhudi: “According to the belief of her people, Jupiter Pluvius is the god of Good Fortune, hence she regarded the downpour as his special benediction on her journey” (166).

Each of Shakespeare’s romances has a classical god implicit in the action and symbolism, such as Apollo in *The Winter’s Tale* and Juno in *The Tempest*. These deities do not dominate the action, but rather appear throughout the play implicit in the symbolism and the themes. They appear rather more clearly in a miniature allegorical core, such as the depiction in *The Winter’s Tale* of the return from the oracle, or the masque in *The Tempest*. However, their influence on the action is profound, if not always apparent to the characters involved.

Plaatje’s use of the classical phrase *Jupiter Pluvius* indicates the equivalence he sees between Jupiter in his manifestation as a rainbringer and Mhudi’s own religious belief. The authority attributed by western scholarship to the classical god is transferred to the African “god of Good Fortune”, who thus becomes less otherworldly, and less ominous, than the African deities presented by Haggard as “queer gods” (33, above). Mhudi’s faith is thereby depicted as a natural attribute she shares with humans of other cultures. Her faith in her equivalent of *Jupiter Pluvius* marks not only the influence of the god in

the chapters that follow, but also the faithful character of the as yet unchristian heroine: the chapter title “Mhudi’s Leap in the Dark” suggests a leap of faith.

Mhudi’s faith is portrayed throughout the text. Their pastoral marriage, which takes place outside of social structures, is “a simple matter” which, in Plaatje’s phrasing, combines both Christian and Barolong: they take “each other for good or ill with the blessing of the ‘God of Rain’” (61). In her flight from Ton-Qon, a prefiguration of her leap in the dark, she finds peace amidst discord:

Crouching down for the night she opened her eyes and looked away into the immense depth of the skies overhead, reading something there that she had never observed before. This immense dome, so lofty and yet so brilliant, suggested the power of its Maker, who apparently also made the trees and birds, and beasts and men—yes, brutal men!

(77)

In her “reading” of the divine in nature Plaatje, whose own thinking was deeply Christian, simultaneously projects an image of the true (from his point of view) godhead, as well as a powerful suggestion of religious intuition in a member of a pre-literate society. He validates not only his Christian belief, but indicates how close it may be to African thought systems. In doing so, Plaatje follows the same symbolic representation of the divine as Shakespeare does in his romances. The god or goddess implied in each of Shakespeare’s romances can be read as a representation of a blend of the Christian God, an embodiment of Neoplatonic philosophy and classical divinities, and is thus part of a complex allegory in which a classical deity is the agent embodying the divine spirit. Shakespeare’s reasons for doing this were both artistic and political: English dramatists of his time were not allowed to represent God on the stage, and allegory became a creative way of countering the ban.

Plaatje's blending of different religious traditions in his depiction of the divine is for different reasons, but has a similar allegorical effect. He freely evokes the Christian God in *Mhudi*, alluding to the Eden story repeatedly in Mhudi's reflections:

'Where is the God, this Spirit, that made all these things? Does he not stroll around sometimes and examine His handiwork, and even *me*? I wonder how long it took Him to make this immense universe? Is He pleased with the Matabele or with Ton-Qon; and if they too are the creatures of the God of Life, what did He make such people for? Did he also make the dreadful venomous reptiles that infest the land, I wonder? And if so, why?

(77)

Mhudi's wonderings evoke the Christian God of creation strolling in the garden, the God who is pleased with His handiwork (though not with sin, for the Matabele and Ton-Qon lead to an image of the serpent in Eden). Mhudi herself becomes, humbly, part of "His handiwork". And this is Plaatje's point: coupled with the woman who is frightened out of the Faustian pride of counting the stars by her "native superstitions"¹, is a woman who is God's handiwork, who instinctively knows God, and who interprets her own people's "God of Rain" in a way that makes him the God of Life, the allegorical equivalent of the Christian God. Mhudi's flight from Ton-Qon does not only bring this revelation, it also reveals something of the cause for conflict:

She wondered if, [the stars], too, were classed into tribes such as the people were on earth. Can it be that the stars also engage in fighting sometimes, and if so, did they kill one another's wives and children? Could it be that the thunder and lightning and hailstones that accompany the rain at times were the result of aerial battles?

(78)

¹Plaatje's typically alert use of language would suggest that "native" is used here with a tension between the words original meaning and the more colonial usage.

Besides indicating the symbolic meaning of storms and other images of chaos in the text, this passage also suggests that classification into “tribes”, an earthly practice, leads to warfare.

This prelude to “Mhudi’s Leap in the Dark” establishes both the symbols Plaatje deals with in the later chapter, as well as the themes. The leap in the dark is not only a leap of faith, but also an entry into unknown territory, the consequences of which are unexpected. The imagery of a storm that is at once chaotic and reflective of the blessings of the “God of Rain” is appropriate to the beginnings of the symbolic journey. However, the chapter ends with Mhudi travelling with a party of Boers who, “suffering from a shortage of Native servants”, welcomed Mhudi, God’s handiwork, as “additional help at the wagons”.

The following chapter changes to a male perspective, with Ra-Thaga inwardly resenting his wife’s appearance amongst the war party. The male backdrop of this chapter pushes the four main women characters into the foreground, where they form the allegorical core, much like an everyday, prose version of the three graces in Spenser’s description of the vision on Acidale in *The Faerie Queene* (VI.x.15), with the shepherdess figure in their centre. The Graces are linked, through their association with Venus, with love. Furthermore, in Spenser, Pastorella—as her name suggests—embodies pastoral values that are nevertheless linked with courtesy. The vision of the Graces and Colin’s love, a persona of Pastorella, is a vision of reciprocal and abundant virtue, a quality opposite to what is represented by the brigands who destroy the pastoral world. Mhudi’s role is similar: she is at once an earthy, pastoral figure who embodies the qualities of natural courtesy, grace and wisdom. In this scene she personifies and multiplies the values of the other gathered women.

Mhudi, central in the group, is challenged by Ra-Thaga about her attitude to the Boers, and she tells him of the cruel treatment meted out to Dancer, the Hottentot leader of a wagon team who was tied to a wagon wheel and flogged, and to Jan, a Hottentot shepherd. However, the incidents throw into relief an act of human kindness:

“A pretty Boer girl in the wagon in which I came remonstrated with her mother for keeping quiet while Jan was being beaten for no cause whatever. The Boers are cruel but they sometimes breed angels”, concluded Mhudi, “and Annetje is one of them”.

(176)

Immediately after this—making a symbolic connection—Mhudi introduces to a startled Ra-Thaga Umnandi, the queen of his Matabele enemies:

I met her two days ago, and being on the same quest we quickly fell in love with each other. The other one is a Rolong girl who has been captive among the Matabele since her childhood when Kunana was sacked . . . but so attached has she become to this noble Queen, that she realises the inhumanity of deserting her now in this war-devastated wilderness. After my own alarming experiences I cannot but encourage the girl in her sympathy for the lonely Queen, for indeed it is a shame that one so dear and so good-hearted should be a Matabele.

(177)

Thus the scene becomes one of cross-cultural loyalty and affection, where Mhudi is able to assure Umnandi that Ra-Thaga “unlike many men, did not have a heart of stone”. Thus limitations typically attributed to racial or sexist groups are broken down. Ra-Thaga goes—not, as Umnandi suspects, in hatred to betray her as a Matabele—but rather to tell his Boer friend, in love, that Annetje is closer than he expected. Ra-Thaga becomes the unlikely match maker in the proposed union between Phil Jay and Annetje, helping to establish love between the two figures of virtue amongst the Boers. Plaatje suggests

that Africans are not necessarily like Haggard's African characters who are destroyers of the domestic ideal, and who do not know, and cannot realize, love. Ra-Thaga's actions counter the image of the self-interested barbaric warrior, or the emotionless follower of orders.

Annetje, Umnandi, Ra-Thaga and the Barolong servant all, as if under the influence of Mhudi, break out of the stereotypes into which they are cast by both society and literature. And if Mhudi's flight from Qon-Ton brings her an image of inter-group conflict, that is resolved after her leap in the dark, where humanity, understanding, sympathy and love briefly triumph over the conflict brought by prejudice. Mhudi's parting words to Umnandi echo the central theme: "when thou hast recovered the lost favour of thy royal lord, urge him to give up wars and adopt a more happy form of manly sport" (179). Before she finally encourages Umnandi to "Urge [Mzilikazi], even as I would urge all men of my race, to gather more sense and cease warring against their kind", she says:

Farewell, thou first Matabele with a human heart that ever crossed my way. Mayest thou be as successful in thy quest as I have been in mine. May the gods be forgiving to thy lord and make him deserve thy nobility, and may the god of rain shower blessings upon thy reunion. Good-bye, my Matabele sister; may there be no more war but plenty of rain instead.

(180)

The end of this chapter conjures the romance ideal: Mhudi's leap in the dark has led to her new understanding of both Boers and Matabele—they may have cruel people amongst them, but virtue and vice are not the monopoly of any race. Each group has loving, caring individuals. But her own new knowledge gives her the authority to sue for peace, for greater human sympathy amongst peoples, and thus she is able to pray for the forgiveness of Mzilikazi. In an echo of *The Tempest*, Mhudi counters the revenge which motivates Ra-Thaga and the Boers, while at the same time countering Haggard's

more sinister African revengers such as Mopo and Zikali. The chapter fittingly concludes with the evocation of the “god of rain”, who initially blessed Mhudi’s journey.

Mhudi’s romance journey is one of change. She moves, not of course of her own volition, from the comfort of her “tribal” innocence into a confrontation with the world, a tension which enables her to move beyond the narrow constraints of ethnic and sexist categories into a wider humanity, at one with the “God of Life”, who is also the “God of Rain”, the Christian God of forgiveness and of peace. Her journey is not without tensions, however, and is not as clearly patterned as Mzilikazi’s is.

There is a romance peak, for instance, when Mhudi, Ra-Thaga, their children and their stock arrive in Thaba Ncho. But, as Othello and Desdemona’s island reunion is threatened by Iago’s presence, their romantic story is also overwhelmed:

For months after, the women never tired of discussing their romantic story at home, or at work in the corn-fields. Men whiled away their evenings spinning yarns about them, or in the daytime when engaged in braying skins or sewing karosses in the shade. People came long distances to see them and they brought them many presents. Indeed it seemed that their “resurrection” was going to be an abiding conversational topic to the exclusion of all other questions until it was eclipsed one fine day by the arrival at Thaba Ncho of a party of white men.

(87)

Their “romantic story” is not allowed to end. Reality, or history, intervenes and sets up the tension between the ideal romantic that the text seeks and the world of harsh reality that counters the ideal.

At the end of the story, similarly, there is a tension in the possible romance conclusion imaged by their reunion and departure from the battle front, and Ra-Thaga’s giving up the “call of war or the chase” for

the calls of his Chief and Mhudi (200). The end of the text evokes the beginning, and its passing: “Gone were the days of their primitive tramping over long distances, with loads on their heads”.

Instead, Ra-Thaga could easily kill a “koodoo” with his musket, and carry it home in his wagon. As Shillington points out¹, a wagon was a prized possession amongst the Barolong, the economic value of which Plaatje would have been well aware. The outrage of “the other Boers at Khing” at the presentation of the wagon can guide a reading of this symbol. The Boers were “God’s chosen people, so they argued, and had never seen a heathen treated with so much consideration” (197). However, Chennells’s comment that “it seems profitable to recognize the wagon as an unstable image inviting different readings”² leaves a sense of possibility open in the end of the text, and does not force the narrative into definitive closure. This is apt, for the end of *Mhudi* is also a new beginning.

Coupled with the calmness, and their “pleasant thoughts”, is the “gathering darkness” into which the still travelling couple move. Their appropriation of the symbol of the Great Trek may be read as a triumph, as can their ownership of the wagon, for Mhudi’s previous journey by wagon was as a servant. But the triumph is darkened by the echo of Mzilikazi’s prophecy. Their love, their humanity, their ability to learn and adapt, their desire for peace, their ultimate forgiveness and understanding of others make theirs a quiet triumph of love, of African humanism, and yet the dominant sound is the creaking of their old wagon wheels.

¹*The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana: 1870-1900*, 64, 66 and 123.

²“Plotting South African History”, 48.

Michael Green's reading of the ending of *Mhudi* emphasizes the symbolic wagon, with Ra-Thaga shouting Mhudi's name "over the noise the rumbling future"¹. His noting that, at the end of *Mhudi*, "there is so obviously no sense of community", emphasizes the importance of the grace-like convergence of women mentioned above, 63, which symbolizes the possibility for a community based on understanding and peace.

Chennells sees one possible reading of the pair in the wagon as "a synecdoche of the historical destiny of blacks", but he does not see such "despairing cynicism" as characteristic of Plaatje. Such a reading, he says, would see "their lives are lived on the margins of the white economy, grateful for whatever discarded rubbish they are allowed to appropriate as their own"². Any underlying validity in this interpretation ought to be qualified by the spirit of Phil Jay's gift, presented to Mhudi for being the only Rolong woman on the front. The wagon is accompanied by two oxen, for he says that it is in a "rather poor state of repair; but two bullocks paid to a blacksmith will turn it into the best wagon in Thaba Ncho". The qualification "in Thaba Ncho" seems to echo Plaatje's qualification of the friendship of the two Boer lovers. They show the potential in their people, but the resolution, the marriage, the harmony is not yet reached: the tragedy of the Boer bigotry is not yet translated to romance. Yet the sound of the wheels brings to mind Phil Jay's comment earlier in the final chapter:

Yes, I always told you that this world was round and you refused to believe me; but now that you see that it has spun round like a wagon wheel at Mzilikazi's expense, you must believe that it is indeed round.

(198)

¹*Novel Histories*, 59.

²"Narrative in Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*", 46.

Plaatje Africanizes the Medieval and Renaissance wheel of fortune, evoking in the image the romance notion of cyclic, patterned change through the tragic troughs and the more pastoral peaks, change which swings with a growth and decline of virtue, of the “political righteousness” that brings about the social ideal. And as Mhudi and Ra-Thaga move into the darkness of their future, happy with their dream, the creaking “wagon wheels on the hard road made a fierce yet not very disagreeable assault upon their ears”. The human vulnerability of their love and hopes is evident as “An Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago” leads into the necessity of black people to take, rather more hopelessly, to the roads in *Native Life in South Africa*.

Bibliography

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Becker, Peter. *Path of Blood: The Rise and Conquests of Mzilikazi*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.

Bible, The. Authorised Version. Ed. C. I. Scofield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Blake, William. *Selected Poetry*. Ed. W. H. Stevenson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988.

Bosman, Herman Charles. *The Collected Works of Herman Charles Bosman*. Halfway House: Southern; Cape Town and Pretoria: Human and Rousseau, 1988.

Bradley, A. C. *Shakespearean Tragedy*. London: Macmillan, 1974.

Branford, Jean. *A Dictionary of South African English*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Brown, John Russel, and Bernard Harris, eds. *Later Shakespeare*. London: Edward Arnold, 1973.

Buchan, John. *Prester John*. London: Thomas Nelson, 1957.

Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol VII. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

Coan, Stephen, ed. *Diary of an African Journey: The Return of Rider Haggard*. By H. Rider Haggard. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000.

Chapman, Michael, and Achmat Dangor, eds. *Voices from Within: Black Poetry from Southern Africa*. Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1986.

Chapman, Michael, Colin Gardner, and Es'kia Mphahlele, eds. *Perspectives on South African English Literature*. Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1992.

Chennells, Anthony. "Plotting South African History: Narrative in Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*." *English in Africa* 24.1 (1997): 37-58.

Chrisman, Laura. *Imperialism and Opposition: Literature of South Africa*. Diss. University of Oxford, 1992.

Christie, Sarah, Geoffrey Hutchings, and Don Maclennan, eds. *Perspectives On South African Fiction*. Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1980.

Cloete, T.T., ed. *Literêre Terme en Teorieë*. Pretoria: Haum-Literêr, 1992.

Clothier, Norman. *Black Valour: The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918 and the Sinking of the "Mendi"*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1987.

Coetzee, J.M. *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters In South Africa*. Sandton: Radix, 1988.

Comaroff, John L. Introduction. *The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje: An African at Mafeking*.
By Sol T. Plaatje. Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1972.

Copleston, F.C. *A History of Medieval Philosophy*. London: Methuen, 1975.

Cornwell, Gareth. "The Early South African Novel of Race." *Perspectives on South African English Literature*. Eds. M. Chapman, C. Gardner, and E. Mphahlele. Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1992.

Couzens, Tim. "Early South African Black Writing." *A Celebration of Black and African Writing*.
Eds. Bruce King and Kolawole Ogunbesan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

---. Introduction. *Mhudi*. By Sol T. Plaatje. Ed. Stephen Gray. London: Heinemann, 1978.

---. "Sol Plaatje's Mhudi." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 8.1 (1973): 1-19.

Couzens, Tim and Stephen Gray. "Printers' and other Devils: The texts of Sol T. Plaatje's Mhudi."
Research in African Literatures 9.2 (1978): 198-215.

Crowder, Michael. *The Flogging of Phineas McIntosh: A Tale of Colonial Folly and Injustice, Bechuanaland 1933*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

Dante. *Divine Comedy*. Trans. Dorothy L. Sayers. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955.

Davenport, T.R.H. *South Africa: A Modern History*. Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1987.

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965.

de Vries, A. *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976.

de Wet, Christiaan Rudolf. *Three Years War*. (no translator acknowledged). Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1902.

Dhlomo, H.I.E. *Collected Works*. Eds. Nick Visser and Tim Couzens. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1985.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. Eds. George Ford and Sylvère Monod. New York and London: Norton, 1977.

Donne, John. *The Complete English Poems*. Ed. A.J. Smith. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

Doyle.M. "Mhudi/Sol. T. Plaatje." (Review). *Staffrider* April/May (1979): 53.

Drakakis, John., ed. *Alternative Shakespeares*. London: Methuen, 1985.

Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *English Critical Texts*. Ed. D.J. Enright and E. de Chickera. Oxford: Clarendon, 1962.

Ellis, Peter Berresford. *H. Rider Haggard: A Voice from the Infinite*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

Euripides. *Medea and Other Plays*. Trans. Philip Vellacott. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963.

Evans, Bertrand. *Shakespeare's Comedies*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Felperin, Howard. *Shakespearean Romance*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Ford, John. *Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Ed. Brian Morris. London: Ernest Benn, 1978.

Frye, Northrop. *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965.

---. *Anatomy of Criticism*. New York: Atheneum, 1966.

---. *Fearful Symmetry*. Boston: Beacon, 1962.

---. *The Myth of Deliverance: Reflections on Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1983.

Gandhi, M.K. *Satyagraha in South Africa*. Trans. V.G. Desai. Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., ed. *Race, Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

---. "The Master's Pieces: On Canon Formation and the Afro-American Tradition." *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*. Ed. Dominick LaCapra. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991. 17-38.

Gardener, G.B.A. *Sarel Cilliers: Die Vader van Dingaansdag*. Cape Town: n.p. 1919.

Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*. London: Faber and Faber, 1962.

Gollancz, I., ed. *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916.

Gordimer, Nadine. *The Black Interpreters: Notes on African Writing*. Johannesburg: Spro-cas/Ravan, 1973.

Gray, Stephen. "Plaatje's Shakespeare". *English in Africa* 4.1 (1977): 1-6.

---. "Redefining the Canon: The Case for Douglas Blackburn, Stephen Black and Sol T. Plaatje". *Perspectives on South African English Literature*. Eds. M. Chapman, C. Gardner and E. Mphahlele. Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1992.

---. "Sources of the First Black South African Novel in English". *Munger Africana Library Notes*.

Pasadena: California Institute of Technology 37 (1976): 3-28.

---. *Southern African Literature: An Introduction*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1979.

Green, Michael. *Novel Histories: Past, Present, and Future in South African Fiction*.

Johannesburg: Witswatersrand University Press, 1997.

Haggard, H. Rider. *Allan and the Holy Flower*. [1915] London: MacDonald, 1954.

---. *Allan Quatermain*. [1887] London: Nelson, 1956.

---. *Allan's Wife: with Hunter Quatermain's Story, A Tale of Three Lions, and Long Odds*. [1889]

London: MacDonald, 1951.

---. *Ayesha: The Return of She*. [1905] London: Ward Lock, 1905.

---. *Benita*. London: Cassell, 1906.

---. *Cetywayo and his White Neighbours*. [1896] London: 1882. New York: AMS, 1982.

---. *Child of Storm*. [1913] London: MacDonald, 1952

- . *Diary of an African Journey: The Return of Rider Haggard*. Ed. Stephen Coan. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000.
- . *Finished*. London: Ward Lock, 1917.
- . *King Solomon's Mines*. [1885] London: Cassell, 1926.
- . *King Solomon's Mines*. Ed. K.J. Saycell. Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1985.
- . *Maiwa's Revenge; or, The War of the Little Hand*. London: Longman Green, 1888.
- . *Montezuma's Daughter*. [1893] London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895.
- . *Nada the Lily*. [1892] London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914.
- . *Queen Sheba's Ring*. [1910] London: Everleigh Nash, 1910.
- . *She*. [1887] London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925.
- . *She*. Ed. Daniel Karlin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- . *She and Allan*. [1921] London: Arrow, 1960.
- . *The Days of My Life*. Ed. C.J. Longman. [1926] London: Longman, Greene, 1926. 2 vols

---. *The People of the Mist*. [1894] London: MacDonald, 1951.

---. *The Witch's Head*. London: Spencer Blackett, 1884.

Hawkes, Terence, ed. *Coleridge on Shakespeare*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

Henkin, Leo. *Darwinism in the English Novel, 1860-1910: The Impact of Evolution on Victorian Fiction*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1963.

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. E.V. Rieu. Revised by D.C.H. Rieu and Peter V. Jones. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991.

Izevbaye, Dan. "Elesin's Homecoming: The Translation of *The King's Horseman*." *Research in African Literatures* 28.2 (1997): 154-170.

---. "Issues in the Reassessment of the African Novel." *African Literature Today 10: Retrospect and Prospect*. London: Heinemann, 1979.

Jones, Grate. *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction between Biological and Social Theory*. Sussex: Harvester, 1980.

Kermode, Frank. *Renaissance Essays: Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne*. London: Collins/Fontana, 1973.

---. *The Sense of an Ending*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

---, ed. *The Winter's Tale*. New York: Signet, 1963.

Knight, G. Wilson. *The Shakespearian Tempest*. London: Methuen, 1953.

Kunene, Mazisi. "Review of Stephen Gray's 'Sources of the First Black South African Novel in English.'" *Research in African Literatures* 2.2 (1980) : 244-247.

Kwame, Anthony Appiah. "Out of Africa: Topologies of Nativism." *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*. Ed. Dominick LaCapra. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Leggatt, Alexander. *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love*. London: Methuen, 1974.

Lenta, Margaret. "The Need for a Feminism: Black Township Writing." *Journal of Literary Studies* 4.1 (1988): 49-63.

Lewis, C.S. *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Ed. Walter Hooper. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966.

---. *Spenser's Images of Life*. Ed. Alastair Fowler. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Lightbown, Ronald. *Sandro Botticelli: Life and Work*, Vol. I. London: Paul Elek, 1978.

- Lockett, Cecily, ed. *Breaking the Silence: A Century of South African Women's Poetry*.
Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1990.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Marlowe, Christopher. *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, in *Elizabethan Plays*. Ed.
Spencer Hazelton. Boston: D.C. Heath, 1933.
- Maylam, Paul. *A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the
1970s*. London: Croom Helm; Cape Town: David Philip, 1986.
- Mbeki, Govan. *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: A Short History*. Cape Town: David
Philip, 1992.
- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Ed. G. H. Cowling. London: Methuen & Co., 1926.
- Mofolo, Thomas. *Chaka*. Trans. Daniel P. Kunene. London: Heinemann, 1981.
- Mongia, Padmini, ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. London: Arnold, 1996.
- Mostert, Cornelius Wickaam. "The Native in the South African Novel in English." Diss. University
of the Orange Free State, 1955.

Mowat, Barbara A. *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976.

Mphahlele, Ezekiel. *The African Image*. London: Faber and Faber, 1974.

Nuttall, A.D. *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality*. London: Methuen, 1983.

Omotoso, Kole. *Season of Migration to the South: Africa's Crises Reconsidered*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1994.

Ogungbesan, Kolawole. *The Writings of Peter Abrahams*. New York: Africana, 1979.

Opland, Jeff. *Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a Black South African Tradition*. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1983.

Oxford English Dictionary. (Compact Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Pakenham, Thomas. *The Boer War*. London: Abacus, 1992.

Parrot, Matthew. "From *Mhudi* to *Mine Boy*: The Development of Black South African Writing." *African Perspective* 3 (1976): 34-47.

Peterson, Douglas L. *Time, Tide and Tempest: A Study of Shakespeare's Romances*. San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1973.

Moore-Gilbert, Bart. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London, New York: Verso, 1997.

Pettet, E.C. *Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition*. New York: Haskell House, 1976.

Plaatje, Sol T. *Mhudi*. Ed. A.E. Voss. Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1989.

---. *Mhudi*. Ed. Stephen Gray. London: Heinemann, 1978.

---. *Mhudi*. New York: Negro University Press, 1970.

---. *Native Life in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982.

---. *Sechuana Proverbs with Literal Translations and their European Equivalents*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1916.

---. "Selected Shorter Writings." *English in Africa* 3. 2 (1976), Grahamstown: Institute for the Study of English in Africa.

---. *Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings*. Ed. Brian Willan. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996.

---. *The Mafeking Diary of Sol T. Plaatje*. Eds. John Comaroff and Brian Willan, with Solomon Molema and Andrew Reed. Cape Town: David Philip; Oxford: James Currey, 1999.

---. *The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje: An African at Mafeking*. Ed. John L. Comaroff. Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1972.

Plaatje, S.T. and D. Jones. *A Sechuana Reader in International Phonetic Orthography (with English Translations)*. London: University of London Press, 1916.

Rich, Paul. "Romance and the Development of the South African Novel." *Literature and Society in South Africa*. Ed. Landeg White and Tim Couzens. Pinelands: Maskew Miller Longman, 1984.

Richards, Jeffrey, ed. *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

Ridge, Stanley G.M. "A Sifting Process: The Truth, Language and Bishop Colenso." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 88 (1994): 21-33.

---. "Chosen People or Heirs of Paradise: Trekkers, Settlers, and Some Implications of Myth." *Race and Literature / Ras en Literatuur*. Ed. Charles Malan. Pinetown: Owen Burgess, 1987.

---. "Mixed Motives: Ideological Elements in the Support for English in South Africa." *Ideology, Politics and Language Policies: Focus on English*. Ed. Tom Ricento. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000.

Sanders, A.J.G.M. *Bechuanaland and the Law in Politicians' Hands*. Gaborone: Botswana Society, 1992.

Saycell. K. J. Afterword. *King Solomon's Mines*. By H. Rider Haggard. Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1985.

Schreiner, Olive. *An Olive Schreiner Reader*. Ed. Carol Barash. London: Pandora, 1987.

---. *The Story of an African Farm*. Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1978.

---. *Thoughts on South Africa*. Ed. Margaret Lenta. Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1992.

---. *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*. Parklands: Ad. Donker, 1992.

Shakespeare, William. *Pericles*. Ed. F.D. Hoeniger. London: Methuen, 1979.

---. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Ed. John Dover Wilson. London: Octopus, 1980.

---. *The Tempest*. Ed. Frank Kermode. London: Routledge, 1988.

---. *The Winter's Tale*. Ed. J.H.P. Pafford. London: Methuen, 1966.

Shillington, Kevin. *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana: 1870-1900*. Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1985.

Sidney, Philip. *An Apology for Poetry*, in *English Critical Texts: 16th Century to 20th Century*. Eds. D.J. Enright and E. de Chickera. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

---. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Ed. Maurice Evans. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.

Sophocles. *The Theban Plays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1947.

Snyman, J.P.L. *The South African Novel in English: 1880-1930*. Potchefstroom: The University of Potchefstroom, 1952.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. A.C. Hamilton. London: Longman, 1980.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. London: Thomas Nelson, n.d.

Thompson, Elizabeth. "Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*: A Book for a Democratic English Syllabus". *Crux* 26:3 (1992): 6-11.

Tillyard, E.M.W. *Shakespeare's Last Plays*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1951.

Tourneur, Cyril. *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Ed. R.A. Foakes. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975.

Trump, Martin, ed. *Rendering Things Visible : Essays on South African Literary Culture*.

Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1990.

Uphaus, Robert W. *Beyond Tragedy: Structure and Experience in Shakespeare's Romances*.

Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1981.

van Wyk Smith, Malvern. *Grounds of Contest*. Kenwyn: Jutalit, 1990.

---. "Romancing the East Cape Frontier: Prelude to the South African High Romance of Empire."

English in Africa 24 .2 (1997): 1-14.

---. "Looking Before and After: The Boers and the Anglo-Boer War in the South African Imaginary."

Paper. *The South African War: A Reappraisal*. Conference. Bloemfontein, 11-14 Oct. 1999.

Virgil. *Aeneid*. Trans. W.F. Jackson Knight. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959.

Vivan, Itala. "Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*: History as Fiction." *Crisis and Conflict: Essays on Southern*

African Literature: Proceedings of the 11th Annual Conference on Commonwealth

Literature and Language Studies in German-Speaking Countries, Aachen-Liege, 1988. Ed.

Geoffrey Davis. Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1990. 45-60.

Voss, A. E. Introduction. *Mhudi*. By Sol T. Plaatje. Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1989.

---. "Sol Plaatje, the Eighteenth Century, and South African Cultural Memory." *English in Africa* 21.1 and 2 (1994): 59-75.

Walter, Brian. "The Romance of Protest: Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*." *Literature, Nature and the Land: Ethics and Aesthetics of the Environment: Collected AUETSA Papers, 1992*. Eds. Nigel Bell and Meg Cowper-Lewis. University of Zululand, Ngoye, 1993: 193-199.

Warwick, Peter. *Black People and the South African War: 1899-1902*. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1983.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.

White, Landeg, and Tim Couzens, eds. *Literature and Society in South Africa*. Pinelands: Maskew Miller Longman, 1984.

Willan, Brian. "An African in Kimberley: Sol T. Plaatje, 1894-1898." *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness 1870-1930*. Ed. Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone. London: Longman, 1982.

---. *Sol Plaatje: A Biography*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984.

Wylie, Dan. "Shaka and the Myths of Paradise." *English in Africa* 22.1 (1995): 19-47.

Young, Francis Brett. "South African Literature." *London Mercury* 19 (1929): 507-516.