CHAPTER 9

CONTENT AND CHARACTER IN THE WHITE RHODESIAN NOVEL—

VARIOUS OTHER TOPICS AND CONCERNS

Introduction

Several topics are discussed in this chapter. There is, for example, the issue of African voices in the Rhodesian novel. Although Africans invariably appear as characters whose sole raison *d'être* is to serve as servants to their white masters and mistresses, a few novels portray servants whose voices become critical in shaping their masters' destiny. Such African characters are found in Brian O'Donoghue and in Rider Haggard.

The issue of interracial marriage is another topic that is explored. A few novels such as those by Charles Bullock, Kathaleen Stevenson Rukavina, Sarah Gertrude Millin and Ronald Leavis focus on this theme, including the issue of acculturation.

There are some novelists who simply wrote thriller/adventure stories at a time when the Rhodesian question was prominent locally and internationally. Paul Tingay, Douglas Hurd, and Betram Mitford represent these authors. Other authors, such as Wilfred Robertson and A Young Rhodesian Farmer, wrote books in which the characters feel at home in Rhodesia. All these books will be discussed in this chapter.

One novelist, Hyatt, pays tribute to the trek ox as the chief means of transport in the early days of occupation in Rhodesia, while a number of authors, namely, Bernie Goldin, Q.C., and A.R.W. Stumbles wrote what can be called, commentaries on Rhodesia. Stumbles and Goldin will not be dealt with in this chapter because their work falls outside the scope of the thesis. However, Hyatt will be discussed because he deals with the important issue of transport in early Rhodesia, an issue that affected many people then.

Attention will, therefore, be paid to these various topics and concerns as they are interesting and insightful. This is the last analytic chapter of the thesis, the next one being the conclusion to the thesis. It is important to conclude such an analysis with a broad overview of various concerns that emerge from the literature studied.

AFRICAN VOICES IN THE RHODESIAN NOVEL

Brian O'Donoghue begins his novel, *The Green Place,* by having his unnamed narrator apologise to Mabiribodi, his African servant:

> Of Mabiribodi I would ask forgiveness. If I could summon a fairy godmother or a leprechaun it would be to ask for the gift to write down the beauty of his words as he has always spoken them. But I cannot summon even the wicked witch. I can only write down the words I use, and must beg his forgiveness

and, perhaps, yours too.[1]

This is one of the very few instances that an African worker has been given such prominence in a Rhodesian novel. To emphasise that prominence, the first chapter of the novel is entitled, Mabiribodi, making him the subject, rather than the object of discussion. This indicates his indispensable role in shaping the narrator's future on the farm that he buys after an unprecedented encounter with Mabiribodi. Mabiribodi's appearance in the front page of this novel banishes the usual invisibility of the African in the novels.

The same prominence is given to Otter in Rider Haggard's *People of the Mist*[2] and to Nyoni in Eve Slatter's *My Leaves are Green*.[3]

O'Donoghue, in *The Green Place,* begins his novel at the end of the story, and tells it backwards, a style used by Lessing, too, in her novel, *The Grass is Singing.* The narrator in *The Green Place* reminisces on his life and experiences on the farm that he eventually names "The Green Place;" a life and experiences shared with Mabiribodi, his dedicated worker, who has to leave because he has reached retirement age. It is from this chapter that we learn the special relationship the narrator has had with Mabiribodi, as he says,

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[1] Bryan O'Donoghue, *TheGreen Place* (Doornforntein, Johannesburg: Perskor Publishers, 1976) Dedication page.
[2] Rider Haggard, *People of the Mist* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905).
[3] Eve M. Slatter, *My Leaves are Green*. In this novel Nyoni is allowed to complete David/Paul's autobiography after his death. Authorship is a very strong independent voice by a person, even though he still remains subservient to his master.

> Mabiribodi has been my crutch, my extra arm, my friend. From the shadows of my mind flashes of our time spent together keep coming back. Mabiribodi has seen too many of my failures, has watched the world manhandle me to her ways, too roughly, too often, not to know that I shall accept his going.[4]

It can be added that Mabiribodi has been the narrator's advisor and confidante. The narrator goes on to say about him, "If the truth be known, Mabiribodi has been philosopher to my stumbling ambition, servant to my wants, master of my behaviour, confessor to my many failures and guardian of my secret desires for my children."[5] Yet after describing him in all these mature, adult ways, the narrator ends by saying, "In a way, he is *the last child* to leave me. Like [my children], he will be lost to us except in our prayers and our thoughts, and our wishes upon which we can no longer insist."[6] The narrator may be expressing deep feelings of love for Mabiribodi. He may be saying that as far as he is concerned, there is no distinction between his real children and Mabiribodi. However, being a white Rhodesian, he may also be misunderstood to mean that because Mabiribodi is an African, he remains his child. The latter interpretation would be unfortunate, yet probable, considering the time that the novel is written and the lack of progressive consciousness of the white people then.

We say that Mabiribodi is "given a voice" in this novel, because he dictates to his employer many times, telling him and his family what to

[4] B. O'Donohgue, <u>The Green Place</u> 1.
[5] B. O'Donoghue, <u>The Green Place</u> 4.
[6] <u>Ibid</u> 4.

do, and they actually do it. First, he tells the narrator that he is going to work for him. His second instruction is when he adamantly insists on choosing the site of the narrator's house, and borrows tools from their neighbour to carve out a new road that goes to the site for that house. Finally, he insists that the house should face eastwards rather than northwards, as if it were his own. Mabiribodi, further, asks for a cigarette. He is given a packet which he calmly pockets. All this takes place on the very first day that he meets the narrator and his family! He is a very aggressive and determined person. Although he addresses the narrator respectfully as Inkosi or boss, he really does what he wants, and tells the narrator what to do.[7] He gives his rationale for insisting that his employer build his house facing east in the most eloquent wisdom and logic:

> Face the house to the east, Inkos…Face it to the coming day. It is good for a man, when old age comes to keep him company, to stand on his stoep and greet the new morning…watch the cat Inkos. He does not choose to sleep on the north side…He sleeps where the sun will warm him. The puff adder and the bees do as all wild animals do, they pick the east to catch the morning sun …you must build your house facing east because you love the land. A house is not for selling….Your house must also be part of you. It must be a place where each dawn each day will bring a memory when you are old and tired.[8]

Although the narrator dismisses Mabiribodi's piece of advice concerning the positioning of the house at first, eventually he realises that "Mabiribodi was right," and so the house is built, facing east. Its

[7] *Ibid* 6-14.
[8] *Ibid* 14.

completion, its perfection of design and workmanship enhances Mabiribodi's status in the narrator's opinion, as he says,

> Suddenly it was finished—a beautifully simple, conical roof. Its symmetry and proportions were exactly right…old Mabiribodi grew in stature; his magic and ability unchallenged, his decision final, his plans undisputed, his status unassailable…. His decisions were final—beyond question. He was no longer just a simple gardener. He was the Lord of the Manor. The house he alone had built was his citation. I had yet to match it. But I couldn't begrudge him his title….[9]

The next project that bears Mabiribodi's stamp is the borehole. When the professional water diviner comes, he finds water on one side of the yard. Mabiribodi confidently disputes that site, claiming that *Manyuse*, the rainmaker, divined water under the Kaffir boom tree, near the rock where the narrator and his family found him sitting. The narrator dismisses Mabiribodi's argument and proceeds to have water drilled on the professionally cited place. He argues, "I ask you …who would take the advice of a one-eyed old ruffian preaching black magic in the face of a professional scientist [who, according to the narrator, 'needed a punch up his scientific nose' because of the way he carried on snobbishly anyway], who had actually proved, with a little black box that had more dials than a chameleon has spots, that water was present somewhere else."[10]

Water does, indeed, gush out of the professional site, but it quickly dries up. Later, they drill at Mabiribodi's site, and at 80 feet down, they strike

[9] *Ibid* 34-35.
[10] *Ibid* 25; 26.

an inexhaustible supply of water. The borehole is drilled before Mabiribodi completes the house. By the time he completes it, his credentials as a talented, knowledgeable person have been firmly established.

Like Mabiribodi, it is Nyoni, in My Leaves are Green, who decides for his master, David-Paul, the farm to buy. Nyoni's decision is influenced by his divination of the presence of water within that farm. David-Paul explains, "We crossed several pleasant streams, and twice I felt tempted to turn along a stream and find a site. But Nyoni was adamant. 'Not here, Nkosi. This is not the place I see in my mind.' I grumbled, but we went on. Finally, as my temper was rising Nyoni stopped and threw back his head. 'I smell water…plenty of it….'"[11]

Nyoni, like Mabiribodi, is correct about the better site for settling. In this and other issues, David-Paul becomes Nyoni's follower, just like O'Donoghue's narrator becomes Mabiribodi's follower. In addition, Nyoni decides where David-Paul's house should be built, and together, the two companions name their future farm and home, Talana, meaning "the little shelf."[12]

In The Green Place, Mabiribodi is proved correct in other spheres of the narrator's life and his family, such as the upbringing of his first born son. Mabiribodi believes that the child should grow up with a sense of independence: "He must never be petted. Leave him to himself [to]

[11] E.M. Slatter, My Leaves are Green 205.
[12] Slatter, My Leaves are Green 206.

discover life for himself. The day will come when he will lead your family. From loneliness he will learn to lead wisely."[13] The narrator discovers this counselling to be wise and correct as time passes : "Now I know he was right," the narrator says of Mabiribodi, later. "But in those distant days I fumed and threatened to hang the old man if he put so much as one thought in the child's head to make him need less of his parents' love. Time has made my outlook less rigid."[14]

In Eve Slatter's _My Leaves are Green,_ Nyoni is also an authority on raising children. He helps to raise the identical twins, David and Paul. Because they are so identical and difficult to distinguish one from the other, both are called "David-Paul." Only Nyoni is able to tell them apart. He raises them as his own children. David says, at the beginningof the novel, "Paul and I were given Nyoni as a personal attendant in our baby days…we spoke Zulu as fluently as we did English. All my remembered days his face had been the first thing my eyes opened on every morning."[15]

Later on, when David has wrongfully assumed Paul's identity after the latter has been killed in one of the Boer wars, it is Nyoni who chastises him for that, and urges him to resume his former hobby of painting which he stops doing because Paul was not a painter. David, in shock, wonders how Nyoni knows that he has assumed a false identity. Nyoni has known that all along, since he has been closer to him than his father or mother. David has never fooled him. In spite of his knowledge, Nyoni remains

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[13] B. O'Donoghue, _The Green Place_ 62.
[14] _Ibid_ 62.

faithful to him and does not betray his young, foolish master, to his wife, or to anyone else. Nyoni further chastises David for deceiving the young woman he marries under the guise of being Paul.[16]

Nyoni, therefore, occupies a unique position in the life of his master's family. He, too, has a voice that comes out strongly, even though he is a servant to the parents, to the children and to the grandchildren of this family.

In The Green Place, Mabiribodi insists on accompanying the narrator to track down a lion that has killed a boy in a neighbouring village. Little does the narrator know that Mabiribodi will save his life, in spite of his having one eye, and lacking the narrator's experience as a game ranger. Mabiribodi is a very skilful hunter, who is well versed in the ways of the wilderness. Before starting on the track, he offers a prayer to the "Hunting God" in which he practically gives himself as a sacrifice if it should be necessary. He prays, "My Nkosi is also hurt and he should not hunt. But keep him safe and watch his footsteps. If you need someone, take me. My master is my heart and without him I am nothing."[17] In his prayer to the Hunting God, Mabiribodi demonstrates superb loyalty and selflessness, literally indicating his readiness to give up his life for his master. The two of them need each other, as it turns out, because they end up killing two lions instead of one. Each kills one, thus saving each other's life. Mabiribodi, however, discounts and downplays his own apparent skill at shooting, in order to highlight his Inkosi's skill.

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[15] Slatter, My Leaves are Green 1.
[16] Slatter, My Leaves are Green 177.

In _My Leaves are Green,_ Nyoni's role approximates Mabiribodi's when he authoritatively insists on accompanying David-Paul to Beira to receive his wife and daughters who are coming from South Africa: "You must take me, Nkosi… There will be lions—many. And if we have to walk we may have to carry the children."[18] When David-Paul goes to fight in the 1893 Ndebele/settler war, he gets injured in the hip. One of his legs ends up shorter. Nyoni admonishes him: "If the Nkosi would take me with him these things would not happen…It is only when I am not there that trouble finds you."[19] He feels that he is David-Paul's protector just like Mabiribodi does. Indeed, Nyoni saves David-Paul's seven-month old son from the Shona ambush in which his wife and two daughters are killed during the First Chimurenga of 1896. The ambush takes place after Nyoni has gone for a walk with the baby. He continues to hide, keeping the baby alive and well fed with cow milk for three days before he is reunited with his father in a laager in Salisbury. After the reunion with David-Paul, Nyoni recounts the story of his escape, concluding, "Nkosi…The child is mine as you were when you were small. My life is his."[20] This is the same sentiment of self-sacrifice for the baas that is expressed by Mabiribodi. The loyalty of these workers is absolute.

When considering form in these novels, it is found that throughout _The Green Place_, the narrator tells his life story, but remains nameless. The story is a reminiscence of the good years spent by the narrator at the farm

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[17] B. O'Donoghue, _The Green Place_ 142.
[18] B. O'Donoghue, _The Green Place_ 219.
[19] Slatter, _My Leaves are Green_ 238.
[20] _Ibid_ 256.

or the *plaas* he has named “The Green Place.” That life has been spent in the companionship of an unusual gardener, Mabiribodi whose name means “The Ugly One.” So the plot is made up of the present events, events that take place when Mabiribodi is retiring, and those that take place one year later when the narrator visits him with Mabiribodi’s long lost daughter and her son. Then there is the past, from the time the narrator arrives in Rhodesia looking for land to purchase, and his meeting Mabiribodi. It is a story told in hindsight with humour and a reassessment of the past.

The "Rhodesia" that is the setting for this novel published in 1976, is one where a man and his family, servants and neighbours, lead an ordinary, blissful life. They deal with wild life and the vagaries of weather the best way they can. The author totally ignores the racial conflict surrounding him, and makes no reference to the political situation prevailing in 1975 to 1976. He devotes a whole chapter, for instance, to the rescue of a duiker for which his family becomes emotionally attached. The family also shows similar, unusual attachment to their dog and an old cat at the expense of distressful political events happening around them.[21] The narrator’s biggest challenges are the poachers and the lion mentioned earlier.[22] Even the culling of elephants inflicts emotional bruises on the narrator and his colleagues.[23] Reference is made to Ian Smith’s war with Guerrillas when it is casually mentioned that the eldest son is on call up.[24] The novel has an incredible plot for its time.

[21] B. O’Donoghue, *The Green Place* 53-56; 65-66; 76-77; 78-83.
[22] *Ibid* 68; 141-142.
[23] *Ibid* 92.
[24] *Ibid* 95.

A chapter entitled “A Time for Mourning,” makes the reader wonder who has died, only to learn that the mourning is for various animals such as snakes that eat up birds, and so on. In a country torn by war, this man writes as if there is nothing else to worry about in Rhodesia except the well being of owls, mongooses, snakes and bushbucks—totally ignoring the human tragedy that has engulfed the country, including the narrator’s eldest son. There is no news on how he is fairing in the war.

The reason for this kind of plot seems to be that the story focuses on Mabiribodi and his role in the life of the narrator and his family. It is Mabiribodi who begins the story, and it is he who ends it. The narrator manages to find Mabiribodi’s prodigal daughter and her son with the help of a policeman friend. So he takes the two to Mabiribodi. Thus, “his wish to see his grandson before he died,” has been fulfilled and the narrator leaves them to enjoy their reunion—his mission accomplished.[25]

Slatter’s in My Leaves are Green, story is different from O’Donoghue’s. It is David’s story, so the focus is not totally on Nyoni. In her setting, Slatter does not only concern herself with this family of David-Paul, but she also portrays global events around her characters, including the regional wars that ensue. Nyoni himself retires after David-Paul’s death from wounds sustained after a fatal lion attack. He and Philip, David-Paul’s now seven-year old son, go back to Natal where they live with Richard, David-Paul’s youngest brother. Nyoni is over sixty years old, and has little sight and strength left. He is always cold and has to sit in

the full heat of the sun to feel warm. Alternatively, he wraps himself in a thick blanket, given to him by Nkosi Richard.[26] Unlike Mabiribodi who retires to his own piece of land, Nyoni does not own any piece of land. Neverthless, he has the honour of completing David-Paul's story, informing the reader that David did not die of the feared heart ailment, but after he had been fatally wounded by a lioness.[27] He died with Nyoni beside him. They shook hands in farewell, and Nyoni was told to bury him "under the trees."[28]

In _The Green Place_, brief attention is paid to acculturation and alienation as the cause of Mabiribodi's misery. He loses his wife, his eye and the daughter he once knew and loved so much, to the negative influences of western education. When he sends his daughter to school, he loses her because she ends up despising her parents. She then runs away with an uncouth boyfriend. He follows them, trying to find out how they are doing, but the boyfriend attacks him, bludgeoning off his eye. As a result, his wife pines away and dies from the heartbreak caused by these tragic events. The good news is that the daughter and her son are finally reunited with Mabiribodi after his retirement to his own "Green Place," where he farms. The narrator feels happy that he has been able to show Mabiribodi his sincere gratitude for the latter's long service and unparalleled friendship, by making this reunion possible. O'Donoghue has told a good story, which is not marred by insults to Africans.

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[25] B. O'Donoghue, _The Green Place_ 163.
[26] Slatter, _My Leaves are Green_ 266.
[27] Slatter, _My Leaves are Green_ 267.
[28] _Ibid_ 268.

Mabiribodi and Nyoni, thus, play a similar role in their masters' lives—faithful servant, confidante and friend. The authors give them voices of their own, to articulate their own opinions whenever they see fit; to advise their bosses and to direct their lives when necessary.

Otter, in Rider Haggard's novel, *The People of the Mist,* exhibits the same dominant qualities as Mabiribodi and Nyoni. He is also a faithful, Basuto servant, who works for Leonard and Tom Outram. Tom and Leonard Outram come to Africa in search of a fortune with which to re-claim their family home in Britain. Their former home has been auctioned because their father not only neglected his family, but he has also squandered all the family's fortune, and then committed suicide. The two brothers swear on the family Bible that they will make it their life long mission to recover their family home. So they depart for Africa, ending up in Rhodesia, in search of a fortune. It is while they are digging around for gold that they engage Basuto servants, one of whom is called Otter. Unfortunately, Tom dies of malaria. After Tom's death, Otter remains faithful to Leonard. On hearing of Tom's death, Otter mouns him as though he had been his father, and eulogises him in Zulu.[29] This is the first time we listen to Otter's voice. Thereafter, he becomes one of the dominant characters, alongside Leonard himself. Leonard also trusts Otter's judgement and asks for his opinion on what their next course of action should be. He has high regard for Otter's judgement in all matters. He considers it as good as his own.[30]

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[29] Rider Haggard, *The People of the Mist* 26-27.
[30] *Ibid* 31.

Throughout the novel, Leonard and Otter are practically equal partners in their adventures. The first adventure entails their embarking on a dangerous journey eastwards after being persuaded by a black woman, Soa, to go and rescue Juanna, her white mistress, who has been abducted by Portuguese slave traders. Leonard agrees to undertake this adventurous rescue because, before he died, his brother Tom appears to have had a vision which had propelled him to tell Leonard not to leave this place. Tom had also told Leonard he would eventually succeed in winning back their home with the help of a woman. Thus, when Soa turns up immediately after that, talking about treasure and rescues, Leonard believes that, perhaps she is the woman Tom saw in a vision before his death. Tom's visionary message is made deliberately ambiguous. The second adventure entails their journeying to the land of the People of the Mist. Soa, whose home is this land, promises Leonard a treasure of rubies, as payment for the rescue of Juanna, her mistress. Leonard and Otter consult each other on what to do during these gruesome, life-threatening adventures, during which they save each other’s life.

Juanna and Soa will be discussed more fully, later. For now, it is important to emphasise that Otter is a respected, Basuto servant who is treated as a man, not as a boy. Although he is given an arbitrary name of an otter because of his exceptional swimming skill, and because Tom and Leonard find “his native patronymic…quite unpronounceable,” he is not contemptuously treated. He is given a voice in that he speaks his mind always. For example, after rescuing Juanna, it is Otter who analyses her character thus: “She is proud…she is beautiful…she is cold…she does

not say 'thank you' nicely for all that you [Leonard] have done…. Still, she might say 'thank you' to you, Baas, who are her—husband."[31] When Leonard protests that he is no "husband" to Juanna, Otter counters the protest by saying, "I mean you bought her first, according to our custom, and married her afterwards according to your own, and if that does not make her your wife, nothing can."[32]

It is Otter whose practical and creative ideas enable them all to successfully run away from the People of the Mist, once they are discovered to be phoney gods.[33] Hence, it is a fitting tribute to Otter for Leonard's son, Thomas, to toast his health. The author makes that toast the last words of the novel: "And I drink to…Otter, who killed the Snake god, and whom I love the best of all of them. Mother, may Otter get the spear and the rope and tell us the story of how he dragged you and father up the ice-bridge?" the child requests.[34] This is, indeed, a final tribute to Otter and his creative abilities. Yet he, himself, remains very humble. When he feels it necessary, Otter serenades his Baas, Leonard, in poetry, after the Zulu fashion.[35]

Leonard ends up marrying Juanna, and they sail back to England where he inherits his old family home upon the death of Jane Beach, his first

[31] *Ibid* 108-109. As part of the rescue strategy, Leonard had to comply with the wishes of the head of the slave traders who required that the man who pays the most amount of money for this beautiful girl who is practically being auctioned, must marry her in full view of everyone in that slave camp. So Leonard goes through this ceremony after paying the largest sum of money, in order to rescue her, beating all the other bidders. Both Leonard and Juanna regard the marriage ceremony as fake, dishonourable and repulsive, though they do fall in love and get married properly later on. This fake marriage is what Otter is referring to, here.
[32] R. Haggard, *People of the Mist* 109.
[33] R. Haggard, *People of the Mist* 311-323.
[34] *Ibid* 343.
[35] *Ibid* 128-129.

girlfriend. When Leonard goes to Africa, he leaves Jane, his first sweetheart behind, because her father no longer recognises his right to befriend her since he is now a pauper. Thus, Jane is forced to marry the son of a Mr. Cohen, whose family buys the Outram home at the auction; an auction necessitated by old man Outram's financial recklessness, indiscipline and debt. In her will, Jane returns the Outram home to Leonard because she loved him always, she says. Since her husband and daughter are also dead, she believes that Leonard should get back his old home. Evidently, she never approves of its acquisition by the Cohens. Otter sails to England with Leonard and Juanna, where he, too, settles.

Although Rider Haggard is not a Rhodesian settler, his story is set in Rhodesia. We learn about this setting when Leonard and Soa sign their agreement at the beginning of the adventure that rescues Juanna. The agreement is "signed in the Manica Mountains, Eastern Africa."[36] Haggard creates dizzying adventures; eliminates most local folk in the service of the white men, and saves the incredible Otter only, out of everyone else. The People of the Mist themselves, though demonised, are majestic. At least Haggard does not make it easy for some white adventurers to steal their wealth. It is not this wealth that Leonard is destined to utilise to win back his home in England. Rather, it is the everlasting love and generosity of his first girlfriend, Jane, that wins him back his home through her will. The outrageous adventures ensure that Leonard earns the family home after going through some hardships.

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[36] *Ibid* 49.

Otter, Mabiribodi and Nyoni are, therefore, servants in a class of their own. They serve their white masters with extreme reverence, influencing them in vital ways that shape their future. The masters, in turn, allow these servants to speak their own minds. The authors of these three novels have, thus, portrayed African servants differently from the rest. It should be noted, however, that Mabiribodi and Otter are very ugly and all three including Nyoni remain unmarried for the rest of their lives. It seems as if the authors have deliberately disfigured these African servants who otherwise have exceptionally good qualities. This is another way of denying that ordinary black people who, unobtrusively, populate their novels can be good without obvious physical or moral defects. This is a strange way of viewing Africans.

WOMEN AS OUTSPOKEN PROTAGONISTS IN THE RHODESIAN ADVENTURE NOVEL

In a previous chapter, women were discussed as silent protagonists in two historical novels, *Mlimo* and *The Induna's Wife*. In Chapter 8 there is a discussion of female-authored novels, which highlights the plight of women in the colony of Rhodesia. In this section, women are discussed as outspoken protagonists in Rider Haggard's *People of the Mist, Maiwa's Revenge,* and to a lesser extent, *King Solomon's Mines.*

In *People of the Mist,* Tom and Leonard Outram are driven out of England to Africa by poverty, outrage and the desire to reclaim their family home. On their own efforts, however, the two brothers fail to

accumulate enough wealth and fortune to enable them to repurchase their home from the Cohen family. Tom subsequently dies of fever, and Leonard would have gone the same way had the black woman, Soa, not showed up and cured him of it. Before Tom's death, he gives Leonard what turns out to be an ambiguous message—"You will get the money and Outram—and found the family afresh—but you will not do it alone. *A woman will help you.*"[37] The ambiguity lies in the last part of the prophecy, if we may call it that—"A woman will help you." Leonard is told to wait for some days before leaving this place where they have been digging for gold, to await this woman, perhaps. Hence, when Soa comes with a tale of treasure in the land of her People of the Mist, and actually gives him a sample of such treasure in the form of a large ruby, Leonard automatically believes that this is the woman his brother talked about. In return for this treasure and many more like it, Soa asks Leonard to help in the rescue of her mistress, Juanna, from the notorious slave camp of the Yellow Devil. Soa becomes the driving spirit behind the rescue effort of Juanna. Otter leads the way, since he himself once escaped from the clutches of the same Yellow Devil. Leonard is only a follower.

After Juanna has been rescued, Soa no longer wants to fulfil her other obligation to Leonard concerning a journey to her people of the mist. She apologises to her mistress for having committed her, in her absence, to that journey in which she used the white man's greed as an incentive. So she says, "I told this tale to the white man because I saw that he was greedy, after the fashion of his race, and my strait was desperate…."[38]

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[37] R. Haggard, *The People of the Mist* 21.
[38] R. Haggard, *The People of the Mist* 117.

However, Juanna takes up this quest for treasure seriously. For her, it becomes a necessity and a means for repaying her debt to Leonard who risks his life to rescue her. She, in turn, promises, "Certainly I shall try my best to help you in this business, if I can, for you have worked hard and endangered your life, Mr. Outram, and I am sure that you have earned your money, or rather the prospect of it…if in any way I can help you to obtain possession of the valuables of this People of the Mist I shall have paid off an obligation which at present crushes me."[39]

From this point onwards, Juanna becomes the driving spirit of this second adventure. Soa leads the way because she knows how to get back to her people from whom she fled forty years before, as she was about to be sacrificed to the people's gods. Leonard also believes that, perhaps Juanna is the woman mentioned by her dying brother. Juanna believes so, too, as she tells Leonard, "…I earnestly hope that Soa's tale of treasure will turn out to be true, and that you may win it by my help. It will be some slight return for all that you have done for me."[40] Juanna, therefore, is driven to the leading position by two ambitions: to be the woman whose help is to win Leonard his fortune, and to repay her invaluable debt to him for the rescue in the first adventure. She and Soa, thus, have become outspoken protagonists in the quest for Leonard's treasure.

Juanna's leadership is evident when the African team, made up of ex-slaves from the rescue camp, a team that includes Headman Peter,

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[39] *Ibid* 118.
[40] R. Haggard, *The People of the Mist* 125.

accompanies them to the People of the Mist. Because of the harsh conditions of this arduous journey in which they walk a long distance to an unknown country, strength and determination fail the team. They announce that they want to return to their villages. Leonard fails to persuade them to continue, and so he bids them goodbye. Juanna steps forward and reminds them of how Leonard risked his life to rescue them along with their mistress who now speaks. Why are they deserting Leonard in his hour of need, she asks. Further, she threatens them:

> "…I who foretold the doom of the Yellow Devil, am a true prophetess, and I tell you this, that about a very few of you shall live to see your kraal again, and *you* will not be one of their number, Peter. As for those who come home safely, their names shall be a mockery, the little children shall call them coward, and traitor and jackal, and one by one they shall eat out their hearts and die, because they deserted him who saved them from the slave-ship and the scourge. Farewell, children of my father: may peace go with you, and may his ghost not come to haunt you on your path.[41]

After this scornful speech, Peter and his people reconsider their position. They acknowledge the mockery and the "ropes of shame [tied] about [their] necks," and are honest enough to say that they cannot bear it. Hence, they continue with the journey.

[41] R. Haggard, *The People of the Mist* 145. Juanna calls these people, "children of my father" because they all worked for her late father and lived in his compound from where they were all abducted by the slave traders.

When they eventually reach the land of the People of the Mist, Soa uses her people's legend about the gods who would come back to them sometime in the distant future, to gain entrance into her people's kingdom. The gods would be a man who is as short and ugly as Otter, and a beautiful, elegant woman like Juanna. She hatches a plot whereby Juanna and Otter are to pretend that they are the long expected gods who have now returned to their land. The two are to be revered as such. Soa, Leonard and the rest of the group are to be respected because they are servants of these gods. She, therefore, exploits this long-standing legend among these people. Soa knows about this legend because she escaped from her homeland after being offered as human sacrifice to the ugly crocodile in a pool below a dangerous cliff. These people worship the crocodile as one of their gods. The plot holds up to a certain point, before it is discovered that the "gods" and their servants are all fake. Soa discovers that her father is still alive and is one of the very high priests in her community. She becomes jealous of Juanna's apparent love for Leonard, and turns traitor against them.

Juanna perseveres and helps the whole group out of its predicament when its plot has been discovered. The fraudulent plot is discovered because Soa turns against Juanna and Leonard. Juanna agrees "to marry" Olfan, a king who professes love for her, and does so in order to continue to work out a way for the release of Leonard who has been imprisoned.[42] It is, indeed, a fantastic adventure that Leonard leads Juanna into, but she rises to the occasion and acquits herself most magnanimously in its execution.

In the end, though, Juanna is denied the ultimate honour of being the woman by whose help Leonard gains his sought-for treasure. Otter finds the bag full of jewels weighing "seven to eight solid pounds of gems, the finest in the world." Instead of allowing Leonard or Otter to carry the bag, Juanna cries, "Then give it to me…I have nothing else to carry. You may have to use both your hands presently."[43] Possessing the jewels, holding them and keeping them safely for Leonard, marks her greatest triumphant moment:

> Oh what I have suffered in that place [the land of the People of the Mist]!…How have I lived through it, I wonder? And yet I have won something…and if only we survive and I am the means of enabling him to fulfil his vow and buy back his home with these jewels, I shall not regret all that I have endured to win them. Yes, even when he is no longer so very much in love, he must always be grateful to me, for few women will have done as much for their husbands.[44]

These words certainly instil an everlasting sense of gratitude in Leonard's heart—or rather, a yoke around his neck, forever. Juanna displays vanity and greed that nature finds repulsive, for it is this vanity and greed which make her gloat over the stones:

> …the thought came into her mind that she would examine [the jewels]…. Opening the mouth of the bag, she thrust her fingers into it, and one by one drew out the biggest gems which were jumbled

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[42] R. Haggard, People of the Mist 272-290.
[43] Ibid 302.
[44] Ibid 306.

> together there, placing them on the rock beside her.
> In less than a minute she was feasting her eyes upon
> such a collection of priceless jewels as had never before
> gladdened the sight of any white woman, even in her
> wildest dreams; indeed, till now Juanna had not thought
> it possible that stones so splendid could exist on the hither
> side of the walls of heaven…. Juanna arranged them in
> rows and stared at them with ecstasy—where is the woman
> who would not have done so?[45]

In these jewels which she admires pre-maturely (since she is not yet at her journey's end), she becomes so absorbed that she gets absent-minded. The narrator says, "…in contemplating them she even forgot the present terrors of her position—forgot everything except the gorgeous loveliness and infinite value of the wealth of gems, which she had been the means of winning for Leonard."[46]

It is after she has returned the jewels into their bag that Nam, one of the high priests they have taken prisoner, snatches the bag away from her. After cursing the three of them: Otter, Juanna and Leonard, he hurls himself backwards into the abyss below the rock they stand on, the jewel bag in his hand. Broken-hearted, they prepare to leave for good, so that at least, they can save their lives, even without the jewels. Juanna correctly takes the full blame for the loss of the jewels, and the lost chance she had of winning treasure for Leonard and ultimately, his home back in England. Leonard forgives her, but she lives with the burden of failure forever.

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[45] R. Haggard, *People of the Mist* 308-309.
[46] *Ibid* 308.

As it turns out, fate will have no ambiguity as to how the fortunes of Leonard Outram is to return to him. The woman who helps him regain his family home and fortune is neither Soa nor Juanna, but Jane Beach, his first love. Jane Beach bequeaths, through her will, the whole estate of the Outrams back to Leonard. Her husband and daughter are now dead and she, too, is dying. Leonard finally understands his brother's prediction and his wish for him not to leave soon after his death. Had he stayed at this place a little longer, he would have been discovered by messengers from England who had been sent to find him in order to have him return to England to claim his inheritance. The messengers arrive a day after Leonard, Otter and Soa have departed for the rescue of Juanna from the Yellow Devil. This aspect of the story is very important because it links with Tom's death-bed vision in which he predicts that Leonard will not reclaim their family home solely through his own efforts. The narrator reminds us of this fact when he says, "Also [Leonard] failed…he had kept his oath indeed [to work hard in order to achieve his goal] and fought on till the end was won, but himself he had not won it."[47] This statement highlights the indispensable contribution of women in Leonard's life.

However, both Juanna and Soa are disqualified from the role of helping Leonard: Juanna because of her greed for wealth, and power over Leonard; Soa because she is dangerous and jealous of Juanna. She becomes very evil once she realises that Juanna has fallen in love with Leonard. She chastises Juanna: "…You loved him [after the rescue from the Yellow Devil]. Ah! could I have foreseen it Shepherdess, I had left

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[47] R. Haggard, People of the Mist 341.

you to die in the slave camp, for then you had died loving me who now hate me and cast me off for the sake of the white thief."[48] She even claims that she "cannot live without the sight of her."[49] Soa's love for her mistress hinges on the homosexual, and when that love is threatened by Leonard, she seeks to destroy him while marrying off Juanna to Olfan, one of the high priests, in order to fix her and to always see her.[50] Soa ends up destroyed. Only one woman, whose purity of love and heart, though admittedly weak of character, is the saviour of the Outram valuable estate, realised upon her death. She receives the final honours. Evidently, women play a most vociferous role in this novel. That is why they are the outspoken protagonists.

In another novel, *Maiwa's Revenge*,[51] the woman, Maiwa, is the brave daughter of Chief Nala. She vows to avenge her baby daughter, who has been killed by her husband who is also the child's father, called Wambe. She runs away from him to enlist the help of Quarterman to urge her father, Nala, to wage war against Wambe and destroy him. That, she says, will revenge her daughter's death and the general ill treatment she suffers at her husband's hands.

The determination of Maiwa to have this vengeance is so intense that she neither can eat nor drink, "so fiercely was she set on vengeance."[52] She guides Quarterman and his people to her father's kraal. Her endurance,

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[48] *Ibid* 210; 218.
[49] *Ibid* 220.
[50] *Ibid* 275-276.
[51] Rider Haggard, *Maiwa's Revenge or the Story of the Little Hand* (London & New york: Longmans, Green and Co., 1888) 103-216.
[52] *Ibid* 119.

too, is unparalleled. Quarterman marvels: "What astonished me was the extraordinary endurance and activity shown by Maiwa. She never flagged. I think the girl's muscles must have been made of iron, or perhaps it was her will that supported her."[53]

During the subsequent war between Wambe's and Nala's people, Maiwa clutches an assegai, too, and urges her father's soldiers to victory as she shouts, " 'Slay, you war-whelps…Art you afraid, you women, you chicken-hearted women! Strike home, or die like dogs! What—you give way! Follow me, children of Nala.' And with one wild long cry she leapt from the wall as leaps a stricken antelope, and holding the spear posed on high rushed right into the thickest of the fray."[54] She so inspires her father's soldiers by getting into the thick of the battle herself, that "they massed together, and following the flutter of her white robe crashed into the dense heart of the foe."[55] The result is that the Matuku, Wambe's people, are mown down "like trees before a whirlwind…and there, straight in the forefront of the battle, still waved the white robe of Maiwa."[56] At the end of the battle, Maiwa stands by her wounded father, herself unscathed, "wearing on her face a proud and terrifying air."[57]

There is no doubt that the inspiration of this determined woman enables Nala's people to conquer Wambe's people. She leads the final battle and turns the tide. Clearly, as the saying goes, hell hath no fury like a woman wronged. Maiwa is such a woman, an outspoken protagonist for her

[53] *Ibid* 124.
[54] R. Haggard, *Maiwa's Revenge…* 187.
[55] *Ibid* 187.
[56] *Ibid* 187-188.

cause of vengeance against Wambe for killing her baby daughter whose dry hand she carries around as a reminder of duty to be accomplished. She agrees to become the Chieftainess of the Matuku tribe under her father, and promises to be "good and gentle to those who [are] good and gentle to her, but the forward and rebellious she would smite with a rod of iron."[58] After her father's death, she rules both Wambe's and Nala's people "with great justice and firmness."[59]

Maiwa is a great, fearless woman whose spirit remains unbroken, even in the face of hardship. Although Haggard writes this story as a narrative of the adventures of Allan Quarterman in Rhodesia, he entitles it, "Maiwa's Revenge or the War of the Little Hand," thus, placing emphasis, not on Quarterman in this case, but on Maiwa and her determination to avenge her daughter. He succeeds in portraying a strong, indomitable woman who becomes Chieftainess, then Chief, something unique in the novel about Rhodesia; unique even for Haggard who portrays women as old, ugly witches and smellers of witches in his earlier novel, *King Solomon's Mines*.[60] In that novel, women are also used as rewards for male prowess in war. They are despised and abused.[61] Chief among these evil women is Gagool, though she is actually the only person to remain sceptical about the eclipse of the moon as a symbol of the white man's power over nature.[62]

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[57] *Ibid* 189.
[58] *Ibid* 209.
[59] *Ibid* 211.
[60] Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (London & Glasgow: Collins, 1885 reprinted 1968).
[61] *Ibid* 136; 147-149; 158.
[62] *Ibid* 142-155.

THE CASE OF INTERRACIAL MARRIAGES IN THE RHODESIAN NOVEL

Chennells devotes a chapter, in his thesis, to the issue of interracial, sexual relations in the Rhodesian novel. He, then, discusses Peter Halket's racist opinion on that subject, and quotes one particular passage where Halket deplores, what he calls, the nigger-women's habit of always returning to their nigger-men no matter how well treated they are by white men. Thus, Chennells comments, "Peter has accepted unquestioningly the racist contempt with which Rhodes has encouraged his men to regard the Shona…and the lad, who feels uneasy at physical cruelty to a duck or a Black man, is incapable of recognising the jealousy of the woman's husband as a human emotion."[63]

In this section, the issue of interracial, sexual relations will be dealt with from a different angle. An examination will be made of one novel where a love relationship between a white man and a coloured woman becomes still born. Two novels will be discussed where white men actually marry and live with black women in a polygamous situation. These kinds of people are nicknamed "white Kaffirs" by other whites. There is one other novel that deals with an alienated, acculturated black woman who finds it difficult to relate to a black man in her village, after a love affair with a white boyfriend in England.

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[63] A.J. Chennells, "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel, 383. The whole chapter on this subject is on 378-416.

Race as a Barrier to Love and Marriage

In Charles Bullock's *Rina, A Story of Africa*,[64] Adrian, the main character, faces a heart-breaking experience when his girlfriend, Helen Demerly, whom he meets in England, turns out to be a black woman genetically, even though she looks white. She is a South African who has lived in England with a guardian for a long time, because she lost her parents in a vehicle accident as a child. While on holiday with Adrian, they meet a man who knows her family and tells her that she comes from an aristocratic family, except that her grandmother was a South African black woman. She cannot accept that situation since she has a habit of denigrating men who go out with black women. She is, therefore, devastated to learn that she, herself, is not white after all. She immediately transfers to the Greater London area, from where she writes to Adrian, giving no postal address and begging him not to trace her.[65]

Adrian is the one who tells this story to his Godfather, Robert Marston, who is rumoured to have experienced a similar tragedy earlier in his life. Adrian, therefore, wants his Godfather's advice on how to cope with this bitter predicament where a girl he loves simply disappears from him because she feels she cannot continue a love relationship with a white man. Marston himself must have suffered, too, emotionally, for he never marries any other woman all his life. In answer to Adrian's request for help, Marston gives him a manuscript, which contains his biography, including the story of the girl, Rina, with whom he was once in love.

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[64] Charles Bullock, *Rina, A Story of Africa* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Juta and Co., 1949).
[65] *Ibid* 15.

It turns out that Marston's reason for never marrying is that he dumps Rina on racial grounds, after discovering that she is a coloured girl—her mother was a black woman. When he first meets Rina, he is automatically filled with explosive racial prejudice against her African environment, and against the African people surrounding her. He is outraged that she lives in the African kraal, and that Chief Harahara calls her "my little wife." He exclaims that she is white and the Chief must not marry a white woman. The Chief, whom we suspect knows her background, tells Marston that Rina is not a white woman, but a *munhu*, "a person." Harahara's explanation is that many people have a lighter complexion, and that the light falls on Rina in a particular manner, which accentuates her complexion. The Chief, further, argues that besides the effect of light on Rina's skin, it is also the cloth she wears, a gift from Marston ironically, that deceives him into believing that she is a white woman. "But she is a *munhu* not a *murungu.* She is a person, not a white creature," the Chief concludes.[66] The Chief's use of "creature" is ironical and humorous in view of Marston who sees black people as inferior to the whites.

Marston disagrees with the Chief and analyses Rina's skin colour to convince himself that she is not a *munhu.* In her features he perceives a particular delicacy which he says is a "stamp of race as well as beauty." Even the name Rina, he argues, is not *chinhu* or a native name. When the Chief disputes this evidence, Marston makes him swear. The Chief

[66] Charles Bullock, *Rina…* 75.

swears by his father, the Pool, his totem *Dziva;* by his sister and by Gorongo, the spirit of his tribe.[67]

In his reaction to Rina's presence among Africans, Marston exhibits the horror that Chennells says exists in white people when they think of interracial relationships.[68] They exhibit a "mysterious racial antipathy [which is] in some way connected with an instinctive abhorrence of miscegenation…peculiar to men of Teutonic stock."[69] Indeed, Marston's reaction is instinctively racist:

> "With no self-conscious art she [Rina] had glided across that granite rock with the grace of a lovely ballet dancer I had seen in London long ago. But how came she among these barbarians, this daughter of Terpischore? She was born to dance, and not in the coarse revelling of these Africans…I wondered if she were happy in the thought of her coming marriage, distant though it might be, to that great black Chief. I could not help feeling that such a union would be a desecration—there was something repulsive in the thought of it. And yet he had sworn by all that he held most sacred—and most dangerous—that she was not white.[70]

In his discussion with another white man, Jones, whom the locals have nicknamed *Chidakwa* because he drinks too much, Marston discovers, to his further horror, that Jones is married to a black woman. Chidakwa had even to go through baptism of fire to be among the chosen few people to be allowed to marry that particular woman, one of a select race, "a special

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[67] *Ibid* 75-76.
[68] A.J. Chennells, "Settler Myths…" 379.
[69] H. Marshall Hole, *The Passing of the Black Kings* (London: Philip Allan, 1932) 306.

sort of breed."[71] Marston, in his righteous indignation, considers the matter to be a degradation for Jones. Jones himself, though living with a black woman, and despite having a daughter from this union, still regards black people as a barbaric lot. He believes that he lost his dignity in his servant's view when he decided to marry the woman. The servant defected to Marston. Jones had wanted to teach him "the dignity of labour," he says.[72]

Marston passes judgement on Jones, proclaiming that it was his own fault to get into his situation. He has no time for "gentlemen who indulge in miscegenation [and to put it plainly, Marston continues], I can't bring myself to associate on friendly terms with white men who live with Native women." In the ensuing debate, Marston's racism gets clarified. He insists that he will not have any dealings with "women not of pure European blood. Our race is European wherever born," he declares. His definition of European includes Jews whom he considers to be like Europeans. This argument and his insistence on condemning miscegenation, prepares the reader for his still born relationship with Rina. From his first encounter with her, he is attracted to her, as he is thinking that she is a white woman among blacks. It appears that Bullock wants to highlight the fact that, sometimes, issues of the heart do cut across skin colour. Bullock goes beyond mere hysteria to demonstrate that cross-racial marriages are common. He has engaged Jones's informed debate on the subject to show how Jews have married Arabs, and how the European race, itself, is not that pure.

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[70] C. Bullock, *Rina…* 76.
[71] *Ibid* 89.

In spite of Jones' logical argument, Marston repeats that he cannot condone miscegenation with negro women and insists that a sheep cannot mate with a goat. Jones tries to show him that goats and sheep are not of the same species, while all humans are members of the Homo sapiens, differentiated only by skin colour and pigmentation. The two carry out a very interesting debate, in which Jones points out that Marston could be floored "in mental gymnastics" with a native, because they possess the same mental faculties as white people. When Marston asks why, if that be the case, the natives "are still living in a state of barbarism," Jones counters by asking a very pertinent question: "And, by the way, why is it that you have left your much-to-be admired civilization?"[73] Nevertheless, Marston remains adamant that "hybridization is a crime against posterity…that blacks and whites are two differing breeds which must never unite."[74]

Up to this point, it looks as if Jones holds liberal views about inter-marriages between whites and blacks. When Marston shouts in a temper that if he does not mind it, he should let his sister marry one of the black men, Jones takes exception to this and stands up ready to physically assault Marston.[75] This is an example of "the very real hysteria that was aroused in settlers at any suggestion that an African man had made sexual overtures to a white woman."[76] Later, Jones undoes all his hitherto seemingly cogent arguments by agreeing with Marston that

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[72] *Ibid* 91-92.
[73] C. Bullock, *Rina…* 96.
[74] *Ibid* 96.
[75] *Ibid* 97.

miscegenation is evil and admitting that he continues to live in marriage with a black woman for the sake of his half-caste daughter. This deplorable situation in which he finds himself is responsible for his degeneration into drink, into a *Chidakwa*, he says. Later, Marston tells Rina that while "a white man may degrade himself by taking a black woman…it is a crime for a black man even to think in that way of a white woman." So he assures her that Harahara would have to "give up even the thought of you" as his wife.[77] Instead of being sceptical about Rina's race, considering that the Chief has solemnly sworn that she is not a white woman, his prejudice and contempt for her potential union with the Chief, lead Marston to believe his own judgement about her race.
He, therefore, sets out to rescue her from the black Chief, and in the process, he ruins her life irretrievably.

Rina, herself, is in a predicament, and needs to run away from the WaRemba people. The reason is that, besides not wanting to marry Harahara, she is being accused of being a witch, responsible for the death of one of Chief Harahara's wife and child. She, too, is drawn to Marston, evidently because of his colour that looks more like hers. She comes to Masitoni (as she calls him) for refuge and with a request that he should take her away from this place, or she will have to commit suicide, rather than marry Harahara or face witchcraft accusations from his jealous and superstitious people. These accusations will mean certain death at their hands. Instead of just helping her escape, Marston falls in love with her,

[76] A.J. Chennells, "Settler Myths…" 379.
[77] C. Bullock, Rina… 164.

only to drop her after discovering that her mother was not white but a *munhu.*

Although he suffers from conflicting emotions over the issue, Marston fails to follow the logical course of action.[78] The problem he faces is similar to the one faced by Obi Okonkwo and Clara, an Osu, in Chinua Achebe's No Longer At Ease, and like Obi, he fails to break with tradition, and marry the girl whom he loves. Rina dies physically, while he, Marston, dies spiritually. In the case of Adrian, his godson, who is willing to marry Helen, it is Helen who refuses to break with the tradition and marry Adrian. She prefers to be a Nun. According to Marston, therefore, this story is published as a way of helping other people in future, so that they may be able to avoid such suffering.

Bullock explores the issue of miscegenation in a thorough, most heart-breaking manner. Finally, he indicts the South African racist tradition for the problem faced by Marston, Helen and Adrian. The problems occasioned by the prohibition of miscegenation remained unresolved institutionally and constitutionally in African countries until the countries gained their political freedom and independence. Only then were the people free to marry anyone they chose, without being ostracised by their societies. Although both Marston and Adrian live in Rhodesia and Helen in England, they still feel bound by their white traditions.

[78] C. Bullock, Rina… 180.

Further Exploration of the Theme of Miscegenation

Three other novels deal with the theme of miscegenation. In two of them, white men marry black African women and remain in Africa permanently, since they no longer fit into their societies. They are examples of "white kaffirs," the outcasts, who choose to live in Africa because they can no longer be accepted in their home countries. In the third novel, there is no marriage, just a flitting love affair, which plays emotional havoc in both the black and white communities where the characters find themselves.

Kathaleen Stevens Rukavina explores this theme of miscegenation in her biography of Chirupula Stephenson who calls himself the "jungle pathfinder," because he is one of the first white men to settle in Northern Rhodesia under Cecil John Rhodes's British South Africa Company.[79]

Jungle Pathfinder traces the life of John Edward Stephenson, alias Chirupula, as he works for Rhodes's BSAC in the telegraph office. Later, he and another man called Jones, open up Northern Rhodesia to Company rule. Though the novel is set in Northern Rhodesia, it has been considered thematically relevant to this discussion, since it is set at a time when Northern and Southern Rhodesia are under Cecil John Rhodes's company. The author is Rhodesian.

[79] Kathaleen Stevens Rukavina, *Jungle Pathfinder: The Biography of Chirupula Stephenson* (|London: Huthcinson & Co., 1951).

Of interest to this discussion is how Chirupula acquires his two African wives. He has a girlfriend called Hannah back home in England. Owing to his prolonged absence from her, "he couldn't remember Hannah any more, not even recall her features. Somewhere along the way her vision had finally faded. He tried to think of other girls—Ida—Esther—of girls with fair hair, pink cheeks, white lace at their throats. But they were so remote, left far behind in another world, while here…Loti!"[80]

Loti is the young orphaned fourteen to fifteen year old Ngoni girl whom he "rescues" from an impending tribal custom of the Yao people, who plan to offer her to "the village ruffians at their beer drink." Tambo, his servant cannot save Loti because he already has two wives. Thus, it is left to the *Bwana* to rescue her—which he does innocently enough—except that her foster father demands ten shillings for this "rescue," a sum usually paid as dowry to parents of a girl getting married. That effectively makes Stephenson the husband of young Loti. By and by he fails to resist her beauty. Later on, Chirupula Stephenson is given another wife, Princess Mwape Chiwali. Princess Chiwali's father, is a Priest-King of the Lala people. While Chirupula lives among these people, he expresses a wish to learn their language, Uwulala. King Chiwali thinks there is no better way to learn it than by marrying his own daughter, who will teach him the language. Since Loti approves her husband's acquisition of a second wife, Chirupula ends up with two wives. It is the Lala people who re-name him Chirupula, which means "the smiter" in their language.

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[80] *Ibid* 55.

Stephenson's relationship with Loti and Mwape is not one of a man and concubines, which many of his white colleagues keep. He is emotionally involved, he loves them and misses them when they are not with him. For example, when he is forced to leave Loti at her foster parents' home, he misses her desperately. He has to leave Loti's home area because of employment duties, but cannot take her along because she is expecting their first baby (whom he calls "Loti's child). The narrator explains how he feels: "So implanted had Loti become in Stephenson's mind that he desisted, after one or two unsatisfactory adventures, from anything to do with the local girls…She filled his thoughts of an evening until he realised that peace of mind would not be his until Loti was with him once more."[81]

Stephenson pays dearly for his marriages socially. Fellow white people ostracise him to the point where he is sidelined in the next promotion. Instead, a man who is two and half years his junior, is promoted over him to become District Commissioner, while he remains Assistant District Commissioner. He is forced to resign from the BSAC since he cannot win back his promotion.[82] His children, being coloured, are segregated against. Evidently, the other white people despise Chirupula, a "white kaffir."

Stephenson himself becomes Africanised. He learns the local language and culture from his wives, especially from Mwape. He starts teaching them the alphabet and the English language, and ends up as their pupil.

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[81] Rukavina, _Jungle Pathfinder…_ 61.
[82] _Ibid_ 123-127.

He believes that he has very little to teach them, but very much to learn from them.[83] He masters the Lala-Lamba language so well that, in real life, he is acknowledged by A.C. Madan, in his 1908 publication of Lala-Lamba Handbook, as having helped that author with his "notes and collections" on grammar and vocabulary of that language.

Here is one white man who, at twenty-four years of age, comes into Africa, and willingly decides to let himself be assimilated by her. He now looks at the Company rule with critical eyes. For instance, he argues with Coryndon, his co-worker, against the increase of taxation for African men. He loses the argument, however, because Coryndon believes in the theory expounded by Rhodes, of letting taxation be the gentle stimulant for Africans to seek employment. In their argument, Coryndon believes that, "The African had yet to acquire the habit of steady employment…. Taxation…would 'enforce the habit….'"[84] Ironically, it is Stephenson, who, as Native Commissioner earlier, introduces taxation initially in Lalaland. At that time he considered it to be one of the three mainstays of civilisation—employment, taxes and English law.[85] Africans disregard his ideas because they do not like working for the white men anyway. As he gets more and more Africanised, Stephenson argues against an increase in taxation. While fellow white people shun him, he, in turn, shuns their company. He feels that he no longer belongs to their culture. He, therefore, creates his own kingdom that he calls Chiwefwe, where he develops a large orchard. His aim is to market the fruit to the white

[83] Rukavina, Jungle Pathfinder 142.
[84] Ibid 119-120.
[85] Ibid 93.

community growing around the town of Broken Hill, but the white community ostracise him.

The white people consider Chirupula very strange in that he chooses to remain "isolated from European affairs for nearly twenty-seven years…."[86] Rukavina confirms Chirupula's assimilation into the African world in two incidents. The first one is Loti's question: "Why should Alpha's son be white at Irumi?"[87] Alpha is their son who now has his own son. Chirupula muses later,

> " Why indeed should Alpha's son be pale skinned in his own country? Let him be black as the ebony which soared in his forest, as black as coal in the bowels of his earth, for that was Africa's law. White into black. Yellow into black. Brown into black…Let Alpha's son be black. Colour was not of immediate moment. The need between black man and white was not to meet in the flesh, but rather in the spirit, seeking the same goal—'good will towards all men' and with that joint aim the physical merging of the two coming, when it may, would find fulfilment."[88]

The second incident is when his visiting white pen pal, Ardelle, exclaims to him, "You speak like a Lala!" Chirupula replies, " I *am* a Lala!" The narrator then comments, "Thus, it was before an English woman, blood of his blood, Chirupula knew his metamorphosis is to be complete. Strange that it should have been she, and not Loti or Mwape, before whom he

[86] *Ibid* 229.
[87] *Ibid* 245.
[88] *Ibid* 248.

claimed kinship with the bush, before whom he knew himself to be a son of Africa."[89] Ardelle, who cherishes hopes of a love relationship with Chirupula, ends up committing suicide.

Like Rukavina, Gertrude Millin's novel, *The Burning Man*,[90] deals with white men who marry blacks. There is Coenraad, a Dutch, who has three African wives: a Hottentot, a Xosa and another one called Elizabeth. There is also "the famous giant," de Buys, who has a "harem of black women [whom] he drags about…."[91] A third one, a missionary called Johannes, marries a slave girl from Madagascar about whom he writes to his Directors in London:

> You will be surprised when I inform you that I am, after having been a widower fourteen years, remarried with a native of this country, whose mother comes from Madagascar. I hope that in this step I have consulted and followed the will of God, and that his alliance will not prove a stumbling-block to me in my missionary work, my present wife being fully resolved to accompany me wherever it shall please God to send me.[92]

Millin's story deals with race in a very effective way. As in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing,* there is no authorial intrusion. The characters debate issues, trying to convince each other on what is correct emotionally, morally, religiously, politically, culturally, racially and economically. This is one of the best novels in terms of its focus on

[89] *Ibid* 216.
[90] Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The Burning Man* (London, Melbourne, Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd., 1952).
[91] *Ibid* 259.
[92] G. Millin, *The Burning Man* 285.

racial issues. The Dutch are the protagonists. They marry locals with no qualms, for instance, Coenraad and James Rad, a British under Dutch influence. Johannes, the missionary, is the "burning man," burning with desire for the beautiful young, local girls, yet unable to fulfil his desire because of his religious calling. Hence, he calls it "the struggle for his soul renewed between God and Satan."[93]

The issue of intermarriage, therefore, is given prominence in Rhodesian literature in different ways. Rukavina and Millin explore the lives of white men who marry African women, and the fate of their children, who are not comfortably accepted in either the white, or the black communities. Chirupula's children are segregated against by the white community. Johannes, in Millin's novel, wants to go to England in order to run away from the local community's segregation. He hopes things are better in England: "My Hottentots. My children. My Hottentots will never get justice in this land, and I could wish myself to lay their case before the English Government. Perhaps through the influence of Lady Anne Barnard…my children, also, will never, because of their skins and their maligned parent, get justice, education, fruitful work in the land of their birth."[94]

As it turns out, one of Johannes's sons does not fare well abroad. Although he and his brother are sent to England for education, "they could not benefit from their education and were returned to South Africa." In his old age, Johannes, Jr. wanders north "like other half

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[93] Ibid 185.
[94] G. Millin, The Burning Man 305.

breeds," and is killed by Hottentots.[95] Thus, he is practically rejected by both the white race and the black race.

Chirupula's solution to this problem of future security for his children is to propose to them a scheme to enter into a family Chiwefwe Citrus fruit business as equal partners. But they turn down the proposal. Some of the children become suspicious of his motives, since he is a white man just like those who segregate against them. They cannot even trust their own father because of the ill-treatment they receive at the hands of other whites.[96] Hence, their fate remains open and indefinite, with the narrator suggesting, in typical racist fashion, that the children's inclination to be lazy is inherited from their African side:

> On the one hand white prejudice had intimidated them and aroused their suspicions; while on the other, an even stronger deterrent held them back, the African inertia heavy in their background, and which so easily germinated the thought: "Today has taken care of me, so why not tomorrow too?" Despite its thousand hazards, the bush has and still is permeated with the idea of easy living. The sun, the equable climate, the food devoid of many essential energy-building qualities all play a part in creating a happy-go-lucky lethargy—the spirit enhanced by the sense of security engendered by the communal life of the village life. While the individual cannot be blamed for his inheritance of lazy expectations, the attitude, not only of past but current propagation, raises a very real obstacle before the white man's efforts to help the African to improve his standard of living.[97]

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[95] *Ibid* 306.
[96] *Ibid* 222-224.
[97] G. Millin, *The Burning Man* 223.

It is not clear why the narrator attributes the reluctance of Chirupula's children to form a family co-operative, to their African half, and how that reluctance is attributable to their laziness which is also said to emanate from their African half. The reader can only sense a general racist attitude permeating these comments.

In Millin, the debate on the problems of intermarriage is very well highlighted. de Mist and Janssens argue,

> How are we to differentiate between the acts that have created this half-breed race and the preaching by Van der Kemp and Read of marriage between black and white as expressing the will of God: which follows, as I understand, Read's own infatuation with a Hottentot girl? The first seems to arouse little indignation; the second, a national jury: yet the results are alike.[98]

de Mist then concludes their discussion with a statement that shows the mixture of people that has now become their new society in this part of Africa: "I love this country, with its Kaffirs and Hottentots and giants; its mixed nations and mixed breeds and infatuated missionaries and infuriated Boers." Then to Janssens he says, "Use your own judgement when you go through the country next month, about where we are to move Van der Kemp and his Hottentots. As we need Fort Frederick for

[98] *Ibid* 259.

our own soldiers, it would be well to keep the missionaries and their black-white preaching a reasonable distance from them."[99]

These statements indicate the inevitability of mixed marriages when two groups of people meet. In many cases, it is the white man who is absorbed into the majority culture, as in the case of Chirupula and Dr. Van der Kemp, who is derogatorily said to be "sinking to [the Hottentot's] level in habits of negligence and filth…instead of raising [them]."[100]

In another novel, *Through the Zulu Country,* Mitford describes one white man in the land of Cetywayo, John Dunn, who becomes one of the Chiefs of Zululand after Cetywayo's defeat and imprisonment. He is said to have become a "regular Zulu." He is a polygamist, having married many African women.[101] Again, it is he who gets Africanised, preferring to make Zululand his permanent home.

Acculturation

Ronald Leavis[102] explores a different aspect of this theme of miscegenation. He describes a young African woman, Denise, who studies at a university in England, and who dates a white Canadian boyfriend. Upon her return to Africa, she fails to fit into her society. She cannot fit in because she has been acculturated. She can no longer relate

[99] G. Millin, The Burning Man 260.
[100] Ibid 267.
[101] Betram Mitford, *Through the Zulu Country, Its Battlefields and its People* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1883; new edition, Durban: T.W. Griggs & Co., 1975) 199-201.
[102] Ronald Leavis, Hippodile (London, Toronto, Melborne: Heinemann, 1961).

to the local teacher, Sadziwa, who wants to marry her. Denise can only relate to another white man, a salesman who brings grocery and other supplies to her father's shop in the village. It is with this salesman, Steve Hynde, that she prefers to carry on an informal intimate relationship, till she eventually returns to England. Denise is the daughter of Mr. Ncube, a shop owner in rural Rhodesia. He is one of those families Weinrich would label, the African elite.[103]

In a discussion between Hynde and Sadziwa, the race issue is equated to a football game that assumes the proportions of a mini war. The beaten side always waits for revenge. In the absence of a permanent solution to the issue, Steve Hynde offers only a metaphor: "It is two pots of paint, one black and one white. You pour them on the ground, near to each other. At first they just touch at the edges and then mix there. But gradually, if you leave them to flow together, it is hard to tell which is which." This mixture takes a long time to happen.[104] The metaphor has connotations on the results of sexual relations between black and white. The union between the two races would produce children who are of neither colour, thereby solving the race problem.

Having studied in England, it is Denise who suffers most from the new cultural contact. She now has a fixation, and seems to think that she should be white or should behave as a white, in order to be accepted by

[103] A.K.H. Weinrich, _Black and White Elites in Rural Rhodesia_ (Rowman and Littlefield: Manchester Unviersity Press, 1973). Weinrich interviewed 50 European and 20 African elites on various subjects including race relationships with each other. Ncube would have fitted into this group as a shop owner who is enlightened and wealthy enough to afford to send his daughter to England to study. She comes back with a Doctorate in Anthropology, but seems to have lost her Africanness.
[104] Ronald Leavis, _Hippodile_ 24.

and be equal to people of that colour. She wants to escape her blackness. She says that she feels cornered in her work as a researcher in anthropology "by a primitive people."[105] In addition, she now finds that Sadziwa's breath "stank as a garden boy's and it nauseated her."[106] The reader does not know the state of Sadziwa's mouth, but this is an insult to a man who genuinely hopes to marry Denise, unless she chooses to "sacrifice [herself] on the alter of miscegenation" by marrying a white man.

In the novel, *Hippodile,* Ronald Leavis makes it clear that a love relationship between black and white is possible, though hazardous in Central Africa, where his story is set. Such relationships are hazardous because they are not tolerated by both racial communities. Although Steve Hynde continues to help Denise,[107] he does so while consciously debating the issue of her blackness, an act that arouses hostility between them.

The theme of Leavis's novel, therefore, is racial and cultural conflict centred on the question of miscegenation as opposed to the political question. To buttress this view, the author's form complements his content. For example, the moment Steve Hynde gets involved with Denise, he experiences several bouts of misfortune. Nature herself appears to disapprove of Steve's intimate friendship with Denise.

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[105] *Ibid* 125.
[106] *Ibid* 138.

[107] Kath Hays, Hynde's employer's secretary thinks he helps her, not only because her father is his good customer, but also because, as he admits, he admires her… "she is very clever." To this comment,

The first misfortune is experienced when Hynde and Durden, his pilot, go to deliver supplies to Masterson, their customer who lives in the interior that is inaccessible by road. Their plane crashes before reaching its destination and Durden dies from snakebite sustained while walking to look for help.[108] Hynde is devastated by this misfortune.

The second misfortune is when Timothy, Hynde's African assistant, is trampled and gored to death by a cow elephant trying to protect its calf. The whole herd of elephant is disturbed by Steve Hynde's attempts to drive through its midst. Timothy panics, bolts out of the car, and meets his death painfully.

The third misfortune is when Jansen, the Johannesburg crook or *tsotsi,* looks for Hynde in order to rob him of money or to do him some kind of harm. All these misfortunes happen coincidentally around the time that Hynde and Denise have befriended each other. That is why his cook and house keeper, Mulenga, buys *muti,* a good luck charm, to try and stave off this stream of bad luck.[109] Finally, Denise has to leave for London, and in the words of Kath, Holtzberger's secretary (Holtzberger is Hynde's employer), "…You can see she doesn't fit in here anymore, poor thing. She was born fifty years before her time."[110]

It can be noticed that in all novels dealing with inter-racial, intimate relationships, it is the case of black women getting involved with white

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Kathy adds her own with a racial twist… "and very beautiful too for a native, don't you think so?" (*Hippodile,* 246).
[108] Leavis, *Hippodile* 150-157.
[109] Leavis, *Hippodile* 269-270.

men, and not vice versa. Historically, it was totally unacceptable to have black men get involved in love affairs with white women. This attitude spills over into fiction. Doris Lessing attempts this theme in The Grass is Singing, and the event results in the death of the woman and the inevitable jail term, if not execution, of the black "boy" Moses.

PURE ADVENTURE IN THE RHODESIAN NOVEL

One of the prominent reasons for Europeans coming to Africa is, inevitably, adventure—the thrill of exploring unknown lands and charting new paths, where none existed for Europeans before. This reason is cited by characters in almost all the novels discussed in this thesis. For example, the narrator in *Through the Zulu Country* writes, "Young Britain going out to try its luck in fresh woods and pastures new, crowded out of the old country perhaps, or in search of a more adventurous life. Many, of course, have friends seeing them off, generally of more woeful appearance than the intending migrant."[111]

The ugliness and gloom of the English weather is another prominent reason for people to leave England for the new African lands whose weather is sunny and pleasant during most of the year. In spite of excessive heat in the Rhodesian summer months of October and November before the rain falls, and the drudgery of the rainy season itself, it is still better for the characters in the novels to live in Rhodesia

[110] Leavis, *Hippodile* 246-247.

than in Britain. The narrator, in Angus Shaw's *Kandaya…,* considers weather as one of the major reasons for colonisation. He says, "I always reckoned the historians underestimated the temperate climate as a reason so many of us, about a quarter of a million in all, settled here" in Rhodesia.[112]

The same emphasis on weather appears in Betram Mitford's *Through the Zulu Country,* where the English weather is considered too wet and gloomy: "Rain, rain—nothing but rain, skies dank and misty, swarthed in one vast curtain of yellowish grey; not a break anywhere, gloom and dampness all-prevailing…So goodbye, Old England, for we have looked our last upon you, and now the sunny South!"[113]

In another novel, *Biffel the Trek Ox,* contrast is made between the weather in Southern Rhodesia and that of Northern Rhodesia. The narrator says, "It is not likely that Northern Rhodesia will ever become so important a part of our great Empire as other places in South[ern] Africa…. Northern Rhodesia has fertile soil and good pasture land, but the climate is so hot that only the highland regions can ever form suitable places of abode for white men."[114] That is why most of the white people go to Southern Rhodesia in search of adventure and settlement. The weather is excellent.

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[111] Betram Mitford,, *Through the Zulu Country* 2.
[112] Angus Shaw, *Kandaya* 49.
[113] Betram Mitford, *Through the Zulu Country…* 1; 14.
[114] Stanley Portal Hyatt, *Biffel, A trek Ox* 181; see also 163; 171.

Some Rhodesian novelists write about people who leave Britain to settle in Rhodesia or South Africa, while others write about tourists in Southern Africa. An example of the latter is Betram Mitford, whose narrator is a tourist who travels through the Zulu country, just to see it. He tours the areas where the Anglo-Boer wars took place, trekking from place to place, talking to the Africans he meets, eating their food and enjoying their hospitality. He actually visits Cetywayo, the deposed and jailed former Zulu king, whose people still ask for his return and reinstatement as king. In his descriptions, the narrator displays the usual prejudice against Africans, such as when he notes what he calls, the native mind, which is "deficient…in respect of punctuality."[115] Africans are also regarded as a "thieving, filthy, impudent, worthless set of vagabonds, a pest to their unfortunate neighbourhoods, never reliable and always discontented, spending all their earnings in drink when they do condescend to work."[116] There are many such similar descriptions of the local people, page after page. Yet they do shelter him, feed him and discuss their historical past with him. They give him eyewitness accounts of battles fought with the British or the Boers, and they direct him to graves of his fallen countrymen.

The tourist comments on what he sees. For instance, he defends John Dunn's chieftainship and polygamous life style, pointing out that for "a man who has led a wild, roving life finding the position of chief among a brave and superior race like the Zulus, [may] not be unworthy of his ambition. His domestic relations are entirely his own concern; he lives in

[115] B. Mitford, *Through the Zulu Country* 62.
[116] Mitford, *Through the Zulu Country…* 201.

Zululand, not in European society; he does not bring his wives with him when he visits the colony [of South Africa], nor on these occasions can anyone cite a single instance of his acting in a way unbecoming the usages of civilised society."[117] Evidently, John Dunn is another Stephenson Chirupula.

The narrator's prejudiced remarks about Africans reflect the thinking of the time in which he is writing. This is the time when black people were regarded as savages, no matter how humane; a view consistent with the Englishmen's concept of Africans, which tended to place the Negro among the beasts.[118] When the Narrator is told that Zulus did not believe in torturing their prisoners of war, preferring to kill all the vanquished, as soldiers would do, he still calls the Zulus savages and barbarians.[119] However, sometimes he recognises excellence in the African, especially if that African is a Zulu. A good example of this is where he describes the Zulu handshake as opposed to the Boer one: "The Zulu has a mode of shaking hands peculiar to himself; it is not like the English way, but a good honest grip for all that. His fingers and thump are kept quite rigid, but he lays hold of your hand and shakes it with a will; very different to the dab of a flabby paw which the Boer favours you, leaving a sensation on your palm, of contact with a fish or a raw leg of mutton."[120]

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[117] *Ibid* 200-201.
[118] Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden*, 14.
[119] Mitford, *Through the Zulu Country* 95; 97; 99.
[120] *Ibid* 217.

One other interesting observation that this tourist makes is how the Zulu is so ready to "forgive and forget." He comments about that characteristic, by saying,

> One fine quality which Zulus possess is a readiness to forgive and forget. They bear no malice, and, considering that, whether rightly or wrongly, we invaded their country, slaughtered thousands of their best warriors, burnt their kraals, carried off their king and reduced them—the most powerful nation in Southern Africa—to the condition of a conquered race, it is surprising how little resentment is entertained towards us. They say it was all the "fortune of war, …it is past and there's an end of it," and they welcome the Englishman wherever he goes with the same cheerful and hearty greeting.[121]

All these, and many more, are observations made by a tourist who is at leisure, and is enjoying the sights and sounds of another country. At the end, the narrator leaves, thoroughly contented with his adventurous tour of Zululand, and having spent some time with the captive, Cetywayo and listened to his pleas for release.

Hurd, Osmond and Tingay write books that can best be described as thrillers.[122] *Send Him Victorious* and *Night of the Rukh* fit in the thriller category because events described make one very tense. They keep the reader in intense anticipation right up to the end. *Send Him Victorious* describes three conspirators who attempt a coup in Britain. The king is kidnapped, locked in a trunk, and declared dead in a plane crush, because

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[121] Mitford, *Through the Zulu Country* 313.

[122] Douglas Hurd & Andrew Osmond, *Send Him Victorious* (London: Collins, 1968). Paul Tingay, *Night of the Rukh* (Salisbury [Harare]: Graham Publishing, 1975).

of the Rhodesian question which centres on whether or not to send troops to Rhodesia to quell the UDI. *Night of the Rukh,* on the other hand, describes a Rhodesian mercenary whose assignment, full of mystery, danger and adventure, involves the Chinese, the Russians, the Americans and the British. The Chinese and Russians want to blow up the Americans and the British over a plan to invade Rhodesia. Dunne, the Rhodesian mercenary, is supposed to stave off this invasion somehow. Both novels are gripping tales, and while, in *The Night of the Rukh,* the Russian-Chinese connection as a plot is not developed to its full potential, it reminds one of the same Russian-Rhodesian guerrilla connections in Peter Rimmer's *Cry of the Fish Eagle.*

The Rhodesian conflict inspires these three authors in a different direction. Instead of writing regular narratives, they write movie-style thrillers about it, complete with daring-out-of-the-ordinary narrow escapes from danger, and stunts. The spirit of adventure is, thus, epitomised in these novels where it is thoroughly dramatised.

FEELING AT HOME IN RHODESIA AND A TRIBUTE TO THE TREK OX

There are some books where characters feel very tranquil, satisfied, contented and at peace with the world around them in Rhodesia—none of the usual black-white conflicts intruding into their lives. One feels that these authors write in order to celebrate the goodness of life. Curiously, in such books, namely, *The Rhodesian Rancher,* [123] *Life on the Farm,*[124]

[123] Wilfrid Robertson, *The Rhodesian Rancher* (London & Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Ltd., 1935).

and in *Biffel, A Trek Ox*,[125] the reader recognises that the tranquillity is only possible with the narrators' feet on the ground, so to speak. At the beginning of Robertson's novel, *The Rhodesian Rancher,* the author describes the idea of having a solid foundation for his ranching activities. He does so in an artistic form, thereby highlighting the importance of land: "To every picture there is a background, to every play a stage. The background to my many years of ranching life in Rhodesia was the land itself, the twenty-seven square miles of virgin bush, unaltered by man since the dawn of time."[126] In a paragraph, the Rancher highlights the indispensable nature of land, and its abundance to him. In one breath he contradicts himself by describing such land as "virgin bush, unaltered by man since the dawn of time," then following that with an acknowledgement of the existence of natives, "…here and there, timorously holding their own in the midst of nature's realm, were the tiny native villages and their surrounding patches of cultivated land."[127] By now, the reader is familiar with similar contradictory statements, for example, in *Waters of Madness,* where Piers de Kuiper claims that the Ba-Rapuza territory is empty. As mentioned earlier, this is discourse intended for a people trying to forcibly occupy space while simultaneously displacing its former occupiers.

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[124] A Young Rhodesian Farmer, *Life on the Farm, 1929-1933* (Bulawayo & Salisbury [Harare]: Rhodesian Commercial Printers, 1975.
[125] Stanley Portal Hyatt, *Biffel, A Trek Ox* (London: Andrew Melrose Ltd., 1909).
[126] Wilfrid Robertson, *The Rhodesian Rancher* 3.
[127] *Ibid* 3.

Such statements are made wherever one group of people wants to justify its occupation of another's land. A good example of that in 2001 can be cited in the case between the Israelis and the Palestinians.[128]

The Rancher-cum-farmer feels at home in Rhodesia, as indicated by the content of his story. He describes his daily activities on the ranch, such as his initial settlement in Rhodesia. This includes information on how one finds water to provide for oneself, one’s workers and one’s animals; how to guard against wild fires; how to trade; how to build one’s first brick house; the first and subsequent rainy seasons; the work that follows the rainy seasons; the dry season; the development and management of beef cattle; the leisure time in the dry season spent touring the country and what one encounters during these tours. The Rancher also describes his hosts and hostesses, the African people, with whom he trades. Their enduring culture is described, in spite of his insistence on calling the Africans savages.

Inadvertently, the Rancher acknowledges the African social and cultural practices, which are evident in their daily chores as described by him. Women’s work consists of sweeping, collecting water and firewood, cooking, stumping and grinding grain. The men have their chores: hunting, stitching together treated skins into garments, pottery, making cloth from the bark of the baobab tree, drum making, black smithing, boat

[128] Monirah el-Ghayaty, "Bibi Back?" *The Egyptian Gazette* (June 24, 2001). In his article, el-Ghayaty quotes Benjamin Natan Yahu who asserts that "when the Jews invaded Palestine it was uninhabited! The land was empty!" Earlier, in 1948, Golda Meir had uttered the same statement, saying, "the Palestinians don't exist." Monirah el-Ghayaty then comments, "I think either the Palestinians were transparent, or Bibi suffers from hereditary blindness! Did we go to war to fight along with ghosts? And I can show him stamps from the nation of Palestine before '48. Proving that all the structures were in place, including the Post Office [sic]."

making and so on. For amusement and entertainment, there is music to the accompaniment of the mbira, xylophone and drum. There is also draughts playing, and orature. In other words, the Rancher witnesses, at close quarters, the way Africans live. He also learns their philosophy, as in the case of the crocodiles in the pool which the Chief tells him not shoot: "You slay a few and go on your way; but what of the others?…[129]

The Rancher witnesses the honesty of Africans before the pollution of mixed cultures invades them. Thus, he comments: "The raw native is wonderfully honest and trusting; it is a sad fact that only when he becomes 'civilised' and sophisticated does he lose his primitive decency."[130] To illustrate this honesty in Africans, he says that although his first huts on the ranch had no doors and nothing was locked, he could go away for days only to return and find all his property intact. "Serious theft, cheating over deals with his fellows, and trying to pass bad money were vices of those who had worked in the towns or on big mines, and not among the heathen of the bush."[131]

The reader witnesses the values of reciprocity that African children are taught. When the Rancher gives two children an empty tin of condensed milk, which they lick dry, they bring him three bananas as a return gift, a demonstration of their high life values and good manners—one good turn deserves another.[132]

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[129] W. Robertson, *The Rhodesian Rancher* 145.
[130] *Ibid* 44.
[131] W. Robertson, *The Rhodesian Rancher* 44.
[132] *Ibid* 133-134.

Because of the thinking prevailing during the author's generation which tended to dictate on how black people are to be regarded, the Rancher denigrates this African custom of reciprocity. He does not recognise it as evidence of an advanced state of civilisation. He also denounces African music by saying, “To a native, repetition is bliss, and with it he dreamily soothes his savage mind.”[133] He cynically misinterprets the reason for the harmony and cheerfulness that exists between husband and wife, by saying that an African husband would not ill-treat his wife because she is his property of considerable value. “To ill-treat her would be to injure his own property….”[134] When he gives meat to an old grandmother, she thanks him by dancing and ululating, which he describes in the most denigrating language:

> With an inarticulate cry of joy she clasped the gory chunk to her withered breasts, and then laid it carefully on the ground. Rising to her feet she began to dance, a weird and horrible sight, while from her shrivelled lips issued earsplitting squeals and yelps. Backwards and forwards she ran, posturing, grimacing, and waving her bony arms. Villagers and carriers gathered round, attracted by the noise, watching the macabre dance of an animated death. Finally, the old witch collapsed on the ground from exhaustion, and clasped her meat again. She was helped up and led away by a couple of the younger village women.[135]

The exemplary episodes show the Rancher's racist attitude towards his hosts and hostesses. They, in turn, avail to him an abundance of food and

[133] _Ibid_ 138.
[134] _Ibid_ 136-137.
[135] _Ibid_ 135.

good hospitality: "for there was unlimited meat in camp, plenty of native produce and any amount of mouth-watering wild honey to be had…it was good stuff, that wild honey, and a valuable addition to my own commissariat…."[136]

What is difficult to understand is why Africans go out of their way to entertain this stranger; this white man who just happens to come to them. Consider the moment of his arrival in one village: "Upon my abrupt appearance [into the village], the menfolk sprang to their feet, while the women paused in their evening tasks to look at the strange apparition."[137] Instead of politely requesting to camp in their homestead, the Rancher simply passes through the village to "a big shady tree just beyond its borders." He commands his African carriers to make camp, with no permission given him by anyone to camp in the village. An African could not dare do that in the middle of Sussex, or on the banks of the Thames River, without talking to the people around, and remain safe, now or then. The Rancher then reclines in his deck-chair to wait for the next move from these villagers. His brazen manner, far from being a sign of civility, smacks of savagery.

That next move is what puzzles the reader most: "From the corner of my eye I saw the village Chief give instructions. Three or four women picked up their great earthenware pots, balanced them on their heads, an [sic] started off to fetch a supply of water for my party; while some men were dispatched for firewood. Children dived into huts in search of eggs;

[136] W. Robertson, *The Rhodesian Rancher* 139.
[137] *Ibid* 129.

others tried to catch a couple of athletic and wild-squawking fowls; and an elderly dame brought a bowl of meal to the headman. Presently, the old Chief advanced to where I sat, an escort following behind bearing the customary gifts."[138] In the next village, too, "Old Zuzandani the headman, rose to his feet and came forward to greet me, calling over his shoulder to his people to fetch wood and water, and bring the usual Chief's present."[139]

Perhaps the reason why these Africans jump up to fetch water and carry firewood for the white man is that there have been many like him before, and so, they are used to looking up to them automatically as "Baas." That is why it is appropriate to say that the Rancher is "at home in Rhodesia!"

The other incident of strange behaviour by an African, is that of Chimuti, the Rancher's trusted servant, appropriately named, because he is literally used as a whip to chastise and insult other Africans on behalf of his Baas. He insults one Chief, calling him, "this old baboon-without-a-tail." This is the Chief who explains the hazards of going beyond his village as they proceed on their tour of the country. He describes the Chief's in-law as one "who was doubtless a child of a hyena."[140] Needless to say, an angry exchange of words ensues between them.

One gets the impression that life for this Rancher is generally good and that he is well pampered by the Africans. At the end, however, he makes the inevitable observation that the African is changing, but he

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[138] W. Robertson, *The Rhodesian Rancher* 130.
[139] *Ibid* 151.

characterises this change in uncomplimentary language: "the canker that creeps outwards from the townships and big mines like ink on blotting paper—is turning [the African] from an interesting savage to a detribalised 'nigger.' The old friendly relationship between rancher and native, sharing common primitive dangers and difficulties, is merging into the soulless contact between future employer and labourer…."[141] Inevitably, the future labourer would demand recognition of his rights and a proper wage. The Rancher feels uneasy in his home, it appears.

The Young Rhodesian Farmer, in *Life on the Farm…,* is another author whose book gives the same impression of one's contentment with life; one who is "at home in Rhodesia." The book is a series of observations and activities humorouly told by a farmer. Humour is the underlying form in the book. The young twenty-six year old farmer, who identifies himself as W.E. John Richards, in the "Foreword," writes humorous anecdotes about farm life. His purpose for writing is to while away time as he "found the evenings long and lonely."[142] The anecdotes were written in 1930 and rediscovered when the farmer was now seventy-one years old. He gave the volume of the anecdotes to his grandson. Presumably, the grandson publishes them.

The farmer's objective is to describe the hardships of farming in 1930, when mechanical farm implements, such as tractors, were almost non-existent, and prices for farm produce were affected by the world economic depression, which made them very low. It is these conditions

[140] *Ibid* 123-124.
[141] *Ibid* 210.

that the farmer humorously documents. An example is when he rears many turkeys, hoping to make a fortune. The project fails. The description of that experience is hilariously funny. A character called Ebenezer Giles runs through almost all the anecdotes—someone like Va der Merwe in *Waters of Madness*. It is Giles who hatches the turkey rearing idea, and the farmer catches on: "Chicks were carefully protected from themselves; success became transfigured into swarms of strutting potential pounds and thirty-bobs. It was delightful to case one's eye over the various groups and make rough estimates, and train the memory in Pelman way…."[143] When the project fails because there are no buyers, the implied consequence is that he "kills" Ebenezer Giles, is tried in court, and the verdict given is "culpable homicide under extreme provocation with a strong recommendation to mercy." When he looks at one of the juryman he notices "the tan of his skin and his horny hands [and he says], I knew [him] to be a fellow Toiler of the Soil."[144]

The book compares well with *The Bones of the Wajingas,* except that it is more light-hearted. It is a social commentary rather than a political satire. It is in the same category as *The Rhodesian Rancher,* except that the latter is a more serious account of a farmer's life. Nevertheless, *Life on the Farm…* is the kind of book one writes when one feels at home in a particular place, which is how it fits into this section.

[142] Young Rhodesian Farmer, *Life on the Farm* 3.
[143] *Ibid* 19.
[144] *Ibid* 19.

A Tribute to the Trek Ox

At the time of colonising Zimbabwe, means of transportation were difficult and crude. In the novels, the white people frequently use a *machila,* which is a hammock, held at each end by a black man. Rickshaws are also mentioned. While the white person rides comfortably, it is the blacks who walk the whole way. Sometimes they send a "runner," meaning, a black person who runs to collect mail several miles away. The horses are available, but they are very prone to horse sickness. The reader will remember Joyce's pony, very vividly, in Page's Edge o' Beyond, which dies of this sickness, breaking the owner's heart.

In Madeline Head's Down Memory Lane, Mrs. Kathleen Daly Charter describes her arrival at the port of Beira, on her way to join her husband in Rhodesia. She says,

> Imagine our dismay when we discovered that there were neither docks nor any other landing place for passengers to disembark. We were taken from the ship by tugs, which in their turn could not quite rich the land, and so we were carried in to the beach on the backs of natives who waged out for us. It was an ordeal for everyone, and the children were terrified of the natives who, of course, were entirely new to them, and we were highly embarrassed by this undignified mode of transport.[145]

Having reached the beach, their transport blues do not end after they have disembarked from the natives' backs. They take a train which is still in its primitive stage of development, but which is *there,* at least. Mrs. Charter's description of the train is quite amusing:

> The train, when it arrived, was so small that we were convinced that it was a toy train for children. The engine was tiny, and the coaches so short and narrow that one was obliged to put one's feet out of the window when lying down. It was an amusing sight to look out and see rows of feet protruding all along the train.[146]

After the train ordeal to Mutare, came the mule-drawn coach which was "a vehicle…with long seats and boxes of luggage strapped all around the outside and on top."[147] Because there is not enough room, Mrs. Charter, the only woman out of twenty-two passengers, has to travel for three days with the baby on her lap. The coach overturns at the foot of the Christmas Pass, and everyone is thrown out on top of the other. When Mrs. Charter refuses to get back into the coach, Mr. Fairbridge, the then current Mayor of Salisbury, reassures her. On board the same coach is Mr. Honey, founder of Honey and Blackenburg Law Firm. This is in December 1898. Eventually, they do arrive in Salisbury. Mrs. Charter gives a good description of the desperate transport needs of Rhodesia at that time. Her husband is contracted by the BSAP to manufacture bicycles for Northern and Southern Rhodesia.

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[145] Madeline Heald, Down Memory Lane, 54-56.
[146] *Ibid,* 54.
[147] .M. Heald, Down Memory Lane… 55.

It is, therefore, easy to understand why the novel on Rhodesia could not be complete without one author paying tribute to the trek ox. The role of the trek ox is vital in the colonisation of Rhodesia as the first settlers arrive in the ox drawn wagons. Some places, such as Halfway House, 135 kilometres from Harare on the Mutare road, and some towns such as Chipinge, still have the wheel of this kind of wagon, displayed prominently. The reader will remember the role of the trek ox as described in Robertson's *Wagons Rolling North,* Smith's *Men of Men* or Slatter's *My Leaves are Green*, among many other novels. For long distance travel, therefore, to and from, and within Rhodesia, the trek ox plays a crucial role. It seems to endure the harsh terrain and weather. It is also reliable. During the 1893 and 1896 wars, laagers are formed using ox wagons.

Hyatt thus, writes a whole novel dedicated to an extraordinary trek ox he calls *Biffel.* The Rhodesian Farmer, too, writes an anecdote, in his *Life on the Farm,* in which a trek ox is the persona. No other animal is given such prominence by the novelists as the trek ox. The Rhodesian Farmer's ox is old, now, retired:

> Here, by the roadside, can't you see me, a broken-down Trek Ox, chucked out of the span, unfit for work, unfit for anything; too road-soiled for an indiscriminate village Butcher and much too lean for the Bully Beef tin. Count the rings on my horns, look at the splay of my hoofs, feel the skin on my neck—all the tokens of an old campaigner, indisputably a veteran of the Grand Army. I wonder how many miles I must have walked in my life, how much road surface I have worn away with these old, tireless feet, how many tons of burden have I helped move about. I leave you,

> wise Mathematician, to work it all out while I browse about
> for something to eat.[148]

This ox, named Roman, tells the tricks that he and his friend, Hermans, used to play in order to avoid working too hard. The two of them used to arch their backs, grunt and moisten the eyes pitifully, while pretending to be pulling hard. This was a way to relax and to shift the load to others. Next, Roman laments the advent of technology and the coming of lorries which replace the ox as a major means of transport. While in the 1890s "transport was glamour and romance and wealth [and] a man took pride in his turnout and span and the brains of the country made a business of the game," now the trek oxen are left to the poor who do not handle them with as much care. Roman, the ox, looks back to his former days with some longing and is happy that, at least, he has now retired.[149]

Hyatt, on the other hand, writes a full novel about one particular trek ox called Biffel, the kind that pulls so hard that when stuck in the mud, the fate of the span is determined by Biffel's strength and efforts. Evidently, this is an outstanding ox, the type of which more work would be shifted by the likes of Roman and Hermans. The novel is about the transport system that obtains before the railway system and lorries take over. As mentioned earlier, goods and their owners are transported across the country and beyond, by oxen and wagons, crossing rivers via drifts. A bull like Biffel displays unheard of strength and reliability, which is why the author celebrates its power, industry and its intelligence.

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[148] Young Rhodesian Farmer, *Life on the Farm,* 55.

The narrative is in the omniscient point of view and, thus, we get to hear Biffel's feelings as if he is a person. As a youth he fights all the big bulls in his neighbourhood, claiming his deserved championship. Then he is purchased by Mayne, a young white man of thirty-two, who has been struggling to make a living in Rhodesia since the age of twenty-three. He has a Basuto servant, Amous, who is very arrogant to the Shona people whom he calls unclean dogs and baboons several times in the novel. Having left his home, Biffel, the three-and-half year old bull, struggles to cope with his new role as a wagon-pulling ox. His struggle resembles the black people's against the colonial yoke. The narrator says, "…he remembered the indignity of it [his new job], the way he was being compelled to do what those men wanted, and once again he tried to break free. An instant later, however, that horrible stinging lash curled round him, giving him a hateful sense of impotence and fear…He was humiliated and sore…."[150] Somehow this description is reminiscent of the black people's efforts at self-liberation in 1893 and 1896 in Rhodesia, and the subsequent humiliating submission to the white man's rule which lasted up to 1980.

Once Biffel has accepted his position as a wagon-pulling ox, he settles down, and Amous depends on him to lead the rest of the team. When he finally succumbs to the cattle disease raging in the country, it is only Amous who mourns him, broken-heartedly. Mayne, his boss, is dreaming of a new dawn to be ushered in by the coming of the railway. He has accidentally discovered a copper mine. This enables him "to shake the

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[149] *Ibid* 55-56.
[150] Hyatt, *Biffel…* 52; 54.

dust of Africa off his feet finally…."[151] He sells his interest in the mine for £10 000, and he dreams of his journey to the Cape, en route to England, "the white man's land." He has made his fortune.[152] Biffel and the rest of the oxen are forgotten, a fate that Roman, in Life on the Farm, mourns.

In Biffel, it is Jackson, one of the owners of transport oxen, who articulates the pain of losing their transport cattle, and the take-over of that system by the railways. In a voice full of tragedy he says, "We made the country; we opened it up: we made the great transport roads before the railways came; we alone made it possible for the railways to come, and now…."[153] It is not just the money they are losing, he says. In a broken voice he expresses the pain of losing the cattle to disease, "You know how one gets to care for the cattle."[154] This is a point similar to that raised by Roman, the trek ox that is given a voice by the Young Rhodesian Farmer. The death of these cattle in Biffel marks the end of the trek ox and the wagon transport system. However, it has been an enduring system. It is good that Hyatt pays tribute to the trek ox. Hereafter the wagon has to compete with the lorry and the railways.

While Biffel is remembered as a trek ox of distinction, one gets the impression that Amous, the white man's faithful servant, is forgotten: "He was only a Basutu, after all, a nigger, and so he did not count for

[151] Hyatt, Biffel… 138; 143.
[152] Ibid 147; 148.
[153] Ibid 141.
[154] Ibid 141.

much in the scheme of things."[155] This is in spite of his being over zealous in his work. He is in the same catego
ry as the Shona, after all, whom he often despises and insults. This aspect of Amous's attitude to his fellow Africans is an important aspect of the novel because he is portrayed as very arrogant and unnecessarily so. Biffel's death humbles him finally: "After Biffel's death, Amous went back to his native land and settled down as a farmer; and since Biffel's death and Mayne's departure, his life is different from what it was on the road."[156] No doubt he is poorer.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, several topics and several important issues have been discussed. An examination has been done of African servants who converse with their masters on equal terms. The question of inter-racial sexual relationships and miscegenation has also been examined. Authors whose works deal with pure adventure; characters who feel totally "at home" in Rhodesia, and authors who pay tribute to the trek ox, recognising its invaluable contribution to the colony of Rhodesia in the area of public transportation, have all been discussed. Through the discussion of the novels' content and character, it has been shown that these are important issues in the Rhodesian novel, issues which each author has told using an appropriate style.

The next chapter is a conclusion to the thesis.

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[155] Hyatt, *Biffel…* 150.
[156] *Ibid* 170.