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# Henry Rider Haggard's Nordicism? When Black Vikings fight alongside White Zulus in South Africa

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- The 19th century, at least in Europe and the United States, saw a renewed interest for the Scandinavian sagas (Sigurdson, Wawn, Kassis, Rausing), particularly in Britain which rediscovered its Norse ancestry, along with “scientists” who, after Darwin’s path-opening publication, *The Origins of Species* in 1859, developed more distasteful extrapolations of his ideas, which Darwin rejected and opposed, such as Social Spencerism. The pseudo scientists who had misread Darwin but had followed Spencer’s tracks that power helped the fittest to survive, started to promote a certain hierarchy within humans, stating that some peoples were superior to others, particularly those with blond hair.<sup>1</sup>Wendy R. Katz demonstrates that Haggard was not devoid of racialism when she writes “To accuse Haggard, who probably knew more about and had more sympathy for African society than most of his contemporaries, of having been a racist is to grant that he was very much a man of his time and of his class” (Katz 148). This article will concern itself with Henry Rider Haggard and “racial” attitudes in a South African context; was he just a mere “man of his time” or was he more of a visionary. Was Haggard able to anticipate a future for South Africa, where Blacks and Whites would be politically equal and where questions of colour would be meaningless? Through his forays into the Age of the Vikings and its paralleled counterpart within the Zulu martial sphere, this article endeavours to delineate Haggard’s prospective use of manly qualities to stimulate and condition his Victorian readership. This article leans on academic works that associate Victorian Norse ideology and Haggard’s representations of the Zulu warrior.<sup>2</sup>Yet these articles focus on “Black Vikings” while the present article purports to analyse Black and White Vikings/Zulus in the Victorian imperial ideological context as transcribed by Haggard, with a major emphasis put on the racial questions of the time through some of Haggard’s early works: *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), *She* (1887), *Allan Quatermain* (1891), which were closer to Haggard’s South African experience and a later one: *The Wanderer’s Necklace* (1914). Saul Dubow states

that in South Africa, there were “people who questioned the truth of race superiority, but these critics were compelled to argue within the established terms of what amounted to a dominant racial consensus” (1). This article wishes to focus on the racial question at the heart of Haggard’s work, at the crossroads of “vikingness” and “zuluness”.

## Victorian Vikings

- 2 The myth of the Vikings is omnipresent: “In Victorian Britain the Scandinavian devil had the best tunes, many of which are still whistled in the new millennium” (Wawn 372). Modern Victorian translations of Norse sagas come above layers after layers of Viking historical, artistic and fiction works that never really ceased throughout time (Wawn). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, poets, scholars, and travellers developed a keen interest for Old Norse literature, sagas, odes, and language. In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century British Norse enthusiasts used to promote the “pirates” that came from Scandinavia, and it is only in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that a more romanticized representation of the sea-kings came to the fore with a sense of continuity which links maritime skills of the Viking and British Navy heroes.<sup>3</sup>This interest was rekindled through the translation of sagas and poems that celebrated Britain’s Viking past as reminded by the numerous places in Britain that bear references to Norse culture.<sup>4</sup>The gothic revival and linguistic studies triggered a keen interest for Britain’s Northern origins.<sup>5</sup> What is more, the population was subjected to “vikingism” regularly as they were often reminded of their Norse origins,<sup>6</sup> as stated by Thomas Carlyle: “Spiritually as well as bodily these men are our progenitors” (19). The Archaeological findings in Britain (Northern antiquities), including treasures, were regular in the Victorian era particularly located in the Danelaw, territories ruled by Danish and Norwegian kings (in the Northern and Eastern parts of England).<sup>7</sup> Runes were discovered on stones and translated, and local historians unearthed the past.<sup>8</sup> Iceland became a new tourist destination for British travellers (Kassis) who came back with accounts which were published in newspapers and books or delivered through conferences, which included Rider Haggard.<sup>9</sup> The development of tourism led to the publication of several articles in the British press. These encouraged people to travel to Scandinavia.<sup>10</sup> Many romances were written, including Sir Walter Scott’s best seller, *The Pirate*, published in 1822, which was a starting point in British “vikingism” (Wawn 372), along with many scientific books that bear the words ‘Viking’, ‘Northmen’, ‘Norse’ or ‘Sea-kings’ (3). “Vikingness” became fashionable in the Victorian era as Erasmus Darwin or Charles Kingsley became Norse enthusiasts as well as William Morris (41). The latter grew a steady interest in Norse Sagas such as the Volsunga saga which inspired him *The Story of Sigurd and the Fall of the Niblungs* (1876) which is considered by some as his greatest poem (Ashurst 43).<sup>11</sup> Operas were written and gave rise to historical mistakes such as the plumed or horned Viking helmets staged in the British theatres; eliciting the comment from Andrew Wawn that “In many ways, the Victorians invented the Vikings” (3). But the keen Victorian interest in Vikings went further than mere entertainment. It was in fact a mirror image of their own imperial achievements, commercial successes and technological progresses as Norse warriors became part of the agenda of race ideologists who wished to underpin their vision of the superiority of (Northern) Europeans over the rest of the world.

## European Nordicism

- 3 Various definitions of Nordicism can be found, one of which is “The belief in or the doctrine of the superiority of the hypothetical Nordic racial type and its cultural capacities” (Merriam Webster online Dictionary). The ideology behind this theory is based on social Spencerism which states there can be a hierarchy among human groups and that, therefore, some of them are superior to others (Hutton; Field; Juginger & Akerlund; Gregor). This assumes that populations that have the same Proto-Germanic origin are naturally built and constituted to physically, intellectually, and culturally, dominate the others. The prototype of this superhuman has a strong constitution, a very white skin, blue-eyes, and blond hair. Saxonism and later nordicism, are two of the pseudo-scientific doctrines that prevailed in the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century in Europe. Amongst the foremost promoters of such theories is Arthur Count Gobineau, a French diplomat and politician who was interested in social issues in a Spenserian perspective. His idea was that French upper classes originated from the German Franks who took over Gaul and turned it into France at the end of the Roman Empire, while peasants remained Gallo-Romans. His famous book *The Inequality of Races* published between 1852 and 1855 in four volumes (for the French edition) advocates that it is a fallacy to think that the arrival of “barbarians” in the 5th century (Angles, Saxons, Franks, Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Lombards, Burgundians etc.) destroyed Roman civilization.<sup>12</sup> For him, the barbarians did not precipitate the fall of the Roman civilization, as it already had borne for a long time the seeds of its own destruction. Indeed, it was but the shadow of what it had been once, in its heyday. The barbarians invigorated a decadent and degenerated society. Fresh blood was needed. Hence while showing the Roman as a degenerated being, he praised the Northern blond-haired barbarian as embodying the best human qualities.<sup>13</sup> The Scandinavian peninsula is, for him, the cradle of (European) peoples, the matrix of nations (Gobineau *Essai* 200). He also states that the ‘Aryans’ that colonized the South of Sweden, became navigators for the first time and they developed this activity which one day enabled them to surpass, with daring and intelligence, all the other civilisations’ achievements (*Essai* 193).<sup>14</sup> There is admiration in Gobineau’s description of the Vikings, meaning “those who raid” when he writes that frightening the Western seas by the quantity and the boldness of their “piracies”, they were about to penetrate all the way into the Mediterranean sea, looting Spain, while at the same time, through a more fecund work, they colonized the neighbouring islands of England, settled in Ireland and Scotland, and peopled the valleys of Iceland (*Essai* 266).
- 4 He adds that the Vikings had renewed the blood of the French Province of Neustria [which includes modern day Normandy, a part of Britany, the Isle de France and is bordered by the Loire river in the South], and thus brought a strong ethnic superiority to the other parts of Gaul (*Essai* 266). Gobineau implies here that the so-called “degeneration” of a people can be stopped by strong foreign elements such as those introduced by the Northmen.<sup>15</sup> It is in modern-day Scandinavia that one can find the physiological, linguistic and political traces of “the ultimate noble race”; according to him, they are the worthy descendants of Ragnar Lodbrog or Harald Fairhair or “beautiful hair”, the king who may have unified Norway according to the sagas (Gobineau, *Essai* 267).<sup>16</sup> Others share his view such as Madison Grant for whom

Scandinavians are a race of conquerors.<sup>17</sup> So, the question raised is how and why this keen discovery of the Viking Age past should appeal to someone like Haggard who set most of his novels in tropical or subtropical countries rather than in the cold Northern parts of Europe. One of the possible answers is that he saw a connection between the manly qualities of different people like the old Norsemen and the Zulus. Maybe that had an attracting power to him as his own family background was part of the equation as we will see further on. Another attractive element for him may have been a disillusion for his “modern” society and an appetite for wildlife. Indeed, throughout the 19th century, influential philosophers such as Fichte or Nietzsche believed that war was necessary for civilizations, as it fulfilled a function of regulation. It was ethically good for human groups and represented the quintessence of humanity. John Mackenzie reminds us that throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was an evolution towards a more “martial” Britain.<sup>18</sup> In this context, George McCall Theal, the Canadian born South African historian wrote in his history of South Africa:

But life without excitement is insipid to the savage as well as to the civilised man, and these wars and animosities, though sometimes causing great suffering and loss of life, in general provided just that excitement which was needed to prevent the minds of the people from sinking into complete stagnation. (7)

- 5 Allan Quatermain, “the voice of his master” Rider Haggard, is in total agreement with Theal when he declares: “The thirst for the wilderness was on me; I could tolerate this place no more; I would go and die as I had lived, among the wild game and savages”. (Haggard *Quatermain* 3).<sup>19</sup> It seems Quatermain is part of the British Imperial conquering race just like Victorian general Wolseley praised it.<sup>20</sup> One of the issues is hybridity (miscegenation) amongst population, which, for some ideologists is a positive thing, but for others, is a catastrophe. For Gobineau, Scandinavian warriors (amongst others) are “the glorious shades of noble races that have disappeared” (Gobineau *Inequality* 209). His conclusion was clear to Nazi ideologists: “And the blood even of these was no longer pure” (*Inequality* 209).
  
- 6 In the 19th century there was a variety and a multiplicity of racial theories which Haggard was familiar with. The Indo-European origin of the European population was favoured by many and contested by others. William Z. Ripley and Robert Knox, along with Gobineau, were amongst the most read at the time. For Ripley, Scandinavia was the home of “the Teutonic race in its maximum purity” (205). He entitles his chapter IX “The Teutonic Race: Scandinavia and Germany” (which he later completes with the People from the Netherlands and the British Isles: The Jutes, the Angles, and the Saxons). Ripley explains, commenting the photograph of a man’s face: “The first is a pure blond Teuton, blue-eyed, fair-haired, with the characteristically long head and narrow, long face of his race. The features are clear cut, the nose finely moulded. Such is the model in all the upper classes all over Germany” (217). Robert Knox is also a champion of the “Blond race” as depicted by Haggard: “[...] Steinar, my foster-brother, who had light-coloured hair and blue eyes, and was much bigger and stronger than I, [...]” (Haggard *Wanderer* 11).<sup>21</sup> Blondness (along with blue eyes) thus became the attribute of the “superior human”.<sup>22</sup> It was the epitome of what humanity produced at its best according to some. In the post-Second World War context, UNESCO scientists specified that there was only one race, humans, disclaiming previous theories grounded in the idea of the existence of “races” linked to the Proto-Indo-European origins of the people of Europe. Barend (Ben) Jacobus Marais stated in 1952: “In answer to the theory of a so-called ‘pure Nordic’ or Aryan race, it has been correctly shown

that a so-called pure race, at any rate as far as Europe is concerned is purely an illusion" (55).

## Haggard the Norseman

- 7 If Allan Quatermain is the eponymous character of some of Haggard's novels, others are worthy of Quatermain's admiration and because of their physical beauty, strength, manly qualities, values, and open-mindedness are close to Haggard's representation of the ideal man. The two heroes that best qualify in that category are Leo Vincey (*She*) and Sir Henry Curtis (*King Solomon's Mines* and *Allan Quatermain*). Leo Vincey, as the curtain lifts on the narrative, is five years old. He is the son of an English nobleman, and everybody notices him as his hair is "pure gold" (Haggard *She* 19). He is very handsome both inside and outside: "as he grew and increased so did his beauty and the beauty of his mind grew with him" (*She* 21). He becomes a very handsome, blond, grey-eyed English young man, so handsome that his fellow students at Cambridge nicknamed him "the Greek god" (*She* 21) and that the narrator, his tutor Horace Holly wrote about him that "Leo at twenty-one might have stood for a statue of youthful Apollo" (*She* 21). He is also a fighter, as one day he "trashed" a butcher twice his size for having insulted the narrator, the person in charge of him (*She* 21). Later they meet a mysterious and unknown people in Africa, the Amahagger. When the meeting takes place, Leo Vincey's physical appearance attracts much attention on him: "Leo's tall, athletic form and clear-cut Grecian face, however, evidently excited their attention, and when he politely lifted his hat to them, and showed his curly yellow hair, there was a slight murmur of admiration" (*She* 80). The other Haggardian stock character that encapsulates all the qualities of the perfect man (nobility, beauty of features, physically strong and tall, a good fist fighter, but also kind, intelligent and caring to others and what is important for our analysis: blond-haired), Sir Henry Curtis, is a member of the English aristocracy in Haggard's masterpiece *King Solomon's Mines* (1885).<sup>23</sup> When he meets, for the first time, the persons he is going to share his adventures with, Allan Quatermain, makes an interesting comparison, stating that one of them, Sir Henry Curtis' physical strength and blond hair evoke an ancient Dane to him.<sup>24</sup> Haggard introduces here the notion of the rejuvenating links with a less polished or civilized past.
- 8 "Going native" in the 19th century was a very offensive sentence when designating a white man. It meant losing once respectability brought about by (Western) "civilisation"; It meant returning to a state of savagery which Western people had abandoned for centuries, it meant renouncing the privileges granted to white "civilized" men because of their inner (and technological) superiority. Yet some authors consider that becoming the "noble savage" once again may be appealing to any white western man as, devoid of his technology, he must fight his way through the jungle like any other creature. This is the case when "civilized" heroes go deep into the jungle without any of the modern technological devices and therefore can only rely on his natural capacities, his intelligence, and his culture. Robinson Crusoe is one of the earliest representatives of white survivors in a natural but lethal context, marooned on a desert Island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Other examples are Mowgly or Tarzan, who find themselves alone in the jungles of the British Empire, in India and Africa. In some instances, the more the hero sweeps away from civilization and modern

world, the more it seems he is going back in time to a pre-civilized world. King Solomon's road is proved to be ancient by pictograms displayed on the walls of a tunnel the road goes through, symbolical of a time passage to the past. Going down the road is going to King Solomon's mines, and thus symbolically going back to Old Testament era Africa, as biblical times were being questioned as the primeval times of the world.<sup>25</sup> Oral tradition goes back so far in time that memory has faded, and no one remembers who the pictograms' artists were. Yet we are in Africa and the artists are Africans (Egyptians). Going back in time is going back to the source, one's inner source: "To take the positive view of wilderness, first, Africa as unspoilt nature offers the jaded civilised Englishman a chance to recharge his spirits, rediscover himself" (Stiebel 64).

- 9 For the narrator of *King Solomon's Mines*, Curtis' symbolical regression towards the primeval ages of the world goes through a physical metamorphosis: "As for ourselves, we were contented with a good wash and combing our hair. Sir Henry's yellow locks were now almost upon his shoulders, and he looked more like an ancient Dane than ever, while my grizzled scrub was fully an inch long, instead of half an inch, which in a general way I considered my maximum length" (Haggard *KSM* 100). Later, on the eve of the battle against Twala the usurper of the throne of the Kukuanas, the white heroes get dressed. Because they are considered exceptional guests as they have enabled Ignosi, the legitimate heir to the throne to come back to his country, they are given a chainmail that was left in Africa by medieval crusaders:

We got up and dressed ourselves for the fray, each putting on his chain-armor shirt, for which at the present juncture we felt exceedingly thankful. Sir Henry went to the whole length about the matter and dressed himself like a native warrior. 'When you are in Kukuaneland, do as the Kukuanas do,' he remarked as he drew the shining steed over his broad shoulders, which it fitted like a glove. (*KSM* 140)

- 10 This description echoes what was said a few pages before when the white heroes tried the chainmail for the first time "these steel shirts, which had evidently been made for men of a very large stature, hung somewhat loosely upon Good and myself, but Sir Henry's fitted his magnificent frame like a glove" (*KSM* 113). Hence, at the beginning of the story, Quatermain's first impression of Curtis whom he compares to a Viking becomes prophetic, as now Curtis is wearing a medieval chainmail and is ready to fight like his Scandinavian ancestors. Thus Haggard is keen on turning his unwilling hero into a "primitive" or "savage" man, "marooning" him into an unknown land (like Robinson Crusoe), depriving him of all the "civilised tools" that he would appreciate to have in order to survive (such as firearms), so as to test his physical strength and his intelligence as a "White man" when confronted to "fearful odds" in a lethal situation.<sup>26</sup> Thus, being "uncivilised", a "barbarian" or a "savage", even if each of these words are not necessarily synonyms, sheds a light on Haggard's admiration for powerful men, be they White or Black. But what does, becoming equal to natives on a materialistic basis, bring to his status as an ambassador of his (imperial) society?

## Going Berserk: a rejuvenating process

- 11 Fighting a modern 19th century war, but in an indigenous type of warfare (that is with no modern firearms) should bring the white fighter to its downfall, he should not be used to such a hand to hand type of combat, as proved by the 24th regiment of foot which was annihilated by Zulu warriors at the battle of Isandlwana on 22 January 1879, although they had firearms and canons while the vast majority of the Zulu warriors had



their *Iklwa* (stabbing spear) and their *Umbumbuluzo* (shield).<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that Rider Haggard, who was in South Africa around the time of the Anglo-Zulu War, and had been subjected to many Zulu stories when he was a member of Sir Theophilus Shepstone's staff and went along with him in the South African wilderness, developed a vivid empathy for the strong and brave Zulu warrior. To triumph without peril brings no glory says the motto, hence, the more formidable the Zulu warrior is, the more he is a match for one of Haggard's White heroes. Summoning his ancestral hand to hand fighting qualities inherited from his Viking ancestors enables Sir Henry Curtis to remain superior to the Kukuana-Zulus who, even though Haggard portrays them as marvellous warriors, are no match to the great White Zulu-Viking. The result of this transformation will become effective during battle. When the two great Kukuana-Zulu *impis* (armies) face each other, thousands of formidable warriors are ready to fight for their King, Twala ruler of the kingdom but which he has usurped from his nephew on the one hand, and Ignosi, the legitimate heir to the throne of the Kukuanas with faithful regiments alongside whom our White heroes are going to fight: Allan Quatermain as a strategist and Curtis as a gallant combatant whose presence galvanizes the Kukuana warriors and ultimately enables them to overcome their foe. Haggard seems to share a common vision of "vikingness" with Thomas Carlyle who remarks that the Norse system is "an enormous force, as yet altogether untutored, stalking helpless with large uncertain strides" (23-24), when amid the fighting, Curtis expresses his ancestral qualities as a great barbarian warrior:

And yet more gallant was the vision of Sir Henry, whose ostrich plumes had been shorn off by a spear thrust, so that his long yellow hair streamed out in the breeze behind him. There he stood, the great Dane, for he was nothing else, his hands, his axe, and his armour all red with blood, and none could live before his stroke. Time after time I saw it sweeping down, as some great warrior ventured to give him battle, and as he struck, he shouted "O-hoy! O-hoy!" like his Berserkir forefathers, and the blow went crashing through shield and spear, through head-dress, hair, and skull, till at last none would of their own will come near the great white "umtagati," the wizard, who killed and failed not. (Haggard KSM 158)

- 12 For the learned reader, Haggard's analogy to the Berserkir,<sup>28</sup> classifies Curtis, if need be, in the category of the great warriors. Those Norse wild warriors were so fierce that they were considered as demons, so famous that they became chessmen<sup>29</sup> and that anglophone countries use the expression "to go berserk" when one becomes mad with rage and cannot control one's anger and himself, or when people say of a class of unruly children "they all went berserk". He originates from Scandinavian sagas and is supposed to be Odin's warrior, although it is believed he was part of elite regiments close to the ruler. He is said to be able to get into a sacred fury which turns him into a formidable opponent but also a danger for his allies as his madness does not enable him to distinguish between friend and foe in the midst of the battle. He is a stock character of the Icelandic sagas (Brown 6). One can identify the Berserkir amongst the Lewis chessmen as they are represented biting their shield. This is testified by Scandinavian sagas as explained by Vincent Samson when he states that 'shield biting' is a ritual meant to frighten the enemy: when they bite their shield the Berserkir reveal their awe inspiring savagery that matches that of dogs and wolves whose howling they adopt (Samson 231). The shield-biting phenomenon can only be found in Norse culture (Brown 23) and is part of the reputation of the berserker whose rush of bloodthirsty madness was particularly dreaded (Samson 232). It is therefore not surprising that the rook in the game of chess, which can rush towards the opponent (formerly an armed

chariot, from *Rukh* in Persian), becomes a late Norse warrior, a Viking age berserker biting his shield in medieval Scandinavian chess games (Brown 23). Within the process of symbolic regression that Sir Henry Curtis undergoes towards a positive primitive state, the reference to the Berserker consolidates the image of an instinctive warrior, close to the positive characteristics of animality and far from an intellectual way of thinking based on reason. These animal characteristics are applied to the warrior who are thus associated to the boar, the wolf, and the bear in Scandinavian tradition. They are Odin's warriors, protected by him, they would go into a trance thanks to the spirit of their totemic animal, hence the origin of their name which probably means "bear-shirt" or "bare-shirt" according to others (Brown 22). They would thus become uncontrollable as described in the *Ynglinga Saga*.<sup>30</sup> The *Eyrbyggja Saga* is an example of the origin of the expression "to go berserk" as it stages two Berserker, Halli and Leiknir, who from humans, went berserk and turned into wild animals, they were mad as dogs and nothing could stop them (Nordberg & Wallenstein 56). Hence, in Old Norse sagas, to go berserk was to mutate from a human into an animal-type fierce warrior, close to the legends of lycanthropes who transmuted from humans into were-wolves. Thus, nobody could resist Berserker when they were in a state of martial trance or frenzy that can be found in the *furor heroicus* of the Germans or the Celts and corresponds to the description of the fighting Curtis we have just quoted.

## A hero's bright eyes

- 13 Curtis is indeed, in Haggard's frame of mind, the worthy heir of a fictitious ancestor called Eric Brighteyes, eponymous character of Haggard's 10th century Icelandic saga, "Arguably the finest Victorian Viking-Age novel" (Wawn 331) who is both a great fighter and a marvellous navigator, the two characteristics Victorian Viking enthusiasts hoped British people had inherited.<sup>31</sup> Eric Brighteyes is the perfect stereotype of the handsome, strong and brave Viking: "He was named Eric Brighteyes, Thorgrimur's son, and in those days there was no man like him in strength, beauty and daring, for all in all these things he was the first" (Haggard *Eric* Ch 1 np). He is not a Berserker himself, but his father is named Iron-Toe as he had lost a foot during a fight against a 'Baresark' (another spelling for Berserker). A footnote in the novel explains to the reader that 'Baresarks' "were men on whom a passing fury of battle came; they were usually outlawed". Haggard's potential nordicism transpires through this vision of the untamed, outlawed, and furious Berserker. This "wild thing" which finds his equivalent in Sir Henry Curtis, is in contradiction to the stiff upper lip image of some of the British aristocrats, with a major difference that Henry Curtis only unleashes his fury in battle but recovers his composure as soon as the fight is over, becoming an everlasting gentleman once more, as if Jekyll could tame Hyde and not be dominated by him.
- 14 But the Berserker can be a foil for the hero, and the latter thus becomes even greater if he can dominate such a demon. Throughout his saga, Eric wants to avenge his father and thus must challenge Skallagrim<sup>32</sup> the Baresark who lives secluded but is never bothered as everybody is afraid of his strength and his fury (Haggard refers to the period the Berserker as elite regiments were forbidden and thus some became bandits). The fight between the two enables Haggard to stage a Berserker's fury: "Now Skallagrim knew him and the Baresark fit came on. His eyes rolled, foam flew to his

lips, his mouth grinned, and he was awesome to see. He let fall the head, and, swinging the great axe aloft, rushed at Eric” (Haggard *Eric*, Ch VII np). The latter is caught in a hand to hand fight with the Berserker whom he cannot strike down as his fury is too great. He must handle his opponent until his fury goes away and he becomes a normal man again. He thus manages to defeat him. Eric then turns the defeated Berserker into a faithful ally. The reader becomes well aware of the formidable fighting machine the Berserker is when Skallagrim himself tells Eric what happened to the soldiers who wanted to protect their lord who was fleeing with Skallagrim’s willing wife, and were poking fun at him while he was tied up, an opportunity for Haggard to display a good description of a Berserker’s frenzy.<sup>33</sup> Curtis’ controlled fury makes him, according to Allan Quatermain’s own words, a worthy descendant of his Berserker ancestors.

- 15 Interestingly, if one guesses that Allan Quatermain is an *alter ego* to H. Rider Haggard, one might think that Lord Henry Curtis is one too when we know that Rider Haggard thinks himself to be a direct descendant of Danish nobility, his ancestor being “a certain Sir Andrew Ogard, or Agard, or Haggard (I believe his name is spelt in all three ways in a single contemporaneous document), a Danish gentleman of the famous Guildenstjerne family whose seat was at Aagaard in Jutland” (Haggard *DML* Vol I ch. 1 np). And so, Sir Henry Curtis, British nobleman, who has probably done nothing more than some fencing during his life, crushed so many enemies’ skulls during the fight for the succession of the Kukuanas’ thrown, that one can only admire his natural fighting qualities inherited from his ancestors. This is what Infadou, the legitimate heir’s uncle, says to Curtis: “‘Thou art a great man, Incubu,’ he said, simply; ‘I have lived a long life among warriors, and known many a brave one, yet have I have never seen a man like thee.’”(Haggard *KSM* 159)<sup>34</sup>
- 16 Haggard praises strong well-built blond-blue-eyed Viking type of English aristocrats and therefore seems to give credit to the pseudo-scientific idea that physical traits can induce superiority of man over others. It looks as though determinism, social Spencerism and nordicism are ideas he is willing to promote. Yet these ideas, as developed in the 19th century, posit that White superiority cannot be matched by any other race, least of all Africans. So the questioned raised here, is to know how this part of Haggard’s ideology fits with the fact that some of his African characters can be equal to the best white men like Umbopa/Ignosi or Umslopogaas and thus superior to white men such as the Saxons embodied by Good and Quatermain?

## When Zulus wield battle axes

- 17 We saw that Curtis is referred to as a White Zulu and a White Viking, but can we infer there are Black Vikings in Haggard’s imagination? The answer is positive as there is at least one symbolical Black Viking or to be more precise a Black Berserker according to Haggard, embodied by Umslopogaas. Indeed Berserker and Zulu stories are rooted in the ‘racial’ ideas of the time when Haggard states that Meridith Townsend, one of the owners of the newspaper *The Spectator*, was the one who suggested the idea of his Nordic character, Skallagrim, that is “a Berserker, a White Umslopogaas, with a vein of pity in him for women only” (Haggard *Days* 27).<sup>35</sup> Haggard also mentions Andrew Lang his fellow co-author for *The World’s Desire* (1890), who states he likes the following quote “‘I have made me a mat of men to lie on,’ says the Zulu berserk when he had killed twenty and the assegais in his body were ‘like reeds in a marsh’. He is a Callaway” (*Days*

5). The link between Zulus and Berserker is strengthened when historical comparisons are made. Berserker are “warriors of Odin, clad in the skins of animals and fighting in an ecstatic rage called *berserkerangr*” (Nordberg & Wallenstein 49). They demonstrate that this wild fury is not unique “This type of animalistic/predatory rage or fury is by no means unique to Old Norse culture, quite the contrary. It has widely distributed parallels in the history of religions, as well as in the history of war” (49). Among the many human groups they mention is “the furious battle trance of the Zulu warriors” (50).<sup>36</sup> Whether Haggard knew of this parallel between Viking Berserker and Zulu fighters is not known, yet if he made a conscious or unconscious parallel between the two types of warriors is interesting. A White “traditional” Viking-like Curtis, and a famed Zulu warrior like Umslopogaas or Ignosi, (or the other way round: a White Zulu embodied by Curtis and a Black berserker such as Umslopogaas), for Rider Haggard are the epitome of manhood as they are fierce, handsome and intelligent warriors. There are, according to him, some visible signs of their status. They have to be impressive because of their natural beauty, they have to be warriors, and thus good fighters, they should have scars to prove their valour, they have a natural dignity that originates from the fact they are from royal or aristocratic origin, which seems to encapsulate a Victorian ideology which promotes the brave kings and heroes of British history such as King Arthur and more pragmatically the upper-class White Protestant male as the epitome of what humanity produces at its best. The two main characters that embody such a profile (a courageous aristocratic warrior), are Ignosi and Umslopogaas. In *King Solomon's Mines*, Ignosi is a “handsome-looking man” (Haggard *KSM* 39), he has “deep black scars” that marked “old assegai wounds” (*KSM* 41), and when he speaks he has “a certain assumption of dignity” (*KSM* 40) which comes from his speech and which strikes A. Quatermain. The reader learns that he is an exceptional warrior because he belongs to an elite regiment of the Zulu *impi* (army), created by the legendary warrior-king of the Zulu Shaka kaSenzangakhona: “I was Cetywayo's man in the Nkomabakosi regiment” (*KSM* 40). Later the reader discovers who he really is, the legitimate king of the Kukuanas (*KSM* 110). These noble and positive features can also be traced in the character of Umslopogaas, Allan Quatermain, Good and Sir Henry Curtis' fellow hunter in *Allan Quatermain*. The narrator describes him as having “a powerful-looking Zulu face” (Haggard *Quatermain* 15) who has often fought “and yet am I a warrior among warrior; see my scars- and he pointed to countless cicatrices, stabs and cuts, that marked the skin of his chest and legs and arms” (18), which does not prevent him from having a “thin aristocratic-looking hand” (14). What is more, he is of royal extraction: “I who am high-born, ay, of the blood of Chaka, the great king - a chief, and captain of the regiment of Nkomabakosi- [...]”<sup>37</sup> (17). His last combat, alone against fearful odds evokes the Berserker's fight:

Up rushed the assailants, one, two, three at time, and as fast as they came, the axe crushed and the sword swung, and down they rolled again, dead or dying. And ever as the fight thickened, the old Zulu's eye seemed to get quicker and his arm stronger. He shouted his war-cries and the names of the chiefs whom he had slain, and the blows of his awful axe rained straight and true, shearing through everything they fell on. (254)

- 18 In the end, after having vanquished his opponents and saved his friends, he kills the arch-evil enemy of the story: “With a shake and yell of fury, the Zulu gathered himself together and sprung straight at Nasta's throat, as I have sometimes seen a wounded lion spring” (256). Umslopogaas can thus unleash his “Berserker's fury” but as an

African Berserker (his totem being the lion not the bear or the wolf). Once again one may wonder whether Haggard ever heard of the Zulu combat trance which has led Berserker specialists to compare both Odin's to Shaka's warriors.<sup>38</sup>

- 19 Zulu Berserker are therefore part of western imagination in the same way as Norse Berserker, and this is perhaps where Haggard differs from the traditional nordicist ideology which promotes blond, blue-eyed White warriors. If, for Haggard, Zulus can be handsome, awesome, and wonderful warriors, they cannot be associated with what is now called white supremacists. As for Umslopogaas, he is yet to be compared to other medieval heroes. Indeed, as he is mortally wounded, he decides that nobody will ever possess his favourite weapon: his battle axe. He thus aims at breaking it on a rock. In Haggard's world, men are fierce warriors whose weapon is identified as a named companion as swords are personified and are sometimes magic just like in the Norse sagas. One may think of famous medieval martial stories such as that of Roland (Charlemagne's nephew) and his sword 'Durandal', Charlemagne and 'Joyeuse', Arthur (legendary king of the Britons) and 'Excalibur,' Lancelot, seeker of the Graal, and 'Arondight', Sigfried and 'Balmung', Beowulf and 'Hrunting' or 'Naegling' etc. Haggard carries on this association of a fierce warrior and a "beloved" weapon, faithful (female<sup>39</sup>) companion to the hero. Eric Brighteyes is such a warrior as he is associated to a magical sword called 'Whitefire', which was forged by dwarfs and had belonged to Odin, and turned his owner into an invincible warrior, foreshadowing the magical weapons of *Lord of the Rings*, as Tolkien admitted having been influenced by Haggard. Haggard's influence might also include his other Icelandic saga, *The Wanderer's Necklace* (1914), in which Haggard portrays a Viking called Olaf Red-Sword, probably a reminder of historical Norwegian king Erik Haraldsson (885-954) nicknamed Erik Bloodaxe. Umslopogaas' homeric end undoubtedly evokes Roland's glorious death at Roncevaux, particularly with the legendary episode when he is about to die and wants to prevent his enemies from disposing of his faithful sword Durandal. He thus tries with his remaining forces to break his sword by hitting with it a big rock as hard as possible. Unexpectedly it is the rock that breaks, not the sword. So, Roland lies down on the sword to hide it before dying. When reinforcements arrive, it is too late, Charlemagne discovers his nephew's dead body lying on his sword. Interestingly, Umslopogaas does not use traditional famed Zulu weapons such as the short spear of the Zulus, the *Iklwa*, which is said to have been invented by Shaka, or the knobkerrie (*Iwisa*), meant to crush the enemies' skull. Instead he uses the battle axe with a half-moon shaped blade, which is typical of Zulu weaponry, but also common to medieval Europeans. His axe also has a name: it is Inkosi-Kaas which he cherishes so much that, like Roland, he wants it to disappear with him: "Down with a crash on the pavement fell the fragments of the holy stone, and down with a crash on to them, still grasping the knob of Inkhosi-kaas, fell the brave old Zulu - dead" (Haggard *Quatermain* 257-258). Naturally, there is a difference between the two narrations, as Roland does not manage to break his sword while Umslopogaas succeeds in destroying his war-axe, even though both manage to break the rock. Yet, one may infer that Haggard wished his African hero to be worthy of the valiant medieval knights of yester time, even though some critics like Edward Boyd consider that Umslopogaas was never a Zulu but rather a "black norseman" in Haggard's imagination (Boyd qtd by Lewis 81). Can we assume that Haggard had any knowledge of the "Song of Roland"? We may answer positively when we know that although the song is French, its oldest copy is treasured at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and thus is part of British literary and historical patrimony. What is more, we

have a glimpse at Haggard's medieval representations when we read in his autobiography that he states about his friend William Booth (1829-1912) founder of the Salvation Army that both of them are like Roland and Olivier, two friends from the *Song of Roland*<sup>40</sup> (Haggard *Days* Vol II 217).

## Conclusion

- 20 To analyse the violence generated by the imperial project, and the blood-curdling narratives linked to the “savage” populations the mighty British army had to quell, the Victorians may have desired to quench their thirst to know how that violence came to be in their own past. “The sanguinary sublime” (Wawn 372) and the fascination for the “Penny dreadful” magazines was probably one of the reasons that induced the Victorians to discover the horrible deeds that took place on their shores a millennium before them, summed up by a famous medieval Latin quote: “A furore Normannorum libera nos Domine! From the fury of the Norsemen, Lord deliver us” (*The Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement*, Sat. August 20, 1881). At the same time, on the Imperial “racial” agenda, the Nordic warrior (whether German, Saxon, Teuton, or Scandinavian) becomes a model promoted by European raciologists in the 19th century. Haggard succeeds in summoning him in his African adventures to fight along the brave Zulu warriors that gained fame on Isandlwana battlefield in 1879. They are both worthy warriors. Africa is the new playground to enact ancient sagas where intelligence and strength were necessary to survive, while civilisation « fossilizes » those Europeans who yearn for the thrill of heroism. To promote Anglo-Saxonism would have been reductive for late Victorians as Imperialism and Britishness were the tokens of the day (Wawn 372). Vikings fit this agenda which might explain why Quatermain and Good, who are referred to as Saxons (Haggard *KSM* 129) are no match to Curtis (the Scandinavian) as there is a difference in seize between Saxon and Viking as stated by Allan Quatermain: “As for Good and myself, the chain armor did not suit us nearly so well” (*KSM* 141).<sup>41</sup> Yet if he praises an aristocratic elite: Curtis is a Lord, Umslopogaas and Ignosi are kings or connected to Royal families, he considers natural superiority more important (Katz 70). A noble must be worthy of his status and therefore must be a natural born leader. This is maybe what attracted Haggard to Icelandic society, “where individual superiority counted for everything and society put few controls on men who wished to express themselves in action” (Katz 71). Gobineau inspired Hitler, but not Haggard as the former states: “There is no true civilization, among the European people, where the Aryan branch is not predominant. In the above list no negro race is seen as the initiator of a civilization. Only when it is mixed with some other can it even be initiated into one” (Gobineau *Inequality* 217). Though attracted to the beauty of Scandinavian types of humans, Haggard differs from all the race ideologists of his time as for him Blacks can be better warriors than Saxons, they can be compared to Berserker, or worthy medieval European knights like Roland, only matched by exceptional White men from noble extraction as Sir Henry Curtis who in turn become impressive White Zulus as Africa reveals one's inner power and origins : “In the Kukuanaland of *King Solomon's Mines*, white men discover their own interior savage selves- sir Henry Curtis puts on skins and feathers and becomes a Viking” (Lewis 79). Through a twist of time and space Haggard manages to oppose what seems to him to be the epitome of the best fighting human qualities: Medieval Northern European Viking raiders to Victorian Southern African Zulu fighters. Two opposed poles in time and

space meet and confront each other, but are similar in Haggard's mind: "*Eric Brighteyes* (1891) and *Nada the Lily* (1892) make an instructive pair of novels inasmuch as one cast of characters is all white and Viking while the other is entirely black and Zulu. Except for skin colour, however, the books are almost interchangeable" (Etherington 81). For Haggard, no matter whether Black or White, they are equal in their superior beauty and strength, even though "Haggard imagined Zulu and Medieval Scandinavian culture [can] not be interchangeable in any real sense" (81). What counts is physical strength along intelligence and moral values. This will lead Haggard to praise Boer guerrilla fighters as strong farmers raised in a healthy "natural" context in South Africa, opposed to the weak British factory workers who were prevented from joining the army to go to South Africa as they were deemed unfit. The fear of degeneracy foreshadows the healthy physical education of the Hitler's youth and echoes Thomas Hughes', Charles Kingsley's or Ralph Connor's "Muscular Christianity" (Juginger & Åkerlund 2). Yet, Haggard shows no form of superiority as Zulus also embody the martial and manly values that are attached to the Vikings in Victorian and Edwardian imaginations:

The dress was, no doubt, a savage one, but I am bound to say that I seldom saw a finer sight than Sir Henry Curtis presented in this guise. It showed off his magnificent physique to the greatest advantage, and when Ignosi arrived presently, arrayed in a similar costume, I thought to myself that I had never before seen two such splendid men. (Haggard KSM 141).

- 21 Black Berserkir and White Zulus, and vice versa are the two sides of the same Haggardian coin that promote a unique appraisal of both physical beauty and strength and individual hand-to-hand martial capabilities, but only because they are at the top of their social ladder. Haggard restricts his praise to formidable aristocratic warriors. Nordicism (as well as saxonism) excludes any equality with Africans, which does not correspond to Haggard's vision of things. Is he totally devoid of social Spencerism? Not quite as, in his books, there are Blacks who are "inferior" to other Blacks and Whites, as there are Whites "inferior" to others.<sup>42</sup> Yet class, breeding, and personal qualities are more important to him. In that sense, he seems to be a promoter of the non-conformist middle class protestant ideal of the self-made man, whose individual qualities contribute to humanity's well-being through the development of a European-type of "civilization" and to the spreading of the European Imperial project, but with Africans as part of that project. As he had cleverly foreseen, Haggard stated in 1913: "To my mind the great question of the future in the Southern Africa is not, as so many suppose, that of the political dominance of Englishman or Boer, but of the inevitable though let us hope, far-off struggle for practical supremacy between the white blood and the black" (Haggard qtd by Katz 148).

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## NOTES

1. Victorians developed this idea: "the Vik-ingr (Sic.) was indeed a terrible being. His stature was gigantic, his strength enormous. Inured to intense hardship on the rock-bound coast of Scandinavia, it was his proud boast never to take shelter under a roof or empty his horn of ale on the hearth of a house. Death in battle was what he aimed at, then alone could he enjoy the blessing of Valhalla" (*The Hull Daily Packet*, April 26, 1880). In the same article the Vikings are called "our Teutonic ancestors" and are said to be virile because "the very voluptuousness of the climate in the South of Europe and Asia tended in the direction of enervation and finally effeminacy." Victorians also put the emphasis on the fair-hair of the Vikings such as when Harald Hadrada the last Viking chief died on the shore of England in 1066: "when the grand-head, with its floating fair hair, was laid low in the dust, and the waves of battle surged over it, there disappeared from sight for ever the last of the brave and fierce Vik-ings" (*The Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement*, August 20, 1881). Haggard himself, as described by a journalist "Without being handsome, he is a fresh, comely-looking Englishman, with fair hair and frank blue eyes" (*Nottingham Evening Post*, 21 June 1888, p. 4).
2. These works range from Spalding Lewis who deals with "African Wolves and Norse Umslopogaas" (Lewis 79) in *Nada the Lily* (1892) arguing that the Europeanization of Umslopogaas is a "means of accessing the ethnic past of Europe" (80), to Norman A. Etherington who states that Haggard uses the European past (the Viking Age) and the African present (the Zulu kingdom) to convey his message (82), not forgetting Dan Wylie for whom Haggard puts forward the fighting skills of the Zulus as they correspond to a European conception of ancient warriors (151).
3. In the old Sea-kings too, what an indomitable rugged energy! Silent, with closed lips, as I fancy them, unconscious that they were specially brave; defying the wild ocean with its monsters, and all men and things; -progenitors of our own Blakes and Nelsons! No Homer sang these Norse Sea-kings (Carlyle 38).
4. Examples are words ending in 'ton', 'by' or 'thorpe', and others like 'sky' or 'window' in the English language. To these, one can add pronouns such as 'they', 'them' and 'their', and of course everyday elements such as the days of the week (Norse god Tui, son of Odin gave the word Tuesday, Woden, Germanic equivalent of Odin, gave Wednesday, Thor gave Thursday, while Frigga, Odin's wife gave Friday).
5. One example among many others states that: "It is perhaps not very generally known that the Lowland Scottish dialect contains a large proportion of Norse words. This Scandinavian leaven is especially noticeable in the speech of the dwellers on the east and north-east coasts, districts which suffered most from the Viking irruptions. Many

of the invaders became incorporated in the population and the influence upon the language is still plainly traceable” (Cassie 225).

6. “Wild, rude, and barbarous even as were the deeds of our forefathers in the days of the centuries long gone by, yet a halo of romance surrounds them, and our blood is stirred within us as we think of the ‘derring do’ of ancient times. We delight to dwell on the past. And why should we not? As the association of our childhood, in connection perhaps with a mother’s teaching and example, have oft-times a spirit rousing and humanising effect in our mature years, so the traditions of the daring deeds of a people from whom we are sprung point ever with a silent finger to the road of action along which as a nation we shall do well to walk, striving to avoid the evil and to emulate the good” (*The Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement*, Sat. August 20, 1881).

7. “Discovery of Viking ship in Cumberland” (*The Edinburgh Evening News*, Fri. January 14, 1881); “The Viking Hoard in Skye” (*Inverness Courier*, 30 Jan. 1891, p. 3); “The Vikings’ Buried Treasure” (*Edinburgh Evening News*, 20 Jan. 1891, p. 4). A Gold Cross was found in Denmark “Northern Antiquities” (*Morning Post*, 14 Nov. 1849, p. 2).

8. Such as in “Kings and Queens at Derby”: “The dauntless Aethelfielda, the daughter of Alfred the Great, would come on the scene in daring conflict with the Vikings and Berserkers, from whom her sword delivered the town in the dim days of 918, when Derby was the metropolis of the Royal Mercian shire (*Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 15 May 1891, p. 4).

9. Haggard toured Iceland in 1888 and nearly died when his ship sank on the journey back (Pollock 78). He did some extensive scholarly research work to elaborate a plausible Saga in *Eric Brighteyes* (1891): “Haggard’s novel is a remarkable illustration of just how inward acknowledgement of Icelandic sagas could be developed in 1890 by a dedicated enthusiast of the old north, even one who was in no real sense a professional philologist” (Wawn 333).

10. The newspaper article “In the Land of the Vikings” states “To the dweller in North Briton it is doubtful if any land possesses a deeper interest than that isle-girdled country beyond the German Ocean, from whence in the dim and distant past, those grand old pirates came over in their frail Viking ships to plunder and harry Scotland” (*Dundee Courier*, 19 July 1889, p. 6). Other examples include: “The tourist traffic to Norway” (*Dundee Courier*, 12 May 1892), “The Land of the Vikings, a Peep at their Fjords and Valleys” (*Leeds Mercury*, 20 Aug. 1881), “The Land of the Vikings Our trip to Norway” (*Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 8 June 1895, p. 4) or “A wild ride through Iceland” (*Isle of Wight Observer*, 7 Dec. 1895, p. 6).

11. Thomas Carlyle, to go further, was amongst the early promoters of the Viking craze that permeated Victorian society. In his famous and later controversial work (when Nazi ideologists took hold of it), *On heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in history* (1841), and more particularly in his first chapter (Lecture 1 delivered on May 5, 1840) which is devoted to “The Hero as divinity. Odin, Paganism: Scandinavian Mythology”, he states that the “Hero as divinity” is “the oldest primary form of Heroism” (5). He reminds his English audience that Norwegians who worshipped Odin in the eleventh century where “the men whose blood still runs in our veins” and “whom doubtless we still resemble in so many ways” (19). Friedrich Nietzsche saw parallels between Carlyle’s conception of the Hero and his own *Übermensch*, particularly along the line that heroes must be admired as they use their physical strength and skills to fulfil their destiny. Viking music too became popular, such as the works composed by Edward Elgar.

12. “Thus, what is more ridiculous than this opinion, shared by many, which gives the Northern barbarian credit for destroying civilization! These unfortunate barbarians are represented in the 5th century as delirious monsters, which, dashing as starving wolves on the admirable roman organization, tears it apart just for the sake of it, breaks it just to break it, and destroys it just to produce ruins” (Gobineau *Essai* 163 my translation).

13. “Facing this despicable being [the Roman], who was the barbarian? A man with blond hair, with a white and pinkish complexion, with large shoulders, great hight, strong as Alcaeus, brave like Theseus, skilful and flexible, fearing nothing in the world, and death least of all. This Leviathan possessed ideas on all things, whether they were right or wrong, they were reasoned, intelligent and were ready to be spread. Within his nationality, he had fed his mind with the essence of a strict but refined religion, with a sagacious political life and a glorious history” (Gobineau *Essai* 164). Alcaeus means strong in ancient Greek. It was the name given to Herakles by his parents who later changed his name to please goddess Hera.

14. He calls the Scandinavians “Normans” whom he distinguishes from the “French Normans” (from Frankish language Nortman and old Norse norðmaðr both meaning Northmen) descendants of Earl Rollo the Viking who was given land in the kingdom of the Franks in order to stop his raids in 911 AD, now known as Normandy. The Victorian press uses different names along with Vikings (Vi-kings, Vee-kings), Sea-Kings, Norsemen, Scandinavians and “Such were the ancestors of the Normans, or Northmen” (*The Hull Daily Packet*, April 26, 1880).

15. He then praises their discoveries: amongst their most brilliant claims to fame is the discovery of the American continent in the 10th century (Gobineau *Essai* 266). He also states that Scandinavian countries in the Middle Ages held a prestigious rank amongst all the dominating races of Europe (*Essai* 266). He further develops the idea that the more the ancient warriors were of a pure race, the less they were tempted to remain lazily in their homes, when so many marvellous adventures would lead them towards the Southern countries (*Essai* 267).

16. Likewise, in his *Story of Ottar-Jarl* (1879), Gobineau traces his own ancestry to a Viking chief, Ottar (a descendant of Odin!) who owned land in Normandy and died fighting in England. He once again states that the Vikings were no savage people: “They were heroes, but self-serving heroes, and in no way, as people wrongly think, say and write, barbarians whose only purpose was to destroy” (Gobineau, *Histoire* 9)

17. “The Nordics are, all over the world, a race of soldiers, sailors, adventurers, and explorers, but above all, of rulers, organizers, and aristocrats in sharp contrast to the essentially peasant character of the Alpines. Chivalry and knighthood, and their still surviving but greatly impaired counterparts, are peculiarly Nordic traits, and feudalism, class distinctions, are race pride among Europeans are traceable for the most part to the North” (Grant 198).

18. “In an age which came to extol the state and subordinate citizenry to nation, war became the crucial determinant of national history. In the personification of that state, war constituted a coming of age, a means to maintain moral stature and physical integrity, an anodyne against racial, spiritual and organic degeneracy” (MacKenzie 2).

19. This form of “going native” underlines that fighting and war are consensual to unite the “savage” and the “civilised” man just like Thomas Carlyle who expresses the idea that “It is doubtless very savage that kind of valor of the old Northmen” (37). The fear of the fin-de-siècle in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a sort of “end of the Roman Empire Armagedon” is one of Haggard’s interests: “the rise and fall of Empires in a kind of

Darwinian cycle of change and flux, which further explains the littering of his African topography with ruins" (Stiebel 95).

20. "Conquering races may be inferior as poets, artists and writers to those they subdue, but the latter would not have been subdued had they retained the manly virtues that made their forebears great. National greatness can only continue to thrive whilst it has fighting strength for its foundation. War, though it may mean a hard struggle for national existence, is the greatest purifier to the race or nation that has reached the verge of over refinement, of excessive civilization. That verge is the edge of a precipice at whose base lie millions in every form and phase of mental and bodily decrepitude" (Wolseley 20).

21. Henry Rider Haggard was not the least of the icelandophiles: "Rider was a great lover of Icelandic sagas and the chief reason of the journey was to visit the site of the story of *Burnt Njal*" (Haggard *Lilias* 139). Even the press validate his Scandinavian origins: "Rider Haggard looks every inch a Norseman, as he leans back in his roomy writing-chair, with the wand of 'umzimbeet' wood lying across a half written sheet of the Icelandic romance of the saga period upon which he is now engaged" (*The Citizen - Gloucestershire - Wed. Sept. 19 1888*) or "Mr Rider Haggard is a worthy descendant of the Vikings" (*Newcastle Courant Fri., 21 Sept. 1888*). His Norse Saga, *Eric Brighteyes* (1891) was praised by the press as it was acknowledged to be close to the original sagas, but with even more talent: "he is showing us what a saga would have been had any 'skald' been gifted with the literary talent of a Rider Haggard" and in the same article "It is a tale, like the 'Nibelungen Lied' and other sagas, of fair women and brave men" (*Derby Mercury, Wed. 17 June 1891 p.4*). "Mr Haggard appears in the guise of a Northern sagaman" as he attempts "the resuscitation of an ancient and alien literary form" without sparing "no pain in 'getting up' his material" as "He saturated his mind - saturated is the word- with the sanguinary lore of Scandinavian antiquity" (*Pall Mall Gazette, 25 June 1891, p. 3*).

22. Knox states that there were men who were superior physically and mentally to others: they are the Scandinavians/Saxons (45) (he does not distinguish them). He writes: "At no period, did they [the Romans] conquer the Saxon or true German, that is, Scandinavian, race" (40) and later adds, "Such were the ancient Scandinavian or Saxon, called German occasionally by some Roman writers" (51). For him, it is a race of seamen (41), part of them are "rulers of waves" and "the race still hopes ultimately to be masters of the world" (42). In his view: "In all climes, and under all circumstances, the Saxons are a tall, powerful, athletic race of men; the strongest, as a race, on the face of the globe. They have fair hair, blue eyes, and so fine a complexion, that they may almost be considered the only absolutely fair race on the face of the globe" (43).

23. A few examples of the positive Victorian press reviews of the novel include the following: "sufficient to say that the story *King Solomon's Mines* is one of the most fascinating pieces of fiction that have appeared for many a long year" ("Mr. Rider Haggard and South Africa" *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 19 Jan. 1895, p. 8*); "one of the most delightful books that has appeared for some long time" and in the same article "In his present tale he has 'struck' a vein which, it is proved fertile, promises a large amount of intelligent pleasure to the reading public" (*Morning Post, 24 Oct. 1885, p. 2*); "The new treasure story that is attracting so much attention" (*Star - Guernsey- 27 Oct. 1885 p.6*); "Mr Haggard's wonderful story, 'King Solomon's Mines,' is the most exciting of its kind ever published in a modern language" (*Standard, 10 Nov. 1885, p. 7*).

24. "Among these passengers who came on board were two who excited my curiosity. One, a gentleman of about thirty, was perhaps the biggest-chested and longest-armed man I ever saw. He had yellow hair, a thick yellow beard, clear-cut features, and large grey eyes set deep in his head. I never saw a finer-looking man, and somehow, he reminded me of an ancient Dane. Not that I know much of ancient Danes, though I knew a modern Dane who did me out of ten pounds; but I remember once seeing a picture of some of those gentry, who, I take it, were a kind of white Zulus. They were drinking out of big horns, and their long hair hung down their backs. As I looked at my friend standing there by the companion-ladder, I thought that if he only let his grow a little, put one of those chain shirts on to his great shoulders, and took hold of a battle-axe and a horn mug, he might have sat as a model for that picture. And by the way it is a curious thing, and just shows how the blood will out, I discovered afterwards that Sir Henry Curtis, for that was the big man's name, is of Danish blood" (Haggard KSM 15-16).

25. "All that afternoon we travelled along the magnificent roadway, which trended steadily in a north-westerly direction. Infadoos and Scragga walked with us, but their followers marched about one hundred paces ahead. "Infadoos," I said at length, "who made this road?" "It was made, my lord, of old time, none know how or when, not even the wise woman Gagool, who has lived for generations. We are not old enough to remember its making. None can fashion such roads now, but the king suffers no grass to grow upon it." "And whose are the writings on the wall of the caves through which we have passed on the road?" I asked, referring to the Egyptian-like sculptures that we had seen. "My lord, the hands that made the road wrote the wonderful writings. We know not who wrote them." (Haggard KSM 88)

26. "And how can man die better than facing fearful odds, for the Ashes of his fathers and the temples of his gods?" Thomas Babington Macauley, *Lays of Ancient Rome*, 1842.

27. This stunning victory of a native nation over modern European troops shocked Europeans and was only matched by a somewhat similar disaster brought about by Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors on the 7<sup>th</sup> of cavalry at the battle of Little Big Horn in 1876 in the plains of Montana. Isandlwana was seen in Britain as an incomprehensible and illogical conclusion to the beginning of a military operation that should have been a mere triumphant march.

28. Berserkir is the plural of Berserker in English and German (Berserkr in Old Norse, Berserkur in Icelandic, Bäsärk in Swedish). Promoted in Victorian imagination by Charles Kingsley and Walter Scott, the Berserker and his fury is so well known that a journalist writes in an article on Berserker: "I have not described the Berserk fury because it is well enough known" (Boyle) this is why the expression is clear even when used in a political context such as in an article entitled "Scotch Home Rule in the Making" which refer to those "who did not share the 'Berserker fury' of the Scotch liberals" (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 July 1890). It is obvious to journalists that Berserker are common knowledge in their time: "The youth of Britain is much interested in Berserkers-so would any other youth be if it had read as much about them. While Charles Kingsley lives in his stories that order of men will not be forgotten" (*The Northern Echo*, Tues. October 23, 1900). The term seems to be so well known that British charging cavalymen are compared to "Berserkers" at Mons in 1914 (*The Manchester Courier*, Wed. August 26, 1914), while British pilots are "Berserkers on the air" ("Dare-Devil airmen" *Nottingham Evening Post* Mon. June 11, 1917), Such comparisons would be clear for former young Victorian boys who now had become adult fighters. The "Norse champions" were described as "half-mythical heroes, who, when the fit came upon

them, howled like wild beasts, foamed at the mouth, tore their helmets with their teeth, and were in popular superstition at such times proof against fire and steel, dreadful when roused, but mild when appeased" (*The Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement*, Sat. August 20, 1881).

29. The Lewis Chessmen, treasured in the British Museum and the National Museum of Scotland, were found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the Isle of Lewis: "They constitute the largest known collection of Western medieval chessmen and one that offers an intriguing entrée into Nordic society" (Yalom 152). They are an opportunity for the Victorian press to remind its reader of the presence of Scandinavians on their shores: "It would appear most probable that the chessmen and the draughtsmen discovered in the isle of Lewis formed part of the stock of an Iceland *Kaup-mann*, or merchant, who carried these articles to the Hebrides, or Iceland, for the sake of traffic" and "The material they are composed of, the peculiar forms of some of the figures, the costume, and the locality, all conspire to point towards the north as their birthplace" (*Morning Post*, 27 Oct. 1841). This statement is still valid twenty-years later (as well as today): "Mr Stuart thought that Dr Wilson had been entirely successful in rescuing these relics from the Scandinavian origin attributed to them, on considerations touching the style of ornamentation, which seemed so like that of the Norman era, as well as relating to the armour, dress, and contour of the figures, which resembled other remains of art in this country of the twelfth century" (*Inverness Courier*, 13 Feb. 1862, p. 5).

30. "Odin could make his enemies in battle blind, or deaf, or terror-struck, and their weapons so blunt that they could no more but than a willow wand; on the other hand, his men rushed forwards without armour, were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit their shields, and were strong as bears or wild bulls, and killed people at a blow, but neither fire nor iron told upon themselves. These were called Berserker" (Hopper).

31. They were sailors whose qualities inspired the Navy. They are "berserkers sea-wolves" (*Leicester Chronicle*, 18 Oct. 1884, p. 8) who lived in "The days of the Sea Kings" (*Leeds Mercury*, 12 Mar. 1892). The discovery of a Viking Ship on the burial site of a chief in Gokstad (Norway) attracted much attention in Victorian Britain (*Dundee Courier*, 18 June 1880; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 19 Jan. 1883, p. 2; *Newcastle Courant*, 5 Dec. 1891; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 30 July 1892, p. 5 etc.), as well as the replica of a Langskip ship which sailed in 1893 from Norway to the United States to attend the World Fair in Chicago ("The Voyage of the Viking Ship" *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 15 June 1893, p. 5) and was cheerfully welcomed in New York harbour ("Arrival of the Viking ship at New York", *York Herald*, 17 June 1893, p. 8.), and Chicago (*Morning Post*, 13 July 1893, p. 5), before it sank the following year (*Portsmouth Evening News*, 7 Sept. 1894, p. 2).

32. This character was probably inspired by Egill Skallagrimsson (904-995) an Icelandic poet (skald), Viking warrior and farmer author of *Egill's saga* who could display Berserker frenzy.

33. "Then my eyes grew dark and I drew near to death from very shame and bitterness. But of a sudden something leaped up in my heart, fire rages before my eyes and voices in my ears called on to war and vengeance. I was Baresark – and like hay hands I burst my cords. My axe hung on the wainscot. I snatched it thence, and of what befell I know this alone, that when the madness passed, eight men lay stretched out before me, and all the place was but a gore a blood" (Haggard *Eric*, chapter VIII np).

34. Haggard promotes the same values as attributed to Vikings by the Press of his time: "But they are legends of men who were indeed, as the old songs say, 'the bravest of the

brave.' Not timorous Provincials of the Roman Empire tell these extraordinary facts, with other horrors attributed to 'the Dane', but Vikings themselves" (*The Northern Echo*, Tues. October 23, 1900)

35. Townsend also asked Haggard: "You are aware that the Berserks when they left their Aryan home on the Northern slope of the Hindoo Koosh" [high mountains between Afghanistan and Pakistan] had taken with them "the dangerous knowledge of its quality of producing a temporary fury in battle" (Haggard *The Days* 27).

36. Joyce A. Hunter, quoting Michael Speidle (p.228) posits that "In the nineteenth century, Zulu warriors went into fierce trance state to achieve battle rage. They considered this ability to summon up a condition of rage their secret weapon and used it to terrify their enemies on the battlefield. We cannot know whether Zulus or Berserkers had any chemical help heightening their eerie battle trances; that would be in the nature of trade secret." (Hunter 156).

37. Umslopogaas fought at the famous battle of Isandlwana on 22 January 1879, a Zulu victory of king Cetshwayo kaMpande, Shaka's nephew against the British army. The reader thus understands that Umslopogaas is such a great warrior, as he is even chief of the elite Nkomabakosi regiment. It is interesting that Ignosi also belonged to that regiment under king Cetshwayo, which can lead us to suppose that he also fought at Isandlwana, perhaps under the orders of Umslopogaas. The latter's fighting qualities are displayed later in the novel when the reader learns he has defeated and killed a hundred enemies and is nicknamed 'the slaughterer', (Haggard *Quatermain* 15).

38. It is interesting to see the analogy between Umslopogaas and Mgobozi, a warrior from the Zulu oral tradition: "After Mgobozi received his first flesh wound, he went berserk and, with the murderous agility of a leopard, he became a raging bull" (Ritter 159) and "the berserk warrior was beyond reasoning" (Ritter 159). Further on in the epic: "Mgobozi went berserk. He was the personification of a battle-mad war-god. He vaulted at and among his enemies with such utter reckless fury and death-dealing agility that they frequently scattered" (Ritter 316) and "Mgobozi stood alone. His mouth was flecked with bloody foam. His madly staring eyes were red as blood: so he waited with heaving chest for the last rush" (Ritter 317). "With a yell the Ndwadwes flung themselves at him, but the old lion met them like a pack of African wolves (wild dogs). Again, and again he killed them right and left" (Ritter 317).

39. One can note that in French, a sword is feminine: "une épée". The femininity of a weapon is enhanced as Haggard's character of Umslopogaas is inspired by the son of a Swazi King M'hlopekazi (Coan), nicknamed Slapogazi whose battle-axe "He cherished as he might a wife, saying that she was evidently a woman as she pried so deep into things - that she was clearly a chieftainess because so many men fell down before her" (Lilias Haggard 55). The Zulu battle-axe echoes that of Skallagrim the Berserker in *Eric Brighteyes*, which seems to have been inspired by the genuine and one of the most accomplished Norse Saga: *Njáls Saga* (13<sup>th</sup> century).

40. Olivier is a fictitious knight whose sword is named Hauteclair, faithful friend and confident to Charlemagne's nephew, who is said to be wise while Roland is said to be brave.

41. The Victorian press spreads this idea such as found in an article entitled "The Danes in Lancashire": "A victorious people have always an intense and widely spreading influence over the nations which feel the effects of their victories and conquests. An inferior race never withstood a superior one. The fact that the Danes gained not only an ascendancy in many parts of England during the Anglo-Saxon dynasties, but even



the government of them all, is a proof that they were at that period, a race of individuals superior to the natives of the land” and further down in the article “The Romans were so much superior to the aboriginal Britons as the English of the present day are to the Afghans and Sikhs. The Saxons were an improvement on the Romanised Celt; while on the Saxon again the Dane or Northman was an advance in superiority, and a great element of improvement” (*Preston Chronicle*, 22 Jan. 1853).

42. See Wendy R. Katz who has a whole chapter on Haggard’s racism (Katz ch.6 131-152).

## ABSTRACTS

This article surveys the question of racism and racial representations in the works of Henry Rider Haggard. Among the numerous articles and chapters written on that topic, few have tackled the issue from the perspective of the nordicist ideology that developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup>. This idea that Northern European people were part of an “elite race” was promoted, particularly in Britain where saxonism was brushed aside as it excluded the “Celtic fringe” of the British Isles. Yet, Late Victorian ideologists were adamant to advertise a consensual Empire which would unite all “British” peoples. The Viking (Middle) Age was thus promoted as a common heroic background to both the Saxons and Celts as the “Sea Kings” plundered the shores of the British Isles and even settled there. Haggard evokes the Vikings but also the Norse elite warriors, the Berserkir in some of his novels. This article purports to examine Haggard’s engagement with the ambient racial ideologies of the period: was he just a man of his time or did he have another vision for race relations in South Africa?

Cet article examine la question du racisme et des représentations raciales dans les œuvres de Henry Rider Haggard. Parmi les nombreux articles et chapitres d’ouvrages qui abordent ce sujet, peu l’ont fait sous l’angle de l’étude du « nordicisme » qui s’est développée à la fin du XIXe siècle et au début du XXe. L’idée que les Européens du Nord faisaient partie d’une « race d’élite » était diffusée, en particulier en Grande-Bretagne où le saxonisme était écarté car il excluait la « frange celtique » des Îles britanniques. Pourtant, les idéologues victoriens de la fin du siècle étaient désireux de proposer l’idée d’un Empire consensuel qui unifierait tous les « Britanniques ». L’Ère des Vikings fut donc mise à l’honneur comme un passé héroïque commun à la fois aux Saxons et aux Celtes car les « Rois des mers » avait pillé les côtes des Îles britanniques et s’y étaient même installés. Haggard évoque les Vikings mais également leurs guerriers d’élite, les Berserkir, dans certains de ses romans. La question que cet article pose est d’essayer de discerner à quel point Haggard abondait dans le sens des idéologies raciales de son époque ou bien s’il avait une autre vision qui anticipait les futures relations humaines en Afrique du Sud ?

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Henry Rider Haggard, Vikings, berserkir, berserker, Les Mines du Roi Salomon, Eric Yeuxclairs, Zoulou, nordicism, Arthur Comte de Gobineau, Umslopogaas

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