

H. RIDER HAGGARD

ALLAN QUATERMAIN



THE WORLD'S CLASSICS



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THE WORLD'S CLASSICS
ALLAN QUATERMAIN

HENRY RIDER HAGGARD was born in Norfolk in 1856, the son of a barrister and country gentleman, and after being educated privately and at Ipswich Grammar School began to prepare for entrance to the Foreign Office. When his father unexpectedly found him a post on the staff of Sir Henry Bulwer, Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, however, Haggard went to work in South Africa, where he spent several exciting years during the time of Britain's almost disastrous war with the Zulus, and the First Boer War which followed.

Haggard turned these experiences to good account on returning to England, when, after an unsuccessful start as a lawyer, he began writing, and he achieved a great popular and critical triumph with his adventure story *King Solomon's Mines* in 1885. Its sequel *Allan Quatermain* (1887) soon followed, with other remarkable tales, such as *She* (1886) and *Maiwa's Revenge* (1887), and Rider Haggard became one of England's most popular novelists for the next forty years.

A distinguished public servant as well as a writer, Rider Haggard had an extensive knowledge of Agriculture and of Imperial Affairs, and sat on a number of Royal Commissions for which he was made a Knight Bachelor in 1912 and a Knight Commander of the British Empire in 1919. He died in 1925.

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INTRODUCTION

AFTER he returned from farming in Africa in 1881, Rider Haggard decided to read for the Bar, but during the months of studying thoughts of Africa continued to preoccupy him, and he wrote an account of the political situation there entitled *Cetywayo and his White Neighbours*.¹ Though the book attracted little attention, Haggard now attempted to write fiction, and he produced two largely unsuccessful novels before his third story *King Solomon's Mines* was accepted by Cassell in May 1885.

Quite unaware of the success *King Solomon's Mines* would enjoy, and still expecting to make his career as a lawyer, Haggard began making notes for other tales. In July his older brother Jack returned to England, having been invalided home from East Africa, and full of stories of African adventure. When, later in the month, Haggard left London for a holiday, he at once began writing a sequel to the still unpublished *King Solomon's Mines*, originally called 'Zu-Vendis' and then altered to 'The Frowning City'. By 28 September he had finished the book, now renamed *Allan Quatermain*. Its writing had taken just ten weeks.

The success of *King Solomon's Mines* later that year made Rider Haggard famous and he was able to ask better terms for *Allan Quatermain*. The story attracted widespread attention when it was serialized in *Longman's Magazine* from January to August 1887, and it became an immediate bestseller. Even before it was published, Charles Longman wrote, 'You have broken the record... We have subscribed 10,000 copies of *Quatermain* in London, which they say is more than has ever been subscribed of a 6/- novel before.' The story has been frequently republished, was the subject of a film made by H. Lisle Lucoque in 1919, and has remained in print ever since. Despite a

¹ Though Cetywayo was the form Rider Haggard regularly used, the more correct rendering of the Zulu chief's name is Cetshwayo.

critical review by J. M. Barrie, many readers will agree with the opinion of the young Winston Churchill, who wrote, 'I like "A. Q." better than *King Solomon's Mines*; it is more amusing.'²

The praise of an admirer who subsequently became such a great adventurer, imperialist, and statesman himself would have particularly pleased Haggard because his early years seemed to have lacked any real signs of promise. Born in Norfolk in 1856, the son of a barrister and country squire, he seems to have had an undistinguished childhood and adolescence, and, after failing an army entrance examination, he studied at a private 'crammer' in London in order to prepare for the Foreign Office examination. Then, quite unexpectedly, his father found him a post on the staff of Sir Henry Bulwer, the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal in South Africa, and Haggard's experiences there from 1875 onwards proved to be crucial in his development. His duties introduced him to all sorts of people—Boer farmers, British politicians, Zulu natives—and he travelled about the country at a critical stage in its history, during which Britain annexed the Boer province of Transvaal, and fought the Zulu war of 1879 and the Boer War of 1880. He became a great admirer of Natal's Secretary for Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone, whose administration was based upon a tolerance of many native customs, and he witnessed tribal ceremonies, talked to survivors of the Battle of Isandhlwana where the Zulus defeated a British army, and saw his farm used for peace negotiations at the end of 1880.

Though none of his early works had sold well, the tremendous popularity of *King Solomon's Mines*, and its immediate successors *Allan Quatermain* and *Jess*, persuaded Haggard to give up the law, and, despite never being entirely happy with his career as an author and often longing to return to public service, he accepted the situ-

² See Morton Cohen, *Rider Haggard: His Life and Work* (Hutchinson, 1960), 63-127; P. B. Ellis, *H. Rider Haggard: A Voice from the Infinite* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 12-103; and D. S. Higgins, *Rider Haggard: The Great Storyteller* (Cassell, 1981), 46-118.

ation and concentrated upon earning his living as a professional writer.³ He published sixty-eight books altogether: novels about contemporary life, such as *Love Eternal* (1918); works of non-fiction, such as *Rural England* (1902); historical novels, such as *Cleopatra* (1889); and many stories about Africa. His early experiences there—the people he met, the journeys he made, the scenes he witnessed—all gave him a wealth of memories, anecdotes, and legends to dwell upon, which not only provided him with the material for his best novels but helped to shape his view of life.

Allan Quatermain is a superb example of his African romances. Based initially upon Haggard's own experiences of Africa, including his acquaintance with a colleague who always wore an eye-glass, and a battle-scarred Swazi who wielded a battle-axe, the story draws particularly upon some of Haggard's journeys, especially his visit to a strongly fortified mission station run by Dr Merensky, who had already twice defeated native forces sent to destroy him. A close reader of studies of the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Greece, Haggard also enjoyed the travel books of such men as Joseph Thomson, whose account of his exploration of the snow-clad and volcanic mountains of East Africa had recently been published. Haggard also benefited from the help of friends, especially in this case Agnes Barber, who seems to have worked as his secretary (and wrote the Song given to Sorais in Chapter XV), and Andrew Lang, who was moved to write the Greek lament for Umslopogaas with which the book opens. Most of all, Haggard revelled in tales of African adventures, and he would have heard many from his older brother Jack, who had served for a time as Vice-Consul in Lamu. Contemporary maps of Africa revealed the existence of the massive stone ruins known as the Great Zimbabwe, and, since Haggard knew the map-maker's family, it seems likely that he would have heard something of the archaeological dis-

³ For Rider Haggard's reservations about 'the craft of story-writing', see his *The Days of My Life*, ed. C. J. Longman, 2 vols. (Longman, Green, 1926), vol. i, pp. xxii-xxiii.

coveries there, while rumours also abounded about the small but secluded African kingdom of Lovedu in the north-eastern corner of Transvaal, ruled by a queen who, like her people, was distinguished by her pale complexion. What is particularly impressive about Haggard's story, however, is not the variety of the heterogeneous sources but the imaginative power with which they are successfully integrated into a powerful and unified narrative.⁴

The story begins as a quest when Allan Quatermain, a big-game hunter grieving for the loss of his son Harry, decides to leave his Yorkshire home and set out for Africa once more in company with his old companions from the great journey in *King Solomon's Mines*, Sir Henry Curtis and Captain John Good. This time their search is not for treasure but to discover whether the tales of a great white race living north of Mount Kenia are true. From North-East Africa the party strike inland, acquiring a remarkable Zulu warrior, Umslopogaas, on the way, and have a series of exciting adventures, fighting a fierce battle with Masai warriors, undergoing a terrifying subterranean journey, and discovering the lost civilization, before they are caught up in a passionate love-triangle, and finally become engulfed in a ferocious civil war.

The story clearly has many similarities to the adventure story for boys which derived originally from the earlier adult novels of Defoe, Scott, and J. Fenimore Cooper, and became enormously popular in the nineteenth century, partly as a reflection of Britain's emergence from the Napoleonic Wars as a great military and naval power. These stories, often exploiting the appeal of exotic parts of the British Empire, such as Africa or India, and usually based upon an unquestioning assumption of British superiority to all foreigners, especially natives, developed well-

⁴ See Higgins, *Rider Haggard: The Great Storyteller*, 17-118; Joseph Thomson, *Through Masai Land: A Journey of Exploration Among the Snowclad Volcanic Mountains of Eastern Equatorial Africa* (1885; 'New and Revised Edition', Sampson, Low, Marston, n.d.); and E. J. and J. D. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain-Queen: A Study of the Pattern of Lovedu Society* (Oxford University Press, 1943).

tried formulaic patterns. They usually begin with a minor crisis, perhaps the death of a relation, before the hero leaves home in search of his fortune, accompanied by some faithful friend or servant. At the end of his journey, the hero encounters a great crisis, usually performing courageously before he returns home triumphant and often loaded with great riches. R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858) and G. A. Henty's *By Sheer Pluck: A Tale of the Ashantee War* (1884) are typically formulaic examples of the genre, while Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) shows how the formula can be transformed by genius.⁵

In their use of formulaic elements and stereotyped characters, these stories owe a good deal to the structure of traditional folk- and fairy-tales, in which similar patterns tend to repeat themselves. Such stories, in their mixture of realism and the marvellous, their narration of the hero's journey as a Quest, and the frequently happy endings, may also owe something to the early romances, such as the tale of Galahad's search for the Grail in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (1485).⁶

Bruno Bettelheim has argued that folk- and fairy-tales have retained their popularity over the centuries, especially with young people, because through them children have learned to master their disappointments and their fears, and to acquire feelings of selfhood and self-esteem. Many fairy-tales, he points out, depict a hero, or heroine, who is not a superman but an ordinary person who goes out into a world where evil is omnipresent, and often temporarily in the ascendant, and yet ends up triumphant.⁷

⁵ See Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

⁶ V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, first edition translated by Laurence Scott with an introduction by S. Pirkova-Jacobson; second edition revised and edited with a Preface by Louis A. Wagner and a new Introduction by Alan Dundee (University of Texas, Austin, 1975). See also Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (Methuen, 1970).

⁷ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (Thames and Hudson, 1976).

Despite their surface realism, similar elements are found in many nineteenth-century adventure stories. They have been transformed, of course, by Victorian interests and ideologies, but their popularity rests on their satisfaction of the same human needs. The reader of such stories is, furthermore, not only tested and reassured psychologically by the familiar mixture of danger and almost certain security, but also aesthetically, as he or she learns to appreciate the ways a skilful novelist can vary the expected pattern of the story or use it to embody unfamiliar or challenging values. Thus Stevenson used the traditional form of the adventure story in *Treasure Island* to question conventional attitudes towards loyalty and friendship.

The presence of the familiar structure of the folk-tale is very clear in the first half of *Allan Quatermain*. A preliminary section introduces the hero-narrator, establishes the purpose of the quest, and describes the preparations for the journey. Then the hero and his companions make their way to the appointed place, encountering various hazards on the way, before they reach their destination and fight a great battle.

However, Haggard varies the elements and pattern of the traditional structure with skill and imagination in a variety of ways. Instead of a young boy, the hero is a withered, yellow-faced old man of 63 with a game leg; and instead of the hero losing his father at the beginning of the story, he grieves for the loss of his young son. Instead of a solitary companion, the hero has three, not including the comical Alphonse, and the discovery made by the explorers proves to be a great civilization, not buried treasure or a desert island. The 'magic' of traditional tales proves to be the products of modern technology, and the Birmingham-made mail-shirts are actually mistaken for witchcraft by the Masai in the great battle of Chapter VII. And finally, although the ending does include a marriage, there is no conventional homecoming, and one might even say that Haggard subverts the happy ending with so many deaths.

The journey is rendered authentic with a wealth of convincing detail, from its sombre opening in Yorkshire and the planning of the expedition in Lamu, through the account of the canoeing to 'The Highlands', the march through the great Elgumi forest, to the final descent via the great lake. Even in the description of 'The Frowning City' itself, there is more emphasis upon exact measurements and architectural details than upon the miraculous. And all the time Haggard is persuading the reader to suspend his disbelief, in the words of *The World's Desire* (1890), in things that 'were not and could not be so',⁸ not only by the quasi-scientific nature of the editorial footnotes, on the Zu-Vendi language, for example, but by the tone of the sensible, level-headed narrator, Allan Quatermain.

Haggard places the emphasis upon action rather than individual characters in his adventure stories, and his characters tend to be types rather than fully explored individuals. Captain Good rarely deviates from his entertaining role as a vain and romantically susceptible naval officer, while Sir Henry Curtis is a heroic throw-back to the Viking warriors of the past, whose kinship with Umslopogaas is commented on. Alphonse never escapes from his somewhat tedious stereotype as a comic and cowardly Frenchman—and a chef to boot!—even though his farcically told affair with Annette prefigures the more tragic love-affair later. But Quatermain, though near to the form of the strong, silent hunter, is presented with some complexity and inwardness. Cautious, practical, and clear-minded, he is reticent about the deaths of his first wife and of his son, but critical of superstitious beliefs and the artificial conventions of so-called 'civilization'. A man of action rather than a man of letters, though he does quote unexpectedly from Keats and Tennyson, Gray and Coleridge, his scepticism makes him the ideal narrator for an incredible story.

Using Quatermain as his narrator, Haggard gradually draws the reader into the familiar structure of the tra-

⁸ From the Poem to *The World's Desire* by H. Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang (Longmans, Green, 1890), p. (2).

ditional romance with great originality and insight. The search for a mysterious civilization has haunted explorers and travellers through the ages, and Haggard describes the quest with wonderfully dramatic and poetic touches, made all the more convincing because it is the level-eyed Quatermain who narrates them. The grim encounters with the Masai, the defence of the fortified mission station, the escape from the Rose of Fire, and Umslopogaas's breathtaking heroics with Inkosi-kaas all demonstrate those qualities which Robert Louis Stevenson called 'the plastic parts of literature', by which he meant the power of the writer to embody character, thought, or emotion in some action or attitude that was striking to the mind's eye.⁹

What gave Rider Haggard's romances their power and popularity in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, however, was more than this: it was the way such stories as *King Solomon's Mines*, *Allan Quatermain*, and *She* gave powerful expression, through symbolical journeys into Africa and the past (which are often the same thing), to late Victorian obsessions with evolution and race, and with psychology and sexuality.

For Haggard grew up in the post-Darwinian climate of opinion. The publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859 seemed to many people to challenge Christian belief and to reveal a world in which the fittest to survive were not necessarily the noblest or the best. At home, Haggard, the son of a country squire, who was passionately devoted to the land, saw these beliefs confirmed in the collapse of English agriculture in the last decades of the nineteenth century, when thousands left the land and villages became 'grass-green' again.¹⁰ What he saw in Africa confirmed this diagnosis, for it is clear that in the decline of its early civilizations Rider Haggard found supreme images of human transience. The ruined cities of the East African coast

⁹ R. L. Stevenson, 'A Gossip on Romance', *Memories and Portraits: Memoirs of Himself: Selections from his Notebook*, Tusitala Edition, vol. xxix (Heinemann, 1924), 123.

¹⁰ Lord Ernle, *English Farming: Past and Present*, new (6th) edn., Introduction by G. E. Fussell and O. R. McGregor (Heinemann and Frank Cass, 1961), 386.

speaking eloquently not only of a glory that has disappeared but of a future decline:

Gone! quite gone! the way that everything must go. Like the nobles and the ladies who lived within their gates, these cities have had their day, and now they are as Babylon and Nineveh, and as London and Paris will one day be. Nothing may endure. That is the inexorable law. (p. 28)

But Haggard's late-Victorian melancholy gave him great insights. For, though he was an imperialist, sharing many of the racist assumptions of his time and class, and clearly found it difficult to believe that black people could have been capable of building fine cities in the past on their own, or that mixed marriages were acceptable in the present, what is remarkable about his novels is the way they do not always conform to the expected values of Victorian imperialism. Thus Haggard, in his celebration of Umslopogaas and the Zulus, was able to show an appreciation of the dignity and the richness of African culture which was not to be surpassed until the novels of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o began to appear in the twentieth century.

More than that, Haggard questions the whole notion of white 'civilization' in *Allan Quatermain*, suggesting that it is largely superficial, and that Europeans and natives are very similar under the skin, when the veneer of 'civilization' is stripped away. Some readers have suggested that Haggard anticipates the work of Freud and Jung by showing that even self-controlled, educated Westerners have uncontrollable, unconscious passions under the surface, but in depicting Sir Henry Curtis and Umslopogaas as near-brothers, when the mail-shirt designed for Sir Henry 'fitted the great Zulu like a skin' (p. 76), Haggard is surely asserting brotherhood, not savagery.¹¹

Haggard's account of the Zu-Vendi, furthermore, enables him to offer a critique of trends within Victorian Britain, and to offer an alternative vision of society. Anti-

¹¹ See Norman Etherington, *Rider Haggard* (Twayne, Boston, 1984), 51-5.

capitalist and anti-industrialist, and coming from the stock of landed gentry himself, Haggard cannot resist praising the superiority of the agriculturally based civilization of the Zu-Vendi, with its feudal organization and its social classes of territorial nobility, middle classes, and well-to-do peasants, all clearly distinguished by their dignified and attractive modes of dress. These kind and light-hearted people also care little about money, we are told. Ambivalent about religion, where he seems sympathetic to the natural sun-worshipping, but hostile to the authoritarian priesthood, Haggard cannot help contrasting the country's mild and just laws, which treat offences against people more severely than crimes against property, with the English system, which does the opposite; and he is also surprisingly tolerant of polygamy, and even of heavy taxation, which seems to fund an early form of unemployment benefit. It is not surprising at the end of the book to learn that Sir Henry Curtis intends to try and stop any foreigners from entering this secluded kingdom, and that he is dedicated to protecting its upright and generous-hearted people from the blessings of barbarism. 'I have no fancy to hand over this beautiful' country to be torn and fought over by speculators, tourists, politicians and teachers, whose voice is as the voice of Babel,' he says (p. 282).

In depicting the ruling house of his imaginary kingdom, however, Rider Haggard cannot help revealing certain Victorian attitudes towards women and sexuality. For Zu-Vendi is ruled by two sisters, Nyleptha, fair, with golden hair and grey eyes, and Sorais, dark, with black hair and cruel lips. The contrast between what Leslie Fiedler has called the Fair Maiden and the Dark Lady, the sinless blonde and the passionate brunette, has a long history. Walter Scott compares Rowena with Rebecca in *Ivanhoe* (1820), and J. Fenimore Cooper similarly portrays the sisters Alice and Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).¹² However, Haggard's use of the same motifs in *Allan*

¹² Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Paladin, 1970), 242-313.

Quatermain may have gained particular intensity from Victorian male anxieties about the emergence of the 'New Woman'. To give just two examples, London University began to admit women to degrees in 1878, while Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, with its portrait of the rebellious Nora, appeared a year later. Like many of his contemporaries who resisted female suffrage, Haggard seems to have been disturbed by fears of the combination of clever women and sexuality. Nyleptha is spotless and almost passive, but Sorais is attractive and proactive. She boldly declares her passion for Curtis, but when she cannot get what she wants she throws in her lot with the Archpriest Agon and the ambitious prince Nasta, out of a mixture of envy and revenge. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have argued that Haggard mediates various Victorian anxieties about female power in *She*, and in *Allan Quatermain* it is difficult to avoid feeling that Haggard is suggesting that Nyleptha is good because she is passive and 'feminine' in showing female weaknesses, but that Sorais is forceful and threatening, and so must be destroyed.¹³

Although enormously popular from the time of the publication of *King Solomon's Mines*, Haggard was subject to considerable criticism, even at the height of his success, and this mainly for two reasons. First, even from the appearance of *King Solomon's Mines*, Haggard was accused of plagiarism in his work. The comic account of Good's white legs which so amazed the natives, was, it was alleged, derived from another recent book of travels in Africa; and both *Jess* and *She* were criticized for using unacknowledged materials. Although Haggard angrily refuted such suggestions, and they usually involve minor details in any case, there is no doubt that he was very sensitive to the charges. This explains the note on 'Authorities' at the end of *Allan Quatermain*, where Haggard admits his debt to Thomson's *Through Masai Land*.¹⁴

¹³ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. ii: *Sexchanges* (Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1989), 3-82.

¹⁴ See the correspondence in the *Athenaeum*, July 1886, and Norman Etherington, 'South African Origins of Rider Haggard's Early African

Secondly, Haggard's work, again almost from the earliest African romances, was criticized for its excessive violence. In the *British Weekly* in 1887, for example, J. M. Barrie, writing under the pseudonym of 'Gavin Ogilvy', savaged *Allan Quatermain* for depicting the deaths of not less than 50,000 human beings, and particularly disliked Haggard's account of the gruesome death of the Masai swimmer and of the Scottish minister's unchristian behaviour. In 1888 the *Church Quarterly Review* expressed similar concerns about violence in five of Haggard's novels. Though Haggard defended himself against these attacks on the grounds of realism—'man is a fighting animal,' he says¹⁵—and death and violence were an essential part of his tragic view of life, he did revise some of his bloodthirsty descriptions, especially after his friend and mentor Andrew Lang, after reading an early version of *Allan Quatermain*, commented, 'perhaps it would be well to mop up a little blood, is it not going to be rather sanguinary?'¹⁶ When he revised the serial for book-publication, Haggard certainly toned down some of the story's violent episodes, omitting a reference to bones being crushed, reducing some of the more sensationalist details of Alphonse's *crime passionnel*, and omitting Quatermain's gleeful, anti-Quakerish enthusiasm for Mackenzie's deeds with a carving-knife, as the Explanatory Notes indicate.

Although Haggard is sometimes criticized for his style, *Allan Quatermain*'s narrator is supposed to be an elderly big-game hunter, more accustomed to handling a rifle than a pen. However, he is familiar with rather more than the Bible and *Ingoldsby Legends* he professes, and there is often an impressive quality about his delineation of landscape and places—in describing the party's emergence from the underground river, for example, and in his breath-taking account of the drama at the story's great climax. Haggard did write rapidly and carelessly at times,

Romances', *Notes and Queries* (Oct. 1977), 436–8, as well as Higgins, *Rider Haggard: The Great Storyteller*, 79–115.

¹⁵ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life*, ii. 92.

¹⁶ Cohen, *Rider Haggard: His Life and Works*, 188.

however, and he sensibly corrected a number of errors of grammar and punctuation from the serial version of *Allan Quatermain*, but his revisions occasionally involve a loss of directness. Though he was surely right to tone down his clichéd and chauvinistic portrait of Alphonse, and to omit the over-elaborate details of the Zu-Vendis' written language, who would seriously object to the phrase 'you little skunk' (replaced by 'you little wretch' on p. 90) or prefer 'at hand' to 'handy' on p. 130?

Another aspect of Haggard's style is his use of archaic language to represent native speech. J. Fenimore Cooper drew attention to the imagery and richness of Red Indian language in *The Last of the Mohicans*, and Haggard attempted something similar in *King Solomon's Mines* when he tried to convey the mode and dignity of native speech by such archaisms as 'thee' and 'whither' and the occasional use of words and phrases from Zulu or Afrikaans vocabulary. The practice is extended in *Allan Quatermain*, with the adoption of more and more echoes of the cadences of the King James Bible and Book of Common Prayer, not only for the speech of Umslopogaas but in order to convey the exotic flavour of the dialogue between the adventurers and the inhabitants of the ancient civilization of Zu-Vendi. Thus Queen Nyleptha responds to Sir Henry's proposal of marriage in these terms:

'Though I be as nothing in the eyes of my lord . . . who comes from among a wonderful people, to whom my people are but children, yet here am I a queen and a leader of men, and if I would go to battle a hundred thousand spears shall sparkle in my train like stars glimmering down the path of the bent moon.' (p. 193)

It is a mannered but effective device, and one much imitated since by writers from Edgar Rice Burroughs to J. R. R. Tolkien.

In creating this language, and in depicting such characters as Allan Quatermain and Sir Henry Curtis, and the lost civilization of Nyleptha and Sorais, with all the adventurous hazards involved in surviving the subterranean river